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ON BEHALF OF:


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PROSPER
 MAGAZINE

Black Country Prosper Magazine is the official magazine of The Black Country Chamber of Commerce. Providing news, information and insights, Prosper is the region's longest running business publication. Produced on a quarterly basis, the magazine is supported by an array of the Black Country's most influential business leaders and is read by business owners throughout the region and further afield.

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The work of the Black Country Chamber of Commerce is supported by these strategic partners - working together to make the region a better place for business



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WELCOME TO THE NEW PROSPER MAGAZINE
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Welcome to the very first edition of our new look Prosper magazine, the region's longest running business publication with a completely new look.

News, views, interviews, opinions and debate from across the Black Country and beyond its borders; a culmination of months of research, hard work and the incredible creative work of our publishing partner, Interactive Magazines.

We've been working behind the scenes to bring you more up to date news, commentary and insights on topics which matter to the business community, and now, with over 30 years of heritage, Prosper has relaunched with a contemporary new look and feel, its own interactive online magazine and reaches out in innovative and engaging ways with things that matter to business readers.

As Prosper goes to print the country teeters on the brink of Brexit, parliament has been suspended after its longest session since the Civil War and the party-political conference season is now upon us.

In light of the continued political turmoil and relentless uncertainty, businesses continue to cry out for clarity during these uncertain times; you can read the thoughts and opinions

of the region's business leaders, respected academics and the Mayor of the West Midlands, Andy Street, throughout this first edition.

Our first Prosper Profile features an interview with Dr Adam Marshall, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce, who tells us about the importance of linking top level government with senior business leaders, how flexible working practices can help a company's best asset, its people, and how he never shies away from the challenges the role brings.

Produced by the Black Country Chamber of Commerce, Prosper also features news from across the Chamber organisation, including the announcement of recent sponsorship links for key Chamber initiatives, news from across the membership and an array of articles from the many business sectors in and around the Black Country.

Enjoy

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EDITORIAL
The opinions expressed in this issue are not necessarily the views held by Interactive Magazines. All information is correct to the publisher's knowledge at the time of going to print. News and press releases should be sent to prosper@blackcountrychamber.co.uk for the attention of The Editor.

WORKING HARD FOR THE BLACK COUNTRY'S BUSINESS COMMUNITY



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The relaunch of Prosper and the introduction of Prosper Online have been central to our plans to make the Black Country Chamber of Commerce one of the most modern and dynamic in the country and I'm sure you'll agree that the region's longest established business title has never looked better. I am incredibly proud of all those who have put the hard work into making this magazine look so fantastic.

As a Chamber we continue to work hard to ensure that our members have access to a range of services and opportunities to connect, raise their profile and make the process of doing business easier.

This year, we have introduced a number of new initiatives including Future Link for young professionals, the Start-Up Business Club, focused our export and import support under the Black Country International name and have teamed up with expert training providers to provide a range of new courses and programmes.

In addition to this, we created more ways for our members to meet and do business with each other through the launch of our fortnightly and regional business networking clubs and have also embarked on a rebrand and created more opportunities for our members to share their news and stories.

Through all of these developments, we remain the voice of the Black Country business community and a powerful platform whose opinions are valued and sought after by politicians and policymakers. If you've yet to take part in our Quarterly Economic Survey, I would absolutely encourage you to do so.

These regular snapshots form part of 53 surveys undertaken by other Chambers across the country and provide the British

Chambers of Commerce with one of the most powerful and most up-to-date sentiment analysis of the business world in the UK. This data is reviewed and poured over by analysts, economists, the Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee, HM Treasury and the Independent Office for Budget Responsibility - often forming the backdrop for changing policy and improvements.

In the face of continued Brexit indecision and general political uncertainty in Westminster; Black Country businesses continue to demonstrate their resolve and the 2019 Black Country Business Festival in May being a particular highlight which demonstrated the confidence, resilience and innovation of our local firms.

Based on our daily conversations with members, we know that businesses want an end to ongoing Brexit uncertainty and a renewed focus on domestic policy. There is certainly a feeling that crucially important policy issues are being ignored with clarity urgently needed on the future of large infrastructure projects such as HS2.

As a Chamber we are supportive of the project, the investment in the West Midlands and the supply chain opportunities which follow.

Locally, the second quarter of 2019 pointed to an easing of recruitment difficulties for the

region's manufacturers yet an increase in the same difficulties for our service sector. There is also a worrying trend that 44% of local businesses across all sectors aren't operating at full capacity.

A high proportion of businesses also indicated that they had either increased or had a constant cash flow yet domestic sales were noticeably down to 81% from 92% with domestic orders seeing a steady decline. For exporters, overseas orders have fallen significantly from 92% to 76%. Whilst some of these indicators could be a result of previous and on-going stockpiling due to Brexit it is clear that this is still a high concern for businesses.

Over the next few months, we will ensure that the new Prime Minister and Cabinet understand the needs of local businesses. From clarity over HS2 and the M6 toll, to fresh engagement on the T Level and apprenticeship system, there is plenty for the government to do, to ensure domestic policies remain in full focus.



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NEWS IN BRIEF

NEWS FROM THE BLACK COUNTRY BUSINESS COMMUNITY



MEMBER NEWS

CONSULTANCY SCOOPS MAJOR IT INDUSTRY AWARD

Wolverhampton-based MSV Consultancy are celebrating their work with London's largest further education college group after scooping the award for Project of the Year in the Real IT Awards, presented in London on May 9.

A complex transition programme kick-started by the merger of three colleges at Capital City College Group (CCCG) necessitated a major upgrade of its IT infrastructure. MSV Consultancy focused on enhancing the technology experience for all stakeholders by ensuring organisational resilience, since system failures in a technology-led learning environment could seriously compromise the work of students and staff.



MEMBER NEWS

KIMBERMILLS FORGES AHEAD WITH 100TH BIRTHDAY SALES BOOST

A company that helped pave the way for the Channel Tunnel and produces forged parts for hip replacements is celebrating its 100th birthday in style.

KimberMills International, which employs 50 people across two sites in the Black Country and Coventry, has enjoyed a £1m boost in its centenary year by securing new contracts in oil and gas, mining, motorsport and rail. The order haul has taken sales to a record high of £8m, created six new jobs and underlined the company's decision to invest nearly £1m in a new drop forge at Cradley Heath, additional machining capabilities and a Materials Requirements Planning (MRP) system.



MEMBER NEWS

£12M INVESTMENT PLEDGED FOR NEW CASINO 36 IN DUDLEY

Casino 36 have announced a £12million new casino entertainment venue at Castlegate Retail Park in Dudley.

The project is due to take up to a year to complete and it is expected to open in the Summer of 2020 and is set to employ over 100 people. The two-storey building will feature the casino and bar on the first floor and an entertainment venue on the ground floor. A groundbreaking ceremony was attended by Adrian Ballard, Casino 36 Director; Mayor of Dudley Cllr David Stanley; Ian Austin, MP for Dudley North and Corin Crane, Chief Executive of the Black Country Chamber of Commerce.



MEMBER NEWS

MIDLAND CYROGENICS CELEBRATE FORTY YEARS IN BUSINESS

Midland Cryogenics Limited celebrated 40 years in business in August and continues to punch above its weight on the international market.

The Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) business providing a full range of specialist services including Pipe Freezing, Hot Tapping, Metal Shrinking & Perlite Installation. Founder and Managing Director, David George Brocklesby, who turned eighty in September, continues to run the business and regularly travels overseas conducting seminars, site surveys and inspections.



MEMBER NEWS

TENDER PARTNERSHIP LEADS TO CONTRACT SUCCESS

Working closely with Klick Business Solutions, the specialist tender writing and bid management service company, Oldbury based Dolphin Lifts (Midlands) have been officially announced as the Dudley Council stairlift contractor, for both supply and maintenance contracts worth £1M a year.

Klick Managing Director, Andrea Childs said, "This is just fantastic news for our client, Dolphin Lifts, real proof that SME's can win large contracts. Meanwhile, Dolphin's Managing Director, Lee Farrington, has been awarded the title of Businessperson of the Year 2019 in the recent Sandwell Business Awards.



MEMBER NEWS

TRAINING PROVIDER SCOOPS PRESTIGIOUS AWARD

GTG has been recognised as 'Training Provider of the Year' at the recent Talent in Logistics Awards 2019 for their outstanding achievements in the delivery of vocational education and training services.

At the awards ceremony in July, GTG were recognised for their outstanding achievements in the delivery of vocational education and training.



MEMBER NEWS

MOLINEUX GETS A CREATIVE LOOK FOR THE NEW SEASON

Wolves and DIS Group have entered into an exciting partnership, with the digital print, sign and graphics specialist giving Molineux a vibrant new look.

The Wolverhampton-based company, which already works with global brands such as Christian Dior, Rolls-Royce and Virgin Active, have used design, graphics and state-of-the-art print solutions to deliver a stunning new runway for the Molineux tunnel, stadium signage and retail graphics for the Megastore and Ticket Office. The team of experts have also installed a number of 'wallscapes' and bespoke player interview walls, featuring the club's new shirt sponsor ManBetX.



MEMBER NEWS

JJX DRIVER TAKES LOGISTICS LGV DRIVER OF THE YEAR TITLE

Alex Hudson, a JJX LGV driver, has been named Talent in Logistics LGV Driver of the Year 2019.

A driver with Brierley Hill based JJX Logistics for 9 years, Alex took part in numerous checks and examinations, and competed against strong competition from much larger transport firms across the UK, undergoing driver assessment tasks on the roads to prove his level of skill.



MEMBER NEWS

PROSPERITY WEALTH CELEBRATES

Prosperity Wealth Limited celebrated awards success recently winning the Outstanding Customer Care title at the Retirement Planner Awards 2019.

Despite being up against strong competition from firms across the UK, including global names such as Zurich Insurance Group, Prosperity came out on top and collected the much-coveted Industry Award. The Retirement Planner Awards are held annually and celebrate those providers who are at the forefront of dynamic and fresh ways to offer retirement planning and pensions advice.



MEMBER NEWS

SUCCESSFUL YEAR ENABLES MOVING COMPANY TO GROW OWN TALENT

As the removals and transport industry contends with the increasing shortage of HGV drivers, West Midlands based Burke Bros Moving Group have created their own solution to the skills shortage; to grow their own talent.

The company achieved a successful year during the last financial year but were finding themselves hindered by the shortage of qualified drivers. As a result they have invested in developing their existing removal crews by upskilling those in non-driver roles to train for and acquire driving licences, HGV licences and, in some cases, to upgrade from class two to class one licences for those that want to develop their skills with the company.

The Freight Transport Association (FTA) believes the sector is short of 43,000–45,000 drivers and the Road Haulage Association (RHA) has suggested it is closer to 60,000.

The driver shortage is believed to be increasing as the number of drivers retiring from the industry exceeds new entrants.



STRATEGIC NEWS

NEW LOOK FOR STOURBRIDGE SHUTTLE

Stourbridge's award-winning Ultra-Light Rail Shuttle has been given a facelift, as it celebrates one of its most reliable periods during the ten years of operation on the line and as part of the rebranding operation into West Midlands Railway livery.

The Shuttle, operated by Pre-Metro Operations, has received a bespoke version of the orange/purple design. The company also worked with West Midlands Railway and Sam Jessup Design to provide some new interior panels, which celebrate Stourbridge.

The Stourbridge Shuttle operation, between the town's junction and railway stations, has hit new heights with its reliability figures. Already one of the UK's most reliable public transport operations, the service recorded 100% reliability in three consecutive reporting periods between March-May 2019. The Shuttle recorded 16,286 journeys, all on time, with no cancellation of service.



STRATEGIC NEWS

OPENING DOORS FOR SCHOOLS, STUDENTS AND BUSINESS

Led by the RSA Academies and the Black Country LEP, a new programme called Opening Doors in the Black Country has launched.

The programme provides employers with an opportunity to give an insight to local schools about their business and giving young people a real view of what happens within a sector and what careers are available. Opening Doors supports the work of the Black Country Careers Hub and is looking to sign-up more businesses to support the project.



PATRON NEWS

MIDCOUNTRIES CO-OP SUPPORTING COMMUNITY CLEAN-UPS

The Midcounties Co-op coordinated 20 community clean-ups as part of its contribution to World Environment Day with the endorsement of the environmental charity, Keep Britain Tidy.

The clean-ups took place across the Black Country and the Society's other trading areas including Oxfordshire, the West Midlands, Buckinghamshire, Gloucestershire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire. Armed with high visibility jackets and litter pickers more than 460 people took part including Midcounties colleagues and members, schools and charities.

The clean-ups formed part of Midcounties 1Change Campaign which encourages people to make one eco-friendly pledge that will make a long-lasting impact, for example giving up plastic bottles or plastic bags.



PATRON NEWS

PLANS IN PLACE TO INVEST MORE INTO CLOUD SERVICES

Launching The Business Hive in 2016, a suite of cloud services and solutions for businesses offering an initial investment with Hosted Desktop, Email Exchange and Offsite Back-Up, CSCM IT Services, are now reporting an increased number of new and existing customers expressing interest in moving over to the cloud.

In the last three years demand for cloud solutions has continued to grow with business owners recognising that technology is crucial. CSCM have invested heavily into growing The Business Hive and will continue to do so as they move onto the next phase throughout 2019 and into 2020 with the CSCM Technical Team using their specific market knowledge to adopt relevant technology to suit the demands of clients.

CHAMBER NEWS



FREE MONTHLY NETWORKING EVENT

Third Week Wednesday is a free networking event for individuals, business owners and anybody looking to do business in the Black Country taking place on the third Wednesday of each month at Casino 36 in Wolverhampton.

Open to businesses of all sizes and sectors, Third Week Wednesday runs from 10am to 12pm with attendees having the opportunity to make new connections, raise their profile, and meet potential clients and suppliers.

The event also coincides with #BlkCountryHour, the weekly twitter networking session and gives Third Week Wednesday attendees the added opportunity to reach more businesses. For more information please email richardbrooks@blackcountrychamber.co.uk or visit blackcountrychamber.co.uk to book your place at the next event.

SUBMISSIONS

If you would like to submit your business news for consideration, please contact:

PROSPER@BLACKCOUNTRYCHAMBER.CO.UK





OTHER NEWS

OBE FOR TECH EXPERT

Leading regional authority and influencer, Dr Pam Waddell, has been recognised with an OBE for her contribution to innovation and supporting economic growth including the support she has given to the Innovation Alliance WM Steering Group.

Chief Executive of the Black Country Consortium, Sarah Middleton and current Chair of the Group said “Pam has made a huge impact across the West Midlands and has brought many organisations together which has brought technological advances and improved prosperity to the region.”

OTHER NEWS

ANJU’S RESTAURANT CELEBRATES FIVE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

One of Wolverhampton’s top-rated Indian restaurants celebrated its fifth anniversary recently.

Anju’s Restaurant at the Ramada Resort Park Hall Hotel first opened its doors in 2014, quickly becoming known for its authentic Punjabi dishes.

More than 100 guests attended the party and enjoyed an exclusive preview of Anju’s new Mumbai inspired menu.



THE PLATINUM GROUP NEWS

UTILITY MANAGEMENT SPECIALISTS TO EXPAND

Control Energy Costs (CEC), one of the UK’s leading specialists helping businesses to save money on water and energy costs by advising on consumption and energy strategies is setting up a new Yorkshire operation.

Through their work with hundreds of manufacturers across the country every year, CEC’s team of analysts work with local companies to address some of the crippling energy costs that are plaguing industrial growth. It is an approach that is working, with more than 30 Yorkshire companies already signed up, receiving potential savings of over £500,000 to date.

The firm believes there is now a significant opportunity to support businesses coming out of 24-36 month contracts that are likely to face up to 50% cost increases due to the rising price of energy. CEC also offers them access to a purchasing collective that allows manufacturers - usually too small to take part - the opportunity to benefit from flexible purchasing and energy management.

“This investment in creating a dedicated team and hot-desking space is our way of proving our commitment to the region,” explained Liam Conway, Head of CEC. “Industry is our big focus and we have enjoyed a lot of success in the West Midlands and the South East, helping firms reduce their energy costs through careful planning, negotiating the best possible deals and smart energy management.”



OTHER NEWS

YOUNG CHAMBER WELCOMES...

The Khalsa Academy, the inclusive Sikh ethos school in Wolverhampton, has joined the Black Country Young Chamber thanks to sponsorship supplied by the city’s Grand Theatre.

The academy, which takes the holistic approach of developing the whole child and welcomes learners from all backgrounds, provides teaching on the Principles of Sikhi; beyond the individual, academic achievement and selflessness, and works under the guidance of its Principal, Anita Notta.

Vicky Price, Associate Director of Development and Communications, “The Grand have been working with Khalsa Academy over the last twelve months as part of the TNP project with the National Theatre.

“We hope this relationship will continue for many years to come and I am delighted that the theatre can sponsor the Academy to become a Young Chamber member.”

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ANDY STREET

The Man – The Mayor

PROSPER CATCHES UP WITH THE MAYOR OF THE WEST MIDLANDS, ANDY STREET TO DISCUSS BREXIT, REGIONAL GROWTH AND HIS FIRST TWO YEARS IN OFFICE

Andy Street is in upbeat mood. Prosper spoke to him after his two years in the role of elected Mayor of the West Midlands, and just as the region passed an economic milestone.

“We’ve performed well over the last 3-4 years,” Andy said. “If you look at data for the last period it’s all very positive. We saw growth of 3.6%, with 38,000 jobs created in the last year.

“But crucially, if you look at the latest three-year period for which we have the data, (2014 to 2017), the West Midlands economy actually grew faster than any other region in the country - including London. That’s very significant; because, since the upturn started in 2010, London has always enjoyed the strongest performance, the West Midlands have always been second. Now we’re in number one position, which is a first!”

Andy heads up the West Midlands Combined Authority, bringing together the councils of Wolverhampton, Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall, Birmingham, Coventry and Solihull as a metro-style mayor, providing a figurehead for the region as Sadiq Khan does in London, and Andy Burnham does in Manchester.

That regional overview means that he understands the challenges facing the Black Country – but he says that even at the sub-regional level, economic signs are positive here, too.

“The Black Country has performed really well,” Andy told Prosper. “In the latest job numbers, the Black Country had the best results of the three areas of the West Midlands, and in terms of growth performance; the Black Country LEP has moved up into the top ten in the country, which is very encouraging.

“The biggest challenge we face in the Black Country has been the poor qualification levels of the workforce. There are some brilliantly skilled people here, but we’ve also had the highest proportion of people with no skills anywhere in the country – with far too many people leaving school with no qualifications.

“This has the potential of holding the area back, so one of the most encouraging things of all is the way the Black Country has made the most rapid progress in terms of reducing the proportion of people with no qualifications. There are great strides being made here in terms of the skills gap.”

In 2007, 20% of young people in the West Midlands left school with no qualifications, a figure that has been brought down to 11%. This has been achieved through lots of hard work including retraining in areas like digital and construction, and a growth in modern apprenticeships – particularly in the Black Country.

“We’re seeing apprenticeships at all levels now, including degree-level apprentices, and Black Country firms are leading the way,” Andy said. “That’s being helped by a unique feature in the West Midlands - the Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Scheme, which allows us to spend the unused apprenticeship levy paid by big firms more sensibly.

“This means that if you are a big company that is paying the levy but not using all of the money, rather than being left in a pot in London that money comes back to us, and we then use it to help smaller firms take on apprentices.

“The unspent levy from just two firms – HSBC and Lloyds – is paying for 800 apprentices at smaller firms. So, my plea to Prosper readers is if you’re a big apprenticeship levy-paying company and you’re not using all of it - then get in touch, because we can put it to good use!”

It is this level of business detail which appealed to voters when Andy was elected. Many politicians claim business credentials, but few can claim the commercial background that prepared Andy, who was a highly successful and respected business and civic leader before he turned to politics and his pursuit of the role as West Midlands Mayor. In thirty years working for John Lewis he rose from trainee to Managing Director, turning the retailer into one of the nation’s best-loved brands and overseeing huge growth.

As a leader and proud West Midlander, this commercial grounding explains his business-like approach, encouraging the region’s different communities into working as a team, putting aside old





local rivalries and party loyalties. He makes plans, he sets goals and enthuses those around him to join the regional renaissance that devolution has kickstarted and build on wins such as securing the City of Culture and Commonwealth games for the region.

But it also makes him a realist, and he sees two urgent clouds on the horizon for the West Midlands.

“Firstly, there is the uncertainty over HS2,” he said.

“There is no question that the property sector of the West Midlands has performed really well, helped hugely by the prospect of HS2. If it does not go ahead, that would be a big risk to the property sector.

“Secondly, of course, there is the uncertainty over Brexit. It is a fact that business investment in the West Midlands has been held off while people await the outcome of Brexit. Now, I’m unequivocal that we must go ahead with Brexit – the electorate voted for it, particularly in the Black Country.

“But I am also clear that a ‘no deal’ would be damaging because of our dependence on manufacturing and exports. We are the export capital of the UK, 25% of our GDP comes from export of goods. In London it’s just 8%.

“So, we need to get Brexit done, and honour the result of the referendum – however, the focus has to be on trying to get a deal. Let’s also be clear: while there were issues with some parts of Theresa May’s deal, it did address the West Midlands’ needs in terms of export and supply chains.

“So I would hope that, regardless of what happens with the Irish backstop and other areas of concern, the new Government will take the parts of the deal that really matter to us and continue to secure what was agreed, to enable us to export to Europe in the same easy way. It is so important to our businesses, more important here than anywhere else in the UK.”

If there is one sector that is key to the region’s economy, it’s automotive, providing tens of thousands of jobs and



WE’RE SEEING APPRENTICESHIPS AT ALL LEVELS NOW, INCLUDING DEGREE-LEVEL APPRENTICES AND THE BLACK COUNTRY IS LEADING THE WAY

even more across an ecosystem of supply chains and support businesses.

“We have a recognised automotive cluster here, with the highest concentration of jobs in any region,” Andy said. “An incredible 50% of all of the UK’s automotive R&D is done within 25 miles of Birmingham. But it’s a sector facing huge change as we head towards electrification.

“The announcement last month of major investment by JLR in electric vehicle production at their Castle Bromwich site was great news,” Andy said, “but it’s also about the electric drive units being made in Wolverhampton, and the batteries being assembled in Hams Hall.

“So, the next big thing we’ve got to do is achieve battery manufacturing here too. I want to see a Gigafactory built in the West Midlands, mass producing the batteries for the new era. This is the outcome I’ll be battling for.

“If we can ensure that the infrastructure of the UK’s electric vehicle revolution is located here, then we’ll be able to reclaim that title of ‘Motor City’ and all the growth and innovation that comes with it.”

Improving transport infrastructure has been a central pillar of Andy’s work as Mayor, whether it’s winning the £250million needed to extend the Metro across the Black Country, or millions to reopen railway stations that last welcomed passengers in the mid Sixties.

“Transport infrastructure is really important,” Andy said, “So that skilled people can travel to areas where jobs are being created, and so that businesses can be encouraged to open up in areas they previously couldn’t access.

“If a community is isolated by bad transport connections, it prevents social mobility and blocks people from opportunity. By winning huge investment in the Metro, the trains and the roads we are getting the region moving again.”

Andy also told Prosper that the Black Country is leading the way in the reclamation of derelict land – so-called ‘brownfield sites’ – for housing and commercial use.

“The thing I am most pleased with is we are making more progress than any other region in accelerating the number of houses being built,” he said. “So, last year we built 14,500 homes, up by 20% on the previous year, when the national average was 1%.

“The way this is happening is through the WMCA using a relatively small amount of Government money for cleaning up brownfield sites, that then become commercially viable for developers.

“Good examples would be Goscote Lane in Walsall, or Cable Street and Dixon Street in Wolverhampton and the old Friars Park site in Sandwell. But the mega one is the Phoenix 10 site, which was an icon of stagnation adjacent to the motorway, which has been cleaned up and will now come back into commercial use.

“This idea of reclaiming brownfield sites is an opportunity for the Black Country to make better use of areas that in the past have been an eyesore, while at the same time protecting our green belt. It’s also about kickstarting the construction industry in the Black Country which has always been such an important part of our economy.”

So, after two years as the region’s first elected mayor, does he feel the role has been accepted by the people of the West Midlands?

“Well, two years ago the role seemed like an experiment,” he said, “Nobody knew whether it would work or not. I hope people would say that we are beginning to make real progress.

“Despite being a very diverse region, we’re playing as a team, working together and the mayor’s job has been to be the glue that binds all that together.

“It’s still a new thing – we have had an elected mayor for two years, while London has had one for 20 – but I hope people are beginning to understand how the role can be a catalyst for change, particularly in the business community.

“But it’s not just about investment and infrastructure, it’s about leadership. As the representative of the region, I think you should have a view on every important issue and be willing to express it.

“So, for example, take the attacks on the mosques in Birmingham or the issues with the LGBT schools protests. Even though these things aren’t necessarily the regional mayor’s responsibility, you are frequently asked your view on them. I think that’s right.

“It’s also clear that West Midlands people don’t just want the mayor to be a mouthpiece of a political party, they expect your first loyalty to be the region, and that is exactly how I’ve tried to act.

“If that means challenging your own party, as I did recently on the impact of housing benefits on homelessness in the West Midlands, then so be it. That’s what my job is.”



Andy now faces re-election in May next year and is determined to carry on the work he has started.

“We’re making real progress but, after 40 years of relative decline in the region, I have this sense of enormous distance still to go,” he says.

“So, in May I shall be saying ‘stick with us, the plan is working’. We can see the evidence of that, but we need at least another four years to continue building on everything that we’ve begun.”

Finally, given his lengthy business background, what advice can Andy offer Prosper readers as they navigate the uncertainty of Brexit?

“My lesson from John Lewis is that actually it’s in times of uncertainty that the best businesses can make the most decisive investments,” he said.

“There will be good value opportunities at the moment in business and, if you are prepared to take a risk, the likelihood is that you could get ahead of the market.

“At John Lewis, we did that with the move to online - we started our huge digital investment in the teeth of the 2008 crash, after we sat down and said ‘there must be a new opportunity to be had here, however difficult the market is’.

“So, my nudge to businesses would be in these uncertain times, identify the new areas and opportunities in the market, get behind them and exploit the moment.

“After all, it’s that spirit of innovation and invention that made the Black Country, and the West Midlands, what we are today.”

i WEST MIDLANDS COMBINED AUTHORITY
WWW.WMCA.ORG.UK/WHO-ARE-WE/MEET THE MAYOR



BUSINESS VOICES

THOUGHTS, COMMENTS AND VIEWS FROM THE REGION'S EXPERTS AND INFLUENCERS...



JOHNATHAN DUDLEY

MIDLANDS MANAGING PARTNER FROM ACCOUNTANCY FIRM CROWE

URGES MIDLANDS MANUFACTURERS TO ACT ON DEMAND FOR UK EXPORTS ACROSS THE WORLD

Recent data released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), show that the demand for UK goods and services is growing across the globe with national audit, tax, advisory and risk firm, Crowe, identifying this as an opportunity for manufacturers to take their ideas and products out to global markets.

The ONS figures reveal that UK exports continued to increase and was up by 2.7% to £634.1 billion in 2018 and exports to non-EU trading partners in 2018 hit a new record high of £345.1 billion.

UK exports to India are increasing at the fastest rate among the UK's top non-EU trading partners, with exports up by 19.3%. This was followed by Japan (7.9%), China (4.6%) and Canada (4.2%). While the UK's trade with the rest of the world has been increasing, the share of UK exports to the EU over the past ten years has declined by nearly 5% to 45.6%.

Johnathan tells Prosper, "Businesses should make the most of this positive news for UK exports and outlines the tax incentives available to many businesses. There are huge incentives in the UK to innovate, particularly through the Patent Box tax relief regime, but too many manufacturers are put off by its complexity."

The Patent Box regime was introduced in the UK in 2013 to promote innovation and research and development. The scheme provides a tax incentive to businesses to make profits from their patents by reducing the tax on those profits. Johnathan says: "By electing in to the Patent Box, an innovative company can achieve a significant long-term reduction in its corporation tax bill."

Johnathan added that the recent Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) copyright win is another rallying call to UK manufacturers. "Many business owners and directors have, until now, viewed JLR's court case with apprehension. They have taken the view that applying for a worldwide patent and seeking to embed the maximum protection for their products and processes is costly to set up and to enforce, and JLR's battle in China has not helped ease this assumption.

"However, a worldwide patent should be a mark of quality in the goods and services that UK businesses provide. The conclusion of this case reaffirms the fact that UK products and services are in demand and well respected across the world, and now is a prime time for UK manufacturers to consider entering global markets."



EMPLOYMENT LAWYER, SIMON BOND

A PARTNER AT HIGGS & SONS & BLACK COUNTRY CHAMBER BOARD MEMBER

TELLS PROSPER BUSINESSES ARE NOT READY FOR CONTRACTOR TAX UPHEAVAL

Employers are largely unprepared for changes to off-payroll working in the private sector, which are due to come into effect in April 2020. That is according to new research from recruitment trade body, the Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo).

The new rules mean that changes to IR35 legislation, which were introduced in the public sector in April 2017, will be extended to medium and large private sector companies. From next year, businesses engaging independent workers will become responsible for setting the tax status of these individuals. As part of this reform, the tax liability will also transfer from the contractor to the fee-paying party in the supply chain, which is typically the recruiter or the company that directly engages the individual.

A survey of the trade association's membership revealed that fewer than half (39%) of the professional recruitment firms polled believe that most of the businesses they work with are aware of the incoming changes. In addition, just 12% said the majority of their clients are actively preparing for the updated legislation.

Simon said, "Many private sector employers have voiced serious misgivings about IR35 and the apparent haste with which it is being applied to the private sector. Those sectors and industries that have traditionally relied on off-payroll workers face significant challenges in implementing IR35. For example, the IT and technology sectors rely heavily on the use of contractors and face the huge task of assessing large numbers of workers in order to become IR35 compliant.

"Assessing workers' status is far from straight forward given the increasingly complex nature of working relationships. HMRC has produced an online "status checker" known as CEST (Check Employment Status for Tax); however, CEST has been criticised for, perhaps unsurprisingly, advising too readily that IR35 applies. To add to the confusion faced by businesses, the tests used by Courts and Tribunals to assess employment status are not the same as those used by CEST, meaning that different conclusions can be reached on status for the same working relationship.

"It seems that IR35 may well have unintended consequences for those contractor-heavy businesses – for example it has been reported that 85% of tech firms say that IR35 will affect the number of contractors they hire. The tension between, on the one hand, IR35 compliance and the practical difficulties of changing a worker's status, on the other, means that the introduction of IR35 to the private sector threatens to bring with its increased cost, talent drain and possible legal action."

WOLVERHAMPTON RACECOURSE PROVIDES A WEALTH OF EVENT AND SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

DISCOVER WHY WE'RE SO MUCH MORE THAN JUST A RACECOURSE...

Wolverhampton Racecourse is owned by Arena Racing Company, making it part of the biggest racecourse group in the UK.

Set within 22 acres of beautiful parkland, Wolverhampton Racecourse provides a fantastic vantage point and environment for cheering on thoroughbred flat horses.

Welcoming over 120,000 visitors every year and will host over 80 fixtures in 2019, so is one of Britain's busiest racecourses. The venue is extremely popular for individuals of all ages with a well renowned reputation for All-Weather racing and highly anticipated events, including live music performances, feature days and after-racing entertainment.

Racing began in Wolverhampton in 1825 and moved to the current racecourse site in 1888, the first race meeting being held on 13 August that year. In 1994, HRH Queen Elizabeth II re-opened the new Racecourse. A major investment in 2014 saw the installation the high-performance Tapeta track, that was pioneering the industry and had not yet been

used by any other racecourse in Great Britain. After hosting UB40, The Human League, Ocean Colour Scene and the Kaiser Chiefs in recent years the racecourse has played host to both the legendary Madness and Brit award nominee Jess Glynne in 2019.

IN ADDITION TO RACING, WOLVERHAMPTON RACECOURSE OFFERS A NUMBER OF EXCELLENT FACILITIES WHICH ARE IDEAL FOR CONDUCTING YOUR BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS.

The racecourse boasts an enviable reputation as one of the leading event venues within the West Midlands area, popular for weddings, conferences, exhibitions, Christmas parties and outdoor events.

The racecourse is able to cater for a wide range of specifications, whilst ensuring your needs are fulfilled with great precision within

professional and relaxed surroundings.

When looking for sponsorship opportunities, horse racing is a fantastic arena to focus on. Being the second most attended sport in Britain, all of our races feature on Sky Sports Racing, with one third of the UK population watching racing on TV and 4.2 million people describing themselves as horse racing followers, it really is an ideal platform to promote your brand.

Having spent over 1 million pounds in 2016, the on-site Holiday Inn Hotel is well-placed to provide a peaceful night's sleep once you have enjoyed your evening of hospitality at the racecourse or busy day in conference.

More than just a racecourse, the venue, with its range of suites, indoor space and vast outdoor areas, really is a venue for all occasions.

i **FIXTURE LIST**
WOLVERHAMPTON-RACECOURSE.CO.UK



SECTOR FOCUS

INDUSTRY SPECIFIC NEWS AND INSIGHTS
FROM THE BLACK COUNTRY & BEYOND

INDUSTRIAL GROUP SIGNS NEW ENERGY DEAL TO SUPPORT FORTHCOMING EXPANSION PLANS

RUBERY OWEN TEAM UP WITH CEC DIRECT AND SAVE ON ENERGY COSTS

Rubery Owen, which was established over 130 years ago in Darlaston, has announced investment in a new facility at its Land Rover and Hyundai dealerships in Aberystwyth and a testing laboratory for its material testing division in Brierley Hill. The latter will specialise in bespoke materials testing across a variety of industry sectors.

This growth is throwing up a number of new energy management challenges and that is why the firm decided to tap into the expertise of Control Energy Costs after an introduction by the Black Country Chamber of Commerce.

CEC worked with the senior management team to provide a complete review of its current and future usage, exploring the possibility of bulk buying as a group whilst also identifying solutions to bespoke issues at individual companies.

It is a decision that is already paying off, with over £16,000 of annual costs already saved, with the potential of more to come as new energy management techniques are introduced.

“Our seven businesses are all growing and with that expansion comes an increase in the amount of energy we use,” explained Kevin McGuigan, Group Finance Director at Rubery Owen.

“Traditionally, we were purchasing it separately for each division, but quickly realised that this wasn’t the best approach and that we should really be looking to buy as a group. In order to do this, we wanted to work with a partner we could trust and that’s where Control Energy Costs came to the fore.”

He continued: “Our existing broker looked a more cost-effective option to begin with. However, it soon became clear that after a comprehensive review and complete transparency on the deals we could see that CEC could save us £16,000 immediately.”

Rubery Owen, which records annual sales of £55m and employs 187 people, operates seven companies, including Merlin Power Characterisation, Phoenix Materials Testing, Rotech Laboratories, Rozone, Rubery Owen Holdings, Shukers and Techtron.

With energy costs rising, CEC was introduced to the company by the Chamber and immediately set about collating all of the disparate supplier information and creating a complete overview of the portfolio.

Liam Conway, Head of CEC Direct, continued: “Our success with manufacturers comes from our ability to get under their skin and understand current and future



energy requirements. We can then use our expert brokers to come up with the best possible deal, with transparency being key to all discussions.

“Rubery Owen was a prime example. At first, it appeared a different broker was a better option, but when we completed a forensic check the company could actually save £16,000 in its first year.

“Going forward, we will be using its knowledge to help us gain the best rate for the new testing facility in the Black Country, which will include testing at high-pressure, high-temperature and in gaseous environments.”

Control Energy Costs work with more than 900 retained clients across the UK, with its team of analysts providing an initial, no-obligation audit and then working with the customer to identify existing issues and opportunities to reduce bills, whilst advising on improving future procurement strategies.

EVENT DIARY:

DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE

27 SEPTEMBER 2019: ROADSHOW

BEIS Roadshow:
National Brexit Campaign
Wolverhampton

01 OCTOBER 2019: MASTERCLASS

The Export Sales Guide to Minimising
Risk & Maximising Profits
(AM & PM Sessions available)
Technology Centre Wolverhampton

03 OCTOBER 2019: MEET THE BUYER

Rail | RVE
The Derby Arena

04 OCTOBER 2019: MEET THE BUYER

National Food & Drink
The Belfry

08 OCTOBER 2019: MEET THE EXPERT

UK ABC
Birmingham City University

09 OCTOBER 2019: WORKSHOP

Ready to Trade workshop
Stoke on Trent | The Moat House

09 OCTOBER 2019: WORKSHOP

Birmingham Tech Week
Fazeley Studio

11 OCTOBER 2019: WORKSHOP

Ready to Trade workshop
Wolverhampton Business Solutions Centre

18 OCTOBER 2019: WORKSHOP

Ready to Trade workshop | Marches
Shrewsbury Town Football Club

22 OCTOBER 2019: WORKSHOP

Ready to Trade workshop
Chateau Impney | Worcestershire

22 OCTOBER 2019: WORKSHOP

Construction | ConExpo Mission
Austin Court

05 NOVEMBER 2019: L&C MASTERCLASS

Business Culture East Africa
The Studio | Birmingham

05 NOVEMBER 2019: L&C MASTERCLASS

Business Culture USA
The Studio | Birmingham



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY FOR BLACK COUNTRY BUSINESSES

LOCAL FIRMS BENEFIT FROM INTERNATIONAL TRADE
ADVICE AND MEET THE BUYER EVENTS

Tapping into the expertise of your local International Trade Team can mean the difference between success and failure for manufacturing companies looking at international trading and export opportunities.

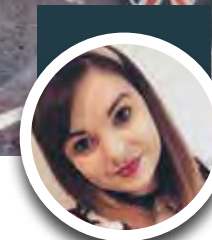
Hosting trade missions across the globe is all in a day's work for a DIT representative and linking suppliers, buyers and commercial teams together is imperative when seeking out new markets in foreign lands.

Manufacturer of temporary LED lighting systems Linklite Systems Ltd met recently with DIT Commercial Officers from Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Russia at a Meet the Expert and Meet the Buyer event in June.

Tatyana Poturaeva, DIT Commercial Officer from Moscow introduced Linklite's, Gary Simmons to a potential buyer in the mining industry after hearing about the flexibility and benefits of their temporary LED Systems

Gary said "My local ITA Heather Crocker, based at Black Country Chamber, advised me to attend this event; not only was I able to meet with DIT experts and talk to them about market opportunities, but on seeing my product Tatyana took me to meet with a buyer from a mining company who have subsequently expressed an interest in our product range".

i HEATHER CROCKER | HEATHER.CROCKER@MOBILE.TRADE.GOV.UK



BREXIT AND OUR AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

BETHAN TOLLEY FROM THE CENTRE FOR BREXIT STUDIES AT BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERSITY REPORTS FOR PROSPER

The automotive industry in the UK is one of the biggest industries facing the most uncertainty when it comes to Brexit.

With PM Boris Johnson stating that he wants to negotiate a new deal with the EU, whilst also preparing for a No Deal scenario, the uncertainty surrounding the sector isn't becoming any clearer.

However, there are many aspects that we can be much more certain of right at this moment in time. Ian Henry, visiting Professor in Automotive Business Strategy at the Centre for Brexit Studies shared his latest research and statistics, stating that if the UK and EU reach a deal of some form, there will be a transition period through to the end of 2020, if not longer, ahead of a new free trade agreement coming into effect. He said: "In such circumstances, the operating environment for the industry should continue much as now, albeit with some, as yet unknown, changes to customs procedures and administration.

"However, if no agreement is reached, or looks like not being reached, one of two things is likely; either the UK Parliament will find a means to block no deal, leading to a general election, a new referendum or indeed revocation of article 50; or the UK will leave without a formal withdrawal agreement (the no deal scenario would come to pass)."

In this case, we can be sure that the EU will impose tariffs on UK exports of cars and

components, respectively at 10% and around 4% (components will face tariffs of 2.5-5%).

Ian said: "Based on an average of 2017-18 production volumes and sales destinations for UK made vehicles, I have calculated likely tariffs on UK exports to the EU of around £2.5-2.8bn per year on cars and as much as a further £800m on engines and parts exported by UK vehicle companies, although this could be reduced if the car companies re-allocated engine production away from the UK.

"UK car manufacturers may also be subject to import duty on parts brought in from the EU; based on 2017-18 sourcing patterns, I have calculated import duty on imported parts would be around £700m per year. If the UK government exempts EU component imports from tariffs, they would have to do the same for imports from other markets too, saving around £220m of current annual tariffs."

These figures will, of course, vary with car production volumes; and if they fall as prices rise, then the amount paid in duty would, in turn, fall. A vicious circle, or downward spiral, will soon come into play. There are many uncertainties facing the UK's automotive industry right now; but of one thing we may be sure, a no deal Brexit will result in significant additional costs for the industry.



'LIGHT-WEIGHTING' SPECIALISM DELIVERS £3M CONTRACT BOOST

Alucast, one of the UK's largest independent aluminium foundries, has secured more than £3m of new contracts from car makers keen to explore ways of reducing weight on future models.

Backed by support from Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Black Country LEP and the Black Country Growth Deal, it has opened additional facilities adjacent to its Wednesbury headquarters to cope with the expansion, giving the company an additional 7000 sq ft of dedicated machining space to work with.

"The automotive industry continues to move to lighter vehicles as the car makers look at ways where they can meet emission targets and improve fuel performance," said Tony Sartorius, Chairman of Alucast. "We have been working on this approach for some time, supporting some of the world's most prestigious OEMs to design and cast lighter components to what they've been using previously."

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

THE BLACK COUNTRY HAS A HISTORY OF PROFESSIONALS AND BUSINESSES GIVING THEIR SUPPORT TO HELP OUR COMMUNITIES, CHARITIES AND NOT-FOR-PROFIT INITIATIVES.



FUNDRAISERS BRAVE AMAZON RAINFOREST FOR AIR AMBULANCE

Eleven adventurous fundraisers embarked on a challenge of a lifetime in one of the world's toughest environments, the Amazon rainforest. To date they've raised £64,000 between them, and this total continues to rise.

The intrepid 11 included a number of supportive corporate partners; Andrew Higgs from TH Baker, Emily Glew from Paycare and Sally Glarvey and Tamar Hughes from Phoenix Group. Individual supporters Sarah Elder and Andrew Goode, MAAC volunteer Adam Lote, and the charity's aircrew and staff, Karen Baker, Richard Apps, Ryan James and Adam Williams, completed the team.

They spent five gruelling days kayaking the Amazon River, learning to catch their own food, making camp and even met and had dinner with a local tribe, all in aid of Midlands Air Ambulance Charity.

Emma Gray, fundraising and marketing director for Midlands Air Ambulance Charity, added: "This fantastic total raised is testament to the hard work and efforts of all our brave fundraisers. A big thank you goes to our corporate partners, staff, volunteers and critical care paramedics who took on this once in a lifetime challenge for our charity."

MFG SOLICITORS HONOURED FOR SECURING VITAL FUNDS FOR CANCER RESEARCH UK



Law firm mfg Solicitors has been recognised by Cancer Research UK after facilitating more than £281,000 worth of gifts over the past 22 years from people choosing to leave a legacy to the charity in their will.

The charity receives no government funding for its research and relies heavily on the generosity of people leaving gifts in their wills. Over a third of its research into the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer is funded through supporters leaving a legacy to the charity.

Cancer survival in the UK has doubled since the early 1970s and Cancer Research UK's work has been at the heart of that progress. Every step taken by its doctors, nurses and scientists relies on donations from the public and the kindness of supporters who choose to leave a gift in their will.

HIGGS & SONS ANNUAL FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT ATTRACTS OVER 380 PLAYERS AND TOPS FUNDRAISING GOAL



More than 380 players representing a host of West Midlands businesses took to the pitch recently for the annual Higgs & Sons charity football tournament.

The much-anticipated day was hailed a huge success and raised an incredible £12,000 for the organisations being supported through the Higgs Charitable Foundation including Higgs' charity of the year WINGS of Wombourne Special Needs Support Group.

The popular event saw 48 six-a-side teams battle it out for the title, with the team from Hexagon Commercial Property taking home the trophy after beating Butcher Woods in the final. Lambert Hampton Smith took the third place slot.

Higgs & Sons' Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme supports a range of projects throughout the region. As well as fundraising, Higgs colleagues also provide hands on support to organisations, committing time and resources in support of the work they do within the Black Country and wider West Midlands.

BLAKEMORE RECOGNISED WITH BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY AWARD

A.F. Blakemore & Son Ltd is celebrating after being crowned National Winners at the prestigious Responsible Business Awards 2019, run by Business in the Community.

The company's schools volunteering programme, Branching Out, was named the overall winner in the Education Partnerships category at the Awards.

A.F. Blakemore's Branching Out programme inspires young people into the world of work by improving their employability skills and supporting the recruitment and development of future talent.



Branching Out works with young people across a range of employability interventions including enterprise events, practice interviews, CV writing workshops, study tours and mentoring sessions.

Since the programme was established in January 2017, 693 employee volunteers have donated almost 4,000 hours engaging with 3,312 students across 63 primary and secondary schools.



THURSFIELDS OFFERS SUPPORT AFTER SURVEY REVEALS 72% OF SMALL CHARITIES LACK LEGACY FUNDRAISING SKILLS

Small charities should seek the support of experts to increase their incomes from legacy fundraising, according to Thursfields Solicitors.

The advice from the leading Midlands law firm comes after a new national survey highlighted major skills gaps at small charities.

The Foundation for Social Improvement's Skills Survey 2018-19 revealed that 72% of small charities do not feel suitably skilled in legacy fundraising.

Katherine Ellis, a senior associate solicitor in Thursfields' Birmingham office and one of the lead lawyers in the company's Charity Law team, previously specialised in legacy law for a large national charity in London.

Ms Ellis explained that Thursfields can assist with legacy administration and management services, in-house staff training for charities' legacy team employees or volunteers, and follow up support by phone, email or in person through regular legal consultations.

She said: "We can help smaller charities who feel they need some guidance and support with developing and increasing legacy fundraising within their organisation."

1



WAYS TO INCORPORATE SOCIAL VALUE INTO YOUR BUSINESS

DEMONSTRATING A COMMITMENT TO CSR IS NOW AN INTEGRAL PART OF BUSINESS LIFE, HOWEVER, SOME EMPLOYEES ARE TOO BUSY TO BRING ON-BOARD.

Changing behaviours, adapting processes and on-boarding employees can prove tricky, so a social value monitoring tool has developed ten top tips to create social value buy-in from all stakeholders.

Social value is often generated by businesses and organisations funding charitable projects, launching a foundation, organising volunteering projects and introducing sustainability initiatives. Impact Reporting, a CSR reporting tool which streamlines the way firms can capture and monitor pro social activity, believes there are ten steps to onboarding staff to help them appreciate the value of CSR.

01: LET EMPLOYEES CHOOSE CHARITIES

While having a 'charity of the year' is the norm in corporate circles, asking staff to nominate a chosen charity can help make this process more democratic. Allow staff to vote from a list and partner with the winning charity - this will help with engagement.

02: DEVELOP EMPLOYEE INITIATIVES

Organise lunchtime cycling, weekend volunteering and recycling projects for all to get involved. Open the floor to suggestions, allowing employees to make recommendations that are important to them. The most popular ideas are often the most successful.

03: BUILD SOCIAL VALUE INTO CLIENT CONTRACTS

Insist that partner organisations prioritise social value too. This is the norm in public sector contracts and is becoming more familiar across a wider range of sectors. It is a sure-fire way to help organisations stand out in business circles.

04: LEADING FROM THE TOP

The most successful CSR-focused businesses have CEOs and MDs who are active and committed to a social value mission statement. To show how dedicated a business is to the cause, encourage the CEO/MD to get involved so they become an example for all staff.

05: ADOPTING A FRAMEWORK

The time is now to be serious about CSR. Paying lip-service won't give businesses the desired results. Set real objectives with fixed timeframes, and work towards those.

06: ALIGN WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Benchmark achievements against 17 global goals set by the UN in 2015 to achieve a more sustainable future and address global challenges related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, and peace and justice. These will help drive growth, attract capital and focus on purpose and offers accountability and assessment.

07: GAMIFY THE CREATION OF SOCIAL VALUE

Inspire employees to do more and get competitive about it. For example, set up a leader board and offer prizes as incentives. Motivate employees by appealing to their competitive nature.

08: START WITH THE BASICS

Transforming a business's attitude to social value won't be an over-night process. It's OK to start small and scale up. Get rid of plastics, put recycling bins in place, ditch cars, use public transport or walk into work.

09: LISTEN TO STAKEHOLDERS

Align with the organisation's mission, vision or values. To truly embed social value into a business, it needs to harmonise. It's about working towards a culture whereby social impact is created naturally and fluidly.

10: WORK WITH PRO-SOCIAL COMPANIES

Be open to partnering with social enterprises, charities, or other 'good' companies at all stages of negotiating contracts. Learn from each other, offer solutions and network with likeminded people. Move forward, together.

EXPERIENCE HISTORY, SPARK CREATIVITY & STRENGTHEN LINKS

BLACK COUNTRY LIVING MUSEUM (BCLM) IS FORGING STRONGER LINKS WITH LOCAL AND REGIONAL BUSINESSES WITH THE RELAUNCH OF ITS BUSINESS PARTNER SCHEME DURING A TIME OF EXCITING GROWTH FOR THE MUSEUM.

Businesses can choose from three partner levels; coal, iron and brass, with all packages inspired by the Black Country's rich industrial and manufacturing heritage past.

All packages include admission tickets to the 26 acre open-air Museum, priority booking for its highly popular special events, venue hire, branding opportunities and more. Higher level packages include special event tickets, invitations to tours and the chance to attend VIP and networking events.

Businesses that sign up will have the opportunity to entertain clients, host exclusive events and even reward highly performing staff with a uniquely immersive experience.



BCLM has a history of working closely with local businesses of all sizes and is pleased to be welcoming back Higgs & Sons onto the refreshed scheme.

Paul Hunt, Managing Partner, Higgs & Sons says: "the partnership with BCLM is a perfect fit for the firm, which traces its Black Country roots back to 1875. Like BCLM we are extremely proud of our long-standing heritage in the region. We are delighted to be renewing our partnership for another

year. The last 12 months have seen Higgs make use of the Museum's excellent facilities and we are now keen to build on these foundations further."

i To find out more about the benefits of becoming a BCLM Business Partner email: development@bclm.com, call 0121 521 5608 or visit bclm.com/businesspartner



BLACK COUNTRY LIVING MUSEUM
bclm.com

Do Bostin' Business with BCLM

The Black Country was built on innovation, entrepreneurialism and creative spark. We offer a variety of ways for businesses to get involved including:

- **Business Partnerships** – benefits including day passes, special event tickets, venue hire and brand awareness
- **Sponsorship Opportunities** – sponsor one of our hugely popular sell-out events
- **Venue Hire** – an immersive location for conferences, corporate celebrations and private parties
- **Filming** – use our unique backdrop for corporate videos and photography
- **Corporate Volunteering** – a team-building opportunity like no other

To find out more contact development@bclm.com or call 0121 521 5608

A FAMILY-FIRST APPROACH TO BUSINESS AND CARE

ADOPTING A FAMILY-FIRST PHILOSOPHY IS A CHALLENGE FOR MOST BUSINESSES BUT ON A RECENT VISIT TO THEIR FLAGSHIP VETERINARY HOSPITAL IN DUDLEY, IT QUICKLY BECOMES APPARENT HOW BLACKS VETS EMBODIES THIS BOTH IN TERMS OF ITS APPROACH TO OPERATING AND HOW IT DELIVERS HEALTHCARE FOR EVEN OUR SMALLEST FAMILY MEMBERS.



The award-winning firm has received a range of accolades in recent years including Best Place to Work, Customer Commitment, Best UK Vet and Best Business with a Black Country Chamber of Commerce award for Workplace Wellbeing further recognising their dedication to being an exemplar in balancing care for their team alongside care for their patients.

Speaking with Penelope Fox, Group Practice Manager, we discovered more about Blacks Vets' approach and outlook to business and customer care in its branches across the region.

"Our family ethos not only embraces our clients, but our team too, and we have invested heavily in providing a nurturing and supportive working environment that allows everyone to reach their highest potential."

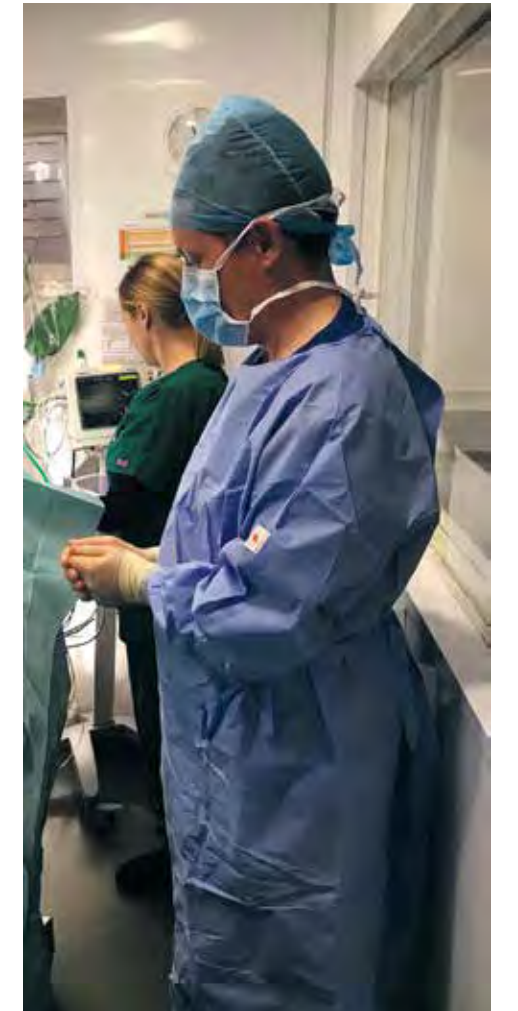
PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLNESS HELPS OUR TEAM TO DELIVER THE EXCELLENT STANDARDS OF CARE WE HAVE BECOME KNOWN FOR AND TO BE RECOGNISED AND AWARDED FOR OUR WORK IS TREMENDOUS.

Caring for the Black Country's pet community for over half a century, much has changed for Blacks Vets since it began in 1965 but a quality and compassionate service has remained central to its ethos.

The business is frequently viewed as a prime national example of what a modern and successful multi-branch veterinary practice should be with their veterinary hospital in Dudley being one of only three such venues accredited by the Royal College of Veterinary Services in the whole of the West Midlands.

Their range of services and equipment includes digital X Ray equipment, a dedicated dental X ray unit, ultrasound machine, MRI scanning, in-house laboratory for biochemistry and haematology blood testing, incubators for very ill patients and surgical equipment to allow a wide range of soft tissue and orthopaedic work.

Further complemented by 11 dedicated operating theatres, specialised facilities for Cardiology, Orthopaedic, Soft Tissue and Dentistry procedures, plus highly qualified staff providing additional expertise in Dermatology, Cardiology, Orthopaedic, Soft Tissue, Medicine and Surgery; Blacks Vets is a fast-paced care-driven environment with 15 Qualified Registered MRCVS



Vets, 31 Qualified Registered Veterinary Nurses and business support teams delivering a 24 hour, 365 day a year service.

Despite all of these investments in ensuring a modern and highly responsive care delivery system, its team remains one of the things Blacks Vets remains highly proud and protective of - boasting a high staff retention and investments in training and support services for its employees.

Penelope continues, "We are extremely proud of our award-winning culture and have been delighted to be recognised as an employer of choice in the veterinary industry. Our team are central to our continued growth - enabling us to offer our high standards of care to even more pets, helping realise our mission to make Black Country pets the healthiest in the UK."

Penelope added, "We always try our best to accommodate flexible working requests to help staff where we can. We know that when our team have a better work / life balance, they are happier and more able to deliver first-class care to our patients. Our high numbers of long-standing team members are a testament to our people focused culture."



HNC HIGHER APPRENTICESHIP LAUNCHED BY IN-COMM TRAINING AND THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON

Budding engineers can take a vocational route all the way to a Degree thanks to an exciting new partnership between In-Comm Training and the University of Wolverhampton.

HNC Higher Apprenticeships have been launched in the West Midlands this month and have already attracted 20 people who are looking for a more practical route to gaining the highest possible competences and qualifications.

The HNC element of the programme is an intensive year-long course, which can be funded by the Apprenticeship Levy and features 12 technical modules with the learning being delivered at In-Comm's state-of-the-art technical academy in Aldridge and the University's dedicated engineering campus.

The competence element of the programme runs alongside, with the learner producing a portfolio of evidence complementing the



knowledge undertaken in the HNC.

Participants on the course have the opportunity to focus their learning through elements, such as engineering and manufacture, design, research, business improvement techniques and new product development.

"This is a fantastic opportunity for young people and more mature workers to gain competences and technical skills that will provide an accelerated pathway to higher education and career progression," explained Bekki Phillips, Managing Director at In-Comm Training.

"For the first time, someone who has completed a Level 2 or Level 3 Engineering Apprenticeship can accelerate their

learning by completing the HNC Higher Apprenticeship that will then lead to their Degree Apprenticeship."

She continued: "This ultimately means that from starting an apprenticeship at 16 you could have the equivalent of a degree by the time you are 22 - better still you have six years of on-the-job training and experience and no tuition fees to pay.

"From a company point of view, you can access funding through the levy to upskill your people to the highest possible level or even give existing workers the opportunity to broaden their technical horizons."

For further information, please visit www.in-comm.co.uk or follow @incomm_training on twitter.

CHAMBER PATRON COLLABORATION COOKS UP CAREER BOOSTS FOR WALSALL COLLEGE STUDENTS

A BLACK COUNTRY CHAMBER PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN MEMBERS OF ITS PATRON GROUP IS FAST BECOMING A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS FOR STUDENTS AT WALSALL COLLEGE.



Wolverhampton Racecourse has provided work placements to two of the college's student professional chefs, with them now working in the kitchens for the Holiday Inn hotel and the Racecourse Horizon restaurant. Wolverhampton Racecourse Head Chef, Matt Pollard has also visited Walsall College to deliver a masterclass to a group of professional cookery students.

Paula Jones, Commercial Manager at Wolverhampton Racecourse said: "After seeing first-hand how these students are thriving in kitchen and restaurant settings, it was natural for the Racecourse to offer to support their further development.

"We're delighted to have these trainee chefs and culinary professionals working with our experienced team. Going forward, we hope to work with the College's students on both catering and front of house vacancies."

The work experience placements and the masterclass came about after representatives from Wolverhampton Racecourse toured Walsall College as part of 'The Chamber Patrons Behind the Scenes' meeting.

James Norris, Assistant Principal for Commercial Development at Walsall College said: "These networking meetings raise awareness of each Chamber Patron's business plans and priorities, sparking ideas for collaboration and best-practice sharing.

"It's great for us to be working so closely with a fellow Chamber Patron, as well as an organisation that appreciates the importance of nurturing the skills and ambitions of those aiming to represent the hospitality industry in future. In turn, we are supporting their recruitment needs and service operations."



Sandwell College celebrated a major win when it beat off strong competition from other regional institutions to be named as Further Education College of the Year 2019.

The annual awards celebrate the outstanding contributions of those making a difference to the education sector in the West Midlands with winners unveiled at a glittering awards ceremony.

Judges were impressed with how staff teaching at Sandwell College has impacted on students and their lives with the college going the extra mile to help students to become high achievers.

Each winner will have the opportunity to work with their category's industry sponsor on a project filmed and showcased at next year's awards. The awards partnered with the Pearson Teaching Awards with all winners entered into the televised ceremony, which gets aired on BBC's Classroom Heroes.

CEO CALLS FOR EMPLOYERS TO JOIN TOGETHER TO BETTER WORKPLACE WELLBEING

A HEALTHCARE ORGANISATION IS ENCOURAGING MORE BUSINESSES ACROSS THE REGION TO STEP UP TO THE CHALLENGE OF PREVENTING COSTLY ABSENTEEISM AND PRESENTEEISM WITHIN THEIR WORKPLACES.

Following the publication of its Retain, Reward, Recognise white paper which incorporates data from internal and external sources, Paycare's CEO Kevin Rogers is anticipating a shift in awareness of employee health and wellbeing across 2019 — from a previous focus on the repercussions of workplace staff issues such as lost productivity, working days, and absenteeism, to a bigger focus on the prevention of such issues.

“Last year we saw a lot being said across all industries about the damage that absenteeism and presenteeism can have on a business. With support from the NHS, government, and business leaders across the UK, the emphasis is moving to more importantly what can be done to prevent these issues from becoming a problem in the first place.”

According to Aviva, presenteeism is continuing to have a staggering effect on the economy, costing businesses £605 a year per person, with UK employers being affected to the tune of £15.1 billion annually.

The prevalence of presenteeism is thought to be much greater than absenteeism, with one in five people taking a day off work due to stress alone and 93% of these lying about their real reason for absence (MIND).



“Much of the emphasis has been placed on the effects of presenteeism and absenteeism on a business and on an individual in terms of their health and wellness, but we're seeing this changing with more employers eager to prevent these from happening in the first place.”

“And based on our recent research, we know that many problems that both employers and employees are facing in terms of low productivity levels and high absence rates can often be caused by underlying health problems such as mental health issues or physical problems such as musculoskeletal disorders.”

“The challenge though is that businesses are being told left, right and centre that they need to focus on their staff's health and wellness, but in reality have very little advice and guidance about how to improve, or even why they should.”

IT'S THREE-IN-A-RROW AS NUFFIELD HEALTH SCOOP PRIVATE HOSPITAL GROUP AWARD

Nuffield Health, which has a hospital site in Tettenhall, Wolverhampton picked up the award for Private Hospital Group of the Year for the third time at the Health Investor Awards 2019. The award is designed to recognise outstanding contribution to healthcare over the past 12 months, through innovation and excellence in healthcare products and services.

Nuffield Health differentiates its approach through personalised, connected services spanning the health and wellbeing continuum. By connecting its health and wellbeing services, Nuffield Health are pioneering a unique form of personalised healthcare with 94% of its hospitals receiving a 'good' or 'outstanding' rating from independent regulators.



MANUFACTURING: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

MANUFACTURING, A SECTOR THAT IN 1979 ACCOUNTED FOR AROUND 23% OF THE BRITISH ECONOMY (GROSS VALUE ADDED), AND IS NOW 10%, HAS HAD TO COPE WITH TREMENDOUS CHANGE AND PRESSURE RESULTING FROM NEW TECHNOLOGY AND INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION.

In the past four decades, the sector has seen the effective abandonment of large-scale low-cost metal bashing to countries in which costs are lower, and a shift into producing goods that require higher levels of innovation and advanced skills and the development of agile and integrated supply-chains.

Warnings from the Bank of England about the effects of a 'no-deal' Brexit are creating concern among all manufacturing businesses. Monthly data from the PMI (Purchasing Managers Index) showing that manufacturing output has fallen by the largest amount for seven years due to continued uncertainty caused by Brexit, as well as reduced demand due to a slowdown in economies across the world, especially China, add to an impending sense of crisis.

But this crisis could become a disaster for manufacturing if the UK leaves the EU with no arrangements in place and tariffs and customs checks become necessary as a result of trading within WTO rules.

Dr Steven McCabe, Associate Professor, Institute of Design and Economic Acceleration (IDEA) and Senior Fellow, Centre for Brexit Studies at Birmingham City University, said: “As all businesses have learned over the last 40 years, what is essential is continued investment in innovation and the development of new

products coupled with training of the next generation of workers.”

Dr McCabe believes the industry must remain positive despite the uncertainty.

He said: “There will be better times ahead and there is no reason to believe that customers across the globe will continue to buy goods and components manufactured in the UK simply because they are the best and offer the best value in terms of performance, reliability and are innovative.”

“However, there is no doubt that there are tough times ahead, even if Brexit were not to occur. This is a time to look to the future and, crucially, beyond events that may or may not occur later this year.”

He added: “This country became great because of the ingenuity fostered by the industrial revolution. What was achieved during this period of phenomenal growth and development of new techniques and products should give inspiration for the next great industrial age. British manufacturing should be seen as the bedrock upon which the UK economy grows as it offers wonderful opportunities for jobs and prosperity for all parts of the UK.”

What happens next for the Manufacturing industry will no doubt come down to if the UK leaves the EU with or without a deal, and on what terms. We wait in anticipation.



HUGE INVESTMENT ANNOUNCED FOR BRIERLEY HILL FIRM

ONE OF THE UK'S LEADING MANUFACTURERS OF ROUND, FLAT AND PROFILE WIRE HAS RECENTLY COMPLETED A £250,000 INVESTMENT DRIVE TO HELP IT BUILD ON A RECORD YEAR.

Alloy Wire International, based in Brierley Hill, which employs 31 people across manufacturing sites in the Black Country and Yorkshire, broke through the £11m barrier in 2018 and immediately pushed the button on the acquisition of 560mm single block and 200mm multi-block drawing machines.

These installations will help increase capacity and will ensure AWI continue to deliver its industry-leading 3-week lead times, so crucial for customers in the automotive, aerospace, nuclear, oil and gas sectors.

There has also been a number of infrastructure improvements, including internal and external refurbishments, new floors in the flat wire rolling department and, following consultation with employees, a re-organisation of the manufacturing plant to deliver further production efficiencies.

WHG RAISES £25M ON BOND MARKET

LEADING MIDLANDS LANDLORD WHG HAS SUCCESSFULLY RAISED A FURTHER £25M ON THE BOND MARKET TO HELP IT ACCELERATE ITS AMBITIOUS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME.

The funding will enable whg to build more affordable and high quality homes as it works towards its vision of owning or managing 30,000 homes by 2024.

whg had originally secured a £250m bond with a 4.25% coupon in 2014, and retained £75m, £50m of which was sold in 2017. The £25m issue was priced at 145 basis points over gilts, giving a yield of 2.758 per cent. The issue was twice oversubscribed by investors.

Chief Executive Gary Fulford said: "The retained bond attracted strong support from bond holders, showing continuing market confidence in whg and our plans for future growth.

"The money raised puts us in a strong financial position for the years to come and will enable us to reach our target of building around 3,000 new homes over the next five years."

The housing association received additional funding earlier in the year when it was named a Strategic Partner by Homes England. As part of the partnership it was allocated a £38.7 million grant to build 1000 affordable homes by 2024.

whg recently published strong financial results, with an operating surplus of £36.7m and an operating margin of 34%, from income of over £108m.

The housing association also retains a strong A3 stable rating from Moody's credit rating agency this year and continues to be rated G1 and V1 by the HCA.

BREXIT & THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

BETHAN TOLLEY FROM THE CENTRE FOR BREXIT STUDIES AT BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERSITY ASKS WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO OUR CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY?



In a post-Brexit landscape, how is the future looking and what will happen to the Construction industry?

Does it face the same level of uncertainty as other sectors, and how will the industry continue to grow and attract talent? Mike Leonard, CEO at Building Alliance and visiting Professor in Manufacturing and the Built Environment at Birmingham City University believes Brexit will help the sector, especially within the West Midlands.

He said: "The West Midlands has a unique opportunity to build for the future and in doing so, create jobs, inclusive growth, a balanced economy and a greener environment. Now is the time to invest in critical infrastructure, public and commercial buildings and housing to ensure our built environment supports long term economic growth, jobs and social inclusion. Every £1 invested in construction delivers a £2.84 return for the UK economy because we make it here.

"Current Government directly supports through grants, funding criteria and rhetoric to move away from UK manufactured bricks and blocks to offsite and modular homes, where the steel and timber raw materials are almost all imported. This market interference undermines global investment to replace and enhance our manufacturing capacity and will discount from a multiplier that could deliver a £68 billion benefit to the West Midlands economy, based on the 21,500 new homes the Mayor plans to build by 2031."

Is the construction industry still able to attract talent post-Brexit? Mike thinks new initiatives

to attract people into the sector need to start sooner rather than later. He said: "For the industry to deliver what is required, we must act urgently to increase the number of young people starting a career in the construction sector. The diverse construction and building materials sector can offer vast numbers of meaningful jobs, reducing our dependency on migrant labour and opening great career opportunities for the long term unemployed, ex-offenders, those retraining such as individuals leaving the armed services.

The UK Government has a key role to play in creating the economic and regulatory environment that will attract inward investment, remove barriers and create long-term sustainable growth, increasing exports and reducing imports."

Mike believes that these changes will take place thanks to Boris Johnson's new cabinet, saying: "With a new team at the helm of government we will need to urgently put in place what is needed to ensure business continuity in the event of a no deal Brexit.

"Housing must be a key infrastructure priority for the new Government. We must put in place the skills, capacity and infrastructure we need to deliver large numbers of high-quality homes that are built to last, securing the economic and environmental gains that are vital to re-energising our economy. The focus must be on whole life value rather than the lowest price and on the delivery of quality rather than speed."

THE START-UP BUSINESS CLUB

SPONSORED BY HIGGS & SONS SOLICITORS: SUPPORTING A NEW GENERATION OF BUSINESS SUCCESS

The Black Country has long been known as an area that drives economic development through business innovation and continues to be a centre for entrepreneurs from all sectors seeking opportunities to develop new and exciting business ideas.

The Chamber are delighted to announce Higgs & Sons as sponsors of the Start-Up Business Club, a firm that has always recognised the need to support new and fledgling businesses in the region, which is why it was keen to partner the Chamber in its latest initiative supporting start-ups.

"Economic growth is driven by new business and this region has always been a hub for individuals and organisations looking to develop new ideas," said Kathryn Small, Business Development Director at Higgs & Sons.

"Higgs & Sons is proud to have supported many such organisations as they have taken their first steps on the ladder to success. The Chamber's Start-Up Business Club is the perfect vehicle for us to be able to continue to do so by working in partnership with a highly regarded regional body in order to provide vital support to new and fledgling businesses at the earliest stages of their development."

Figures published this year show that on average, 70 businesses are being created in the UK each hour. However up to 57% of these will fail in the first five years. Sobering figures certainly, but they may not tell the entire story.

"We know from our own experience that businesses which receive the appropriate level of support from the earliest opportunity are far more likely to survive, and indeed prosper," states Jamie Partington, a Partner at Higgs renowned Business Services Team.

"Initiatives such as the Start-Up Business Club provide help and support in all these areas and allows business owners to focus on their core offering. Working in partnership with the Chamber, Higgs can offer start-ups tangible support in all aspects of starting, establishing and growing a business so they are given the very best chance of success."



The Start-Up Business Club is a place for those taking the first steps at being their own boss or who have been trading less than two years to start right and plan for the future.

The Club delivers a number of events and masterclasses where entrepreneurs and new business owners can meet, network and hear from experienced business people. In addition, the Club provides two years worth of business support from the Chamber and five masterclasses for its members on important topics such as planning, branding, positioning, defining USPs, making tax digital, understanding markets and audiences and goal setting.

To learn more about the Start-Up Business Club and how you can tap into the expertise of our experienced professionals please contact the Chamber's Start-Up Expert: Alison Trinder.

ALISONTRINDER@BLACKCOUNTRYCHAMBER.CO.UK | TELEPHONE: 01902 912 301

Jamie Partington
Partner - Corporate

A partner in the Business Services Team, Jamie advises clients across a broad spectrum of corporate matters.

Richard Saxton
Partner - Commercial Property
As a partner in the firm Richard specialises in a wide range of commercial property matters.

Amy Brokenshire
Associate - Employment
Amy has extensive experience of advising on all aspects of employment law.

Adam Johnson
Associate - Dispute Resolution
Adam is a commercial litigator with extensive experience of prosecuting and defending claims.

CHAMPIONING BRITISH BUSINESS

DR ADAM MARSHALL IS DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE BRITISH CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE, WHICH REPRESENTS THE INTERESTS OF OVER 75,000 BUSINESSES COVERING EVERY REGION, SIZE AND SECTOR, WHO COLLECTIVELY EMPLOY NEARLY SIX MILLION PEOPLE.

On a recent visit to the region, the British Chambers boss shared a platform with senior figures from the IoD, FSB, Made UK, CBI and the Local Enterprise Partnership at the Black Country Business Festival to explore how firms can respond to the challenges of Brexit and beyond.

Prosper spoke to Dr Marshall to discover more about his insights on all things business, his motivations, and how one of the UK's leading business organisations is remaining relevant and tackling the issues which matter most to its members.

"I'm one of those people that needs something purposeful to get up for in the morning. I've worked in and around economic development and making places prosperous for twenty years and this is why I do what I do," begins Dr Marshall who, ten years ago, became Director of Policy and External Affairs at the British Chambers of Commerce before becoming its Director General three years ago.

"For me, linking the top levels of government and the top levels of businesses is vital; our individual business communities are the beating heart of our chambers and working hard for them is what we are here for and it is what gets me excited," and his background in lobbying and representation quickly becomes evident in how he supports the network of 53 chambers across the UK and the growing network of British Chambers around the world.

"I have always been passionate about business and place and these are the two things which

bring the Chambers of Commerce together. All of our businesses want to thrive within their own communities and often be a local success as much as they want to be a global success. We get our strength through the relationship that chambers have locally with business communities, and the ability to take their knowledge and insight and bring it together all around the UK. Together, we've got an honest and robust story to tell – and we aren't afraid to take that evidence and these stories to those making the decisions about the future of our country."

TACKLING THE HARD ISSUES ISN'T SOMETHING WHICH THE BRITISH CHAMBERS SHIES AWAY FROM

One of the biggest challenges which has changed in nature in the last few years for Dr Marshall is how people work within a modern business environment. "Businesses are always on the hunt for great people – whether at entry level, specific skills or top-level managers or leaders. Many say they're still simply struggling to attract and retain the right people. I have never seen a crunch in the labour market as deep as it is right now, and this is true whether it is here in the Black Country or in any other area of the country. "There are a lot of different factors at play. But businesses need to get a lot better at thinking about their staffing needs in five to ten years' time as opposed to just filling a recruitment need right now.

"Also, some businesses still aren't flexible or agile enough, and it is a job seekers' market

at present. For some industries, it is easier to be more responsive – professional services in particular – but for many people with caring responsibilities especially, it can often limit their ability to do a 9 to 5 role. If a business is more focused on outputs and outcomes rather than how many hours somebody spends in the office, then this is often ultimately beneficial for all parties. I know that this is something that the Black Country Chamber is doing especially well and hopefully its lead is having a positive influence on some of its members. For other industries, like manufacturing, retailing and logistics, we need to work with businesses to find ways to take best practice learning in this area and explore whether it will work for them – after all, a good potential worker is going to work for somebody which fits with their priorities.

"Furthermore, we as businesses need to keep on working with schools, colleges and universities – to develop talent and ensure our businesses have access to a healthy pipeline. We have to recognise that we need to help young people to develop transferable skills from an early age. I was surprised to be asked by my five-year-old daughter to help prepare for her first class presentation – learning these skills so early on would have been unheard of some years ago, and needs to be encouraged. "Finally, businesses shouldn't lose out on great people because of lifecycle events where, in particular; people coming back from parental leave might have lost some momentum, confidence or time – that is often a criminal loss of talent for businesses."

As an advocate for place, Dr Marshall explains how the Black Country can function and

compete on a global stage. “At a UK level, this region is seen as having a strong industrial heritage and is known for its role in the automotive sector. It has a fierce identity and, like others in the West Midlands, has sharp elbows and is jostling for its share of voice and funding amongst other regional competitors. When you go beyond this though, globally; people don’t see this level of granularity. They might – just - have an awareness of the powerbase that is the English West Midlands, or of the metropolitan area that is Birmingham, but not necessarily how the Black Country sits within and alongside these or is broken down into various municipal areas.

“Across the world, potential trading partners don’t always understand UK local identities the same way we do. I was recently on a visit to Scotland and spoke with businesses that had recently been over to China. These business owners were introducing themselves as being from this town or that city, when all the potential Chinese clients wanted to know was whether these people from ‘Scotland’ could deliver the goods or work effectively with them. It was that scope and perspective which was important to them. Similarly, for the Black Country, there must be a way of playing to the area’s strengths and heritage that forms part of a wider West Midlands narrative to attract global focus and investment. Businesses need to demonstrate that they are leading players within their sector in the UK, first and foremost, and as part of a strong and confident West Midlands second.

“The lessons for me are don’t be insular; don’t have such sharp elbows that you can’t work together; and think about your partners. The work being carried out by the chambers in the West Midlands is helping to bring all of these players together and demonstrate that we are much stronger and successful when we do cooperate and share a bigger vision.”

With a greater focus on collaboration, Dr Marshall concludes by summing up how the work of the local chamber and the British Chambers is still relevant and important and ultimately benefits businesses.

“There’s a thread running through chamber business communities all across the country – those things that need to be better so that business can drive local and national growth.

“People, as we’ve discussed, is absolutely the top issue. But there is also infrastructure and



connectivity, supporting trade and helping businesses land opportunities in global markets, and putting the brakes on the upfront costs of doing business – which seem to keep going up and up.”

THE BLACK COUNTRY CHAMBER HAS RECENTLY LAUNCHED ITS BUSINESS MANIFESTO WHICH IS SIMULTANEOUSLY AN AGENDA FOR LOCAL GROWTH AND A POWERFUL CONTRIBUTION TO THE NATIONAL AGENDA.

“What businesses want here chimes at a national level, and is a big part of our national work with government and decision makers.

“Sometimes, businesses need a powerful platform or mechanism to amplify these matters and get results. As the voice of business communities across the UK, chambers often put our head above the parapet both regionally and nationally and urge government and people of all political colours to take notice and take our communities’ needs seriously.

“Our levels of engagement have never been higher. We need to make sure that we are pushing the decision-makers to get on with things, and give them the information and evidence needed to actually make those decisions.

“On Brexit, we are working continuously to ensure that businesses have the information

and guidance they need to prepare for all scenarios. In addition, we are also reminding those at the heart of power that sometimes businesses don’t benefit from things like a lower corporation tax when business rates, apprenticeship levy, pension auto enrolment and insurance premium taxes are on the increase.

“Chamber business communities are incredibly diverse and dynamic. We have a fantastic brand, but at times we are still fighting the perception that this is a group of middle-aged white men having dinner. The Black Country Chamber has seen a rapid period of modernisation and has a diverse and energetic team behind it working hard to give a voice to their local business community, raise profile of members and connect them to do more business and try to make the region better and more prosperous for all.

“Ultimately, chambers are owned by the local business community. They faithfully represent this constituency without fear or favour – and in turn we work to ensure that their point of view forms part of a national and global platform that delivers positive impact and change.”

i DR ADAM MARSHALL | @BCCADAM

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MEET THE BUYER EVENT IS MASSIVE OPPORTUNITY TO SECURE MORE BUSINESS

BUSINESSES CAN SPEAK DIRECTLY TO PROCUREMENT PROFESSIONALS FROM A RANGE OF SECTORS BY ATTENDING MEET THE BUYER ON MONDAY 30 SEPTEMBER 2019.

The event offers businesses the opportunity to meet top companies, hear about forthcoming contracts and get tender information direct from the 'horse's mouth' at Wolverhampton Racecourse.

Exhibitors include Blakemore's, Galliford Try, Marston's and Willmott Dixon plus public sector buyers from City of Wolverhampton Council and University of Wolverhampton.

People can register to attend the event at: www.investwolverhampton.com

Phil Crowther, Operations Director at Willmott Dixon Interiors, the event sponsors, said: "Willmott Dixon are proud to be sponsoring Meet the Buyer, part of the City's Business Programme. It has attracted a number of top companies to showcase their future tenders, giving businesses who attend the chance to find out about contracts by talking directly to company representatives themselves.

"I am very impressed by the city's ambition, led by the council. It has a winning formula working with partners to support business growth and secure investment. Willmott Dixon wants to be associated with successful places and is happy to be playing its part."

Businesses who are interested in finding out about construction opportunities can visit the construction zone hosted by CITB – the Industry Training Board for the construction industry.

Sarah Fenton, Midlands & North Partnerships Director at CITB said: "CITB is pleased to be the construction zone sponsor. The zone will showcase construction supply chain and career and training opportunities."

Attendees can also receive free tickets to the autumn evening of racing which follows the event, thanks to Wolverhampton Racecourse.

[INVESTWOLVERHAMPTON.COM](http://www.investwolverhampton.com)



TOP AWARD FOR THE MOUNT HOTEL

IT IS FAIR TO SAY THAT WOLVERHAMPTON'S THE MOUNT HOTEL HAS SEEN A SHIFT IN FORTUNES AND REPUTATION IN THE LAST FEW YEARS.

Acquired by Aspen Leisure in 2001, the historic building was in a rundown state but has seen a substantial £4.5 million investment which has seen it transform into an elegant and popular award-winning venue welcoming thousands of guests and diners each year and the city's only 4 star hotel.

Often the first choice for no less than fourteen of the eighteen Premier League football clubs when they play Wolverhampton Wanderers, The Mount Team, headed by Aspen's Director Scott Bernard recently beat off competition to win the title of Best Hotel of the Year at Midlands Food, Drink and Hospitality Awards.

A popular venue for the region's business community, the Champagne Bar, restaurant, conference facilities and orangery provide an elegant backdrop for meetings, conferences and dining.

In June, Prosper were invited to sample their recently unveiled new-look lunch menu which includes a choice of starters (from £5) including

Darjeeling tea cured salmon with cucumber, pea crème fraiche, quail egg and Nasturtium flower or a home-made soup; mains (from £14.50) such as the cheekily-named Mine's Pigger Than Yours – an 8oz beef patty loaded with pulled pork and streaky bacon; followed by desserts ranging from vanilla panna cotta, a white chocolate brulee with strawberry doughnut or a scrumptious chocolate brownie (£7 each).

The Mount is located in Tettenhall, Wolverhampton, WV6 8HL.

[THE MOUNT HOTEL](http://www.themounthotel.com) | TEL: 01902 752 055

MEET THE BUYER OPPORTUNITY

Sponsored by



30 September 2019

3pm – 5pm | Wolverhampton Racecourse, WV6 0PE

✓ TALK TO PROCUREMENT PROFESSIONALS

✓ GET CONTRACT AND TENDER INFORMATION

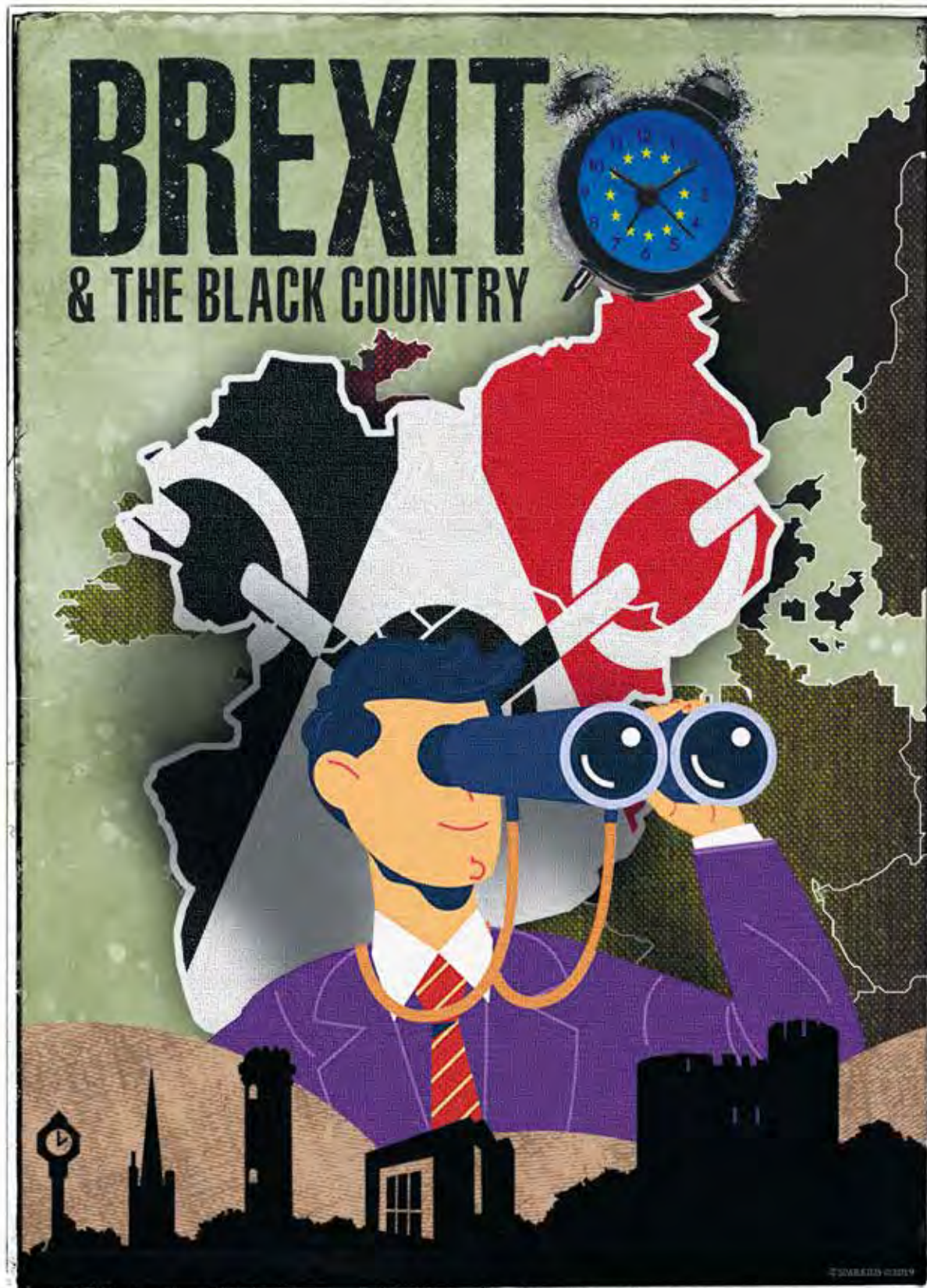
✓ RANGE OF SECTORS

✓ TOP COMPANIES ATTENDING

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BUSINESS, THE BLACK COUNTRY & BREXIT

EXAMINING THE IMPACT BREXIT WILL MAKE ON THE BUSINESS SECTOR AND SOCIETY IN GENERAL

How Brexit ends up affecting businesses throughout the Black Country will depend on whether a withdrawal agreement can be agreed or a 'no deal' scenario emerges.

In the short term, such an outcome is almost certain to lead to an economic shock simply because of the sudden nature of the change in the UK's trading terms, Prosper was told.

Certain sectors are more exposed than others and different sectors are exposed to different aspects of Brexit.

Naturally, the most obvious and immediate impacts will be felt by those businesses that trade directly with other countries in the EU. In all sectors we will see an increase in the paperwork associated with customs compliance, but most businesses will also see an increase in delivery times and some transport costs in both directions.

This is also likely to be accompanied by a significant increase in the uncertainty over delivery times – will it take six minutes or six hours to clear customs? Whether this is an issue or not will depend on the sector in which the business operates: for those in just-in-time supply chains it will be significant whereas those delivering final products it might be less so.

Centre for Brexit Studies Researcher David Hearne, suggests that the immediate set of impacts will be on those businesses whose effective tariff rates change. This will include both all those in certain sectors who export to the EU, but also those who export to any countries that do not "roll over" the UK's existing free trade agreements.

He said: "Businesses in the UK that are currently either behind a tariff wall due to EU-wide tariffs on things like automotive components, might suddenly find that the UK government has decided to eliminate them on imports. Conversely, those who import things from the EU might find that they need to pay

an additional tariff on those imports. At the same time as all of this, we are likely to see substantial exchange rate volatility.

"Over time", he told Prosper, "these effects will ripple through supply chains. Thus, automotive firms experiencing production issues or changes in relative profitability will alter buying decisions from suppliers. Many smaller businesses in the Black Country will find themselves embedded deep in a supply chain that ultimately involves an import-export business. The severity of these effects will depend on how diverse a company's client base is as well as the actions of the European Commission and the French authorities."

Although the Black Country has little direct exposure to the agricultural problems that are likely to emerge as a result of a 'no deal' Brexit, some 64,000 people work in manufacturing sectors.

THE REGION HAS A NUMBER OF COMPANIES IN HIGHLY EXPOSED SECTORS – NOTABLY AUTOMOTIVE AND AEROSPACE.

More exposed are those companies in the supply chain with several thousand jobs in companies that manufacture vehicle components and many more in the metals industry.

However, a potential boost for the Black Country lies in tourism, which might benefit popular destinations such as the Black Country Living Museum, West Midlands Safari Park and Dudley Zoo. A dramatic fall in Sterling would make the UK a much cheaper destination for holidaymakers. The flip side of this is that it will erode the purchasing power of UK consumers, making us all feel that little bit poorer.

Dr Jacob Salder, Research Fellow in the Centre for Enterprise, Innovation and Growth in the Birmingham City Business School, believes any prediction of the impact on business of

the UK leaving the EU should be taken with a pinch of salt until more specific details of the exact arrangements are known.

He said: "What is known however is our departure creates a set of challenges for businesses on the basis of not only market access but also continued economic stability, levels of consumption, and availability of investment.

"This issue is significant for businesses in the Black Country. With a strong manufacturing heritage, this traditional industry still represents high levels of business stock and employment, alongside relevant direct (services and supply chain) and indirect (consumer) multipliers. Manufacturing trade however is similarly strong in exporting beyond Europe, the West Midlands is one of the UK regions with a greater spread of export destinations."

Challenges however do not emerge singularly around manufacturing and related industries. Dr Salder continued: "Part of the issue in terms of restructuring post-Brexit is about entrepreneurial activity and economic resilience. Here, a higher representation of lower skilled and productivity industries such as wholesale/retail and transport/storage alongside lower concentrations of jobs in higher skilled sectors such as information and communication or professional-scientific-technical occupations illustrate potential issues around resilience and adaptation.

"Entrepreneurial activity however, measured as business start-ups, compares favourably with national and regional rates, particularly in the areas of Wolverhampton and Sandwell."

Whatever one's views on Brexit, the level of uncertainty over exactly what is 'coming down the tracks' should be of concern to businesses across the region and beyond. Appropriate planning and risk management for a no-deal scenario is now crucial.

ONE IN EIGHT DRIVERS ARE DELAYING THEIR NEXT VEHICLE PURCHASE



Nearly half of all drivers are set to delay their next vehicle purchase, with one in four of those blaming Brexit, according to exclusive research for Britain's leading weekly automotive title, Autocar, conducted by Simpson Carpenter.

The research follows another month of declining UK vehicle sales, with the latest Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) figures showing new car registrations in April were down by 4.1%.

Market research firm Simpson Carpenter interviewed more than 1000 car buyers on behalf of Autocar. The data collected showed that, of those looking to delay their next vehicle purchase, 39% are doing so due to economic concerns – including the uncertainty associated with the UK leaving the European Union. Luxury car buyers are the most apprehensive - 51% have delayed their purchase, with one in three of them blaming Brexit for their delay.

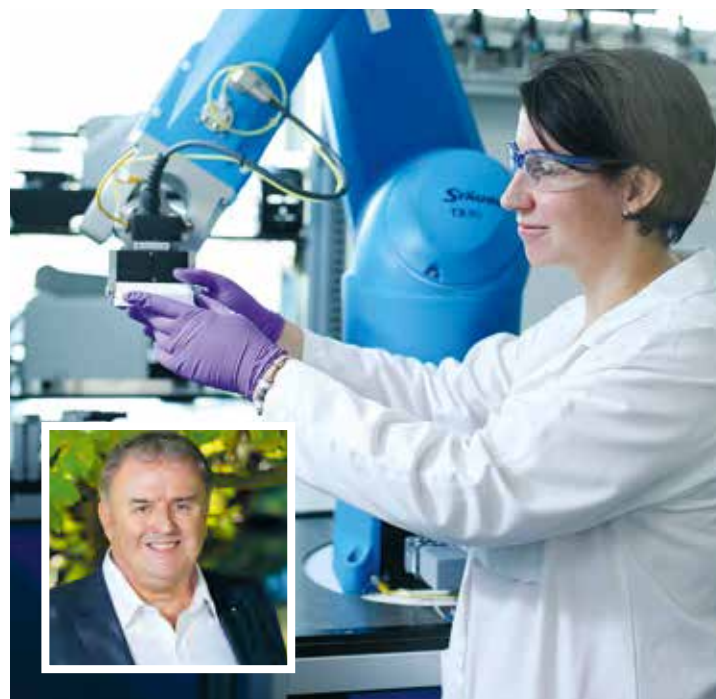
The hiatus will have a long-term effect on the UK's vehicle market, as 31% of buyers now say they will delay their purchase until the long-run effects of Brexit become clear.

UK buyers are also expected to shift their brand preferences after Brexit. One in five drivers said they would purchase a different make due to Brexit, with many favouring brands with UK manufacturing plants. Ford, which has an engine manufacturing facility in Dagenham and Toyota, which manufactures vehicles in the UK, are likely to be among the net winners. French and German brands are the likely net losers. This includes BMW, despite its Mini plant in Oxford.

Mark Tisshaw, editor of Autocar, said: "Since the very beginning of the Brexit debate, the UK's automotive industry has had a very clear stance – leaving the EU without a trade agreement in place would hurt sales and productivity."

WILL BREXIT AFFECT UK SME'S R&D TAX CREDIT CLAIMS?

HOW MIGHT THE LANDSCAPE FOR REWARDING INNOVATIVE UK BUSINESSES WHO INVEST TIME AND MONEY IN R&D, LOOK POST-BREXIT?



Prosper spoke to Ian Batkin, partner and co-founder of Wolverhampton independent firm Luvo Financial, who believes the value to innovative companies across the Black Country of the UK government's R&D Tax Scheme, is set to soar.

"Significant numbers of start-up and established businesses have benefited hugely from EU funding of their projects, utilising EU grants and financial schemes to support their business plans and innovative activities," Ian said.

"In a post-Brexit UK, this EU funding for innovation and R&D will almost certainly simply dry up and stop.

"Whilst the EU-funding-sized hole can't be entirely filled by the UK government's R&D Tax Scheme, its importance as a financial lifeline and reward for innovative businesses, will undoubtedly grow significantly once the UK is no longer a member of the EU.

"Whether with or without a deal, when the UK leaves the EU, the country must remain competitive to ensure economic prosperity and trading success. Innovation is the bedrock of the UK SME sector, particularly those in the Black Country's business community, and this edge will only become more important to the UK keeping its well-earned place on the international stage.

"The government launched its R&D Tax Scheme about 19 years ago to support and reward innovation and R&D across every facet of UK industry. However, whilst part of the EU, the UK's hands have been tied somewhat on the amount that can be claimed under the R&D Tax Scheme, particularly the one specifically for SME's – that is those with less than 500 staff, a turnover of under €100m or a balance sheet total under €86m - which the EU has long described as being overly significant and generous, even labelling it as 'state aid'.

"In a post-Brexit world, the UK's R&D Tax Credits Scheme will therefore be even more valuable and in turn, financial support from the UK government will be more important, more self-determined and, thereby, potentially more appealing too."

The average R&D Tax Credits claim is worth in the region of £50,000 per claim for SME's, but to date, the vast majority of SME's have missed out on this financial support.

"The UK's R&D Tax Credits Scheme exists to support ongoing and future product and service development activity and cost," says Ian. "It is vital that more businesses are supported in applying for this financial reward for their R&D and innovation, particularly when the UK actually leaves the EU.

R&D ISN'T EASY - IT'S TIME-CONSUMING, COSTLY AND RISKY, AS THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO CERTAINTY THAT A BUSINESS WILL GET A RETURN ON ITS INVESTMENT IN IT

"I suspect the low take-up and under-utilisation of the government's R&D Tax Scheme is simply down to a lack of understanding and awareness," says Ian, "because way too many businesses see the scheme as a potential time-consuming 'pain point'.

"Despite R&D Tax Credits being around since 2000, and pretty generous with businesses able to recover about 25 percent of what's been spent on eligible R&D and an average £50,000 pay-out, less than 10 percent of SME's who could potentially claim, have actually done so. Hundreds of SME's are missing out on thousands of pounds from the government in recognition of their investment in R&D, which many could utilise to support ongoing or additional innovative product or service developments.

"We estimate in the region of 20 percent of Midlands-based SME's have developed new products, processes or services which would be eligible for financial support and reward from the R&D Tax Credits Scheme, but less than a third have actually made a claim.

"Not claiming and leaving this money on the government's table represents a massive missed opportunity. And with the EU funding pipeline set to close once the UK leaves the EU, its financial value will become increasingly vital to sustain innovation."

A&M EDM Smethwick based maker of precision parts and tooling for the aerospace and automotive sectors, has claimed over £500,000 in R&D tax credits since 2012.

HOW PREPARED IS YOUR BUSINESS FOR BREXIT?

GET A FREE PERSONALISED BREXIT BUSINESS REPORT



As the country prepares to leave, with or without a deal, businesses across the country, who are already being impacted by Brexit related uncertainty, still require help and guidance for what lies ahead.

The Black Country Chamber of Commerce has joined forces with the Greater Birmingham Chambers, Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce and the West Midlands Combined Authority to offer businesses their very own personal Brexit Health Check in preparation for leaving the EU.

When the UK leaves the EU, it will represent the biggest fundamental change to the UK's political and trading relationships, so making sure businesses know where they can go for support when they need it will be critical - our Brexit Health Check will help them prepare.

Recent World Trade forecasts show that global trade will drop. This is said to be due to the increase in tariffs and barriers in trade of 70%.

Prosper spoke to one Black Country manufacturer with a £12 million turnover who wished to remain anonymous, "Confidence in manufacturing is low as many indices are dropping to levels that make it difficult to operate at profitable levels.

"Automotive production is down and unlikely to recover soon, the uncertainty around what type of Brexit we are going to have increases the lack of confidence, therefore, investment decisions are being put off.

"We are quoting for work in Europe and have been told to reduce the UK content to a minimum so that our customers minimise their exposure to Brexit.

"This may mean we cannot fund contracts on existing terms. We have switched from concentrating on Europe to the US and having some success. But difficulties getting Visas is restricting our ability to work in the area – as are US tariffs. Interestingly we are told this is due to the UK being downgraded below the EU due to Brexit.

"We are four months into the new financial year and have no capital sales this year. Our turnover is certain to drop and so redundancies are certain to follow."

CONCERNED ABOUT THE BREXIT EFFECT ON YOUR BUSINESS?

Our Brexit Health Check questionnaire takes less than 10 minutes to complete.

A free online toolkit, it contains a short set of simple questions after which your business will receive a personal generated report highlighting the key Brexit related risks and changes you should be aware of and recommends steps to take to support your preparations.

TO OBTAIN YOUR FREE REPORT | WWW.WMCA.ORG.UK/BREXITHEALTHCHECK

IS YOUR BUSINESS PREPARED FOR BREXIT?

BREXIT

GET YOUR FREE
PERSONALISED REPORT

VISIT WWW.WMCA.ORG.UK/BREXITHEALTHCHECK

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



THE KEY CHALLENGES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

GET YOUR BUSINESS READY AND PREPARE FOR THE CHALLENGES THAT MAY LIE AHEAD...



Uncertainty and instability are often severe challenges, but they can also become sources of opportunity, and for the UK's SME's who stay nimble, decisive and focused on what they can control and influence, the chance to thrive in a post-Brexit climate is there for the taking.

But beyond the B-word, what are the main things that business leaders should be focusing their attention on in the coming months?

UNLOCK & INVEST IN EXISTING TALENT

If the talent exodus from the UK post-Brexit bears out it is paramount that SME's invest in their workforce now to cement the skills needed to propel their business forward.

Experts agree this is time for recruitment action rather than caution, urging businesses to identify any gaps in their current and future workforce and to seize the opportunity to consolidate their talent in-house.

The suggested approach is twofold: boost retention with internal promotions, further training and employee benefits that are on a par with larger organisations, while protecting employees who may have concerns about visas and citizenship so they can continue to live and work in the UK legally.

Whether Brexit results in a talent exodus or not, ensuring that your team is fighting fit is rarely a bad idea.

STRENGTHEN THE SUPPLY CHAIN

For businesses that rely on EU imports, some tweaks to the supply chain ecosystem will be sensible to minimise delays associated with

trading tariffs likely to be enforced by Brexit.

A key weapon in the armoury could be greater clarity about where products may be at any time. Investing in the requisite software capable of providing clear delivery costs at the point of checkout will save SME's a lot of hassle.

Business is resilient, but investment decisions can and often will be paused or postponed until the likely outcome can be fully assessed. Businesses are making preparations, while some have considered stockpiling goods as they look to shield themselves through a potentially turbulent period ahead. Businesses are generally reactive as opposed to proactive at the moment.

FIND A BANK THAT 'GETS YOU'

A supportive banking partner will be the Holy Grail for SME's that need to keep investing for growth regardless of doom and gloom in wider markets.

Tightening the purse strings may be the default approach in uncertain times, but setting aside capital to invest in people, products and plans will be a key part of many businesses' strategy to stay competitive, demanding a focus on medium-term growth and securing finding lines.

While access to finance can be tricky territory for smaller businesses that may be ineligible for mainstream lending products or disillusioned by red tape, businesses are reporting fewer concerns about getting extra cash than in the past.

BE BOLD WITH BRANDING

As a growing number of businesses exploit

the weakness in the pound and turn their attention to new markets, now is not the time to forget the kind of marketing that in the past cemented relationships with European suppliers and customers.

Too many people are using Brexit as an excuse to become less daring, particularly when it comes to marketing.

Rather than being conservative with marketing spend, maintaining momentum and forging ahead should be on everyone's minds, with personal branding at the core. People have always bought from people but never in the way they do now. Pushing someone to the front of your business to be seen as the expert in your field will put you ahead of the competition.

While the ad platforms of tech titans can be prohibitive to the small player on a tight budget, finding authentic bloggers with influential voices who are a good fit with the brand can be a more cost-effective way of competing with the big brands. Whatever approach businesses do take, ensuring that their voice is heard among the noise of Brexit should help keep them front of mind for potential customers, whatever way the political and economic situation develops.

CHAMPION PRODUCTIVITY

Productivity remains a core challenge for many UK SME's.

It's easy to think of this issue as a solely macro-economic concern, normally the reserve of economists or policymakers in government, but the productivity challenge could really begin to hit home at a business owner level over the next few years, particularly in certain industries, as we are finally starting to see signs of rising real wages.

After the financial crisis in 2008, the UK's flexible labour markets meant that unemployment didn't spike upwards for long, but there was downward pressure on wages and for many businesses that meant they could defer investment in processes, technology and equipment, which would have made them more efficient, and instead chose to paper over the cracks by hiring additional staff.

Fixing those cracks now will require investment in both time and money. Management techniques and restructures may be needed to get more from the staff that businesses already have on the books, while ailing technology will need to be replaced to ensure that those operating it are not held back compared to better equipped competitors.

PROSPER PEOPLE

THE BLACK COUNTRY'S BEST BUSINESS & SOCIAL EVENTS



BLACK COUNTRY COMMONWEALTH GAMES BUSINESS FORUM

Guest speakers and games organisers - Neil Carney, Programme Director, Ian Reid, Chief Executive and organising committee Chairman, John Crabtree at Higgs & Sons in Brierley Hill



SANDWELL BUSINESS AWARDS 2019

The very best business talent and innovation was celebrated recently at The Sandwell Business Awards. The high-profile event at Sandwell College's Central Campus in West Bromwich was hosted by ITV Central's lively weather presenter Des Coleman.



BREXIT FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Event held at the Molineux to discuss the implications of Brexit for those working in this specific sector



BLACK COUNTRY WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP LAUNCH EVENT

The Mount Hotel, Wolverhampton during the Black Country Business Festival



FUTURE LINK YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

Social event at Casino 36 in Wolverhampton

SUBMISSIONS:

Share your business event photos with us at: PROSPER@BLACKCOUNTRYCHAMBER.CO.UK

[ANNIE BENTON | ANNIEBENTON@HOTMAIL.COM](mailto:ANNIEBENTON@HOTMAIL.COM)





BUSINESSES HAILED IN BLACK COUNTRY CHAMBER AWARDS

• FINALIST ANNOUNCEMENT •

THE SHORTLISTED FINALISTS IN THE ANNUAL BLACK COUNTRY CHAMBER AWARDS WERE REVEALED IN AN EXCLUSIVE ANNOUNCEMENT AT CASINO 36 IN WOLVERHAMPTON IN SEPTEMBER.

The Awards, an annual celebration of the best of Black Country Business, in conjunction with headline partner this year, the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, will take place at Wolverhampton Racecourse, where guests will enjoy an evening of exciting celebrations on Friday 15 November.

The evening will be hosted by Aaron James, who will be starring in the Grand Theatre's Christmas panto this year.



Sponsors so far for the evening spectacular include:

WOLVERHAMPTON GRAND THEATRE
(HEADLINE AND TABLE GIFT SPONSOR)

WOLVERHAMPTON RACECOURSE
(EXPORT BUSINESS OF THE YEAR)

WALSALL COLLEGE
(SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR)

MSV CONSULTANCY
(START-UP BUSINESS OF THE YEAR & SOCIAL MEDIA SPONSOR)

CROWE UK
(EXCELLENCE IN MANUFACTURING & ENGINEERING)

DUDLEY COLLEGE
(YOUNG PERSON OR APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR)

DY5
(BLACK COUNTRY BUSINESS OF THE YEAR)

CASINO 36
(AFTER-SHOW PARTNER)

KLICK BUSINESS SOLUTIONS
(BROCHURE SPONSOR)

There are still some sponsorship packages available for the evening to suit every budget.

Tickets for the awards are on sale now and can be booked via the awards website: www.bcccawards.co.uk. Available on a first come, first served basis and they range from £110+VAT to £80+VAT per seat.



SPONSORSHIP: SARAH JOHNSON | 01902 912 304 | HELLO@BCCCAWARDS.CO.UK



THIS YEAR'S FINALISTS INCLUDE

**COMMUNITY
CHAMPION AWARD**

HOWELLS PATENT GLAZING LTD
IMPACT SALES COACHING
THE MIDCOUNTRIES CO-OPERATIVE
OWEN PAYNE RECRUITMENT SERVICES LTD
WOLVERHAMPTON GRAND THEATRE

**HIGH GROWTH BUSINESS
OF THE YEAR**

DIGITAL IMAGING SERVICES LTD
DOLPHIN LIFTS MIDLANDS LTD
MET RECRUITMENT UK LTD
NANT LTD
SIMWORX LTD

**CUSTOMER
COMMITMENT AWARD**

LORD COMBUSTION SERVICES LTD
NANT LTD
OWEN PAYNE RECRUITMENT SERVICES LTD
STK FIRE & RISK MANAGEMENT LTD

**EXPORT BUSINESS
OF THE YEAR**

DEANS MANAGEMENT SERVICES LTD
ENTEC INTERNATIONAL LTD
FOUNDRY MACHINERY SPARES LTD
SIMWORX LTD

**START-UP BUSINESS
OF THE YEAR**

BRIGHT & BEAUTIFUL WOLVERHAMPTON
(CSM FUTURES LTD)
COMFYSE LTD
CS BOOKKEEPING SERVICES (MIDLANDS) LTD
IMPACT SALES COACHING
LOGISTICS WORLD LTD
SAVESTA CONSTRUCTION LTD

**LARGE BUSINESS
OF THE YEAR**

SIPS EDUCATION LTD
THE MOUNT HOTEL COUNTRY MANOR
THOMAS DUDLEY GROUP
WOLVERHAMPTON GRAND THEATRE

**YOUNG PERSON OR APPRENTICE
OF THE YEAR**

REMY LLOYD
WOLVERHAMPTON GRAND THEATRE
JAMES TERRY
NICKLIN LLP
SIAN ROBINSON
NICKLIN LLP
JASPREET KAUR
PENNY POST CREDIT UNION LTD

SAM OWERS
PLUMBING WORLD

ONKAR SINGH
PROSPERITY WEALTH LTD

JAMIE WILKES
ROBINSON BROTHERS LTD

ALEKSANDRA ZUROWSKA
SANDWELL COLLEGE

DANIELLE HERON-BROOKS
NICKLIN LLP

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AWARD

FORRESTERS IP LLP
KLICK BUSINESS SOLUTIONS LTD
MSV CONSULTANCY LTD
PROSPERITY WEALTH LTD

SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

DEANS MANAGEMENT SERVICES LTD
DIGITAL IMAGING SERVICES LTD
DOLPHIN LIFTS MIDLANDS LTD
ENPRO GROUP LTD
MET RECRUITMENT UK LTD
MSV CONSULTANCY LTD
NANT LTD
WELL ASSOCIATES LTD

**FAMILY BUSINESS
OF THE YEAR**

COINADRIK LTD
DOLPHIN LIFTS MIDLANDS LTD
LOGISTICS WORLD LTD
THE MOUNT HOTEL COUNTRY MANOR

**BLACK COUNTRY BUSINESS
PERSON OF THE YEAR**

SCOTT BERNARD
THE MOUNT HOTEL COUNTRY MANOR
VICKY PRICE
WOLVERHAMPTON GRAND THEATRE
PAUL HULL
KMB SHIPPING GROUP
LISA LOVELL
OWEN PAYNE RECRUITMENT SERVICES LTD
MARTIN DUDLEY
THOMAS DUDLEY GROUP

**EXCELLENCE IN
MANUFACTURING &
ENGINEERING**

A & M EDM LTD
IPU GROUP
LORD COMBUSTION SERVICES LTD

**EDUCATION BUSINESS
PARTNERSHIP**

THE MIDCOUNTRIES CO-OPERATIVE
(nominated by Walsall Academy)

THOMAS DUDLEY GROUP
(nominated by Dudley Academies Trust)
TESCO MAINTENANCE BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP
(nominated by Dudley College of Technology)

SIPS EDUCATION LTD

BLACK COUNTRY LIVING MUSEUM
MANUFACTURING AT WORK
(nominated by Foundry Training Services Ltd)

WALSALL COLLEGE



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

TUESDAY 8TH OCTOBER 2019
BUSINESS BRIEFING
 DIGITAL MARKETING BY THE EXPRESS AND STAR
 CASINO 36 – WOLVERHAMPTON

FRIDAY 11TH OCTOBER 2019
COMMONWEALTH GAMES
BUSINESS BRIEFING
 GTG TRAINING ACADEMY & CONFERENCE CENTRE
 (WEST MIDLANDS) – WEDNESFIELD

WEDNESDAY 16TH OCTOBER 2019
BIG BLACK COUNTRY BUSINESS FAYRE
 WOLVERHAMPTON RACECOURSE – WOLVERHAMPTON

A fun, entertaining and informal way to meet new customers and talk to a range of businesses providing offers, discounts and promotions.

- Explore a range of products and services all under one roof!
- Explore a range of promotions, discounts and offers
- Learn more about different products and innovations from over 80 exhibitors
- Develop your understanding about what is in the marketplace and find solutions which could help you
- Meet with prospective new partners and customers
- Take part in our business card tombola on the day to win some great prizes

WEDNESDAY 16TH OCTOBER 2019
THIRD WEEK WEDNESDAY
 WOLVERHAMPTON RACECOURSE – WOLVERHAMPTON

FRIDAY 25TH OCTOBER 2019
THE BAGGIES BREAKFAST
 WEST BROMWICH ALBION FC – WEST BROMWICH

TUESDAY 5TH NOVEMBER 2019
EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNAL
BUSINESS BRIEFING
 WEST BROMWICH ALBION FC – WEST BROMWICH

WEDNESDAY 6TH NOVEMBER 2019
SPEED NETWORKING
 COPTHORNE HOTEL, WATERFRONT, BRIERLEY HILL

FRIDAY 15TH NOVEMBER 2019
BLACK COUNTRY CHAMBER AWARDS
 WOLVERHAMPTON RACECOURSE – WOLVERHAMPTON

The esteemed awards are one of the most prestigious celebrations of business achievements in the region. In the six years since the new awards were established, more than 160 Black Country individuals and businesses have been recognised for their outstanding individual and business accomplishments.

- COMMUNITY CHAMPION
- LARGE BUSINESS OF THE YEAR
- SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR
- EXPORT BUSINESS OF THE YEAR
- EDUCATION & BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP
- CUSTOMER COMMITMENT AWARD
- BLACK COUNTRY BUSINESS PERSON OF THE YEAR
- PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AWARD
- EXCELLENCE IN MANUFACTURING AND ENGINEERING
- HIGH-GROWTH BUSINESS OF THE YEAR
- FAMILY BUSINESS OF THE YEAR
- START-UP BUSINESS OF THE YEAR AWARD
- YOUNG PERSON OR APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR
- OVERALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

WEDNESDAY 20TH NOVEMBER 2019
THIRD WEEK WEDNESDAY
 CASINO 36 – WOLVERHAMPTON

WEDNESDAY 27TH NOVEMBER 2019
BANK OF ENGLAND BRIEFING
 BLACK COUNTRY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
 WOLVERHAMPTON

WEDNESDAY 18TH DECEMBER 2019
THIRD WEEK WEDNESDAY
 CASINO 36 – WOLVERHAMPTON

THE MANUFACTURERS' PROFITABILITY PUZZLE

DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIES TO MAXIMISE PROFITABILITY IS A FUNDAMENTAL CHALLENGE FACING MANUFACTURERS.

To crack this puzzle, companies must carefully plan their strategy and application of resources to identify what investments will have the most impact.

With the Manufacturing PMI falling and much Brexit uncertainty, the intuitive reaction to increase profitability may be to reduce investment that doesn't directly or immediately improve a company's revenue-generating activities.

However, areas like R&D, sales, marketing, staffing and recruitment are an essential investment for the future. If companies follow their instincts and cut back, it creates considerable risks for profitability in the long run.

INVESTING FOR THE LONG TERM

It is important that companies focus their resources where the full potential has not yet been realised, and there's a real prospect of generating competitive advantages.

Companies should remain forward-looking by focusing their investment on four key areas:

- RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
- PLANT AND EQUIPMENT
- SKILLED LABOUR RECRUITMENT
- REWARD & INVESTMENT IN STAFF

(e.g. through pension funding)

Recent analysis of 1,559 US manufacturing firms published in IJOPM (Strategy, Operations, and Profitability: The Role of Resource Orchestration, International Journal of Operations and Production Management) shows that financing R&D has a significant positive effect on long term profits, as it drives the development of new products to bring to market. Continued upgrades to plants, property and equipment is essential to future proof a manufacturing business, as a lack of investment in these areas ultimately leads to poor performance.

The opportunity to recruit high-skilled technicians and engineers and integrate them into the company, as the agents for future long-term growth, must not be neglected. Incentivisation through investment in pension provisions for example can have long term, positive performance implications, helping to retain your best people.

Although profitability may suffer short term pain as a result of these investment decisions, if executed well they will certainly prove beneficial in the long term.



If you require any further information or advice regarding these topics, then please feel free to contact our Manufacturing & Engineering sector expert, Chris Barlow.

mha
 MACINTYRE HUDSON

+44 121 236 0465 | CHRIS.BARLOW@MHLLP.CO.UK



BUSINESS IS DONE BETTER TOGETHER

We hope that you're enjoying the new Prosper magazine! It is the culmination of a lot of hard work by many people and is the latest initiative of the Chamber in its role as a champion of the business community and a standard bearer of all of the great things happening across the region.

2019 has been a busy year for us with Prosper forming part of our rebrand and just one of a number of exciting new projects which has seen us expand our offers and services.

One activity I'm particularly excited by is our Black Country Business Manifesto which we launched in May. Developed and shaped by members it highlights the challenges which impact on local productivity and growth and is the focal point for our important policy and representation agenda.

Our work in this area is just one of the ways we support our members and make the process of doing business easier. Over the next pages you'll learn more about our activities and projects from the supporting your professionals to new businesses networking clubs. You'll also be able to read more about how your Chamber membership can save you money on a range of business essentials.

As we enter the last few months of 2019, there is still plenty to look forward to including the Big Black Country Business Fayre on 16 October and our very own celebration of the best of the region's businesses with the Business Awards in November.

JULIE CUNNINGHAM

President | Black Country Chamber



CHAMBER LAUNCH THE REGION'S FIRST BUSINESS MANIFESTO

THE BLACK COUNTRY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE LAUNCHED ITS FIRST BUSINESS MANIFESTO TO RESPOND TO CHALLENGES HIGHLIGHTED BY ITS MEMBERS TO TACKLE A WIDE RANGE OF ISSUES WHICH IMPACT ON GROWTH AND PROACTIVITY.

Developed and approved by the Chamber's Consultative Forum, a network of businesses of all sizes and sectors, and launched with the help of West Midlands Mayor, Andy Street, in July; the Manifesto details five key policy issues and 15 commitments which will be the focal point for the business organisation's representation and lobbying work over the next 12 months and beyond.

Chair of the Consultative Forum and Black Country Chamber President, Julie Cunningham said,

"THIS IS A SIGNIFICANT AND WELCOMED STATEMENT OF INTENT BY THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND PROVIDES A CLEAR MESSAGE TO GOVERNMENT ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF INVESTING IN OUR HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL REGION.

"Reflecting on calls from our membership and in response to very significant shifts in the political landscape it sets out the challenges, opportunities and changes that members believe will successfully impact the region."

Responding to issues across transport, business essentials, finance, Brexit, inclusive growth, manufacturing and skills; the Manifesto has been received positively by the business community with the Chamber's considerable lobbying power and connections to local, regional and national government, ministers, policymakers and influencers seen as the ideal vehicle to drive positive change.

Julie Cunningham added, "Providing strong leadership and a unified voice for a business-driven agenda that includes lobbying Government to secure a business-friendly BREXIT for UK plc, safeguarding the future interest of Black Country businesses exporting, attracting regional investment in major infrastructure and creating a region which businesses and their employees can be proud of and prosperous in are central to the Manifesto and the Chamber will play a pivotal role in championing this."

DOWNLOAD YOUR COPY OF THE MANIFESTO | BLACKCOUNTRYCHAMBER.CO.UK



NEW NETWORKING CLUBS CREATE MORE WAYS FOR BUSINESS TO CONNECT

A SERIES OF BLACK COUNTRY NETWORKING CLUBS LAUNCHED IN JUNE AS PART OF THE CHAMBER'S LATEST INITIATIVE.

Designed to enable businesses to make more meaningful connections, discover new opportunities and learn more about how they can help one another.

Spearheaded by the Black Country Chamber of Commerce and exclusive to its extensive network of members, the Clubs provide an ideal platform for the region's professional community and businesses to share their stories, successes and highlight their brands, services and products.

Meetings are held on a fortnightly basis from 9:30am until 11am at Clubs in Dudley (Himley Country Hotel), Sandwell (National Metal Forming Centre), Walsall (Holiday Inn Express) and Wolverhampton (Ramada Park Hall Hotel). Businesses have the opportunity to join one Club in each of the areas of the Black Country or multiple Clubs for an additional joining fee.

The Clubs' aims are focused around the quality of engagements between businesses with one business at each session getting the opportunity to deliver a ten minute business briefing slot per year to advertise and highlight its work and services and other attendees having a sixty second slot at each session in which to share their latest news.

Karen Webb, Director of Business Services at the Chamber said, "The Chamber is passionate about helping businesses do business. We believe people buy from people and by launching our new networking clubs we are enabling our members to get to know one another, develop a rapport and for businesses to share their stories and generate a sustained awareness in their work and products."

The exclusive nature of these Clubs means that only two organisations from each sector are eligible to join each Club and send one member of their team to each session. The Clubs have grown in popularity and businesses interested in joining should call 01902 912 317 or email membership@blackcountrychamber.co.uk in order to secure their space. Each Club is £200 + VAT for 12 months and there are strict guidelines in place around engagement in order for members to get the best value and experience from the initiative.

FUTURE LINK: BRINGING TOGETHER YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

FUTURE LINK CONTINUES TO ATTRACT YOUNG PROFESSIONALS FROM ACROSS THE REGION, THOSE WHO WANT TO ENHANCE THEIR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, NETWORK WITH LIKEMINDED INDIVIDUALS, OR EVEN STEER THEIR COMPANY IN A NEW DIRECTION.

Headed up by Gurpreet Boparai, membership helps those young professionals to harness a competitive edge and develop their skills; including leadership, communication, teamwork, adaptability and networking.

Regular networking, workshops and speaker events run throughout the year with after work drinks in accessible venues across the Black Country.



"I joined Future Link to network with my peers and help build a strong network with young professionals across the Black Country. We are all at similar points in our career and face the same challenges. The workshops are a valuable experience with some great insights and actions to assist with our personal and career growth."

JACK EDMONDS

Assistant Manager Crowe U.K. LLP



"As a young professional in the Black Country I have often struggled to find 'my crowd' and relatable people who are also at the start of their professional journey. With Future Link, I am surrounded by other driven young professionals."

DION FANTHOM

Ramada Resort Park Hall Hotel, Wolverhampton



Why did I join Future Link? Simple; with so much competition in the market, networking is an essential part of our business model and allows us to not only offer our services but to source new and exciting suppliers. The workshops are both modern and relevant and in just a few short weeks I have already taken on board key information that will remain with me during my professional career"

MICHAEL MCKIE

Business Development Manager Wolverhampton Racecourse

FORTHCOMING EVENTS:

OCTOBER:
SOCIAL EVENT AT WOLVERHAMPTON CITY CENTRE VENUE, VAAL & VAAL

NOVEMBER:
SPEAKER EVENT

DECEMBER:
BIRMINGHAM XMAS DRINKS

GURPREET BOPARAI | 01902 912326



FROM FOOTBALL TO POLITICS...

HOW DAN TURNER'S PLANNED CAREER IN FOOTBALL TURNED INTO A PASSION FOR POLITICS

Destined for life as a professional footballer, but with a passion for politics, it's no wonder that Chamber Lobbying and Representation Officer, Dan Turner, relishes the challenges his job at the Chamber throws up.

Seven years as an academy player at Wolverhampton Wanderers, followed by a degree in politics from Canterbury Christ University, Dan returned to his home city and the Black Country lobbying role; a role that sees the Wolverhampton born young policy professional, and avid Tottenham Hotspur fan, working on behalf of the region's business community whilst leading on several of the Chamber's policy forums.

Mentored by Dr Adam Marshall, Director General of the British Chambers, Dan supports and contributes to all ongoing programmes, robust research which underpin Chamber policy positions, reinforcing campaigns and actively collaborating with colleagues to act as a link with relevant policymakers.

A regular in front of MPs, the Bank of England, leading business figures and regional stakeholders "It's a job I relish," he said, "It was instilled in me from an early age that although a career in football was my dream, working hard through school and taking A-levels was crucial.

"MY DAD HAS WORKED ALL HIS LIFE IN LOCAL MANUFACTURING, AT GOODYEAR TYRES IN THE CITY, NOW SADLY LONG GONE, AND AT JLR, HE MADE ME REALISE THAT MY EDUCATION WAS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE"

Joining the Chamber in 2017, Dan now leads on the Chamber's manufacturing, transport, skills, construction and Brexit forums, heads up the area's European Direct Information Centre and is responsible for collating, and interpreting, the Quarterly Economic Survey results, the largest business survey of its kind in the UK, the results of which are submitted to the Bank of England, HM Treasury and key decision makers.

Recently appointed as Chair of the Midlands Policy Group, a network of regional Chamber policy officers that meet to discuss local and regional policy issues and regional trends affecting businesses across their regions, Dan now addresses many policy issues that do not respect geographical borders.

Transport and congestion sit high on the agenda, and issues so familiar to Black Country businesses, are the same for Greater Birmingham and Staffordshire Chamber members. Manufacturing and policy issues, with firms seeking access to funding for innovation and recruitment are common place, whether in the Black Country or the East Midlands and becoming equally vocal on the need for a common-sense, business-friendly immigration system, as hoteliers and the care sector in the Black Country are faced with similar issues that affect agricultural businesses across Hereford and Worcestershire.

SO, WHAT FOR THE FUTURE?

"As a Black Country boy, I thrive on working in the area I call home," Dan said, "I am passionate about the success of the West Midlands as a whole and I enjoy working on all the policy-focused initiatives.

Speaking with members on a daily basis, building relationships and engaging with our stakeholders are certainly areas I will continue to develop."



[DANTURNER@BLACKCOUNTRYCHAMBER.CO.UK](mailto:danturner@blackcountrychamber.co.uk)

THIS FIVE-MINUTE READ CAN SAVE YOUR BUSINESS MONEY

IS YOUR BUSINESS BENEFITING FROM THE COST SAVINGS YOUR CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP BRINGS?

If you're a Finance Director, business owner or budget holder, you might see your teams networking, attending events and your goods and services being profiled to other members but; did you know that your membership can also save you money?

Below we have highlighted a number of the savings you have access to as a Chamber member.

HR & EMPLOYMENT

Our longstanding relationship with HR:4UK gives all members access to a FREE online management system which can be used to simplify your business' HR administration. In addition, you can receive a FREE cloud-based contract of employment, employee handbook and benefit from up to 30% savings on other services.

LEGAL EXPENSES INSURANCE

Business insurance can be expensive and complicated but, through your membership, you can take advantage of FREE legal expenses insurance (for businesses up to 249 employees) covering contract and health disputes, health and safety regulations and data protection. Delivered in partnership with Timmins Whittaker and Abbey Legal Protection, your business can also get UNLIMITED direct telephone access to a team of experienced solicitors and an extensive online legal document library.

REDUCE YOUR BUSINESS UTILITY & CONSUMPTION WITH A 15 MINUTE CONSULTATION

A 15-minute no obligation conversation with Control Energy Costs Ltd (CEC) could open the door to significant savings. CEC will discuss your energy requirements and assess and advise you on potential savings to be made alongside how new technologies could improve your business' energy efficiency. In addition, members can attend quarterly seminars to understand the latest trends around energy and utilities management.

20% OFF MANAGEMENT TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Our management training programme is a highly respected and valued course for managers of people or systems and processes, individuals new to the world of management or seasoned managers who want to make a step-change or are managing through a period of change. Over a 12-month

period, Wendyann Shapiro – Lotus Flower Consulting's award winning business coach working with clients across the world – takes participants through a journey of change, efficiency and discovery. The cost of the programme to members is £1595 + VAT per person.

UP TO 50% DISCOUNT ON EXPORT DOCUMENTATION

We provide exporters around the region with up to 50% discount on a number of export documentation services. Our team of export experts are able to guide you through the application process – meaning that you are able to export your products and services with confidence. This service is available by post and electronically whilst urgent consignments can be handled over the counter at our HQ in Wolverhampton.

FOREIGN EXCHANGE

From hedging strategies to forward contracts, Rational FX are on hand to help Chamber members of all sizes to make informed and smart decisions on how to best manage their international payments and save money at the same time with competitive rates and no hidden fees or charges.

BLACK COUNTRY TRAINING

Develop your teams with award winning professional trainers and benefit from a discounted rate on training topics, workshops and courses including social media, digital skills, bid writing and winning tenders, selling skills and improving presence and presentations.

ISO LITE

All businesses aspire to be ISO-recognised as this means that your systems and processes have attained best practice and are robust and controlled. For smaller businesses though, full ISO accreditation can feel out of reach or you want to be able to make the necessary improvements at a pace right for you. Chamber members receive a discount

on ISO LITE – giving you access to the documentation you need to support the growth and development of your business but without the requirement for auditing or timescales. You simply implement the elements you need at a time which is right for you.

SAVE 67% ROADSIDE BREAKDOWN COVER

Save up to 67% on business vehicle breakdown cover with the Chamber and the AA. Choose from a variety of different service levels which suit your business and, as this service is vehicle-based, you're covered no matter who is driving.

BUSINESS TRAVEL AND AIRPORT PARKING

We have teamed up with Airport Hotels and Parking in order to give our members a range of discounts on airport parking, access to airport lounges and hotels.

MINIMISE YOUR BUSINESS RISKS

How well do you know your customers and their financial situation? Have you ever stopped to consider how much of your profitability or your business continuity depends on the financial stability of your buyers? Parker Norfolk & Partners are a specialist team of credit brokers dedicated to removing a large part of that risk, be that the financial risk of insolvency and failure to pay, or the political risk which comes hand in hand with the export of goods and services

So, what are you waiting for? Contact us using the details below to find out more and start saving today.



[WWW.BLACKCOUNTRYCHAMBER.CO.UK](http://www.blackcountrychamber.co.uk)
MEMBERSHIP@BLACKCOUNTRYCHAMBER.CO.UK
 TEL: 0330 024 0820

CHAMBER MEETS WITH BEIS CITIES AND LOCAL GROWTH TEAM

In June, the Chamber's Director of External Affairs, Neil Anderson and Lobbying & Representation Officer, Dan Turner, met with representatives from BEIS Cities and Local Growth Team.

At Black Country Chamber, we believe it is crucial that we maintain fluent conversation with government departments. On the agenda for the day was Brexit, the importance of HS2, ensuring better promotion of the T Levels, helping businesses to better understand the Apprenticeship Levy, increased powers for the Small Business Commissioner in dealing with late payments and how to reduce bureaucracy in the planning system.

WEST MIDLANDS COMBINED AUTHORITY UPDATES MANUFACTURING FORUM ON T LEVELS

At the most recent Manufacturing Forum, the West Midlands Combined Authority provided an extensive update on the government's latest change to technical education – the T Level. Tony O'Callaghan, T Level Planning Manager, then answered a range of questions on the role of industry in shaping the T Level. BEIS were also present at the Forum, updating manufacturers on how to prepare for Brexit and what direct government support looks like.

TRANSPORT FORUM HEARS FROM HIGHWAYS ENGLAND AND NETWORK RAIL

The most recent Chamber Transport Forum saw guest speakers from Highways England and Network Rail. Highways England updated delegates on all major infrastructure projects in the region, with focus on the M5 Oldbury Viaduct work and M6 junction 10 upgrade. Similarly, Network Rail updated on the plans for the Bescot Sleeper Facility.

For more information on the Chamber's Transport Forum and to see how you can get involved

POLICY ROUND-UP

THE BLACK COUNTRY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE: WORKING HARD FOR OUR MEMBERS AROUND THE REGION



SANDWELL MP ROUNDTABLE HAILED A SUCCESS

As part of the Chamber's reengagement with local MPs, June saw the second in a series of MP engagement sessions, with the latest roundtable event taking place in Sandwell.

The panel included James Morris MP (Halesowen and Rowley Regis), the RT Hon John Spellar MP (Warley), Adrian Bailey MP (West Bromwich West) and Sandwell Council's Head of Planning, Jenna Langford.

The lively session saw debate on a variety of topics, from workplace diversity, to Brexit and local planning. These MP Engagement sessions are a fantastic way for local businesses to discuss local issues with their MPs. The next edition is due to take place in Walsall with a date to be confirmed.



MANUFACTURING ROADSHOW TAKES PLACE AT GTG TRAINING

July saw the hugely successful Chamber Manufacturing Roadshow take place at GTG Training in Wolverhampton.

A vibrant morning was bolstered by an extensive and diverse range of stand holders exhibiting their business support offers.

Service offerings including training and apprenticeships, right through to innovation and legal services, provided the morning with lively engagement between delegates and exhibitors and a great deal of useful advice being taken away from the event.

CHAMBER DELIVERS BREXIT WORKSHOP FOR PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES



On July 18th, the Black Country Chamber delivered a morning workshop for public sector employees in the Black Country. As well as hearing an update from Chamber Lobbying & Representation Officer, Dan Turner, delegates saw informative presentations and talks from Peter Wilding, Brexit Director at FBC Manby Bowdler, Amy Brokenshire, Associate in Employment Law at Higgs & Sons and BEIS Business Intelligence representative, Stuart Chapman.

The session ended with a panel-style audience Q & A, allowing delegates to ask any questions which hadn't been covered during the morning. The event forms part of the Chamber's funded work with the West Midlands Combined Authority, delivered in partnership with Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce and Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber.



ECONOMIC SURVEY WINNER ANNOUNCED

The Quarterly Economic Survey provides an overview to economists, policymakers and government about what businesses are thinking and feeling.

The winner of our second quarter prize draw was Peter Icke from Gould Singleton Architects who won tickets to the Black Country Living Museum. For more information about how you take part in the survey contact policy@blackcountrychamber.co.uk. Winners of the next survey's prize draw will receive an afternoon tea for two at The Mount, and you can read more about the hotel in this edition of Prosper.

CHAMBER PROVIDES EVIDENCE FOR TREASURY SELECT COMMITTEE

Recently, the Black Country Chamber provided evidence, through the British Chambers of Commerce, on regional imbalances in the UK. In the evidence, the Chamber pointed to the power of increased devolution, increased transport connectivity and investment and raising the attainment levels of Black Country residents with better understanding and control over education policy.

Also included in the feedback was the need for a common sense, business-friendly post-Brexit immigration system, which takes into account national wage disparity and the need to rethink the £30,000 lower-skilled wage cap from the Migration Advisory Committee's report into immigration policy.

WEST MIDLANDS CHAMBERS JOIN FORCES TO URGE GOVERNMENT TO INCREASE T LEVEL AWARENESS

Chambers from across the West Midlands have joined forces to urge the government to counteract confusion over the T Level. In a joint press release, Chief Executives from across the West Midlands Chambers reflected on data from a recent British Chambers survey. The survey data showed that only 5% of respondents had heard of the qualification. A combined 74% of respondents had either heard nothing at all or knew the qualification by name only. Corin Crane, Chief Executive of the Black Country Chamber said that this was at "crisis point."

EUROPE DIRECT INFORMATION CENTRE VISIT PLATINUM MEMBERS TO DISCUSS SETTLEMENT SCHEME

In June, as part of the Black Country Europe Direct Information Centre, Chamber Lobbying & Representation Officer, Dan Turner, visited Platinum member and Black Country manufacturer, JC Payne. During the lunchtime visit to the premises, Dan met with employees who were born in the EEA/EU and needed to better understand what the Home Office Settlement Scheme means for them.

ENJOY DISCOUNTS ON TRAINING FOR YOU, YOUR TEAMS AND YOUR BUSINESS

BLACK COUNTRY TRAINING IS A NEW PROGRAMME OF PROFESSIONAL COURSES COVERING A RANGE OF TOPICS AND BUSINESS AREAS DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT FIRMS AND INDIVIDUALS TO LEARN NEW SKILLS. MEMBERS OF THE BLACK COUNTRY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ARE ENTITLED TO DISCOUNTS ON MANY OF THE COURSES ON OFFER.

The topics support a number of key business areas and a number of the programmes have the added bonus of counting towards an individual's CPD.

MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT UNLEASH YOUR POTENTIAL

Suitable for managers of people, systems, processes or businesses; this highly-respected and valued programme consists of 12 full day learning sessions delivered over a 12-month period. Areas covered include an introduction to management, effective communications, time management, team dynamics, building commercial awareness, presentation skills, project management, negotiation, and coaching. The course is delivered by the award-winning development coach Wendyann Shapiro who works with clients across the world to drive personal growth, development and change.

MEMBERS COST PER PERSON IS £1595 +VAT
NON-MEMBERS, £1995 +VAT

DEVELOPING YOUR SMALL BUSINESS

If you're an entrepreneur or run a new business and want to get it off to a successful start you can join others as expert trainer Lynne Jones from Thomas Jones Consultancy help you to get the basics right from business planning and finance to marketing and sales growth. This programme consists of five full day workshops over a five-month period:

MEMBERS COST PER PERSON IS £295 +VAT
NON-MEMBERS, £995 +VAT

CREATING COMPELLING TENDERS AND WINNING BIDS

For businesses whose growth depends on securing new business through winning contracts and tenders, we have teamed up with the renowned Klick Business Solutions headed up by Andrea Childs who work with companies across the UK to train, write and deliver successful tender applications and align their products and services to a client's needs. For those with little or no experience in completing tenders or sales proposals, there is a Level 1 course available.

MEMBERS COST PER PERSON IS £245 +VAT
NON-MEMBERS, £295 +VAT

A Level 2 course is ideal for businesses and individuals who want to write stronger bids, refine their existing systems and deliver more powerful, tailored documents.

MEMBERS COST PER PERSON IS £295 +VAT
NON-MEMBERS, £335 +VAT

The Level 3 course is designed to help build skills around buyer presentations and improving your chances at a tender interview or pitch.

MEMBERS COST PER PERSON IS £495 +VAT
NON-MEMBERS, £595 +VAT

SOCIAL MEDIA & DIGITAL SKILLS

Social media has changed the way businesses and professionals promote themselves and these social media skills delivered by awarding winning JC Social Media enable participants to better understand platforms, content and how they can work for them. Courses include: Fundamentals of Social Media for people currently using social media but want to get more from it or those new to social media, LinkedIn for Lead Generation – for owners, sales managers or business development professionals who want to use this powerful system to connect with prospects; Using Facebook for Advertising – designed to help businesses get the most out of this paid platform.

All courses:

MEMBERS COST PER PERSON IS £180 +VAT
NON-MEMBERS, £210 +VAT

BLACK COUNTRY INTERNATIONAL FOR EXPORTERS AND IMPORTERS

We have a number of courses available for those businesses who trade globally including Customs Declaration Training, for customs agents or customs intermediaries trading with the EU (a range of learning options are available starting at:

MEMBERS COST PER PERSON IS £190 +VAT
NON-MEMBERS, £230 +VAT

Export Letters of Credit – for businesses who regularly trade or handle letters of credit and want to reduce risks, bank charges, and improve efficiency:

MEMBERS COST PER PERSON IS £200 +VAT
NON-MEMBERS, £250 +VAT

Export Documentation Workshop – a practical guide covering all the necessary requirements that

exporters need to follow:

MEMBERS COST PER PERSON IS £200 +VAT
NON-MEMBERS, £250 +VAT

International Operations & Procedures (ITOPS) – a double-certified and nationally recognised qualification:

MEMBERS COST PER PERSON IS £1440 +VAT
NON-MEMBERS, £2120 +VAT

SELLING MORE & SALES DEVELOPMENT

Whether you're new to a sales role or are a seasoned sales professional looking for new approaches and techniques, these courses delivered in partnership with Chill Pepper Development, experienced sales coaches working with both SME's and major blue-chip companies include:

Essential Sales Skills – for anybody who has a sales element to their job or deals with customers:

MEMBERS COST PER PERSON IS £285 +VAT
NON-MEMBERS, £325 +VAT

Advanced Sales Skills – for more experienced individuals who want to hone their skills using more advanced tools and techniques:

MEMBERS COST PER PERSON IS £305 +VAT
NON-MEMBERS, £365 +VAT

Making an Impact at Events & Networking – establishing and nurturing business relationships:

MEMBERS COST PER PERSON IS £180 +VAT
NON-MEMBERS, £210 +VAT

IMPACT, PRESENCE & COMMUNICATION

How we present ourselves is vital to building and maintaining a great rapport and sustaining a successful relationship. The Chamber has teamed up with Earl Lynch from the Kairos Experience for Communicating with Confidence – an interactive workshop to develop higher levels of influencing and engagement:

MEMBERS COST PER PERSON IS £285 +VAT
NON-MEMBERS, £325 +VAT

Being Present and Productive – for individuals who want to gain a better understanding of themselves and others:

MEMBERS COST PER PERSON IS £285 +VAT
NON-MEMBERS, £325 +VAT

BLACK COUNTRY INTERNATIONAL SPONSOR ANNOUNCED

FORRESTERS, A LEADING PATENT AND TRADEMARK FIRM, HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED AS HEADLINE SPONSOR FOR THE BLACK COUNTRY INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME.

The programme championed by the Chamber is designed to deliver essential services, training and information to exporters and importers across the region.

Forresters has been part of the Midlands business community since 1884 and, during that time, has provided support for thousands of companies looking to protect their ideas and designs by possessing the correct rights for patents, trademarks, designs and copyright.

Among the partners at Forresters is Emma Johnson, who grew up in Wolverhampton and knows how vital it is for companies in the region to have the correct IP rights, especially when it comes to exporting goods. She said, "Forresters has strong ties to the Black Country, we appreciate the history and aspirations of the thousands of innovative businesses in the region, and are excited about lending our support, as they seek to grow and move into new overseas markets - particularly around intellectual property rights. Possessing the correct rights for patents, trademarks, designs and copyright provides a competitive advantage and a reward for creativity.

"Effectively exploiting those rights gives you a head start on your competitors in reaching customers as you enter new markets, which can convince investors that your product or service is a good investment. Our UK chartered and European patent and trademark attorneys have a wealth of experience of the laws and regulations which apply in each country and we have developed a strong network of foreign associates.

"This means we are well placed to advise and protect businesses expanding into new markets, as well as answer your questions and help you avoid common pitfalls. We are your local 'one stop shop' for all of your intellectual



property requirements and queries, regardless of the countries you operate in. Forresters is proud to be headline sponsors of Black Country International and we look forward to working with you soon."

Karen Webb, Director of Business Services at the Black Country Chamber of Commerce said, "The Black Country has a strong heritage of making products which are exported around the world. We're delighted that Forresters is sponsoring Black Country International - a range of services carefully selected and designed to support regional businesses to trade across borders.

"With its expertise and knowledge of global markets and a comprehensive understanding of intellectual property and international patent processes, we know Forresters will bring robust knowledge and insights to this initiative."

f FORRESTERS | FORRESTERS.CO.UK

OUR NEW MEMBERS

BIZSPACE LTD

KSM CONSTRUCTION & PRESERVATION LTD

ACF HOWELL METAL FINISHERS

HIMLEY COUNTRY HOTEL

FRETFOIL LTD

HELLERMANNTYTON LTD

ANCOL PET PRODUCTS LIMITED

MIDTHERM FLUE SYSTEMS LTD

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GEORGE SALTER ACADEMY

BLOXWICH ACADEMY

BEAUFORT FINANCIAL

GILLS FUNERAL CARE

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OXYGEN COACHING COMPANY

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THE FLASHINGS FACTORY

K-TEAS CAKES

OUR NEW MEMBERS

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LATHAM'S STEEL SECURITY DOORSETS LTD

BE BOLD MEDIA LIMITED

RIGHTON BLACKBURNS LIMITED

BISHOP MILNER CATHOLIC COLLEGE

ART OF LIFE

THE CHAMBER PLATINUM GROUP WELCOMES TWO NEW MEMBERS

THE PLATINUM GROUP WHICH IS AN EXCLUSIVE PLATFORM FOR SENIOR LEADERS TO COME TOGETHER TO SHARE BEST PRACTICE, INSIGHTS AND NEW IDEAS HAS WELCOMED TWO NEW ADDITIONS.



Mechanical contractor, Lord Combustion and Citroen and MG dealer, Autobase now take their place with other strategic leaders from around the region to enjoy a range of member benefits as well as peer-to-peer learning sessions facilitated by a business coach throughout the year.

Formed in 1982, Oldbury-based Lord Combustion specialises in the service and commission of gas and oil-fired equipment and have enjoyed continuous growth and success over the years and has diversified to support a range of electrical building services. Managing Director, Stuart Smith said, "Lord Combustion are based in the heart of the Black Country and I'm looking forward to working with other members of The Platinum Group to share best practice and work with like-minded businesses in a peer to peer learning environment."

Autobase has been an award-winning Citroen supplier since 2012 and has more recently become a dealer for the MG brand. Based in Wednesbury, Autobase is headed up by Black Country Chamber of Commerce Board Member Ali Allibhai who has developed the business to sell new and used vehicles and commercial vehicles and offers a complete MOT testing and servicing facility. Ali said, "As a long-standing member of the Chamber and as a board member, it is an honour to be a part of The Platinum Group. I am looking forward to connecting and working with other Platinum Group members to share best practice. Black Country Chamber of Commerce has a great wealth of resource in

talented members and I am hoping to learn and be inspired by the success of some of the businesses in the Black Country."

Gail Arnold Head of Premium Membership at the Chamber said, "We are thrilled to have these great members join The Platinum Group. I am absolutely delighted to be working with Ali from Autobase Citroen & MG, which is a fantastic business based in the industrial heartland of the region and will play a role in representing the Automotive sector in The Group. Also, the addition of Lord Combustion Services will further add to the experience and background of The Group and help to create some great sector-based best practice learning as Stuart and his team work tirelessly to deliver their commitment to the environment, corporate responsibility and health & safety."

i PLATINUM GROUP MEMBERSHIP
GAILARNOLD@BLACKCOUNTRYCHAMBER.CO.UK

BLACK COUNTRY WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP LAUNCHES WITH GREAT INTEREST

BUSINESSWOMEN FROM ACROSS THE REGION GATHERED FOR BLACK COUNTRY WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP, LAUNCHED BY THE CHAMBER TO COINCIDE WITH THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S THEME, BALANCE FOR BETTER.



Established to highlight the contribution of women in leadership roles make to business, promote role models for the next generation and support and inspire females in business aiming for future leadership roles.

The forum works to highlight the continuing gender pay gap, lobby for more flexible working practices and aims to promote diversity across the region.

Women in leadership are still in the minority, with a recent Fawcett Society report highlighting that the West Midlands economy is not working for the region's female population. The gender employment gap at 12% is higher than in the UK.

The report, 'Where Are the Women', which was commissioned in association with West Midlands Women's Voices, combines data analysis from the 2018 Gender Pay Gap Reports, commissioned public polling of the West Midlands Combined Authority region and best practice evidence.

Women who live in the West Midlands are far less likely than men to hold leadership roles - just 32% of women compared to 68% men.

The measure of pay in senior roles across the West Midlands also differs, for women the average take home pay is £36,665 per annum, compared to men at £52,539.

In short if women's representation amongst the 187,000 senior leadership roles in the

WMCA, was equal to men's, and women were paid the same, women would stand to gain by £2.7 billion per year.

West Midlands Mayor, Andy Street, has already thrown his backing behind the Chamber initiative stating, "It will help to inspire talent and it is vital that businesses embrace diversity of all kinds."

Julie Cunningham, first female Chair of the Black Country Chamber of Commerce in its 160-year history said, "I am proud to be supporting this new initiative. We've had some amazing feedback from those who attended our first event. We must focus our energy on promoting the amazing women leaders we have in the Black Country region, encourage them to come forward as spokespeople, inspire the future generation and raise awareness of the obstacles we still incur including the gender pay gap."

"We have identified so many women in our region heading up some of the largest companies, councils, charities and centres of education, we want to shout about their work, highlight them as role models and mentor women coming through."

Interested in joining the Chamber's Women in Leadership forum?

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THE BLACK COUNTRY

BLACK BY DAY RED BY NIGHT

AN IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE FROM START TO FINISH, BLACK COUNTRY LIVING MUSEUM IS AN AWARD-WINNING OPEN-AIR MUSEUM THAT TELLS THE STORY OF THE FIRST INDUSTRIALISED LANDSCAPE IN BRITAIN.

Black Country Living Museum is one of Europe's leading open-air museums. Since opening in 1978, over 9.8 million visitors have immersed themselves in the sights, sounds and smells of the past.

Today, visitors can explore 26 acres of shops, houses and industrial areas where historic characters bring to life the stories of some of the most hard-working, ingenious and influential people you could ever hope to meet.

The Museum takes inspiration from Elihu Burritt's famous description of the area, when, as the American Consul to Birmingham in 1868, said "the Black Country, black by day and red by night, cannot be matched for vast and varied production, by any other space of equal radius on the surface of the globe."

It is this turning point in Britain's national story that the Museum celebrates, while drawing parallels with people's lives today with a record-breaking 355,054 people visiting during its 40th anniversary year in 2018. As well as attracting record numbers of visitors during the daytime, the Museum's special evening events have become increasingly popular.

This year's 1940s Weekend saw 10,000 visitors experience the Black Country of wartime Britain.

This annual event has become a real fixture on the 1940s circuit with its jam-packed programme including performances by Britain's Got Talent Finalists the D-Day Darlings, as well as military and civilian re-enactments.

Peaky Blinder's Nights have also been a huge success; with the Museum increasing the number of events in its calendar to meet demand – all of which are now sold out as visitors enter into the roaring twenties to discover the murky underworld of the Peaky Blinders. As a key filming location for the epic BBC1 drama, visitors can explore the set of Charlie's Yard and follow in the footsteps of the series' most iconic characters.

In addition to these high-profile events, the Museum's Halloween and Christmas Seasons are a huge draw for families; with street entertainment, historic characters and live music on offer as visitors explore gas-lit cobbled streets.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

The Museum's next major development is currently underway thanks to confirmation of £9.4m of funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, alongside funding from the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership and Arts Council England.

The £23m project BCLM: Forging Ahead will see the Museum expand by a third, transforming the site with a major historic development focused on the period 1940s-1960s. The Museum will translocate, recreate and replicate key buildings from the area reflecting the lives and stories of people who lived in the Black Country during this time.

The buildings include:

- **WEST BROMWICH GAS SHOWROOM**
(West Bromwich)
- **WEST BROMWICH BUILDING SOCIETY**
(Smethwick)
- **MARSH & BAXTER'S BUTCHER SHOP**
(Brierley Hill)
- **ELEPHANT & CASTLE PUB**
(Wolverhampton)
- **E. MINETT LADIES CLOTHES SHOP**
(Wednesbury)
- **NHS CLINIC - INFANT WELFARE CENTRE**
(Wolverhampton)
- **WOODSIDE LIBRARY**
(Dudley)
- **STOURBRIDGE RD CO-OP**
(Halesowen)
- **J H LAVENDER & CO. ALUMINIUM FOUNDRY**
(West Bromwich)

Alongside the new town, a contemporary visitor centre will provide a juxtaposition against the historic site. This will see the Museum 'turn its face' to Castle Hill and reposition the car park and Visitor Welcome route.

The Museum's current Rolfe Street Entrance Building will be re-purposed and refurbished as a state-of-the-art Learning Centre and an Industrial Learning Space will be created at the heart of the site. Together, they will enhance the Museum's capacity to deliver learning activities for over 80,000 school children a year.



These developments will provide a 'stage' on which to explore questions around themes including how globalisation impacted trade and industry; and the origins of the region's richly diverse population, each drawing parallels to how the region continues to change and innovate.

BCLM: Forging Ahead will create a truly world-class heritage attraction at the heart of the Black Country. It will enable BCLM to welcome in the region of 500,000 visitors per year, expand significantly, and most importantly improve the visitor experience.

Museum Chief Executive, Andrew Lovett, said: 'We want to expand and improve our visitors' experience, enable more people to understand the true significance of the Black Country's heritage, and in doing so play a major role in the wider regeneration of Dudley

by increasing our visitor numbers from 300,000 to 500,000 per year.'

Ninder Johal, Board Member of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) adds: "This project will play a major role in the regeneration of Dudley - strengthening the visitor economy, creating circa 143 jobs within our local area and raising the profile of the region as a place to live, work, learn, visit and invest."

BCLM: Forging Ahead will commence in summer 2019, and be completed in 2022.

i BCLM: FORGING AHEAD
WWW.BCLM.COM/FORGINGAHEAD

o PHOTOGRAPHY
ROSANNA BROOKS | @ROSANNA_B88

NEW APPOINTMENTS

YOUR GUIDE TO THE REGION'S NEW FACES AND THOSE WITH NEW CHALLENGES AHEAD



Sue Allen | DEPUTY DISTRICT JUDGE - MIDLAND CIRCUIT

An experienced clinical negligence lawyer at West Midlands' law firm Higgs & Sons has been appointed a Deputy District Judge on the Midlands Circuit.

Sue Allen successfully completed a rigorous application process and following in-depth training and 'sitting in' days - shadowing an experienced judge - hopes to preside over her first case before the end of the year. "I was delighted to receive the news that I had been selected," said Sue. "It is a highly competitive process involving online assessments, interview, role playing and background scrutiny."

Associate Solicitor Sue joined Higgs & Sons more than 10 years ago with a background in advising defendants in clinical negligence claims.

Alyson Rochelle | ADVERTISING & SPONSORSHIP - BLACK COUNTRY CHAMBER

Alyson joined the External Affairs Team in May with over 20 years experience in business to business sales, gained in a variety of roles and sectors.

Overseeing advertising and sponsorship sales for the Chamber on a number of initiatives, including Prosper, Alyson joins the Chamber at an exciting time. A refresh of the organisation's external brand is accompanied by the relaunch of Prosper Magazine and a host of new promotional opportunities across a broad range of platforms."



Chris Reeves | OPERATIONS DIRECTOR - IN-COMM TRAINING

One of the West Midlands leading training providers has announced a new senior management team, as it looks to capitalise on recent investment and a record year of performance.

In-Comm Training, which has supported more than 2500 people with apprenticeships and upskilling opportunities in 2018, has promoted Chris Reeves to Operations Director, overseeing the further expansion of academies in Aldridge, Bridgnorth and Shrewsbury.

The former member of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers will join Directors Colin Mills, Geoff Jones and Bekki Phillips on the senior management team, with the latter moving to Managing Director.

Adam Johnson | COMMERCIAL LITIGATOR - HIGGS & SONS

A former musician and antique jewellery expert who quit both industries to pursue a career in law has joined Black Country firm Higgs & Sons.

Adam Johnson, a commercial litigator with experience of acting on complex, high value disputes, joins the Dispute Resolution Team. After graduating from the University of Sheffield in 2000, Adam went to work in his family's retail jewellery business for six years, specialising in antiques and diamonds. But in 2006 Adam gave it all up to study law.



Michael McKie | BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER - WOLVERHAMPTON RACECOURSE

With business booming at the racecourse the team have welcomed new Business Development Manager, Michael McKie, to develop and expand corporate race day hospitality, event hire, partnership and sponsorship agreements.

Michael said, "It really is an exciting time for us here at the racecourse, it is now a very popular venue in Wolverhampton and guests are excited to see what events we are hosting throughout the year, I'm excited to see what the next few months have to offer".



GREEN SHOOTS APPEARING ON HOSPITAL HORIZON

WRITES BEVERLEY NIELSEN, WITH THE BIGGEST A&E DEPARTMENT IN EUROPE; 670 BEDS AND 13 OPERATING THEATRES



It was a huge shock to the Black Country and it's business community when Carillion collapsed.

Headquartered in Wolverhampton the company left not only a pile of debt but, as the main contractor for the new Midland Metropolitan Hospital, their demise led to a massive hole in construction plans for this shiny new beacon of integrated healthcare overseen by the board of Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Hospitals Trust.

Since Carillion's collapse at the start of 2018, works have now recommenced. The Trust named Balfour Beatty as the preferred bidder to complete the building, so vital to the wellbeing of our community and due to open in 2022.

As a member of the Midland Met Fundraising Campaign Leadership Committee, headed up by Peter Salt of Salts Healthcare, we are acutely aware of the need for this new hospital. Parts of Sandwell and West Birmingham suffer from some of the highest levels of deprivation in the country, with Sandwell in the top 4% most deprived local authorities in England (EID, 2015).

The health needs of the local population (PHE, 2016) include:

- Infant mortality rates are 67% higher than national average, and 28% of under 16s live in poverty
- 3 in 5 boys aged 5 - 11 are predicted to be overweight or obese by 2020 (OHA, 2016)
- One in three people have a long-term condition affecting their lives - for example, recorded diabetes is +34% higher than the national average
- Black and minority ethnic groups have poorer access to health, with a higher percentage attending emergency services
- Adult physical inactivity is rated amongst the worst in the UK

Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS employs over 6,000 people, responsible for the care of 530,000 people from across North & West Birmingham and Sandwell; one in six patients are children.

Over 5,500 babies are born in the area each year, with almost 710,000 outpatients seen by staff. Over 200,000 patients attend the hospital's emergency departments last year - almost a 5% rise on the previous year.

In response to this, Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust set out major changes in service provisions.

Identifying the need to prioritise acute services into one, centralised, fit-for-purpose, technologically advanced premises, enables all the services to be better located in the community and improve care.

Plans for the new hospital emerged and a site identified for the new Midland Metropolitan Hospital bringing together emergency and acute healthcare for both adults and children onto a single site.

Located on 16.76 acres of the former GKN site at Grove Lane, Smethwick, this project is transforming this brownfield land into 80,000 m² of new hospital space.

The A&E department - one of the biggest in Europe - will replace emergency care facilities at City Hospital, and Sandwell A&E will become an Urgent Care Centre. It will be the nearest adult hospital to the centre of Birmingham.

It is a massive undertaking affecting thousands of lives and representing a major capital investment of over £475m. The Midland Met will provide capacity to support 200,000 patients per year. It will

house the highest quality facilities to provide the best patient experience – more than 670 beds and 13 operating theatre suites, as well as modern diagnostic equipment, sustaining top quality, acute services for an increasing population seven days a week.

The Midland Met will also provide significant regeneration opportunities contributing to improving the health of the local community with almost 50% of this population aged 29 or younger - representing the need to generate future employment opportunities for young people not in education, training or employment. The area ranks 1st in England for the number of residents born outside of the UK - recognising that stronger social cohesion links need to be created.

It also ranks 2nd in England for the highest number of private rented households - highlighting a need to generate greater wealth and opportunity for large numbers of people living here.

SANDWELL AND WEST BIRMINGHAM NHS TRUST'S REGISTERED CHARITY ARM, YOUR TRUST CHARITY, HAS COMMITTED TO A FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN OF A MINIMUM £2MILLION.

The vision is to make Midland Met not just a hospital, but a community hub. The campaign, which I am proud to be involved with, is looking to secure funds, with plans to deliver benefits from the new hospital site for people across our local community and adding to the experience of patients, their carers, visitors and staff.

The campaign envisages offering additional galleries, exhibition space, gardens and play areas within the Midland Met hospital site, giving all visitors a place to reflect and relax.

A 5th floor winter garden will hold performances, lectures and seminars engaging with the local community through a summer concert programme.

Modern, comfortable furnishings and facilities, exceeding NHS specifications, will be provided for outpatients and the paediatrics department will house custom-made vinyl art works - designed by local schoolchildren - to inspire and engage young visitors and inpatients.

The campaign will also raise funds to add extra research nurses, pharmacists and analysts over the next five years to pioneer new treatments at the new Midland Met.

The opportunity is to now do more than NHS resources alone can enable, by adding to and enhancing the visitor and community experience.



We want this to be the best new hospital in the country and more importantly to help improve the life expectations for thousands of people across the Black Country who are not getting their fair share.

If you would like to get involved and support our Midland Met fundraising campaign, please email midlandmet@nhs.net or call the team on 0121 507 5196.

Cllr Beverley Nielsen is Associate Professor, Institute for Design & Economic Acceleration, IDEA, at Birmingham City University and a member of the Midland Metropolitan Hospital Fundraising Campaign Leadership Committee.

PHOTOGRAPHY | WWW.EDWARDWILLIAMSARCHITECTS.COM



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PROSPER MAGAZINE 71

LEGAL ROUND-ROBIN

THURSFIELDS' ADVICE AFTER CLEANER WINS CHALLENGE TO EMPLOYER'S £500,000 ESTATE

A CLEANER'S COURT VICTORY IN CHALLENGING HER EMPLOYER'S £500,000 ESTATE SHOWS THE IMPORTANCE OF TAKING EXPERT LEGAL ADVICE IF THERE ARE CONCERNS OVER A WILL'S VALIDITY, THURSFIELDS SOLICITORS HAS ADVISED.

The advice from the leading Midlands law firm comes after Leonora Da Costa won a High Court battle to overturn a will that disinherited her from being the main beneficiary of ex-Savoy waiter Harold Tickner's fortune.

The cleaner was written into Mr Tickner's fortune in 2014 but just 16 days before his death in 2015 he gave his £500,000 Harrow home to his nephew in a new will cutting out Mrs Da Costa.

Now the High Court has ruled Mr Tickner lacked mental capacity when the later document was drawn up and that there was "no real doubt as to the validity" of the 2014 will – which means Mrs Da Costa could inherit around £415,000 of assets.

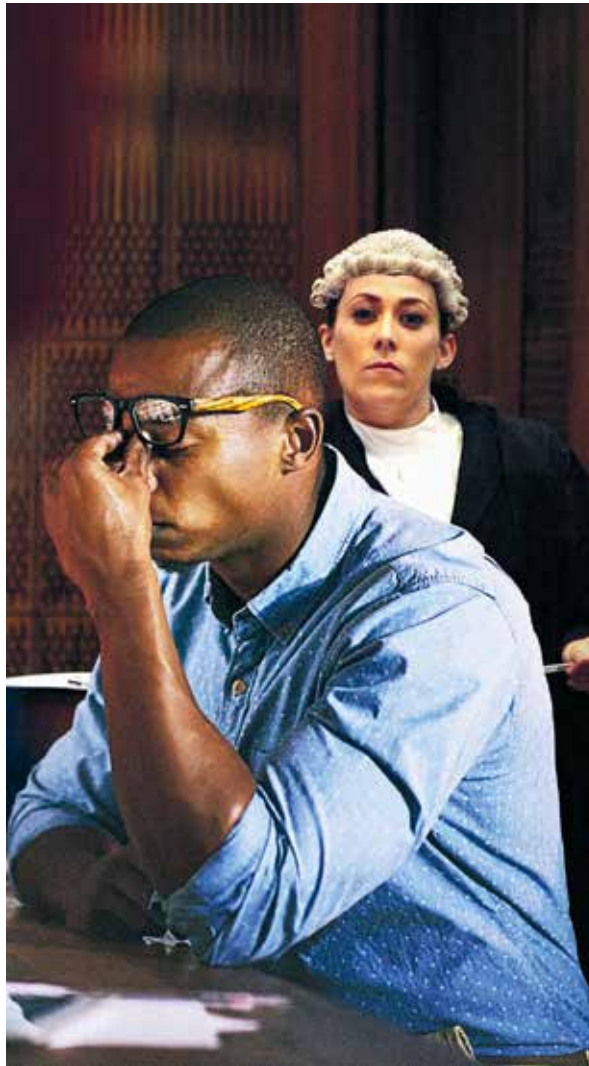
Georgia Morris, a trainee solicitor in Thursfields' Dispute Resolution department, said: "Mrs Da Costa's success highlights the importance of taking legal advice where concerns over gifts in wills arise.

"Legal experts will be best placed to advise on the evidence needed to support such arguments, which are often the deciding factors in such cases.

"Mrs Da Costa's success was in large part due to the expert evidence put forward by her lawyers at trial.

"This convinced the judge that Mr Tickner did not have the necessary mental capacity to have known what he was doing when he changed his will days prior to his death."

Katherine Ellis, a senior associate solicitor in Thursfields' Kidderminster office, added: "Controversial gifts and wills are



often called into question, and none more so than wills that have been executed shortly before someone has passed away.

"It may be that a terminal illness causes a person to reconsider who should receive their hard-earned assets, however it's an unfortunate reality that such circumstances can leave a person vulnerable to undue influence, causing them to make gifts they would not have made without such pressures."

This article is intended for general information purposes and does not constitute legal advice.

If you have concerns over gifts or wills made by loved ones or would like to find out more about the grounds available to challenge a will, please contact:

THURSFIELDS | [KELLIS@THURSFIELDS.CO.UK](mailto:kellis@thursfields.co.uk) | 0121 647 5419

BUSINESS GROWTH IS A TOP PRIORITY FOR CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON HELD ITS BIGGEST ANNUAL SPOTLIGHT TO SUPPORT BUSINESS GROWTH - OFFERING TWO WEEKS OF EVENTS, WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING TO HELP BUSINESSES TO START, GROW AND SUCCEED.

The city's annual business programme from Wednesday 18 September until Wednesday 2 October was sponsored and supported by local businesses and partners.

John Wood DL, Director of Liberty Industries Group Ltd and Chair of the city's Economic Growth Board, said: "As a business leader in the city I am pleased to have played my part in shaping the annual programme of support, to help ensure businesses are geared up for continued success."

Business people registered in their thousands to take advantage of the free events in the programme which were specifically designed



to appeal to all businesses, whatever their type and size, from supply chain opportunities and international trading support to start-up help and bespoke training.

Councillor Harman Banger, City of Wolverhampton Council Cabinet Member for City Economy, said: "The council is proud to have co-ordinated the city's 6th annual business programme, which is a first-class example of a strong partnership working to support the local economy. It demonstrates our commitment to supporting business growth.

"I would like to thank everyone who has

contributed to this year's programme.

"Our pro-business attitude continues to attract new investment and secure business expansion, which together are generating thousands of jobs."

Save the date now for the 2020 Business Breakfast – the city's most important business conference of the year – on Thursday 24 September.

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THE BLACK COUNTRY BUSINESS FESTIVAL

ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S LARGEST BUSINESS EVENTS COMPLETES A SUCCESSFUL SECOND YEAR.

After two exceptionally busy and very exciting weeks, the 2019 Black Country Business Festival fortnight came to a close with a record number of events and huge footfall from the region's business community.

Following two exceptionally busy and very exciting weeks, regional businesses celebrated the success of this year's event closing event held at the Black Country Living Museum. The second edition of the Festival saw nearly 4000 attendees over a packed fortnight in May attending 113 events - with nearly a quarter of all taking part in activities throughout the Festival coming from outside the region.

At the closing event, The University of Wolverhampton won the 'Most Engaged' award for running 13 brilliant events, producing their own mini-Festival brochure, creating a dedicated web page and for being proactive on social media.

The 'Best Creative Event' went to 'Barry Potter and the Chamber of Commerce' run by Flying Ducks; whilst the Black Country Housing Group won the 'Best Social Impact' award for their event, 'A Rich Source of Talent', which aimed to show the employable skills of ex-forces personnel.

The final award, 'Most in Demand', went to the Grand Theatre for their 'Public Speaking with Confidence' event which filled up so quickly that more tickets needed to be made available.

Stand-out statistics of the 2019 Festival included an incredible marketing reach of nearly 60 million and 302,000 social media impressions. Over 1000 different businesses were involved and 87% saying that the Business Festival had a positive impact on them or their business.

The Festival was initiated in 2018 by the Chamber to benefit the people and businesses in the Black Country; stimulate growth and shine a spotlight on regional successes.

Chamber Chief Executive, Corin Crane said, "We enjoyed an amazing fortnight of brilliant events once again this year. Witnessing everything from speed networking, expos, creative and cultural demonstrations to factory showroom tours and various sporting networking days. We welcomed the heads of the country's top business support organisations, leading AI legal futurists, the Department for International Trade and... Barry Potter! It just doesn't get any better than that!

"In all seriousness, events this year have been mind-blowing - and 98% of people agreed, having rated the events they attended as good to excellent. We're also seeing new people with 58% telling us they have not been to a business event in the last six months.

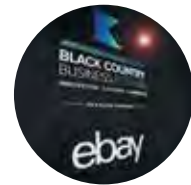
"So, from the Chamber's perspective, the Festival is doing everything we wanted it to and more.

"So much so, we've already set the dates for 2020: Monday 11 to Friday 22 May 2020 and we want everyone to put it in their diaries now and get thinking about how they can get involved."

One way to become an integral part of the Festival is through partnering or sponsoring.

This year's headline partner was on-line retailer, eBay, which launched its first UK, 'Retail





Revival' scheme in Wolverhampton in November 2018 to help local retailers to start trading online to complement their existing shops.

Rob Hattrell, Vice President at eBay UK, said, "This year's Black Country Business Festival has been fantastic. It's been a truly enlightening event that's been great for local entrepreneurs and businesses in the region.

"During the Festival, eBay opened the doors to its first ever UK concept store in Wolverhampton, where we showcased the products of some of the brilliant local sellers participating in our Retail Revival programme.

"eBay takes great pride in nurturing local businesses and the pop-up 'Home Grown by Wolverhampton' gave visitors the ability to connect and learn more about their local retailers, whilst demonstrating the positive impact the programme has already had in helping these businesses flourish.

"We've loved partnering with this thriving region and are excited to build on this success and to see what we can achieve over the next six months."

Partners for this year's Festival included: DY5 - Dudley's Business and Innovation Enterprise Zone, Talbots Law, the University of Wolverhampton, Birmingham Airport, Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership and Black Country Growth Hub.

Sponsors for the Festival were Casino 36 and M6 Toll. Supporters were Wolverhampton Racecourse; accountancy firm, Crowe; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Think Sandwell, Gecko Programmes and Walsall Council. Media partners have been Signal 107, the Express and Star, outdoor media experts, Elonex and Infonote Datasystems.



THE THRILL MAKERS

THE KINGSWINFORD FIRM BRINGING EXCITEMENT TO MILLIONS AROUND THE WORLD



On a mission to create out of this world experiences, Kingswinford based Simworx have a well-deserved reputation as innovators bringing thrills and excitement to visitors in theme parks and attractions across the globe.

A leading supplier of 3D and 4D effects theatres whose customers also include major museums, zoos, visitor attractions and aquariums; we caught up with Simworx Managing Director, Terry Monkton to understand more about the magic behind their work with exports reaching from Malaysia to Dubai and New Zealand to Mexico.



IMMERSIVE TUNNELS, STARGAZER MOTION RIDES, AGV DARK RIDES, THE COBRA MOTION RIDE, ROBOCOASTER, FLYING THEATRES AND THE PARADROP ARE ALL IN A DAY'S WORK FOR THE TALENTED TEAM OF CREATIVES AND SOFTWARE ENGINEERS BASED ON THE PENNETT INDUSTRIAL ESTATE



Providing clients with full turnkey solutions, including an immense library of 3D/4D films, the company has grown to create more bespoke projects that continue to provide truly magical experiences, whilst championing Great British creativity, design, technology and manufacturing.

A global outlook is key to Simworx's success and is central to Terry's approach recognised by his recent appointment as a Department of Industry & Trade Regional Export Champion for the Midlands Area and recipient of EY Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

"There is strong demand for our products in overseas markets and through strategised exhibiting at a number of global exhibitions our business has grown rapidly in recent years. Whilst we are 95% export sales, probably a similar percentage of our supply chain is UK based so funds received from overseas are retained and channelled through the UK economy.

"Using the knowledge and expertise of the DIT, the Black Country Chamber of Commerce, UKEFG and our banks has been paramount to our growth planning. Our order book has grown from £6 million in 2016 to £41 million in February this year and we have recently signed contracts for new attractions in Toronto, Mexico, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia."

The Simworx team has grown from 25 to 55 in just three years as the company's global prominence has increased. Using their incredible skills and imagination to ensure that only the best quality productions are paired with

attractions means the company's highly regarded skills are in demand, producing award winning designs and global installations for the likes of DreamWorks, Parques Reunidos, Ferrari Land and Oceanographic, Spain; National Geographic, China; Bollywood Parks and Motiongate, Dubai; Parc Spirou and Futuroscope, France; Movie Park, Germany and Universe in Denmark, as well as for UK entertainment venues, Thorpe Park, Paultons Park and Drayton Manor Park.

Growing in a fast-paced industry, the company ensures it has the best people ready to take on any new challenges. Their aim; simply to have the latest designs and technology to create any attraction with mind blowing results for clients and attraction enthusiasts to enjoy around the globe.

Terry said, "From the start we have embraced utilising the very latest technology prevalent in Audio Visual Design, Special effects and of course various types of ride system to 'move' the visitor during an amazing audio-visual experience. The 4D Effects Cinema was our very first product, that at the time – was only ever seen at parks like Universal Studios and Disney. We were successful in deploying this product to the much larger – privately owned theme park and visitor attraction sector. As an added benefit, because it was scalable, we were happy to produce a 24 seat 4D Cinema, as well as a 300-seat version – so it had an appeal to venues of all sizes and budgets.

"Following our success with the 4D Cinema, we continued to invest in developing new types of media attractions. The Cobra and Stargazer very quickly followed, but it was the Immersive Tunnel that was a game changer for us. A truly amazing ride whereby 30 or 60 people load into a themed motion simulator- imagine a large jeep! From there the simulator moves along a short track into a huge almost 360° degree 3D screen that totally immerses the riders so all they see is an amazing fantasy world that they could never experience in real life. This ride was used by Merlin to transport visitors on a 'London Bus' to a 'Land, Far Far Away', where they encounter Kung Fu Panda, Toothless and various other Dreamworks characters along the way. Other versions of the ride have seen riders transported to Islands, populated by Dinosaurs".

Subsequent rides developed by the company include its new AGV Dark Ride Vehicle, a futuristic 8-seater vehicle that transports guests in a multi-screen and SFX laden room without requiring track or power cables. Plus, a Flying Theatre that lifts riders into the air - 7 or 14 metres with their legs dangling free, providing a flying sensation in front of a huge domed screen.

With sales forecast to reach £25 million by 2020, the company has worked on increasing its export presence as well as strengthen its working capital,

changed its business model from manufacturing to design and outsourcing via its local supply chain, expanded its product range and increased bonding facilities.

Sales agents are also in place in countries around the world to help expand Simworx's coverage across various territories, whilst helping to assist and facilitate meetings with the knowledge of local customs and language.

Terry concluded, "We will continue to beat pathways to customer doors. We will always make the effort to go and see them on multiple occasions and give them the confidence in what we do and what we offer. We invite clients to our facilities at Simworx as well as book meetings with them at trade shows in their territory.

"Of course, at the moment, no one is sure of what the outcome of Brexit will be. However, I have attended several consultations held by DIT regarding the subject and given that the UK Government has actively encouraged and supported companies like us to grow our export sales, I am confident that they will ensure that there is minimal impact on the UK companies' ability to trade overseas."

BLACK COUNTRY COMMUNITIES BENEFIT FROM ETHICAL APPROACH

RECENT STUDIES HAVE REVEALED THAT 55% OF PEOPLE IN THE WEST MIDLANDS HAVE LESS THAN £100 IN SAVINGS AND THAT AN INDIVIDUAL'S MONEY WORRIES NEGATIVELY IMPACT IN THE WORKPLACE AND CAUSE STRESS AND ANXIETY WHICH ULTIMATELY AFFECTS BUSINESS PRODUCTIVITY.

This information has formed the backdrop to an initiative which has seen the region's four credit unions; City Credit Union, Castle & Crystal, Walsave and 6 Towns joining forces with the Chamber of Commerce and Just Finance Foundation Black Country.

The campaign is part of Chamber President, Julie Cunninghams' commitment that ethical finance activities should form part of a business' corporate and social responsibility agenda and that employees and the local community have an alternative option to payday loans and lenders with high interest rates when they need to borrow money.

WORKING WITH WOLVERHAMPTON CITY CREDIT UNION, EMPLOYEES AT THE CHAMBER ARE NOW ABLE TO SAVE DIRECTLY FROM THEIR MONTHLY PAY

They can also access their savings at anytime with the knowledge that individuals from the local community can access competitive rates on loans.

Announcing the initiative at a recent event to showcase the ways businesses can be more ethical with contributions from Paycare, BCRS Business Loans and Money Pensions UK and attendees from the other region's other three credit unions; Julie Cunningham said: "We're delighted to be working with Wolverhampton Credit Union on this fantastic initiative. Ethical finance is an area which I am extremely passionate about, so I'm keen to raise the profile of credit unions in the Black Country. It was standing room only at our fantastic event, proving that businesses and the public want to know more about ethical lending and borrowing."

Wolverhampton City Credit Union CEO Rob Shearing, added, "We're so proud to now be working with the Black Country Chamber of Commerce to promote payroll deduction to their employees. It's important that employers include financial health as part of employee wellbeing, as money worries can



cause stress and impact negatively on employees' work performance. It's not a subject that people feel comfortable discussing at work, but 1 in 4 employees lose sleep due to money worries."

Also speaking at the event was financial expert and Chair of Just Finance Sir Hector Hants who highlighted how by being a good employer and corporate citizen, businesses have a role to play in championing ethical practices when it comes to financial matters from choosing suppliers which align to their values and promoting socially-responsible corporate borrowing and lending. Just Finance's Development Worker for the Black Country, Rev Cassius Francis said, "We are working with the Chamber as part of their campaign around ethical finance and are excited to be partnering with them and our four Black Country Credit Unions in building a movement for financial resilience across the Black Country."



CYBER ATTACKS RANKED AS MAIN BUSINESS ISSUE WITH FIRMS STALLING ON CYBERSECURITY

UK ORGANISATIONS ARE FAILING TO MAKE PROGRESS TOWARDS STRONG CYBERSECURITY AND ARE FACING PARALYSIS AS CYBERCRIMINALS BECOME MORE ADVANCED.

This is the conclusion drawn from the findings of the 2019 Risk:Value report – 'Destination standstill. Are you asleep at the wheel?' – from NTT Security, the specialised security company and centre of excellence in security for NTT Group.

Examining the attitudes of non-IT decision makers to risk and the value of security to their business, NTT Security's report focused on C-level executives and other senior influencers across firms in 20 countries in order to assess their preparedness in this area.

UK respondents demonstrated that they are aware of the risks posed by cyber threats, with over half ranking cyber attacks on their organisation as one of the top three issues that could affect businesses in the next 12 months – second only to potential 'economic or financial crisis'. While global organisations rank 'loss of company data' in third place, in the UK, 44% felt that cyber attacks on critical infrastructure is a far greater threat with vulnerable components of critical national infrastructure, telecoms, energy and electricity networks taking first, second and third place.

Almost all of UK respondents indicated that strong cybersecurity is important to their

business over the next 12 months with a high proportion further stating that they believe cybersecurity has a big role to play in society. In addition, strong cybersecurity enabled UK-based businesses to 'ensure the integrity of their data' and 'ensure only the right people have access' to this data, indicating that it 'helps protect the brand'.

NTT Security analysed the responses for good and bad practice in cybersecurity with the results pointing to a worrying lack of progress globally over the last two years and almost a third of these demonstrating more poor practice approaches than good ones.

In comparison to other countries, India was cited as the best performing for cybersecurity whilst the performance of France and Germany has worsened over the last 12 months. In terms of sectors; those businesses operating within the financial services, telecommunications, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, oil and gas and healthcare industries across the globe all cast doubts on the resilience of critical national infrastructures.

Commenting on the 2019 findings, Azeem Aleem, VP Consulting from NTT Security, says: "The Risk:Value report is an interesting barometer based on responses from those

sitting outside of the IT function – and is often very revealing. What's clear is that the world around them is changing, and changing fast, with the introduction of new regulations, integration of new technologies and fast-paced digital transformation projects changing the way we work. What's concerning though is that organisations seem to have come to a standstill in their journey to cybersecurity best practices – and it's particularly worrying to see UK businesses falling behind in some critical areas like incident response planning.

"Decision makers clearly see security as an enabler; something that can help the business and society in general. But while awareness of cyber risks is high, organisations still lack the ability, or perhaps the will, to manage them effectively. The execution of cybersecurity strategies must improve, or business risk will escalate for the organisations concerned."

Reasons which pointed to why firms in the UK are lagging behind other countries and failing to take on board best practice included cost factors - a third of British firms indicated that it would be cheaper for them to pay somebody who had hacked into their systems rather than invest in tighter security with a further third feeling that paying a hacker was often more cost beneficial than paying non-compliance fines due to result data regulation breaches. Similarly, security budgets in this country are failing to keep up with the increasing cyber risk - with the amount of money allocated to the IT operations budget being slightly smaller than they were last year. Whilst UK respondents revealed that 70% had a formal security policy in place (compared to a global average of 58%) this figure was down on the 77% cited in last year's study and of these; almost half admitted that they believed their employees were actually aware of the policy and its details.

With the report highlighting that time and money spent on recovering from cyber breaches is rising year on year (taking just under 100 days to recover and costing firms over £1 million); these trends should be a wake-up call to businesses in the UK that they should be doing more in their preparation for cybersecurity attacks and ensure that their teams understand more and make this a priority.



Emma Reynolds

MP FOR WOLVERHAMPTON NORTH EAST

WE CAUGHT UP WITH EMMA REYNOLDS, ON A BUSY MORNING AT HER CONSTITUENCY HEADQUARTERS ABOUT WHAT DRIVES HER AS A POLITICIAN, INEQUALITY AND BEING A WORKING MOTHER IN PARLIAMENT.

INTERVIEW | AMY KAUR & CHARLOTTE BENTLEY | WOLVERHAMPTON COLLEGE

SO, WHAT DRIVES YOU?

Trying to make a difference to people's lives, making sure that people are treated fairly which is not easy as there is a lot of inequality knitted into the system.

WHY DID YOU BECOME AN MP?

To try and make that difference. I decided that I had really got the bug for talking to people on their doorstep, I was very interested in people and politics and the campaigning was something I enjoyed.

I loved working in Brussels, but everything felt a little remote and distant from people's lives, even though the decisions that have been, and continue to be made in Brussels by our MEPs, do have an impact here.

I found it really refreshing to be back in Wolverhampton, my home town, talking to people about their lives and what kind of things made a difference to them. That's when I really decided I wanted to stand as their MP.

WHAT IS YOUR FOCUS AS AN MP?

I found myself wanting to speak up about the inequalities in society, especially surrounding opportunities for children and the economy.

One of the reasons I came into politics was because I want every child, regardless of their parent's income or background, to be able to flourish and do well, but we don't yet live in a country where every child has an equal chance. Some parents are able to spend more money on their children's education than most people earn in a salary.

WHAT INEQUALITIES ARE YOU TACKLING?

I think there is still a lot of sexism in politics. I remember when the #MeToo movement started, my husband asked me, have you ever suffered this? Thankfully I never have!

I think it can happen to MPs, but it very often happens to people who work for MPs because there is a kind of power dynamic.

Until relatively recently, Parliament has been quite male dominated. It's odd you're sitting here interviewing a woman MP? Thirty years ago, even twenty years ago, it might have been very unusual for that to happen.

It has been a hundred years since some women got the vote, and since women could stand to be elected. So it has been a long journey, but still only a third of MPs are women and this is something which should change.

WHAT ABOUT THE GENDER PAY GAP?

Making sure that women break the 'glass ceiling' and getting into those top jobs is really the only way of bringing down the pay gap and we have introduced legislation which requires companies with over 250 employees to reveal their pay gap.

This includes big companies like the BBC. When their wages list was revealed, it was pretty shocking.

When an employer is looking at recruiting they may have a biased perception against employing or promoting women because they think once women hit a certain age it's more likely that they are going to go off on maternity leave.

In an equal world this should not be the case and we also need to make sure that men are taking shared parental leave, but only a small percentage of them do at the moment.

HOW DO YOU JUGGLE YOUR JOB AS AN MP & MOM TO TWO YOUNG CHILDREN?

The most challenging thing I've faced so far is having a four day old baby when Theresa May changed her mind in 2017 and called a general election.

I went out campaigning to keep my seat having given birth just a week before. Although I shouldn't have because I paid for it! I thought I could do it, and I felt OK, but I suffered later. There is a reason we have maternity leave.

In January this year, there was a pilot scheme introduced for a proxy vote system which would allow MPs on maternity leave to nominate a colleague to vote on their behalf in Parliament.

HAVE YOU BENEFITED FROM THE SCHEME?

About to go on maternity leave, it means I can better represent my constituents and I won't suffer reputational damage for not being able to attend a vote.

Once something like this is introduced, they won't go back on it. They only need to improve it. For instance, this proxy system is only for female MPs, but I hope they extend it to fathers as well. Male MPs can only take two weeks paternity leave but male employees can take shared parental leave.

It's a big reform and we are dragging Parliament into the twenty-first century. In some cases, kicking and screaming but in most cases, people are in favour.

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