

# THINKING BUSINESS

• OFFICIAL MAGAZINE FOR KENT INVICTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE • April - May 2023 •

## GOING GREEN

Make your business more environmentally sustainable

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# Kent region shows economic resilience



**Jo James OBE**  
Chief executive

**Welcome to the latest edition of Thinking Business.**

It was so lovely to see so many of you at the Kent Business Leaders Dinner held at the beautiful Bradbourne House in East Malling. We had over 50 guests

attend this event which included a fascinating historical tour of the Tudor Grade I listed building by Karyn Hood from the East Malling Trust. I never underestimate and underappreciate the enormous value of seeing people face to face.

Looking at our environmental impact as individuals and businesses is important to us all – and the environment is the focus of this edition.

A BCC survey of more than 1,000 businesses, of which 96% are SMEs, has discovered that nine out of 10 people don't fully understand what the Government's target of making the UK Net Zero by 2050 means for them. It also revealed that there is a big divide between firms with more than 50 employees and those with fewer than 50 in terms of understanding and progress.

The research has also revealed that more than two-thirds of SMEs (69%) have installed LED lighting,

more than a third (34%) are investing in greener vehicles and just under a third (30%) are using solar panels. We look at how we can increase those figures in this issue.

The cost-of-living crisis has hit small firms hard and planning for Net Zero can slip down the list of priorities but remember that we, as a Chamber, are here to help.

The feature on South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) makes positive reading. SELEP has backed more than 40 skills projects, supported by over £40m investment for skills training across the South-east. More than £80m in European Social Funding has been allocated across our area to support people into work and training, alongside over £70m of European Regional Development Funding providing targeted business support programmes. They have also invested more than £450m on road, rail and other infrastructure projects, as well as

close to £248m on commercial development projects for doing business in our area. This is helping our corner of England display economic resilience.

Things are looking positive for our region. It is promising to see that Kent's property market is optimistic with 70% predicting growth over the next two years and it is fantastic to see that Hochiki Europe has purchased a £5.5m facility in Medway. This sends a clear signal that Medway is seen as a valuable investment opportunity for global businesses.

I hope that this Spring gives us even more reasons to have a spring in our step!



Jo James OBE,  
Chief Executive,  
Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce



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# Chamber Chief Executive announces retirement

After working for the Chamber for 33 years, of which 15 have been as Chief Executive, Jo James OBE has taken the decision to hand over the reins of the 33-strong team, who support businesses employing more than 50,000 people across the county.

**As a result, the search has now begun for a new Chief Executive for Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce after Jo announced her plans to retire at the end of 2023.**

The announcement, made at the recent Annual General Meeting, will see Jo, aged 63, stepping down from the role on 22nd December, with the Board now taking the lead on recruiting her successor over the next 10 months.

Jo has been an indefatigable champion for the county's business community, representing it as vice-Chair on the Kent & Medway Economic Partnership; vice-Chair of the Business Advisory Board and director of the South East LEP. Nationally she has also been a member of the Accreditation Board of the British Chambers of Commerce.



Chris Hare, Chairman of Kent Invicta Chamber, said: "After being synonymous with the Chamber for so many years, there is no doubt that Jo will be a hard act to follow. She has successfully built

a formidable team around her and established Kent Invicta Chamber as one of the leading Chambers in the country.

"Her announcement gives us plenty of time to find a worthy successor and that work starts immediately."

Jo James added: "During the last few years the Chamber has stepped up to support not just our members but the whole of the county's business community. We successfully delivered the Covid Helpline, and continue to drive forward a series of business support initiatives, including the Kent & Medway Growth Hub, each one designed to help companies navigate very challenging economic conditions.

"We will continue to do everything we can to help businesses across Kent and Medway, and I look forward to working with my successor as I seamlessly handover at the end of the year."

*“After being synonymous with the Chamber for so many years, there is no doubt that Jo will be a hard act to follow. She has successfully built a formidable team around her and established Kent Invicta Chamber as one of the leading Chambers in the country.”*

**Chris Hare, Chairman of Kent Invicta Chamber**



# Sustainable Development

## The Impact of Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards on Commercial Property

By *Sophie Robins*  
Girlings Solicitors

**In the legal world, we have observed a growing trend of cases that concern environmental and sustainability issues.**

In relation to commercial property specifically, there is high awareness of a sequence of changes that make landlords responsible for ensuring their properties meet minimum energy efficiency standards, which began with the introduction of the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards legislation (MEES) that came in to force on 1 April 2018. The current impact of this legislation today means that it is unlawful to grant a new lease or extend an existing lease if the commercial property has an EPC rating of F or G if a valid exemption has not been registered.

From 1st April 2023 under the MEES, it will be unlawful to continue to let commercial property with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of F or G. The Government estimates this change affects 18% of current commercial property stock and, to achieve its net zero target by 2050, the EPC rating requirement is expected to be raised to a B by 2030. It's estimated 85% of commercial property will need to be upgraded to meet this standard.

The EPC rating system is widely recognised by both landlords and private homeowners but the need to prepare for the future changes is less well known. Progression up the energy performance scale is typically achieved by making improvements which include:

- increased loft insulation
- draught proofing
- solar water heating
- and the addition of double-glazed windows.

Such improvements clearly have positive implications, not least in terms of improving the quality and efficiency of rented homes for tenants, but they also make a substantial contribution towards the UK's wider targets for decarbonisation.

However, new and existing landlords should also be aware of the potential financial implications of upgrading properties that currently feature in the lower rungs of the EPC scale. For example, the UK Government suggests on its website an indicative cost of £4,000-6,000 for solid floor insulation; £4,000-£14,000 for cavity wall insulation; and £4,000-6,000 for solar water heating.

Whether taking their early steps in the commercial or residential buy-to-let market, or managing a large portfolio of rented properties, these costs pose a considerable challenge for landlords and their carefully balanced financial formulas of mortgage, tax, rental incomes, and yields.

As in many other industries, lawyers recognise there may be scepticism surrounding environmental goals and standards. This is reflected both in our own experiences and the kind of news stories that we may read, providing a broad range of examples stretching from acts of genuine environmental consciousness to the kind of more superficial and disingenuous application of green principles that sometimes leads to claims of 'greenwashing'.

However, amid the scepticism and potential for conflict that can result from environmental debates, new legislation, and competing interests, there is real potential to make positive change – not least in terms of improving the efficiency and quality of the UK's buildings. Rather than being perceived as an additional burden for businesses or landlords, new and evolving legislation may in fact provide an opportunity to unleash creative prospects for business.



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# The Drive Towards SUSTAINABILITY

**Lee Wood APFS**  
Chartered Financial Planner



**Reinforced by the agreements reached at the COP27 conference last year, the environmental agenda will continue to influence companies and investors alike. We look at the need for transparency in assessing whether an investment really does have a positive impact, and why we take a common-sense approach to sustainable investments**

The COP27 climate change conference held in Egypt concluded late last year with a number of key agreements that may impact investment decisions in the future. Perhaps the most eye-catching agreement was reached on the last day of the conference, as developed nations agreed to establish a dedicated fund to assist developing countries rebuild infrastructure caused by extreme weather events. The conference also reaffirmed the 2015 Paris Agreement, where nations committed to pursue efforts to limit global temperature increases, and also agreed to focus on low-emissions energy, through wind and solar, to carbon capture and storage.

So what does this mean for investors? Almost every company and investment fund has been influenced by the environmental agenda for some time, and the decisions reached at COP27 underline how businesses will need to consider the environmental impact of their operations in the future. Companies are already moving in a consistent direction of travel towards greater sustainability, better corporate governance and consideration of the social impact of their business.

This drive towards sustainability is being adopted by most global companies, although companies are moving in different ways

and at different speeds. Common themes adopted by many companies is to reduce use of fossil fuels in the manufacturing process, moving away from single use plastic to recycled products, and switching to renewable energy sources. It is good practice as well as being good for the planet, as consumers are becoming increasingly conscious about the sustainability of the products they purchase, and companies want to be seen to be doing business with other companies that share similar views, ethos and outlook when it comes to sustainability.

Amidst the clamour to be more sustainable, it is important that investors can rely on the transparency of data, so that they can make informed investment decisions. Over 90% of the constituents of the S&P500 index now issue an annual Sustainability Report and sets of standards have been introduced covering a diverse range of impacts, from use of natural resources, pollution and waste measures, to impact on local communities, human rights and anti-corruption.

Whilst undoubtedly a positive move, trying to provide investors with key data that allows comparison between different organisations is difficult, as one or more factors can be specific to a sector of industry. A further hindrance are the different measures used by the various global sustainability standards that companies use to prepare the reports, which can make interpretation of the results more difficult.

Given the importance that many investors, consumers and businesses now place on sustainability, regulators are becoming more concerned about "greenwashing". This is where a company uses language and imagery that claims that its products are environmentally friendly or have a greater positive environmental impact than they actually do. Whether undertaken

deliberately or innocently, a greenwashed product can tap into the growing desire that investors and consumers have to invest in a sustainable manner, and companies found guilty of greenwashing can be subject to reputational and financial damage. Take the case of Volkswagen, who admitted cheating emissions tests by adding software that recognised when engines were being tested and changed the engine performance accordingly. Not only did this cause significant reputational harm, but the company also suffered a financial penalty of \$4.3bn\*.

As awareness of sustainability increases, many investors appreciate that avoiding companies that harm the environment or promote what some may see as unhealthy products, such as tobacco or gambling, is difficult. This is why our Socially Responsible portfolios aim to take a common-sense approach, by focusing on those funds who aim to invest with sustainability in mind but adopt a strategy that is not too restrictive so as to reduce the universe of available investments, which could potentially hurt investment returns over the longer term.

**If you would like to move your portfolio towards a more sustainable footing, then speak to one of our experienced Advisers at FAS about our Socially Responsible portfolios.**



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\*Source: - [justice.gov/opa/pr/volkswagen-ag-agrees-plead-guilty-and-pay-43-billion-criminal-and-civil-penalties-six](https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/volkswagen-ag-agrees-plead-guilty-and-pay-43-billion-criminal-and-civil-penalties-six)



## Abigail's footsteps

**“We founded the charity Abigail's Footsteps in 2010, after our daughter Abigail was stillborn at 41 weeks. Sadly, the hospital was unable to look after us properly, and their staff hadn't been trained to handle this type of bereavement. We knew things had to change to help parents who have lost a baby by providing bereavement suites in hospitals, training for healthcare professionals and counselling for the bereaved families and the hospital staff.**

We work alongside The Bond Group in Sheerness to deliver refrigerated Abi cooling cots nationwide. These vital pieces of equipment allow parents to spend more time with their baby than would otherwise be possible, help parents to bond and aid the grieving process. We are delighted to have donated over 100 cots, which my wife Jo and I feel is such an important legacy in memory of our daughter. When we had Abigail, we only had two or three hours with her, but our Abi cooling cot allows families to have two or three days to make memories.

Kent businesses have been a fantastic support to Abigail's Footsteps over the last decade, and we're very grateful, however there's still more we need to do. There are hospitals that need Abi cooling cots, and bereavement suites, there are midwives who have had no bereavement training, as well as parents that need counselling. Please do get in touch if you want to help us make a difference.”



**David Ward,  
Founder and Trustee,  
Abigail's Footsteps**

[abigailtfootsteps.co.uk](http://abigailtfootsteps.co.uk)

## Maidstone Innovation celebrates a year of officially opening!

Maidstone Innovation Centre (MIC) goes from strength to strength as it establishes itself as a Hub for MedTech, Life Science and Healthcare.

**The centre has celebrated a year of operation after officially opening in March 2022. Over the past year the centre has grown and developed relationships with businesses, academics, funding partners and the local community.**

MIC's aim is to support and welcome a diverse range of entrepreneurs and SMEs. In its short time of operation, it has an occupancy rate of 52%, supporting 30 businesses and over 150 jobs.

The centre has seen businesses grow, develop and create local employment. Some have even expanded taking larger office space and increased turnover. The hub has attracted innovative businesses within the research and development sector.

MIC offers flexible space and a range of memberships including virtual offices, hot desk/co-working space, event space, meeting rooms and furnished offices.

The event space has become a popular booking as it can accommodate up to 50 people, in a range of layouts and styles. It has supported and hosted several events from training courses, workshops, official opening and launch ceremony, as well as a range of meetings.

The centre is already over 50% occupied and has recently opened its new carpark to welcome new businesses wanting to take up space. This occupancy level makes for a lively, thriving community who regularly comes together at the MIC networking events: Coffee on MIC, pizza get together and with its new edition, a ping pong table, its tenants can get to know each other over a game.

Maidstone Innovation Centre is Maidstone Borough Council's newest state-of-the-art building. MIC is part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund 2014-2020 and located at the prestigious Kent Medical Campus.



## How to define your target audience

Marketing works best when you know who your target audience is.

**Sarah Hawes from Izzy PR gives her insight and a few tips of where to start.**

### Who is most likely to want your product?

Unfortunately, the answer is rarely 'everybody'! Although you might offer something that the majority of the population uses, positioning it as having mass-market appeal will make your offering seem generic. e.g; soap – is yours for babies, dry skin, younger skin, older skin?

The trick is to make the buyers feel like you have insight into their lives and are producing something just for them.

### What problem does it solve?

Think about how your product addresses your potential buyers' issues.

**Consider:**

- **What is their problem / pain point?**
- **What do you offer to solve it?**
- **How do you offer the solution?**
- **What's their outcome once they buy?**

### Segment your audiences

You'll often have a number of different buyers, all of whom buy for different reasons according to:

- **Age**
- **Gender**
- **Location**
- **Budget**

There are many more categories such as: heritage, life stage, nationality, holiday destinations, how they commute, etc. Make smaller audience sections so that what you say to them really resonates.

### B2B audiences are different

For B2B products and services, there could be more than one 'customer' who makes the buying decision such as procurement, finance, senior manager and the end user – each has different needs.

Think about factors such as which sector they're in, the job title of who you're talking to, the size of the business, and its location.

This piece has been edited from a longer article, for Thinking Business.

**Visit [izzypr.co.uk/blog](http://izzypr.co.uk/blog) to read the full article.**





## Why an ICO registration doesn't guarantee your data is safe

The Information Commissioner's Office has written to advise that the data you hold and the way you handle it requires you to register with them, for a fee.

**You pay it, receive a digital certificate, see your business listed on their publicly available register – and then what?**

The onus is on the business to know if they need to register and what they need to protect their data.

This is the part I help businesses with.

*Is how they hold their data safe?*

*How do they need to protect different data?*

*Are they compliant in all areas?*

*Are they doing everything necessary under data protection to avoid issues later?*

It's a job for a specialist – you could do it yourself, but a specialist will dot every 'i' and

cross every 't' to ensure you are compliant and safe.

Paying the fee doesn't mean that you are covered, protected or certified; it just registers you with the ICO.

If the information is false, then the registration is invalid.

Data protection needs a bit more than an ICO certificate such as:

- Privacy Notice
- Data Protection Policy
- Staff training / awareness
- Data security

ICO registration is a start, but there are many more processes to ensure you are data compliant and most importantly, that your customers' data and rights to privacy are adhered to.

**If you need further help to understand, review or audit your data, please visit [businessstamer.co.uk](http://businessstamer.co.uk)**

## Dispute?

Not all businesses run smoothly – disputes inevitably occur. Partners fall out, Directors disagree, and once harmonious relationships can sour, impacting business performance and profits. So it's essential to resolve commercial disputes as quickly as, and as effectively as possible.

## Disagree?

Our Dispute Resolution team provides expert advice, short-term tactics and long-term strategies to resolve business disagreements. Ranked in Chambers and Legal 500, we have an enviable track record in achieving mutually acceptable agreements, and preserving future relationships.

## Divided?

To find out how we can help, call us on **01622 698000** or email [enquiries@wmlaw.uk](mailto:enquiries@wmlaw.uk)

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# KENT BUSINESS LEADERS DINNER



Jo James OBE, Chief Executive of Kent Invicta Chamber welcoming guests to Bradbourne House



Dinner was held in The Great Hall

## Kent Business Leaders Dinner Held at Bradbourne House in East Malling

The latest Kent Business Leaders Dinner, staged in association with the Kent Invicta Chamber Patrons, was held at Bradbourne House in East Malling, a striking Tudor Grade 1 listed building owned by the East Malling Trust.

Over 50 guests were welcomed by Kent Invicta Chamber Chief Executive Jo James OBE, and Karyn Hood from the East Malling Trust. Before dinner, Karyn took guests on a journey through the varied and fascinating history of the House.

Guests enjoyed a truly delicious meal accompanied by wines from Chartham and Biddenden vineyards. After dinner, Roger Gough, Leader of Kent County Council, outlined how the Council was hoping to support the local business community over the coming year and its plans for stimulating economic growth in the County.

Photography by Matthew Walker



Karyn Hood from the East Malling Trust taking guests through the history of Bradbourne House



Chamber President Richard Lavender in conversation with Liz Gibney, Chair of Kent and Medway Economic Partnership and Darren James from Lee Evans Partnership



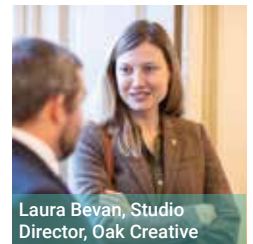
Keynote Speaker Roger Gough, Leader of Kent County Council with Geoff Miles, Chairman of Maidstone Studios and Jo James OBE



Drinks reception was held in The Breakfast Room



Mark Lumsdon-Taylor from MHA MacIntyre Hudson with Jo James OBE



Laura Bevan, Studio Director, Oak Creative



Matthew Arnold, Commercial Director of Stagecoach South East



Roddy Barrow and John Parkinson from HRGO plc



Andrew Osborne from Ashford Borough Council arriving with Geoff Miles



Caxtons Property Consultants hosting their table at the dinner



Hendrick van Dyk from MHA Caves Wealth

# Introducing the Ashford Super 6

Following the success of delivering the Big 8 strategically important infrastructure and development projects over eight years with our key private and public sector partners, Ashford is now looking to deliver the next transformational developments that will bring greater prosperity to the area.

**The Big 8 projects delivered are M20 Jct10a, Designer Outlet expansion, Ashford College Phase 1, Commercial Quarter, Chilmington Green, Jasmin Vardimon Creative Hub, Ashford Spurs and Elwick Place.**

With exciting projects such as the Ashford International Studios at Newtown Works and bringing Brompton to Ashford reaching major milestones, and with a clear set of priorities in our new corporate plan, we have launched a new campaign using the well-established AshfordFOR brand.

Our Super 6 projects help us deliver on our priority themes of Green Pioneer, Caring Ashford and Targeted Growth. They will see the evolution of Ashford town centre, the

resolution to the nutrient challenges in the river Stour thereby releasing the ability to permit major new residential developments, and will support the delivery of the South of Ashford Garden Community, building quality places for people to live.



The International Studios and Brompton will help drive quality jobs, restore historic buildings and provide new public open space. The first of these projects to get started is the Ashford College Phase 2 engineering, business and IT facility, currently under construction and due to be delivered by September 2023.

The Super 6 provides the opportunity to support economic growth, foster new communities, prosperity and improved skills and provides a strong vehicle to publicise other projects outside of the list to a more captive audience. It provides a fresh focus for a new inward investment campaign to help deliver these projects, ensuring the maximum opportunity to attract investment and funding.

**For more information on the Super 6 please visit [www.ashfordfor.com](http://www.ashfordfor.com)**

## Environmental Impairment:

### You may want to check for gaps in your insurance cover



**Earlier this year, Anglian Water was fined £560,170, after failing to stop raw sewage being discharged into a river for nearly 24 hours. Around 6 million litres of raw sewage, the equivalent of more than two Olympic swimming pools, was discharged into the River Great Ouse at Brackley, Northamptonshire. It killed thousands of fish and spread 12 kilometres down the River Great Ouse.**

Have you ever considered how your business would cope if you suddenly had to respond to claims that your company's activities, or even just its premises and land under its control, had somehow caused pollution or other environmental damage?

The chances of your current traditional property and liability insurance protecting you against the ramifications of a pollution incident are

very low. Many businesses can benefit from environmental impairment liability insurance. EIL insurance can provide protection against the financial effects of:

- Soil pollution
  - Air pollution
  - Water pollution
  - Offensive odour
  - Oil storage pollution
  - Noise pollution
  - Damage to natural resources
  - Other pollution and environmental damage
- If we think about what the consequences may be for a business if they cause a pollution incident, they may include:
- Business Interruption – loss of income and profit
  - Statutory liabilities – first party clean-up costs
  - Third party clean-up costs – biodiversity damage
  - Tort Liabilities – bodily injury; property damage; trespass, nuisance or obstruction
  - Legal costs
  - Damage to your commercial reputation and standing in your local community

Naturally, these are outcomes we know businesses would rather avoid and an Environmental Impairment Liability policy can help ensure that support and financial protection is there if that is the case.



**Terry Edwards**, Area Sales Director at Towergate Insurance Brokers says "A good Insurance Advisor is strongly committed to protecting their clients from environmental risks.

A business may have public liability cover, directors' and officers' insurance, property insurance, employers liability insurance and motor insurance but those policies may not cover potential environmental damage claims".

If you are unsure if your business is insured against environmental damage, check in with your insurance broker or provider and they will be able to help.

With over 70 insurance professionals in your Towergate local team, and more than 2,000 across the UK, you can call upon a wide array of skills, knowledge and experience to protect and develop your business.

**For a free no-obligation review of your Business Insurance, contact Terry Edwards at Towergate Insurance Brokers in Sevenoaks on +44 1732 228767**



## An Opulence bespoke wine experience guarantees you a day of unrivalled corporate hospitality

Visiting an English vineyard for a day wine tasting is the perfect way to entertain your clients or thank your team, providing them with a truly memorable day.

Our full day corporate wine tasting experiences involve visiting two different sized producers across the day where you can enjoy the picturesque vineyard views whilst learning about the winemaking process from grape to glass.

You'll experience a guided tour of the vineyard before delving into privately tutored tastings of a multitude of England's finest wines. Indulge in an informative and relaxed hosted tasting from a winemaker or owner at one of the vineyards and choose from locally sourced food options such as canapés on arrival to sharing platters and three-course meals; all of which have been perfectly paired to complement the wines.

Each experience is completely bespoke, with an array of hospitality options that can be included. With collection/drop off from Ashford International, Staplehurst Station or even your own office, you can sit back, relax, and let Opulence create a truly unforgettable day.

For vineyards that we visit and further details of our wine tasting experiences, visit: [opulenceofengland.co.uk](http://opulenceofengland.co.uk)

# Solicitors welcome steps towards compassionate leave during divorce

**Solicitors at Kent law firm Furley Page have welcomed a new initiative by the Positive Parenting Alliance that could see employees being offered compassionate leave from work to deal with the breakdown of their marriage or relationship.**

The Positive Parenting Alliance (PPA) initiative urges employers to treat a separation as seriously as other major life events and is encouraging employers to implement policies specifically aimed at supporting those going through divorce or separation. Asda, Metro Bank, NatWest, PwC, Tesco, Unilever and Vodafone are among a group of major businesses that have already signed up to offer more support.

**Josie Triffitt**, a solicitor with Furley Page's family team, said: "It is widely recognised that a separation or divorce can be akin to a bereavement, so the PPA's new initiative is an important step towards getting employers to acknowledge the impact of a relationship breakdown on their employees.



"Anyone who has gone through a separation or divorce will know that it is often a difficult, complex and stressful time and for many who are working during this period, it can understandably have an impact on their performance, especially when the parties are dealing with the settlement financial matters or arrangements for their children."

In a recent survey by the Positive Parenting Alliance, 90% of respondents stated that separation affected their ability to work and 95% said that their mental health was adversely affected, while more than half of the workers feared they could lose their job or thought about resigning. However, only 9% of employees said that their employers had a specific policy for separation and divorce.

Solicitor **Eleanor Rogers**, from Furley Page's employment law team, said: "In the absence of any such policy, the way that a separating or divorcing individual is treated will depend on their line manager's approach, which may mean that employees are not treated consistently. Furthermore, in this world of hybrid working, issues such as mental health and wellbeing can be harder to spot.



"Employers can have a huge influence by ensuring that their employees feel supported, which in turn supports productivity and staff retention. The PPA's new initiative is a positive step in the right direction, and going forward it is going to become more important for employers to put meaningful policies in place to provide assistance and support to staff as they cope with the impact of issues like separation or divorce."

**Individuals seeking advice on divorce and separation matters can contact Josie Triffitt. Employers and/or employees seeking advice on employment law matters can contact Eleanor Rogers.**

For more information, visit: [www.furleypage.co.uk](http://www.furleypage.co.uk)

## Creative metal solutions

**At Amron, we pride ourselves as a business that understands the built environment, the issues, the people and most importantly, the challenges facing our industry.**

Growing the business, from what was initially a husband-and-wife start-up, has led to some challenging decisions to ensure that the team grows alongside the success of the business. Over the last couple of years, we are thrilled to have grown to a strong team of 12.

### Moving forward

We have always been about Creative Mesh Solutions, however, we have since realised that we are fast evolving. So, with that in mind, and with the successful launches of our new product

offerings, we have decided to adapt our tagline to best suit this growth. We are now all about Creative Metal Solutions. Mesh will always be at our core but making this change, we feel we can offer our customers even more.

This brings us to our new website – a fresher look, more product offerings, including our range of metal systems and even more projects to show you. Our business is and will always be about our customers. We advise our customers as to what we feel is best for their project, not what we want to sell them. We do not work in a conventional "sales" fashion, we work as a consultancy. We will continue to be as accessible as possible and have even implemented a live chat function to our site so that we can help with any quick questions you may have.

[www.amronarchitectural.co.uk](http://www.amronarchitectural.co.uk)

# Harnessing new minds for a net-zero mission



**The Duke Voyagers Shipyard, an innovative start-up with the ambition of decarbonising yacht building, has made some significant additions to its team.**

The company has taken on two interns from The University of East London. Francine Curran, a copywriting intern, responsible for raising awareness of the company's mission, and Alireza Pourmamihamlou, an architectural intern, who will work on the preliminary designs for the company's net zero shipyard.

David Grocott also joined the team and brings over 25 years' experience to his role as non-executive director. David will provide overall governance which is essential to the company's long-term goals.

Given the present climate crisis, The Duke Voyagers Shipyard aims to develop low carbon technologies, materials and processes to tackle the sustainability challenges in the luxury yacht industry. Currently, The DVS is focused on three design challenges;

First, the design of an off grid low carbon shipyard; second, the design of an electric propulsion and energy control system; and third, the design of a circular manufacturing process.

Thanks to our collaborations with the University of Kent, Teesside University and UEL, the prototype yacht 'Molly D' will showcase the latest developments in composite hull construction and electric propulsion. 'Molly D' will be built in a unique facility, specifically designed to support the yacht's net-zero life cycle.

A wider social mission in a net-zero future is engaging communities through opportunities for education and training towards employment, within the maritime sector. The new minds aboard The DVS will bring new perspectives and skillsets, that will be vital to the growth of the startup.

Tony Duke, the director of The DVS commented on the new hirings: "I'm thrilled to have a team who are united in the belief of a sustainable future and pleased they will play a part in creating it."

**For more information, visit: [thedvs.co.uk](http://thedvs.co.uk)**



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# Building a sustainable brand

**Sustainability is high on the agenda for every business, but how exactly do you build an authentic and sustainable brand?**

The truth of the matter is that most businesses are taking some steps towards sustainability. Whether you have formal sustainability goals or you're finding your way with small steps, the reality is we're all on a steep learning curve together.

Here's some things to remember when you're building a sustainable brand:

### Customer's care!

Whether it's a corporate business tender or simply buying milk, the decision making process is undoubtedly influenced by a brand's sustainability credentials. Whilst there are other factors in the mix, communicating your sustainability efforts will have an impact on customers' decision making process.

### Sustainability runs through your business

It's powerful but daunting that every business decision can impact your brand's sustainability credentials. Small and manageable steps are the way to go - think about every part of your business and supply chain. For example monitoring water usage, re-using materials and reviewing procedures to remove waste.

### Local economy is big business

Campaigns such as Help Kent Buy Local set up by Produced in Kent during the pandemic, highlighted the need to support small indie retailers' livelihoods, but this applies at every level of the supply chain. Choosing local is an easy and sustainable choice to help local economies to thrive.

### Make it authentic

Customers care more than ever before about choosing sustainable options. Cut the noise and ensure your communications are authentic and relevant. Take opportunities to remind your audience at each stage of the buying process, small nudges rather than shouty statements.





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## Discovery Park – Home to Kent's only Barclays Eagle Lab

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# Connect, innovate, grow



**Barclays Eagle Labs is one of the largest networks of tech-focussed, start-up incubators in the UK designed to help entrepreneurs and ambitious businesses to innovate and scale.**

The concept started with the goal to make better use of under-used spaces from the Barclays estate with a focus on helping to accelerate scale-ups, promote collaborative innovation and enable access to new and emerging technologies.

Over 30 physical Eagle Labs now run across the country with the initiative evolving to working with partners who share its vision to create a progressive business community. Its reach also extends beyond Barclays' spaces by partnering with organisations such as CodeBase, Avenue HQ and Tramshed Tech, to name a few and providing UK-wide virtual support through events and business growth programmes.

Barclays Eagle Labs has now arrived in Kent, setting up home within Discovery Park, a 220-acre science and technology park at Sandwich offering high quality laboratory, office and manufacturing facilities. As well as space and support to expand and grow, the site currently employs around 3,500 people and has strong links to the local scientific and tech talent pool.

In addition to providing coworking space, entrepreneurs using the Eagle Lab at Discovery Park will be supported by a dedicated Ecosystem Manager who will provide the technical expertise, mentoring and connections required to integrate companies into Barclays' UK wide network, bringing businesses together to create potential new partnerships and collaborations.

Barclays' local business banking teams and specialist 'high-growth' managers will also be available to provide banking support to companies and entrepreneurs.

**Jane Kennedy, Chief Business Officer at Discovery Park,** said: "We're thrilled to welcome the new Barclays Eagle Lab to Discovery Park which will provide a fantastic opportunity for collaboration and innovation among the Life Sciences and Technology sectors. The support they can provide, the investor readiness programmes they run and more importantly their expertise in the tech verticles Agri-tech, Health-tech and Energy-tech are what really drove us to bring Barclays to site."

"We have real aspirations of creating a tech cluster at Discovery Park and this partnership with Barclays will help us achieve this. The new Thanet trainline, opening next year, will see Discovery Park less than an hour from London St Pancras and the growing Knowledge Quarter there. The creation of a Barclays Eagle Lab at Discovery Park will support our wider ambition to build collaborative and productive links with the Knowledge Quarter which is home to The Crick Institute, Digital Catapult, Google and Yahoo, among others, catalysing opportunities for our tenant companies."

To find out how we can support you and your business and for news on our exciting event programme, get in touch with Barclays Eagle Lab Ecosystem Manager, **Andrew Pledger**.

Further information, including how to connect with Andrew, can be found at: [labs.barclays/locations/kent](https://labs.barclays/locations/kent)

# Sustainability is key to ensuring the wheels (of the bus) don't come off in business



Stagecoach South East commercial director **Matthew Arnold** talks about how the company is driving change with green buses, tackling loneliness and why Guide Dogs have made pawsome passengers.

## Eleven new buses will join Stagecoach South East's fleet in the summer taking passengers between Canterbury and Folkestone.

Representing £2.5m investment, the buses are part of the firm's move towards a more sustainable, green fleet.

While the days of new-build diesel buses are numbered, there is still a huge capital cost difference between a diesel-powered bus and a battery, electric or hydrogen fuel cell-powered bus. There are also significant infrastructure implications, for instance, having to provide charging points within the bus depots or providing a hydrogen fuelling station.

"Buses powered by internal combustion engines still have their place - it isn't possible to run battery electric buses for the complete span of the working day on some of our routes, nor is the required amount of power necessarily available within the grid at all of our depot sites," said Matthew Arnold, who has a 20-year history working in public transport across Kent and has been with Stagecoach for seven years.

"We're really pleased that 11 new buses will start to operate on route 16 between Canterbury and Folkestone in the summer, representing an investment of over £2.5 million. Meanwhile, we continue

to look at opportunities to make business cases for investment in zero emission buses where they will be suitable.

"In terms of future sustainability, the bus industry is working closely with the Department for Transport over the ending of post-Covid support funding this summer in order to ensure that as much of the current local bus network is preserved as possible.

"The current £2 fare cap, underwritten by central government, is proving a great success - indeed it has just been extended through to the end of June. Part of the longer-term conversation about sustainability includes discussion about how we avoid a "cliff-edge" when the subsidy stops."

As commercial director, Matthew has a wide range of responsibilities originally focusing on revenue and the shape of the network - where they operate buses and at what times - but the job has broadened through the launch of the National Bus Strategy in 2021.

"I spend a great deal of time now with stakeholders and on looking at opportunities for business growth following the necessary contractions as a result of the pandemic," he said.



Matthew and his Team's current focus are on three key areas: 1. Breaking even - since March 2020, customer numbers have only recovered to around 80% whilst costs have risen by 20%; 2. Punctuality; and 3. Presentation.

"We're working closely with Kent Highways and others in order to understand where delays are occurring on the network and what we can do to minimise the impact on buses," he said.

"During the pandemic, we stepped up our cleaning regime significantly - our customers told us that they really valued this, so we've continued with enhanced cleaning on each bus, every day."

A dedicated team of seven people was set up in 2022 to support local teams with a focus on specific "crisis" areas where short-term disruptions were causing delays to buses. Providing 24/7 coverage, the team ensures "prompt and accurate information" is issued to customers.

Supporting the community is important to Stagecoach South East, which has introduced several initiatives focused on some of their more vulnerable passengers.

The Friendship Bus is an initiative supported by Inspired Villages, an award-winning retirement village operator and





with taking public transport. As well as a promise of friendly faces, guests will be able to enjoy lunch together, free Wi-Fi and cash withdrawal machines around the bus stop locations.

The Friendship Bus is run for the wider community within Inspired Villages Maidstone and remains in that key area.

“We were excited to get back into the swing of our community work after the pandemic, supporting local charities and organisations,” said Matthew.

“We are thrilled to be working with Inspired Villages to help tackle loneliness with the Friendship Bus and proud that the initiative won the gold award in the Bus and the Community category at the 2022 UK Bus Awards. Buses play an important part in bringing people together. For some, the only person they speak with all day is the bus driver. Through this brilliant initiative, we have created a space for people to come together to let them know they aren't alone whilst making new friendships along the way.”

And the older generation aren't the only extra special passengers the bus service is looking after.

Since last June, Guide Dogs UK has visited depots across the Kent and East Sussex sites including Thanet, Eastbourne and Ashford. Training dogs have been practising their skills on the buses.

“Ensuring our service is accessible to our customers extends itself to offering beneficial training opportunities for the soon-to-be Guide Dogs,” added Matthew.

The company joined Kent Invicta Chamber five years ago.

“We are about to start our third year as patrons,” added Matthew.

“Stagecoach is very much part of the local communities that we serve, and we wanted to improve our presence.

“There isn't any hidden agenda; business networking provides local intelligence on local issues and gives us an opportunity to hear first-hand from businesses about their requirements - be that how employees get to work or how the CEO's daughter can get to school by bus!”



developer and aims to combat loneliness. Aligned to Loneliness Awareness Week (13-17 June), Inspired Friendships offers a befriending service to the wider community, to prevent feelings of loneliness and isolation amongst older generations.

Data by Inspired Villages shows that six in 10 (59%) consumers admit to not feeling part of a local community that supports the needs of its residents, with more than one fifth (22%) saying their village or town

needs to improve its community facilities. The research goes on to reveal that over one third of people (36%) aged 65-74 feel disconnected to culture, with a further 39% of the same age group either being part of or considering joining a local organisation to feel closer to their community.

In response to the need for community connectivity, the Friendship Bus will look to encourage conversations amongst older people as well as drive up confidence



## Ask the Expert

# THE WAY WE BUILD HAS TO CHANGE.

By Sharon Bowles



### Net Zero. It's no longer a buzzword. It's a statutory requirement here in the UK.

In 2021, the government published its Net Zero Strategy, setting out a pathway to reaching net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

What have you done differently in your business in the last 2 years to help reach that goal?

Despite our awareness of how our behaviour has been damaging our planet, and the efforts many of us are making to reduce them, most of us only adopt new ways of doing things when we really have to. As humans, the vast majority of us resist change. It's just human nature. Therefore, whilst we're happily making simple day-to-day changes, like separating our household waste, conserving water and choosing pump dispensers over aerosols, the real change needs to come from industry, and none more so important than the construction industry which is known for contributing some 40% of the UK's carbon emissions.

The changes required are fundamental to the way in which the construction industry works and builds.

Sustainable material sourcing, renewable energy sources, embodied carbon, designing and constructing buildings for reduced energy use, the list goes on and on. There's a more sustainable and environmentally alternative to literally every process and material used in construction. It's a mammoth challenge to

change almost everything that the industry has known and relied upon for years. They're changes that instil fear in many, changes that many are resisting, and will continue to resist until they're forced to embark upon them.

In fact, the biggest challenge the industry facing is in upskilling and educating everyone involved, both up and down the supply chain, of how to tackle carbon emissions and waste, through different stages of the design, procurement and construction process, or to support other objectives such as enhanced biodiversity.

Provided with the knowledge and a larger workforce with the required skillsets, the challenges that the construction industry face become surmountable, but how do we get there?

Those with the experience and knowledge must help others navigate and embrace the changes needed so that we meet the goals, and that no-one gets left behind.

As a marketing agency who are dedicated to the construction industry and built environment, The Digital Lookout add value to our clients by understanding and continually educating ourselves on industry issues and right now, this is the biggest.

We work with a wide range of clients across the supply chain. Some are front runners when it comes to working to a strategic change agenda, while others are tentatively dipping their toes in the waters and starting to consider new ways of working.

As marketers we understand each of our client's marketplaces and competitive landscapes. We see the opportunities that being more sustainable and carbon neutral focused when planning construction activities bring. Developers and investors are focused on this now, so the industry's supply chain needs to be too. We're a good two years behind thanks to Covid, but the plans to develop our landscape, towns and cities that are being made now, need to be delivered upon under the new regime of building and retrofitting for Net Zero. We simply can't afford to do things the way we always have done.

There are multiple ways that those designing and executing construction projects can drive decarbonisation through their approach. This could be by signing up to an environmental or carbon standard for built assets (such as PAS 2080, EN15643, PAS 2035, and BREEAM), through ensuring that they maximise the application of existing procurement policy to do so (such as the National Procurement Policy Statement, PPN 06/21 and the Social Value Model), or by setting ambitious reduction targets at project level for carbon and material use.

More importantly, there are reams of information, multiple sources, guidance and services to educate and inform those wanting to learn. If a marketing agency can get under the skin of decarbonisation, so you can too. Or if you really can't, get in touch with us.

## ADOPT CHANGE, OR GET LEFT BEHIND. YOUR CHOICE.

[thedigitallookout.co.uk](http://thedigitallookout.co.uk)



## How do you recognise and reward loyalty?



To decide how best to reward loyalty, you will need to evaluate which customer behaviours add value to your brand and which benefits the customer perceives as adding value to the relationship.

You may describe loyal customers as those who spend more with you whereas the most loyal customer may not generate a great deal of direct revenue but are true brand advocates, choose your brand over others and are your best ambassadors – a truly valuable asset.

### Loyal customers bring more value to your business – what drives their loyalty?

Is the customer who only visits you once a month sharing their wallet with your competitors? If they only come once a month because they're only in the area once a month, this is fantastic loyalty – it's a conscious choice to choose your brand over others; this loyalty should be spotted and rewarded.

**Angela Hall**, from **The Insight House**, specialises in translating customer data into marketing strategy, gives her advice.

A loyal customer is someone who:

- Loves and appreciates your product or service.
- Can recognise the difference between your brand and your competitors'.
- Chooses your brand.

### Reward does not necessarily need to be monetary

At TIH we advocate just saying thanks sometimes. Verbal recognition, small gestures of gratitude and appreciation can be just as impactful if not more so than getting 'the next one on us'.

- Make it relevant, personalised and timely.
- Be consistent – create a continuous conversation, not a series of transactions.
- Reward advocates – not always those who generate the highest revenue.
- Choose the behaviours that you want to encourage and strengthen, decide on the appropriate reward for each.

[insighthouse.co.uk](http://insighthouse.co.uk)



## No ordinary clothing store

As soon as you step inside **AG PLADO**, you realise this is no ordinary clothing store. Among the array of off-the-peg suits (ready to wear), jackets, overcoats, shirts, ties and much more, one is transported into a retro and style-inspired environment that feels genuinely different.

This is the vision of Antonio Plado who has designed this gentlemen's clothes emporium to make his customers feel special by providing them with an 'experience'.

Located in West Wickham, the look-and-feel is Savile Row tailors, with some more playful touches such as a piano against one wall, a Vespa 150 scooter in the window display and a bar billiard table as a centrepiece display.

Music plays from vinyl records on old-fashioned stereograms to create a vibe that you would rarely see in any high street store, let alone on a suburban shopping street.

Antonio explains: "At its heart is our desire to provide a personal service for those seeking quality tailoring whether it's ready to wear or bespoke made.

"It's imperative that the customers leave with the perfect fit. Most importantly, they can relax over a coffee, or a glass of whisky while being measured and fitted."

Antonio further promises: "If a customer invests in a bespoke made suit from us and their body shape or style changes, they can bring it back and we will make alterations at no cost."

In addition, he is happy for customers to bring loved but long-neglected items from their existing wardrobe for advice on 'refreshing' them by altering the size, changing buttons, lapels or pockets, for example.

Tailoring is at the heart of the business so all alterations are done promptly, and they can even deliver within a five-mile radius saving you a trip back.

If you're curious about this unique tailor, then pop in; it really is an experience.

For further information visit: <https://agplado.com/>

## The importance of Cyber security

**MPR IT Solutions understands the importance of protecting our customers' data and ensuring the security of our systems. We are pleased to announce that we have recently been accredited with Cyber Essentials, Cyber Essentials Plus, and ISO 27001:2017 accreditations.**

We can now clearly demonstrate to customers and stakeholders we have taken the necessary steps to protect their data, and we have appropriate security controls in place to protect our information assets and comply with applicable laws and regulations.

### Cyber Essentials/Plus

Cybersecurity is an increasingly important issue for businesses of all sizes. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) offers a range of cyber security services, including the Cyber Essentials/Plus schemes. Government-backed, these are designed to help protect businesses from cyber threats, setting out security

controls that organisations can implement to protect systems from cyber-attacks. Cyber Essentials Plus is an extension of the scheme, requiring organisations to undergo an external assessment, ensuring controls are implemented correctly and are effective protection.

### ISO27001:2017

An internationally recognised standard for Information Security Management Systems, providing organisations with the framework to implement an ISMS, to protect data and ensure security of their systems. This certification is becoming increasingly important for businesses of all sizes, as the need for secure data management grows. The scope of the certification covers all aspects of information security, including physical, network, software securities, and privacy. Helping organisations identify, assess, and manage the risks associated with their information assets and processes.

**If you would like to know more, please do not hesitate to contact us. [www.mpr-it.co.uk](http://www.mpr-it.co.uk)**

## Revolution Events turns sustainability at events up a notch

**Revolution Events have specialised in designing and delivering high-impact events for 24 years, working with a diverse range of clients, including Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, Kent County Council and The Education People.**

2023 sees an exciting evolution as the company pushes event sustainability throughout their supply chain. The full team are all involved in compiling their event sustainability policy – that will be shared with suppliers and visitors – offering guidance on how to support green events.

"We are excited to be supporting a fantastic initiative throughout our various innovative and highly respected events," said Lydia, marketing director.

Claire, business director, said: "Even if people need guidance on events that are not run by us, we want to help all Kent Businesses think green."

Deborah, event director, said: "Our core focus is to exceed our delegates' expectations and elevate their event experience and whether our exhibitors are multi-nationals or small businesses, we strive to give guidance on how all can attend

events without creating a huge carbon footprint."

Local companies will know us by our brands Business Vision LIVE (May), Kent Construction EXPO (October) and The Education People Show (November)

Take a dash of passion, a pinch of fun and thirteen event professionals meticulous in their planning and innovative in their thinking – and voila! You have Revolution Events.

For more information visit: [www.revolution-events.com](http://www.revolution-events.com)

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# Additional Funding for Foodbanks across Kent

**Wards and their parent group Arun Estates have pledged that for every new property Wards list in Kent, £100 will be donated via Kent Community Foundation to local foodbanks.**

Josephine McCartney, Chief Executive, Kent Community Foundation said, "There's no doubt that we are in the midst of a crisis with continuing rising costs putting extreme pressure on the most disadvantaged. This winter will be tough for many in Kent and it will leave a great number of people struggling to make ends meet and keep their family warm, fed and well."

"We were pleased to distribute the initial funding totalling £49,000, on behalf of Wards to fourteen foodbanks



to help ease the increasing demand from families at the end of 2022 and we are delighted that there will be ongoing support from them for foodbanks throughout 2023."

Aldo Sotgiu, Arun Estates Group Managing Director said, "The ability to give back to our community and support those who need it most is a huge part of who we are and the values we represent. Right now, so many people are struggling, and we have always been focused on helping people in the best way."

**Contact Kent Community Foundation about funding for charities and community groups: [kentcf.org.uk](http://kentcf.org.uk)**



## FETCHER DOG rescues abandoned dogs in UK and Bosnia

**Fetcher Dog is a registered charity, 1182392, that rescues and protects abandoned dogs from within the UK and Bosnia finding them forever homes.**

Fetcher Dog is a mother and daughter team that works tirelessly to protect and support street dogs and manage and care for 40 dogs at the rescue centre in Kent and another 40 in Bosnia. We currently rehome 150 dogs per year.

Thousands of dogs are born on the streets of Bosnia every year, condemned to face cruel acts by locals and brutal deaths. The dogs are placed into kill shelters that provide no care, food or comfort.

We have many local rescuers, picking up stray street dogs and

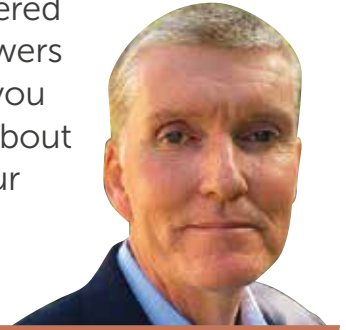
removing as many as possible from kill shelters. All the dogs are taken to safe and secure facilities where they are fed, cared for and taken to local veterinarians.

Individuals and businesses can support us in a variety of ways:

- **Work for Good** - Fundraising through your company's sales.
- **Payroll Giving** - Employees donating straight from their gross salary.
- **Charity Sponsorship** - Choosing Fetcher Dog as your Charity of the Year.
- **Sponsor a Dog** - A one-off donation to cover their rescue journey.

**If you or your business would like to help or for more information, visit: [www.fetcherdog.com](http://www.fetcherdog.com)**

Peter Colechin, Chartered Financial Planner, answers the question of what you should start thinking about when planning for your retirement



**By Peter Colechin at Advanta Wealth**

**Whilst we are working, for most of us our income arrives on a set day each month and our control over the amount we receive is limited. Our ability to save for the future will have been determined by our expenditure and commitments to our family as they grow up.**

As soon as we start the retirement phase of our lives, we need to look at our income in a different way for the simple reason that our retirement lifestyle is likely to be very different from the one we had whilst working. Longer holidays and not incurring commuting costs are two obvious financial changes. But there will be many more.

Working out how much income and capital you need and when you are going to need it requires a structured plan. Working with an adviser to build a cash flow model of your income sources and financial needs is a great way to start this plan.

If you have contributed to pensions during your working life, you will find you have a variety of types with a bewildering array of names – Final Salary/Defined Benefits, Additional Voluntary Contributions, Workplace, Defined Contribution and Self Invested Personal Pensions to name the most common. All of these have slightly different rules and calculations to test against the Lifetime Allowance, the limit over which there may be a tax charge to pay.

After gathering the details from your previous employers you will need to consider whether the pensions on offer provide the income that suits the financial shape of your retirement. If they don't, then you may have a number of options available to you.

For example, you can purchase a guaranteed income known as an annuity – this pays income in a shape that you set; the amount you get paid, the regularity of payment, the amount your partner receives on your death, the rate at which payments increase are just a selection of choices you have.

An alternative to buying a guaranteed income is to keep your pension invested and withdraw income and capital from it. This provides flexibility and can help maximise not only your income tax position but can also play a key role with inheritance tax planning.

Whether structuring your pensions and investments or considering how best to transfer wealth, professional advice can ensure you get the answers before making decisions.

### Risk Warnings:

**Taxation:** The tax treatment depends on the individual circumstances of each client and may be subject to change in future.

**Investment Risk:** The value of investments, and the income or capital entitlement which may derive from them, if any, may go down as well as up and is not guaranteed; therefore investors may not get back the amount originally invested.

### Advanta Wealth

130 Buckingham Palace Road, London, SW1W 9SA

[www.advantawealth.co.uk](http://www.advantawealth.co.uk)

[pcolechin@theadvantagroup.co.uk](mailto:pcolechin@theadvantagroup.co.uk)





# The future of sustainability, today

**Sustainability is becoming an ever-more present aspect across all business sectors. Old narratives that companies must hurt their bottom line to help the environment, are being increasingly replaced with those suggesting it can actually reduce costs and boost productivity.**

EKC Group are training the future workforce to appreciate and understand environmental ways of working, aiming to enhance businesses across Kent by bringing new ways of thinking and new skillsets.

And through new facilities, equipment and funding, EKC Group's sustainability drive is only getting stronger!

## Strategy

In 2021, the Group unveiled its strategy to be Carbon Net Zero by 2040 – a goal that beats the UK government's by 10 years. To achieve this ambitious mission, each department across the Group's six Colleges have reviewed their processes, systems and material usage to find ways of becoming more efficient. Through simple measures such as turning off lights and using less paper, these departmental pledges will all add up to reduce the carbon cost of the excellent training offered by each team.

Across the Group, localisation of procurement has been emphasised over the last two years, and sustainability is now injected into the curriculum. New builds associated with the College are designed with sustainability in mind, employing renewable materials and bearing features that will reduce the use of artificial lighting and heating.

## Building design

Nowhere is this design focus currently seen more than in the ongoing Spring Lane redevelopment, which will host our land-based students starting in September. The roof has been turfed and wildflowers are being planted to enhance biodiversity by attracting bees and insects. This feature also naturally assists with insulation in the winter and cooling in the summer, lowering the facility's energy use throughout the year.

Made using ethically-sourced timber, the Spring Lane campus will maximise natural sunlight and environmental ventilation systems to boost not only efficiency but also the health and happiness of the students and staff. Electric vehicle charging points and plenty of cycle storage will also reduce emissions from commuting.



## Facilities and equipment

A recent jewel in EKC Group's crown is securing funding from the government's pilot Strategic Development Fund, allowing the installation of three cutting-edge laboratories. Featuring robotic arms, industry-standard tooling machines, electric vehicle simulators and 3D printers, these labs will enable the Group to futureproof learners as well as teaching them how emerging technologies can be used to enhance sustainability.

The new T Level qualifications are also prompting a wave of investments across the Group, with sustainability being a key part of the curricula. For example, Automotive workshops will soon have their own electric cars with which students can train, meanwhile students on the Design, Surveying and Planning for Construction T Level will focus on the environmental impact and considerations inherent in the sector today. Industry-standard 3D modelling software is on offer to these students, reducing waste from failed prototypes.



## Impacting the wider county

EKC Group's mission to improve itself reflects its goal in the wider communities it serves. While producing climate conscious workers of the future is an important role for the long-term, the Group aims to educate existing workforces about the steps they can take today to reduce its carbon footprint today.

As such, the Group's EKC Training unit is on hand to offer CPD in the form of apprenticeships, part-time courses and short-term courses to staff currently in the workplace. Without impacting on an individual's work hours, they can grow their environmental credentials and spread best practice throughout their organisation.

The new labs mentioned earlier in the article are also accessible to the private and public sector, meaning staff at local, national and international companies can visit them and become qualified in a host of new practical and theoretical methods.

**To see how EKC Group can help your company become more sustainable, visit: [ekcgroup.ac.uk](http://ekcgroup.ac.uk)**



# EKC TRAINING

## TRAIN YOUR TEAM, SEE THE DIFFERENCE

Skills training and CPD are the best ways to enhance your team's skillset, boosting productivity, creativity and staff retention in the process. EKC Training is on hand to help. With a raft of qualifications that can be completed outside of work hours, online or through an apprenticeship, there's sure to be an option that works for your employees.

### HOW YOU COULD BE HELPED BY:

#### APPRENTICESHIPS

- Get hands-on experience with in-class training
- Be paid while learning from people currently in the industry
- Enable existing staff to become viable for higher level roles
- Access EKC Training's experienced apprenticeship mentors to guide you through the process and available levels

#### ONLINE LEARNING

- Work towards a qualification whenever and wherever suits you
- Teach abstract principles as well as skills
- Gain qualifications from Level 2 to Level 5

#### TRAINING CENTRES

- Three centres across Kent, boasting specialist equipment and training
- Experienced tutors teaching beginner as well as advanced skills and theory
- Industry-standard workshops and facilities for engineering, construction-based and rail sectors

To find out how your business can benefit, search [ekctraining.ac.uk](https://ekctraining.ac.uk)



# POWERING YOUR FUTURE.

## Enhancing your business.

**Yeames Solar** is committed to helping Kent businesses move towards a greener, smarter and more sustainable future.

We provide and install a range of solutions:

- **Commercial & Residential Solar PV**
- **Electric Vehicle Charging**
- **Battery Storage**

There has never been a better time to consider investing in solar. Wholesale electricity prices are increasing whilst government support is dramatically decreasing and your carbon footprint is now on the agenda.

**Get in Touch for your Free No Obligation Consultation.**



Commercial Sales Line 01843 498259

Residential Sales Line 01843 498013

Mobile 07784 922002

[matthew.shinebourne@yeames.com](mailto:matthew.shinebourne@yeames.com)



## GOING GREEN - can you afford not to?

Many businesses across Kent are already actively working to develop a net zero roadmap as part of their long term strategy.



**Matthew Shinebourne**  
Business  
Development Manager  
Yeames Limited

**‘Net Zero’ has become a common term in the environmental and sustainability world since the UK government legislated to hit net zero carbon emissions by 2050.**

This trend is motivated by multiple factors including cost reduction, risk mitigation, employee engagement, reputational enhancement with stakeholders, gaining competitive advantage and accessing finance. Furthermore, current legislation now requires certain organisations to publicly report on their energy use, carbon emissions and energy efficiency as part of ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) framework commitments.

There is no doubt that companies have a corporate social responsibility (CSR) to ensure that their business operates in a way that has positive social and environmental effects. There are many ways to achieve this goal including investing in renewable energy sources. One of the most cost effective and easily accessible renewable energy sources is the sun. Harnessing this power enables significant reduction in dependence upon fossil fuels.

### Cost Reduction

One of the main advantages of installing solar panels is that it can significantly reduce your business electricity costs. Electricity, due to the huge increase in wholesale prices, is one of the highest overheads for most businesses. Solar panels offer electricity at a fraction of grid-supplied electricity. In addition to the immediate savings, investing in solar panels allows you to effectively forward buy your electricity at a price of 4-5p per unit. This compares to around 15p to as much as 70p per unit from the grid.

Reducing your electricity costs will mean that you have more capital to invest in core areas of your business that will drive growth and profits. Overall, solar panels can be a reliable way for businesses to reduce their electricity costs and safeguard their future electricity supplies.



### The Energy Time Bomb - can you afford not to?

Energy prices are a hot topic in the news recently. James Cartlidge, the exchequer secretary to the Treasury, has confirmed that from the end of March 2023, the government will significantly decrease compensating for soaring gas and electricity prices saying: “It is not for the government to habitually pay the bills of businesses.”

The new EBDS (Energy Bills Discount Scheme) replacing EBRs (Energy Bills Reduction Scheme) at the end of March 2023 reduces government tax payers funding for non-residential customers from £18 Billion over the past six months to £5.5 billion over the next 12 months. This is a dramatic drop and Kent businesses will undoubtedly be severely impacted by this change.

Prices may go up or down but can you afford the risk of your electricity potentially quadrupling? This is a real possibility.

### Risk Mitigation

Officially defined as: ‘uninterrupted availability to energy sources at an affordable price.’ Investing in commercial solar panels gives you greater, long-term energy security.

### Employee Engagement and Reputational Enhancement with Stakeholders

Green credentials such as harnessing the sun’s power through solar technology demonstrates corporate responsibility to employees, stakeholders, other businesses,

the press and the public. Improving CSR appeals to eco-conscious consumers, which will increase sales and profitability in the long run.

### Access to Investment and Finance

Support for businesses in Kent is increasingly becoming dependent on the applicant having green credentials and a clear carbon reduction road map such as an ESG framework. Lending institutions need themselves to demonstrate ethical environmental policy and one of the main ways to do this is to restrict lending only to those businesses that are also acting in an environmentally responsible manner. Investors are increasingly applying non-financial factors, such as corporate environmental responsibility, as part of their decision-making analysis process to identify material risks and growth opportunities.

### Summary

As you can see, installing solar panels on your commercial property can bring about several rewards and, in some cases, can be a business life saver. Solar PV technology helps reduce costs, gives energy security, facilitates carbon reduction and improves your brand image to your employees, investors, lending institutions and of course your customers. This is especially true for companies that require high volumes of electricity to operate. Feel free to reach out for free no obligation consultation from your local experts - **Yeames Solar** [www.yeames.com](http://www.yeames.com)

# Action on Net Zero held back by **lack of understanding**

A BCC survey of more than 1,000 businesses, of which 96% are SMEs, has found that nine out of ten don't fully understand what the Government's target of making the UK Net Zero by 2050 means for them. But there is a substantial divide between firms with more than 50 employees and those with fewer than 50, in terms of understanding and progress.



**A total of 56% of the bigger firms have a 'complete' or 'some understanding' of the Net Zero target, compared to just 35% of the smaller ones.**

Almost twice as many firms with more than 50 employees (36%) have developed a plan for reaching Net Zero compared to those with fewer than 50 (19%).

The research also showed that planning for the future skills needed to help businesses make the transition to greener and more sustainable operations has taken a backseat. Fewer than one in 20 firms (4%) have carried out a written assessment of the green jobs or skills they will need in-house over the next 10 years.

One in five businesses (21%) also think that, on balance, green technology will decrease the productivity of their company, whereas 10% think it will provide a boost.

Firms with a negative view of making improvements said they were worried about the extra costs or time required in adopting green technology.

For instance, a small retailer in Norfolk said: "Electric Vans have too limited a range to be effective for us, meaning we will have to waste time to re-charge during delivery rounds, reducing productivity."

Whereas those who had embraced changes cited cost savings and improved efficiency, with a micro information and comms firm in Herefordshire saying: "Over the last 18 months we have changed the majority of our lighting to LED, and as a result have achieved a net saving of over £1,000 per annum even after the cost of [installation] is taken into account."

The survey also revealed many firms are using new technology or adopting greener policies even if their overall understanding of reaching Net Zero is incomplete.

#### The research showed that:

- **More than two thirds of SMEs (69%) have installed LED lighting**
- **More than a third (34%) are investing in greener vehicles**
- **Just under a third (30%) are using solar panels**
- **Almost half (46%) are using recycling and waste management strategies**
- **Over a quarter (28%) use renewable energy providers or tariffs**
- **Two out of five SMEs (42%) thinking about Net Zero will speak to Chambers of Commerce and almost a fifth (19%) to their banks, lawyers or accountants.**

Shevaun Haviland, Director General of the BCC, said: "The cost-of-living crisis means many smaller firms are focussed on keeping their heads above water. So, it is perhaps no surprise that researching and planning for Net Zero has slipped down the list of strategic priorities.

"But if the UK is to stand a chance of hitting its 2050 Net Zero target, then businesses must be put at the heart of the strategy to do that. They will provide one of the biggest dents in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by making the transition.

"Yet, there is a real danger that smaller businesses will get left behind unless politicians, banks and business leaders come together to galvanise action.

"Many chambers are working with their members to help them develop their plans to become carbon neutral. And this research shows that businesses are turning to Chambers and their banks for advice.

"We have a position of responsibility here and it is up to us to use our influence to improve awareness of the benefits of becoming more energy efficient and how to do it.

"Clarity and certainty will drive confidence to invest. As it stands, it is alarming that a sizeable number of firms think investing in green tech will damage their productivity.

"Our work with Lloyds Bank will help pinpoint the main drag factors holding companies back and then set out in clear terms what business and the financial sector can do to change the dynamics."

## Canterbury Climate Action Partnership

**Canterbury Climate Action Partnership is an independent not-for-profit Community Interest Company working closely with Canterbury City and Kent County Councils and other like-minded interest groups towards a more sustainable future, to achieve a zero-carbon district by 2030 and support biodiversity.**

Since our inception in 2019 we have endeavoured to achieve our goals by organising a range of activities in 2020, a Climate Action

Week in 2021, a Climate Action Festival in 2022 and launching our Annual Climate Action Awards in 2022. Through our accreditation with UNFCCC (United Nation Framework for Climate Change) our Chairman, Dr Carl Wright, led a team to attend COP26 in Glasgow in 2021 and COP27 in Sharm El Sheikh in 2022.

This year we will be holding more outreach events including a biodiversity talk and panel discussion on Earth Day, 22nd April, in Canterbury, information and guidance

events on how to reduce your carbon footprint and save energy costs in your home and business, and a series of climate action and biodiversity activities during the Canterbury Festival. Our Repair Café continues to be held on a regular basis and has proved to be very popular.

Our corporation membership scheme has enabled us to form partnerships with local businesses. We are keen to develop this further to help promote those businesses wishing to reduce their carbon footprint and embrace biodiversity.



We will shortly be announcing our Climate Action Awards for 2023 in the following five categories: Business, Secondary/Primary Education, Higher/Further Education, Community Action and Individual Action. Details and an application form will be available on our website.

**For more information visit [www.ccap.org.uk/news](http://www.ccap.org.uk/news)**

## Ignorance is no longer bliss... it is increasingly unwise and expensive!



By **Rob Robinson**

Sustainable Business Programme Manager,  
Kent County Council

As I type this on a rainy Monday night in March, there's plenty from today even, that should sharpen the focus on the relative efficiency your operations, as we ourselves evolve with the shifting landscape.

**Firstly, with still a few months left to deliver the latest (and last) incarnation of the Low Carbon Across the South and East (LoCASE) programme, we've had to close the application process and open up a waiting list...which is growing by the hour.**

The fact is that ever since the Autumn, demand has steadily increased in our ERDF grant funding programme to such an extent that we're fully expecting to sign off over £1M of grants to over 110 local businesses in March alone. Compare this to a more modest and typical £400K of awards for 50 businesses in August and it makes one think. Is it just because the penny has dropped that this really is THE final chance for firms to claim the last remaining EU funds in a programme such as this?

It may be the growing array of examples of projects we that we've supported over the years has reached a critical mass of businesses and networks (with peers verifying the benefits of doing so) a social diffusion of better business practice, if you will. It could also be that there has been the imperfect storm brewing; rising raw material costs, steepening energy prices, increased consumer awareness and demand of supply chains to improve. Even if project costs have risen with global inflation, the cost of simply doing business has rocketed in the majority of cases and so, doing nothing about that outdated building, equipment, inefficient operations or even the entire business model simply becomes less of a viable option than investing.

Tough in times of crisis but our business communities have been increasingly adaptable, innovative and resourceful in the face of waves of fresh challenges. It has been refreshing to help embed and witness normalising of what was novel technology or more circular

approaches less than a decade ago for many sectors, nothing showing this more clearly than with last year's Kent pilot project Growing Green.

This collaboration saw us 'simply' run through a range of options for growers and manufacturers in the food and drink sector to think about; from building fabric, process and ingredients input and output, waste and packaging to logistics and couple it with access to peer-to-peer learning, a few visits to local early adopters and a bit of seed funding to help overcome a key barrier to adoption. Some of the examples are outlined on that page but the shared learning we want to take far wider as a team and as a service going forward.

Through Low Carbon Kent, our business engagement strategy revolves around a joined-up service provision. When speaking to a firm or supplier about a particular project that might be most pertinent to them, we also introduce other sustainability aspects which might not be on their agenda. Waste and the circular economy figure highly through Upcycle Your Waste and BLUEPRINT to find novel and viable business solutions to challenge the status quo of linear waste streams. We're adding this waste value proposition theme to our Steps To Environmental Management (STEM) accreditation, ensuring that all businesses engaged (both Kent and beyond!) take the chance to think of their wider impacts, not just to remain compliant but also to adapt and move towards continuous environmental improvement.

As we report on the successes and learning from delivering this portfolio of projects, we're pulling together the collective best practice examples that all of this readership can relate to and look into for your own business and associates. Whilst looking to support the transition to and development of the green economy, it isn't merely the preserve of the few but a necessity of the many to realise the multiple benefits of taking a closer look.



## Portable power and data, **where you need it**

Portable energy is the new frontier for renewable energy.

**Many operations are in remote or difficult to reach places, and as a result, they rely on portable diesel-fuelled generators. The problem with these generators is that they have a high carbon footprint and result in high annual running costs. Mobile solar systems were trialled years ago but did not deliver the consistency. However, today's technology has advanced significantly, and renewable power is increasingly popular.**

Deployable solar systems are growing exponentially in recent years, driven by the need to move data and power into remote locations. The need to move data is critical for almost every part of a project, because sites expand organically, and sometimes quicker than they can cope with, this has caused issues with hot spots and saturation, limiting service and leading to down time. Solar powered platforms, like our Autonomous Remote Communications System or IO System, mean companies now can place data communications points or surveillance cameras wherever they are needed, and wireless networks can be redesigned quickly and cost-effectively.

There's a mind-set change where companies are actively looking for innovative new solutions to improve operations, reducing reliance on old tools and processes and engaging with new hardware and software that offers improvements across the board. As understanding, awareness, and technology continue to improve, clean energy systems will become even more efficient, leading to a more sustainable future for us all.

**For more information visit [www.sunstone-systems.com](https://www.sunstone-systems.com)**

Take a peek at our website <https://lowcarbonkent.com/low-carbon-kent-services/>



University of Kent at the CEME Hydrogen Event



# Embrace your business' positive environmental future

We know there are barriers to making your business more environmentally sustainable. In fact, in a survey by British Business Bank in 2021, UK SMEs cited over 20 of them, with cost, feasibility and lack of information being the most significant.

**A**t the University of Kent, we've launched the Positive Environmental Futures Signature Research Theme to build an innovative, creative and inclusive community that is actively focused on finding solutions to the urgent environmental issues facing the world today and providing space to collaborate with partners regionally, nationally and internationally. For SMEs in the South East, this means that there will be even more opportunities to benefit from our research and to work with us on bespoke projects to overcome the barriers to decarbonisation.

As part of this initiative, we have committed to become a Right to Food University and want to engage with local organisations to develop a plan to tackle food inequality across Kent and build a Community Kitchen for local food entrepreneurs, supporting best practice and training on good food for the county. This is in parallel to the Growing Kent and Medway partnership, through which we are using national funding to drive innovation in the agriculture and food and drink sector.

We are also helping Kent businesses to achieve their sustainability goals more widely. Last year, our sustainability experts hosted a series of net zero workshops in partnership with the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, which led to a number of innovative partnership projects with local businesses, ranging from designing a net zero yacht to understanding the environmental impacts of creative arts processes. We have worked with the Port of Dover to decarbonise their cross-channel ferry fleet, tackled coffee cup waste with Kent County Council, and engineered new value in waste streams from multiple sectors. And that's just us getting started.

But where do you begin? If you would like to explore our expertise, you can use our new, searchable database to find cutting-edge research on the transition to net-zero, climate change and environmental sustainability more broadly. The database provides contact details for over 70 individual researchers at Kent with the experience to help your business.

Through our work we are building a sustainable regional strategy with our academic, NGO and business partners in South East England and Northern France and Belgium. Here common challenges of climate change and net zero need a collaborative, partnership-based response to find new ways to balance energy supply, demand, technology and behavioural change to deliver goals and targets.

We also have a dedicated Business Relationships team who can provide support and advice for those looking to work with our experts. Whether you're looking to conduct a feasibility study, inform policy and strategy development, adopt new technologies or create new products and services, they can help you explore the range of schemes, expertise and funding available to help you get the most out of your relationship with us.

# University of Kent

Find out more: <https://bit.ly/kent-positive-environmental-futures>



# Join the sustainable construction skills revolution

With the phasing out of gas boilers and a shift to renewable energy sources already underway, many businesses in the construction and building services sector are facing a sustainable skills shortage.



**M**idKent College has launched a **Green Skills Factory and Home Energy Centre** at its **Maidstone campus** to meet the challenge with a suite of new courses to help housing developers and building firms, electricians and heating engineers get the training they need now for a Net Zero future.



Thinking Business caught up with **Jane Le Poidevin**, Director of Curriculum at MidKent College to explain more about the project and what it will be seeking to achieve.

## Tell us about the new Green Skills Factory?

Supported by the Government's Strategic Development Fund, we've installed a new training centre at our Maidstone campus specifically to support the Construction and Building Services sectors as businesses strive to decarbonise. The Factory will offer a range of courses to help employers develop a sustainability mindset and skills to support new ways of working.

## What will these new courses focus on?

Our courses will focus on developing skills and knowledge – from introductory courses that raise awareness for the sector and practical installation and retrofit training to more in-depth degree level qualifications. We're also partnering with The Retrofit Academy for a programme of online and in-person training to help building professionals to be able to assess and advise on making older properties as efficient as they can be.

## What are the challenges you're seeking to address?

The construction sector is among those sectors that uses a lot of energy and waste. The energy crisis has flagged the importance of improved home insulation not only for new builds, but also retrofitting existing housing stock and some commercial buildings. How can you take your 1900s terraced house and ensure that's as insulated as possible, and as warm as possible? We'll be providing training courses that address that as well as modern methods of construction, ensuring planners, architects, designers etc., consider the materials they're using and how they're insulating buildings.

## Why do we need these skills now?

The banning of gas boiler installations in new builds from 2025 shows the direction of travel, but we're already seeing solar panel installers, for example, struggling to recruit to meet increased demand. There is a skills gap and that's where we come in.

## Should businesses see this as an opportunity?

Gas boiler installations are set to be banned for all properties across the UK from 2035 leading the way for all new heating systems to replace them. From air source heat pumps to the latest solar power products there's a real opportunity here for the building trade, both now and as new technologies develop.

## How do you see the new skills factory developing?

What we have launched is only the beginning. It will evolve. We will bring on new courses, new programmes of learning and new opportunities, working with the sector to



develop courses for the skills they will need as technologies – such as hydrogen as an energy source for example – develop.

## Tell us more about the building itself?

We've taken some old mobile buildings and refurbished them to make the space as energy efficient as possible. It's got an air source heat pump and solar panels on the roof. It's not 100% off grid, but it will certainly contribute to heating costs.

We're keen to make the space a central hub for all things green, so if you're interested in accessing the space for a sustainability-themed meeting, please get in touch.

**The Green Skills Factory and Home Energy Centre** at MidKent College is one of four new green skills accelerator centres across Kent supported through the government's Strategic Development Fund.

- **Green Skills Factory and Home Energy Centre, Maidstone**  
To find out more, visit: [www.midkent.ac.uk](http://www.midkent.ac.uk)
- **Green Engineering Centre and Mechatronic Lab, Ashford and Canterbury**  
To find out more, visit: [www.ekcgroup.ac.uk](http://www.ekcgroup.ac.uk)
- **Green Horticultural Centre, Hadlow**  
To find out more, visit: [www.hadlow.ac.uk](http://www.hadlow.ac.uk)



# One man's trash is another man's treasure



**FINDING NEW REVENUE STREAMS** from their otherwise wasted materials is becoming more attractive to businesses facing growing financial pressures, on top of the obvious benefits to the planet.

**GROWING KENT & MEDWAY IS OFFERING UP TO £50,000 IN FUNDING** to help businesses in the horticultural and food and drink sector become more sustainable and create viable circular economies in our region.



**M**ost businesses are only too aware of the need to reduce their waste and the amount of material they send to landfill because of the impact on the environment. Innovative thinking and advances in research fields like biotechnology, mean many businesses are now investing in ways to earn additional value from that waste. Whether by processing waste to create new materials, finding new customers and markets, or identifying new uses.

Growing Green, a pilot training programme led by Growing Kent & Medway and funded through the UK government's Community Renewal Fund which ran in 2022, was designed to help 33 local SMEs on their journey to net-zero. The scheme highlighted that creating value from waste by-products was a priority for many of the small businesses taking part.

Following the initiative, Growing Kent & Medway is now making £900,000 available to help businesses achieve just that. They are inviting Kent-based horticultural and

plant-based food and drink organisations to take part in their new Business Sustainability Challenge.

The Challenge is looking to fund innovative ideas, processes or technologies to support sustainable production, products and packaging in the fresh produce, food and drink supply chain. Successful applicants will be awarded up to £50,000 towards their project costs.

## Finding value from agri-food and drink waste

Across our region, there are incredible examples of innovation taking place, with businesses finding value from all types of waste material created from horticultural production, and food and drink manufacturing.

Some horticultural growers are sending material like green waste, such as plant stalks and leaves, and fruit waste for processing. High-value compounds such as oils and antioxidants are extracted. These materials can then be used by the beauty, healthcare, and nutrition sectors to produce new ingredients and products, including exfoliants, perfumes, and teas.

Waste plant material is also being used to produce more sustainable packaging. Leaves from tomato plants, for example, can be processed into a material that is formed into punnets and is then used to package the tomatoes.

Even the grain used in brewing or distilling to produce beer and spirits can find a new purpose. Spent grain is rich in protein, so businesses are working with researchers to test ways to process this material for new uses as ingredients in meat- and dairy-free products.

Kent is home to many of the UK's fruit orchards. The prunings from these fruit trees can be turned into a material called biochar which, when reapplied to soils, can help to improve the health and fertility of the land. Researchers are also looking into biochar's ability to lock in carbon. Further benefits could be realised by closing the loop on the heat and carbon dioxide created from making the biochar, which could be used by growers of crops like tomatoes and chillis, who need these inputs to grow their crops efficiently.

## Take on the Business Sustainability Challenge

If you think you have an idea that could help to make the horticulture, food and drink sectors in our region more sustainable, you may want to apply for the Growing Kent & Medway Business Sustainability Challenge.

**You can apply if...**

- You operate in horticultural and plant-based food and drink industries, or...
- ...are proposing a project that positively impacts these sectors
- Are a Kent or Medway-based micro, small or medium-sized business

You will be able to claim 50% of the eligible project costs, reimbursed at the end of the project. You must also demonstrate impact on the Kent and Medway economy and 75% of your project activity needs to take place in the region. Partnerships between businesses are encouraged.

**You will need to apply for the Business Sustainability Challenge by midnight 31st May 2023.**  
[bit.ly/BusinessSustainabilityChallenge](http://bit.ly/BusinessSustainabilityChallenge)

## Creating a dynamic food and drink innovation cluster

Our region is known as the Garden of England for a reason. With over 2,500 food and drink businesses and rich fertile land, home to award-winning vineyards and fruit farms. Around 80% of fresh food comes into the UK through Kent's ports.

Recognising the potential, UKRI invested £18m through the Strength in Places fund to create a

If you'd like to join the innovation cluster, membership to Growing Kent & Medway is free. You can sign up at [growingkentandmedway.com/become-a-member](http://growingkentandmedway.com/become-a-member).

food and drink cluster focused on sustainable business innovation.

Growing Kent & Medway was officially launched in April 2022 and boasts over 300 members, has so far awarded £1.3m in grant funding and has taken 38 businesses through its food accelerator support programme.





# Achieving B Corp Certification

**Achieving B Corp status is a clear and strong demonstration of a firm's commitment to being sustainable and socially conscious, and as accountants, business and wealth advisers we are more than proud to announce we are one of few in our sector that have achieved this accreditation.**

Our team of 500 experienced and highly motivated people across Kent, London and Sussex work with a range of clients from ambitious scale-up businesses, charities and not for profits, as well as individuals and their families. With an annual turnover in excess of £40m, we are one of the largest accountancy firms to achieve B Corp status.

**Andrew Griggs**, Senior Partner, said: "This is a significant achievement for the firm and a milestone in our journey of being a purpose-led advisory firm. It is a formal recognition of the efforts we continue to make to have a positive impact on clients, our people and the communities in which we work with strong governance."

**Jennifer Williamson**, a Partner who has been instrumental in the firm's journey towards B Corp accreditation adds: "We are part of a global movement that recognises the need to balance profits with purpose. The firm has a clear purpose

– to guide our clients, colleagues and communities to a brighter future – and B Corp status puts this into an independently verified framework."

"It sets us apart from our competitors, demonstrating to current and future colleagues and clients that we are a firm that chooses to do the right thing."

There are over 6,000 certified B Corps across 159 industry sectors in 89 countries. To achieve certification, businesses must undertake a rigorous and independently verified assessment that encompasses an organisation's entire social and environmental performance, from supply chain and input materials to charitable giving and employee benefits. We will be required to meet high standards of social and environmental performance, transparency and accountability with recertification every three years.

Chris Turner, Executive Director of B Lab UK, says "We are delighted to welcome Kreston Reeves to the B Corp community. This is a movement of companies who are committed to changing how business operates and believe business really can be a force for good. We know that Kreston Reeves are going to be a fantastic addition to the community and will continue driving the conversation forward".

"We are pleased to have B Corps of all shapes and sizes as part of our community – from startups to multinationals and across many different industries. Business is a powerful force and B Corps demonstrate that you can do good in any sector. Welcoming Kreston Reeves is an exciting moment because they have an opportunity to lead the way within the Accountancy industry. We and the rest of the B Corp community are really pleased to support Kreston Reeves in paving the way for a new way of doing things".

"Being able to welcome Kreston Reeves to the B Corp community is hugely exciting. Their commitment to doing business differently will be an inspiration to others and really help spread the idea that we can redefine success in business to be as much about people and planet as it is about profit".



Andrew Griggs, Senior Partner and Jennifer Williamson, Partner at Kreston Reeves can be contacted by email at [enquiries@krestonreeves.com](mailto:enquiries@krestonreeves.com)

Visit [www.krestonreeves.com](http://www.krestonreeves.com) or call us on 0330 124 1399



# Businesses and education working together for a greener, more sustainable future in Kent and Medway



Karima Kamel, Business Development Manager, Locate in Kent.

**Kent and Medway are gearing up for a net zero future. This month EKC Group, MidKent College and Hadlow College, part of North Kent College, launched a sustainable skills revolution to help businesses across the region to adapt to a greener, more sustainable economy.**

New training courses and facilities will support efforts to meet a nationwide sustainable skills gap in horticulture, manufacturing, engineering and construction. They form part of a broader skills improvement plan to meet the challenges local businesses face. The aim of all this is to develop a new pipeline of talent that meets the needs of existing employers already in the region and further increases the appeal of this dynamic corner of the south east for future business investment.

Brompton's plans for a revolutionary new bicycle manufacturing factory on stilts overlooking a restored wetland site in Ashford, is a great example of business and education working and planning together. The leading global bicycle brand sought advice from Locate in Kent, EKC Group and Canterbury Christ Church University's School of Engineering, Technology and Design on building skills development here in the county.

Subject to planning approval, several initiatives will help to develop future generations of manufacturing and engineering talent, boosting a low carbon industry that is estimated to already employ between 17,000 and 25,000 people, contributing £1 billion to the Kent economy.

Sustainability and the low carbon economy has long been seen as a key driver to powering growth and innovation in the UK – and momentum is building. Kent is already home to some of the most innovative businesses in this space, creating an exciting new ecosystem in the region.

This ecosystem is supported by world-leading research and development: including two of the UK's leading centres for science at Discovery Park and Kent Science Park; the GreenTech Hub for Advanced Horticulture at NIAB in East Malling, the Biotechnology Hub at the University of Kent and the Medway Food Innovation Centre at the University of Greenwich.

Our Kent Invents events in 2019 and 2022 showcased some of the pioneers building their success here, including:

- Ryse Hydrogen, the company behind a new multi-million renewable energy plant in Herne Bay, the first of its kind in the UK.
- Alpha 311, a growing Kent business which has developed innovative vertical wind turbines that harvest energy from passing vehicles.

- Nutri-san, the biotechnology company which has created safe sustainable food products using the properties of seaweed.

They are just the start of a new wave of innovation centred on this vibrant and well-connected region where the support is in place for exciting new businesses ready to take on the world.

In February over £154,000 of funding was awarded by food and drink accelerator Growing Kent and Medway to 11 local businesses involved in a diverse range of projects aimed at making food production more sustainable - from reducing plastic in fruit punnets and cutting energy in food processing to extracting plant proteins from seaweed for meat-free diets.

Growing Green, a pilot scheme to help horticultural and food and drink businesses move to net zero, meanwhile, is set to deliver over 20 new jobs and £3 million in GVA in Kent and Medway by 2028, as well as driving down carbon emissions.

The 12-month Growing Kent and Medway programme supported 33 small local businesses to help them move towards net-zero carbon emissions, providing training, decarbonisation action plans and grants to the value of £180,000.

It all goes to show how much Kent and Medway provides businesses with the right support, financial backing and environment to embrace the net zero economy in order to create more jobs and opportunities county-wide.



**The Locate in Kent team can help support your business.**

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# Kent Invicta Chamber Charity of the Year



Every year across Kent, around 50 young people aged 13-24 hear the devastating words, **“You have cancer”**. They will each need specialised nursing care and support to get them through it.

**TEENAGE CANCER TRUST is the only UK charity dedicated to meeting this vital need, and our 28 units in NHS hospitals around the country are the only nationwide network of specialist treatment centres supporting young people with cancer. Our units don't feel like hospital. Designed together with young people themselves, they're spaces where young people facing cancer can feel at home, meet others their age, welcome family and friends, and get the very best care from a dedicated team of specialist nurses and youth support workers.**

Over the past three years we've strengthened our capacity to support young people with cancer in Kent, with the appointment of Sarah and Ami, two Teenage and Young Adult Clinical Liaison Nurse Specialists serving the county.

While Sarah supports young people receiving treatment at Maidstone and Medway hospitals, Ami works across East Kent, at the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford, the Kent and Canterbury Hospital in Canterbury and the Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital in Margate, as well as outreach work in the local community.

Our nurses are specially trained in how cancer affects teenagers and young adults. As well as providing world-class medical care, they understand how to support young people with the impact of cancer on their emotions, friendships, studies, work and relationships. And crucially, they get to know each individual as a person, rather than just a patient.



Ami Archer

Ami, Clinical Liaison Nurse Specialist for East Kent Hospitals University Foundation Trust, says: “My job is to connect with young people facing cancer in the local community. I provide consistent reassurance and support through all parts of a young person's cancer care, from diagnosis to treatment and recovery.

“I love meeting and getting to know these young people and their families, so that I can support them in the way they need. This may include being an advocate so that they can get age-appropriate care, providing easy to understand information, getting financial support, or helping them to navigate school or university. I also support young people to connect with each other and to access fun activities, so that they can get that much needed respite from the often-gruelling cycle of cancer treatment.”

We rely on donations from the public and support from businesses to make our work possible, so we're delighted to be chosen as Kent Invicta Chamber Charity of the Year.

We love working with companies to create exciting and impactful charity partnerships that help transform the lives of young people living with cancer. In return for making us your charity of choice, together we can develop a partnership that will benefit and enhance your business, inspire your people and engage your customers.

There are a wide variety of ways to get involved, including corporate charity challenges designed to motivate staff, build teamwork and improve employee wellbeing. We also offer a range of volunteering opportunities and pro bono skills sharing, including auditing, consultancy and programme development.

*“We rely on donations from the public and support from businesses to make our work possible, so we're delighted to be chosen as Kent Invicta Chamber Charity of the Year.”*

If you'd like to find out more, please contact Lynn Hyder, Relationship Manager South & South East, at [lynn.hyder@teenagecancertrust.org](mailto:lynn.hyder@teenagecancertrust.org) or visit [www.teenagecancertrust.org](http://www.teenagecancertrust.org)

# KENWARD TRUST – Giving hope and recovery from addiction for 55 years



**Kenward Trust (based in Yalding, Kent) helps those affected by addiction, homelessness and crime and since our formation in 1968 we have supported over 10,000 people to transform their lives and start their new future, substance free. We are celebrating our 55th Year of giving hope and recovery from addiction.**

## Pressing that reset button

Ideally set in the countryside, away from everyday hustle and bustle, pressing that reset button to life is essential for a successful road to recovery. We are passionate about our work and helping individuals to transform their lives by avoiding dependency upon drugs and

alcohol. We are proud to have an 85% recovery completion rate.

*"When I came here, I was in a really bad way, but through a journey, one day at a time, which I embraced and was willing to put in the effort that's required with recovery, today I can say that I'm in the best place that I ever have been, and it's all really thanks to The Kenward Trust. It'll always have a big place in my heart."* **Cullum - ex-resident, now works full time, but also volunteers and helps with fundraising for Kenward Trust.**

## Alcohol and drug awareness in businesses

Kenward Trust also provides drug and alcohol awareness programmes for businesses. Our experienced speakers will highlight warning signs to look out for, educate around the latest substances and talk through any concerns.

## How can your business support Kenward Trust?

You can make a donation, appoint us as your 'Charity of the Year' for fundraising, or book a corporate away day at our beautiful Yalding setting for conferences and activities (alpaca walking, archery or disc golf).

**For further information visit:**  
<https://kenwardtrust.org.uk>

# FOUR REASONS why Business Owners should Consider an Estate Plan

**According to recent research carried out by Kent-based estate planning company Squiggle Consult LTD, 60% of UK adults haven't made a will.**

"This is of particular concern," said Squiggle CEO Kieran Osborne, "since we can assume this includes a fair share of business owners.

"This is alarming. Given that business owners may be the only source of income for their families, the consequences could be disastrous if anything happens. For example, if a business owner dies without a will, company bank accounts may be frozen, which in turn may lead to a huge disruption in business operations.

"Conversely, beneficiaries may inherit a business that's forced to cease trading. Or they could end up receiving only a fraction of the inheritance - or in the worst case, absolutely nothing. Or they could face a huge tax bill."

**Osborne recommends business owners consider four critical factors:**

- **Asset protection:** protects assets from being lost or misused after your death by specifying who inherits your business and how it should be managed.
- **Business continuity:** enables the business owner to designate a successor or provide clear instructions for business sale or dissolution after death.
- **Tax minimization:** reduces your beneficiaries' tax exposure with tax-saving strategies.
- **Family welfare:** ensures your assets are properly divided, taking into account family dynamics and the unique needs of family members.

**Squiggle is offering a 20% on estate plans to all Chamber members.**

**For more information visit: [squiggleconsult.co.uk](http://squiggleconsult.co.uk)**

# PEACE OF MIND for your business

**ACE finance directors provide commercially astute FDs giving your business peace of mind and greater financial stability. Our outsourced FD services provide board level expertise as well as hands-on experience for the day to day running of your finance function.**

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- Board level financial leadership;
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- Management accounts, forecasting and budgeting;
- Financial modelling including "what if" scenario planning;
- Cashflow management;
- Commercial pricing and tendering;
- Finance team leadership and mentoring.

We provide a best-in-class bookkeeping service, ensuring compliance with accounting standards and practices. Using leading accounting packages, we take away the pressure of tracking financial transactions, whilst providing critical financial information when you need it.

As a cost-effective flexible outsourced service, we are available as and when you need us; a few days a week, a few days a month or on a project-by-project basis. We provide the tools and expertise to enable you to do what you do best, which is to flourish whilst enhancing stability and maximising growth opportunities.

**Our website is:**  
<https://acefinancedirector.co.uk/>

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# Challenges for UK trade in 2023

The challenges facing UK exporters in 2023 are significant and it will take a **“concerted effort by our global network working alongside the UK Government to positively shift the dial”** says the British Chambers of Commerce.

**Last year, exports increased by 6.7%, once the effect of inflation is removed, but this is still less than the value of goods and services the UK sold overseas in 2018.**

There were also warning signs in the data for the last quarter of 2022, with UK exports falling by 2.9% as economic headwinds continued to blow.

For 2022, as a whole, the total annual trade balance in goods and services, excluding precious metals, widened by £85.3 billion to a deficit of £108 billion, when compared with 2021.

The latest BCC data for Q4 of 2022 also paints a stark picture:

- Most Small and Medium Sized Enterprise (SME) exporters reported no improvement to exports, with 27% reporting decreased export sales in the quarter and 47% reporting no change.
- Only 26% of SME exporters saw increased export sales.
- The picture for future orders was even weaker with 28% reporting a decrease against 24% an increase.

With the World Trade Organisation forecasting global trade growth of just 1% in 2023, down from 3% in 2022, then it would appear there is little to cheer.

While China's reopening should ease production supply chains in the long-term, its suddenness could also add to the volatility, and it may create additional supply chain turbulence – if the Covid pandemic continues to impact its economic output.

But there are some signs of better times ahead. The International Monetary Fund in its World Economic Outlook update in January indicated that global demand may pick up again – particularly in the second half of 2023. GDP growth in China is forecast to be 5.2% in 2023, and 6.1% in India (picking up to 6.8% in 2024).

If consumer spending does pick up in China, and beyond, then there could be the potential for higher export sales carrying on into 2024. Top UK goods exports to China include vehicles, machinery, electrical equipment and pharmaceuticals.

Other export markets which UK firms should be keeping an eye on are the EU, US, Switzerland, Canada, Norway, South Korea and Japan.

But the outlook remains uncertain, and the UK Government must fight the corner of small and medium-sized export firms.

Issues on customs processes and checks arising from the Northern Ireland Protocol require speedy, stable, and certain resolution, as it still looms over the UK's relationship with both the EU and the US.

Outside of the EU, the US is our biggest trading partner, and the one that BCC members tell us they are most interested in. Yet progress on free trade talks is stalled, meaning that other, innovative ways to improve trade relations will be needed.

And as the Good Friday agreement silver anniversary looms, the UK has a golden opportunity to transform our trading relationship with our two biggest export markets in one fell swoop.

Resolve the outstanding protocol issues and it should have benefits for UK businesses exporting in both east and west directions, as well as for Northern Ireland.

This could also help pave the way to dealing with a further challenge that has reared its head on US trade relations.

Measures proposed by the European Commission in recent weeks are being considered by member state governments and trade policy is being discussed in March's meeting of Heads of Government in the European Council.

# THE WINDSOR FRAMEWORK

## offers a 'green light to Green Lane'

**The Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen have negotiated a new agreement, known as the Windsor Framework, which would replace the Northern Ireland Protocol.**

The Windsor Framework would look to reduce the number of checks on goods entering Northern Ireland from Great Britain. So-called "green lane" goods will have fewer checks and controls, including no customs checks or rules of origin.

The new protocol agreement has been welcomed by the British Chambers of Commerce.

William Bain, head of trade policy at the BCC, said: "The BCC has long been calling for a negotiated solution to the trading difficulties caused by the initial version of the protocol.

"Businesses in both Northern Ireland and Great Britain have been calling for a considerable reduction in checks and documentary

requirements to move everyday goods across the Irish Sea. We will be closely considering the legal texts and their full implications, but this appears to be a positive step towards achieving this goal.

"The Green Lane proposal should offer a green light to future prosperity in Northern Ireland.

"But more broadly, businesses in the UK will welcome the potential for stabilising relations with the EU.

"There is now the potential to move to a new phase of co-ordination on trade, regulation, climate, migration and supply chain issues.

"With the UK economy teetering on the cusp of a recession, this could help drive growth for both Northern Ireland and the UK more widely.

"We hope the UK Government, EU member state governments, and the EU institutions will seize this opportunity to improve our relationships, cut costs and remove red tape for exporting businesses."

*"Businesses in both Northern Ireland and Great Britain have been calling for a considerable reduction in checks and documentary requirements to move everyday goods across the Irish Sea."*



Kent and Medway Medical School



# South East LEP – working for a better economy



At the **South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP)**, we have a lot to celebrate. We continue to provide support for and significant investment into the South East economy, enabling businesses and communities to adapt and grow. We have a lot to be proud of, and a lot more to get on with.

By **Sarah Dance**

## What we do

Over the past twelve years, we have delivered a wide range of projects, investing over £800m which has directly contributed to the build of well over 100,000 homes and tens of thousands of jobs. We have backed more than 40 skills projects, supported by over £40m investment for skills training across the South East. More than £80m in European Social Funding has been allocated across our area to support people into work and training, alongside over £70m of European Regional Development Funding providing targeted business support programmes.

We have invested more than £450m on road, rail and other infrastructure projects, as well as close to £248m on commercial development projects to improve the conditions for doing business in our area.

All of this work has provided economic foundations to ensure that our corner of England – Kent, Medway and near-neighbours in Essex and East Sussex – are more economically resilient than elsewhere in this country.

Our strategic approach to economic development is to add value to the local economy, and work with a wide range of regional partners. But we are not simply an economic development bank. We are much more than that – we are a business partner, we study the marketplace, we work to unblock issues that impact on our localities, we set and raise ambitions and reach beyond our boundaries to encourage investment into our local economy.

Partnership is what we are and is key to all we do. This approach has served us well over the years and will continue to do so.

## Vision

Our vision is to ensure that the South East's economic resilience translates into the most sustainable economic growth of anywhere in the UK. We think that high quality, sustainable development, comparative well paid employment, the right skills opportunities, a focus on clean growth and strong business confidence will underpin this and that we can play a meaningful role across all such measures.

## Ambition, Collaboration, Knowledge

We will play this role by supporting growth over the course of the next year:

- We are ambitious for our regional area and are committed to using all means available to champion economic and environmental sustainability;
- We will actively seek out and amplify the collaborative voice of the public and private sector together, offering a unique insight and confident tone which befits the resilience of the local economy;
- We will promote our expertise, our track record and our independent role to the benefit of our area, presenting as more than the sum of our parts; and
- We will maintain our evidence-based approach to strategy formulation and investment prioritisation, driven by the needs of businesses and the regional economy.



Wine Innovation Centre



Meeting Point Swanley

## What we will deliver:

The work of SELEP has evolved over the twelve years of our operation. We have an important responsibility to manage our capital funding and be guardians of this large-scale programme, which will continue for some years yet. To find out more about projects we have delivered and are still delivering, you can visit our website. (<http://www.southeastlep.com>)

We have an even more important responsibility in our role to champion our economy and businesses in these challenging economic times. Our work for 2023/24 will be structured as follows:

- To recast our strategic approach and home in on the support of sectors which will be important to the future vitality of our area. We will do this by redoubling our efforts to shine a light on our coastal and rural areas and their levelling up challenge, as well as capitalising on our leading-edge work on skills and following up on our previous commitments to decarbonisation and enabling a net-zero economy.

- Bringing together Major Projects which will influence how our economy and place looks in the medium to long term. Whether Garden Communities or Freeports, the Lower Thames Crossing or future new infrastructure, there is a growing cohort of major future projects who readily convene on a South East LEP geography to discuss issues such as construction skills requirements, supply chain development, and energy and low carbon construction for projects of such scale. These discussions should open new opportunities for Kent businesses and Kent people, and therefore remain an important focus area for us.
- Leadership and delivery around skills, including providing evidence and data to other organisations, and bringing our knowledge and expertise to local issues. This also includes building on our important relationships with partners in Higher Education, such as the Universities, and Further Education, such as Colleges, and other training providers, and seeing investments we have committed through to completion.
- Delivering business support through schemes like the recently launched Create South East Programme for creative and digital businesses and also the Kent and Medway Growth Hub, delivered with Kent Invicta Chamber. The hub is a one-stop shop for all businesses looking for support guidance and independent brokerage services to local businesses in a way that is appropriate to each business and tailored to the local economy.
- Ensuring that our capital programme is delivered successfully. We do this by providing a transparent and robust approach and using all resources at our disposal to ensure that our capital programme is fully delivered and that benefits are realised, recognising the challenging conditions of rising costs and labour. We have more work to do in informing local people and businesses as to the projects that we have funded in their vicinities, and this will be an area of focus for the year ahead.
- Developing our Strategy Network approach – effectively extending our black book of connections to all partners and businesses who join the network – offering sector data analysis and support, convening together and running events to open them up to new opportunities. Changing working patterns means the value of convening the right people together at the right time has more value than ever before.
- Launching a new round of our recyclable loan scheme, the Growing Places Fund, and using this to stimulate other investment and unlock opportunities for business growth in

our key economic sectors. This will start with a £9m injection into the right projects aligned with our revitalised strategic approach listed above.

- Working with all local partners to ensure that any new democratic organisations or devolution proposals that are developed on the back of Government's Levelling Up agenda utilises SELEP's expertise, including our data and strategies, our leading-edge processes and the lessons learned over the past twelve years.

## Sharing knowledge

This year, we will work to ensure that our expertise and knowledge is fully shared and embedded in future plans. We've managed the largest economic growth portfolio in non-metropolitan England and have a lot to share. We'll undertake an impact and lessons learnt report – documenting where the impact of our work has been most felt, using this to inform the future. We will also host a series of seminars around the lessons that we've learned and how these influence our delivery plan for 2023/24 and beyond.

## The future

Whilst learning from the past is important to inform the future, we also want to continue to learn about what our businesses need now, about where more needs to be done and how different businesses and sectors can contribute to making it happen. We will ask questions about what conditions businesses need to thrive, what opportunities need to be maximised and what barriers need to be removed. We need insights to get this right and will provide opportunities to hear from all organisations on this.

We will continue to analyse the market, review what opportunities are out there through new Government funding and what we can do to provide strategic added value. We have a significant opportunity with our Growing Places Fund over the next year and fully intend to use this to maximum effect. As ever, we will work with our public and private sector partners to turn collective ambitions into projects on the ground.

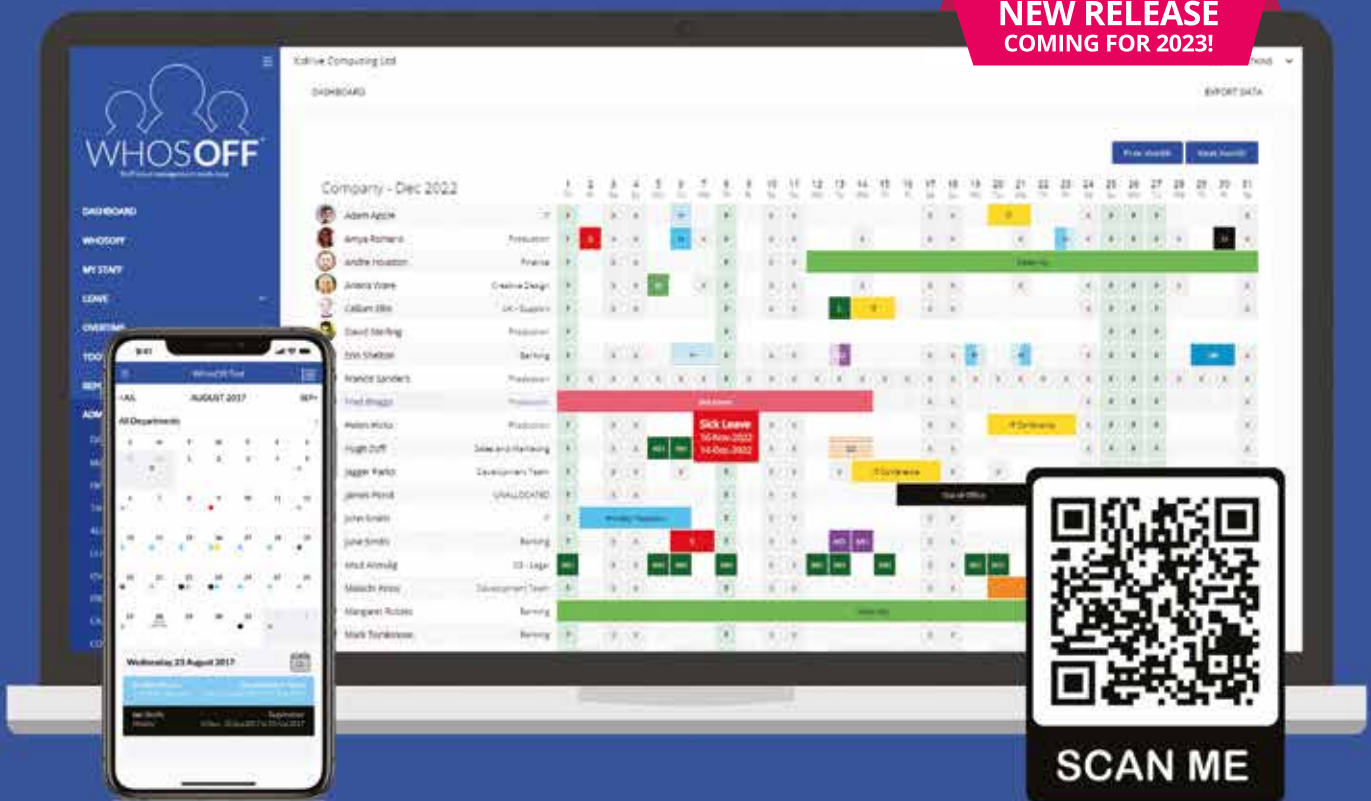
While the direction of Government policy around economic growth is shifting and with the levelling up agenda focussing on more local than strategic regional impacts, the components that have made us so successful over recent years – Ambition, Collaboration, Knowledge – should have a place in our future and ensure that we are all the beneficiaries of a vibrant economy.



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April - May 2023

# Kent Invicta LIVE Events



Every week we bring you a mix of information sessions, networking events, workshops, panel sessions and training sessions with some of the top local business professionals from an array of different industries.

Each event is designed to offer invaluable up-to-date information tailored to our attendee's wants and needs, as well as networking opportunities to help you grow your business.

With many events held online and across Kent, you're sure to find the right one for your business.



## Networking With Music and Dance Performances At Homewood School

On the day you will be met by the student ambassadors at the Mansion and escorted to the Sinden Theatre. Here you will be welcomed by Tenterden Schools Trust CEO Stuart Reeves and have the opportunity to network with businesses whilst sampling fresh homemade pastries. You will then be treated to some stage performances from the music and dance students.

During this event there will be plenty of networking opportunities, giving you the chance to connect with like-minded individuals from local businesses of all sizes.

**Thursday 20th April 2023 | 10:30am - 12:00pm**

**Members: £10.50 + VAT | Non-Members: £15.50 + VAT**



## Networking and Safari Tour at Port Lympne Hotel & Reserve

During the morning, you will be welcomed by the team at Port Lympne where you will get to hear what the park has to offer.

Get ready to see over 900 rare and endangered animals, go on safari to see the free-roaming giraffes, see Kent's only spectacled bears, the UK's largest dinosaur collection and much more.

There will refreshments available and an opportunity to network with other companies where you can build up your business connections.

**Thursday 18th May 2023 | 10:30am - 12:30pm**

**Members: £20.00 + VAT | Non-Members: £25.00 + VAT**

For all events and to book...

[www.kentinvictachamber.co.uk/events](http://www.kentinvictachamber.co.uk/events)



We are delighted to announce the relaunch of the Kent & Medway Manufacturing Focus Group (KMFG), building on the Chamber's history of supporting the Manufacturing & Engineering sector.

The Event will be hosted by Jo James OBE, CEO of the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce. Lunch will be provided on arrival as well as the opportunity to network with other local business representatives before our keynote speakers.

**Wednesday 26th April 2023**

**Bridgewood Manor Hotel, Chatham | 12:00pm - 2:00pm**

**Members: Free to attend | Non-Members: Free to attend**

Virtual Business Networking is a bi-weekly, fun way of networking which is highly interactive, sparking interesting conversations and aims to bring like-minded people together, guide forward new ideas and form new business relationships.

Each event will be an eclectic mix of conversation topics as we interview our guest business and encourage questions from the attendees.

**Tuesday 11th and 25th April 2023**  
**Tuesday 9th and 23rd May 2023**

**10:30am - 12:00pm**  
**Members: Free to attend**  
**Non-Members: Free to attend**

This informal event will give you an opportunity to promote your business and make invaluable connections. 'Chamber Connections Networking' are very popular networking events.

Any business, any size, we know and understand the pressures and ambitions your business has.

Imagine what you could achieve being part of a local, national and international business community.

**Thursday 6th April 2023**  
**The Friars, Aylesford**  
**10:30am - 12:00pm**  
**Members: Free to attend**  
**Non-Members: Free to attend**

## Events at a glance...

**Kent Construction Focus Group (KCFG)**  
 Tuesday 4th April 2023  
 The Village Hotel, Maidstone

**Chamber Connections Networking**  
 Thursday 6th April 2023  
 The Friars, Aylesford, ME20 7BX

**Virtual Business Networking**  
 Tuesday 11th April 2023

**Ignite Your Membership**  
 Thursday 13th April 2023

**Business Bites - Sector Specific Networks, Why Get Involved?**  
 Tuesday 18th April 2023

**Business Talks: Networking With Music and Dance Performances At Homewood School**  
 Thursday 20th April 2023  
 Homewood School & Sixth Form Centre, Ashford Road, Tenterden, TN30 6LT

**Virtual Business Networking**  
 Tuesday 25th April 2023

**Kent Manufacturing Focus Group Launch**  
 Wednesday 26th April 2023  
 Bridgewood Manor Hotel, Chatham

**An Introduction To Sales And Marketing Overseas**  
 Thursday 27th April 2023

**Kent Construction Focus Group (KCFG)**  
 Tuesday 2nd May 2023  
 The Village Hotel, Maidstone

**Chamber Connections Networking**  
 Thursday 4th May 2023  
 TBA

**Virtual Business Networking**  
 Tuesday 9th May 2023

**Letters Of Credit Demystified**  
 Thursday 18th May 2023

**Business Talks: Port Lympne Safari and Networking**  
 Thursday 18th May 2023  
 Port Lympne Safari Park, Aldington Road, Lympne, Hythe, CT21 4LR

**Virtual Business Networking**  
 Tuesday 23rd May 2023

**Business Walks: Wildwood Trust**  
 Thursday 25th May 2023  
 Wildwood Trust, Wealden Forest Park, Herne Common, Herne Bay CT6 7LQ

For all events and to book...

[www.kentinvictachamber.co.uk/events](http://www.kentinvictachamber.co.uk/events)

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# Medway welcomes Hochiki Europe's £5.5m investment in new facility

**News that global life safety company Hochiki Europe has purchased a multi-million-pound facility in Chatham will reinforce Medway's reputation as a location for innovative international businesses.**

Following sustained demand for the company's leading fire detection equipment and systems, the new facility on a 1.92-acre site represents an investment of £5.5 million by the group, which celebrates its 30th anniversary of operations in Europe this year.

Already a longstanding Medway-based business, Hochiki operates its European Headquarters and Research and Development Centre from Gillingham.

The new 24,000 sq ft building is part of the ongoing strategic expansion of the European arm of the group and will ensure the company has the space to expand existing operations in warehousing, production and distribution as well as the sales and administrative teams.

Globally, Hochiki employs over 2,000 employees who work across six manufacturing plants, 38 sales offices and 14 subsidiaries. The new facility will bring with it new employment opportunities to the South East, adding to the 180-strong staff already employed at the head office in Kent.

Speaking about the expansion plans, Graham Lowe, managing director at Hochiki Europe, said: "Despite the challenging few years we have faced as a global community,"



"I am proud of the efforts our teams have made to ensure our continued growth and I would like to thank each team member."

"Over the last six months, we have been able to expand our teams to strengthen the expertise we offer our customers and now, with this new building, we can continue to deliver a world-class service in fire safety to existing loyal customers and ever-growing pool of new customers."

Welcoming the investment, Cllr Alan Jarrett, Leader of Medway Council, said: "This is a significant vote of confidence in Medway and a decision that will not only protect skilled jobs in the area but also see the expansion of the firm's local workforce."

## 11 Kent-based food and drink businesses get share of £154,000 vouchers for research



**Over £154,000 of funding has been awarded by Growing Kent & Medway to 11 local fresh produce, food and drink businesses for investment in research projects addressing sustainability.**

From reducing plastic in fruit punnets, cutting energy use in food processing, to extracting plant proteins from seaweed, the wide-ranging projects each showed innovative approaches to overcoming sustainability challenges.

The businesses also had to demonstrate how their research would have a positive economic or social impact on their local region.

Vouchers worth up to £15,000 were issued to each business to provide access to the technical expertise and testing facilities at three cutting-edge research centres recently opened in Kent and Medway.

The diverse group of local winning businesses include fruit growers, packaging suppliers, food processors, ag-tech pioneers, and start-ups working with alternative proteins.

Dr Nikki Harrison, Programme Director for Growing Kent & Medway said: "Our voucher scheme is a great way for businesses to work with leading research organisations for the first time. We hope they will lead to further collaborations in the future.

"We were impressed with the innovative ideas submitted, which all have the potential to help make horticultural and food and drink production in the UK more sustainable."

Each of the projects will address a specific challenge within the following areas:

- Energy use
- Sustainable packaging
- Reducing food waste
- Water
- Alternative proteins
- Sustainable crop production

Siobhan Parks, New Business and Product Development Manager at Sharpak Aylesham Ltd, said: "We applied for a voucher to receive technical research support from the University of Kent for a new packaging technology for raspberries. We're testing whether a recyclable novel punnet will extend the shelf-life of raspberries, compared to punnets containing the standard soaker pads currently on the market.

"If successful, it will offer a viable alternative to retailers looking to meet their Plastic Pact UK pledges, help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by improving the circular economy of plastics, and simultaneously reducing food waste."

Ag-tech company Verdant Carbon based in Ashford, secured a grant to better understand the link between soil health and carbon capture in different farming situations. Co-founder Frank Gollins said: "Soil microbiology has a pivotal role in determining the viability of agricultural soils, both for farming and as an agro-ecological tool; despite this it remains poorly understood.

"This grant will hopefully form a first step for further partnerships, exploring the role of a vital, yet often overlooked farm resource."

The vouchers are designed to help businesses access research to test new prototype products, trial new technology or get data to validate an idea. Businesses across the horticultural and plant-based food and drink supply chain in the local region were able to apply.

**Additional grant funding is now available through the Growing Kent & Medway Business Sustainability Challenge, worth up to £50,000. See page 30 for more details.**

# All about the advice, not just the numbers

**A4G has experienced over 27 years of consistent growth bolstered by a positive working environment and our capacity to achieve consistent results for our client base through maintaining our focus on the mantra of being 'all about the advice, not just the numbers'.**

But what does that really mean? In short, it means personal communication.

We pride ourselves in being more than just traditional accountants quietly ticking boxes for HMRC. We operate a two-man approach with our clients which means there is always someone available when you need it who understands the ins and outs of your business and can provide real, strategic advice.

"Every accountant should really care about their clients; available out of hours in an emergency, prepared to fight your corner with HMRC, help advise and counsel in times of pressure and celebrate your successes," said partner Emma White.

As a practice, we are dedicated to helping our clients navigate the troubled waters in which we have found ourselves as a nation since the pandemic first hit. Given that we are an owner-managed business ourselves, we are in a prime position to understand the challenges currently facing other owner-managed businesses.

In pursuit of this objective, we have set up a Challenging Times Support Hub complete with free resources and tools to help owner managed businesses. Soon, we will be launching a special series focusing on the staffing and recruitment crisis in the UK too.

**Gain access to the free tools and advice on our website: [www.a4g-llp.co.uk](http://www.a4g-llp.co.uk)**

# Kent's property sector remains optimistic about growth

Kent's property sector remains optimistic despite the tough economic climate, with over 70% predicting growth over the next two years, a survey has revealed.



(L-R): Graham Mitchell, Finance Director, Caxtons; Lee May, Partner (Commercial Property), Brachers; Phil Eckersley, Agent, South East and East Anglia Agency, Bank of England; Simon Crookston, Head of Corporate Tax, Crowe; Sarah Gaines, Partner and Head of Commercial Property, Brachers.

## Industry leaders from across Kent's property sector gathered in Faversham for the Property Outlook 2023 event, co-hosted by law firm Brachers, property consultants Caxtons and accountancy firm Crowe.

The event explored the opportunities and challenges faced by the sector through presentations by industry experts, including a keynote speech from Phil Eckersley, regional agent for the Bank of England.

While there are undoubtedly challenges facing the sector, fuelled by tough economic conditions, there was refreshing optimism among attendees.

When surveyed, over 70% of attendees predicted year-on-year growth in turnover and profit over the next few years. Nonetheless, difficulties around the recruitment and retention of staff and inflationary pressures (including wage increases and the rising cost of materials) remain the main obstacles to growth.

Sarah Gaines, partner and head of commercial property at Brachers, said: "With demand for office and industrial space still high, combined with the ongoing take up at Kent's science and business parks, there is a lot to feel positive about, despite the retail market still struggling somewhat.

"Kent is well-placed to weather most storms due to its relative affordability, plus its proximity and transport infrastructure for access to London, the rest of the UK and Europe."

Sustainability remains high on the agenda with 70% of the businesses surveyed seeking to reduce their carbon emissions.

Simon Crookston, head of corporate tax at Crowe, said: "The property sector is a significant contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions, and achieving net zero emissions in this sector is therefore crucial. Just over a quarter of businesses stated they are aiming to be net zero within the next two years, whilst another 44% said they wanted to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions during this period."

Unsurprisingly, cost was the biggest barrier to businesses reaching net zero or moving forward with their sustainability agenda. Particularly, as many buildings were constructed before energy-efficient technologies and building codes were in place, so they require significant upgrades to reduce their emissions.

Crookston continued: "A third of businesses stated that retrofitting their existing buildings cost effectively would be a major challenge as their buildings were either listed, leased or had shared occupancy.

While retrofits can be costly, property owners need to consider the long-term benefits of retrofitting, such as lower energy bills, increased property value and reduced maintenance costs."

Since the pandemic, many businesses have re-evaluated their office space considering the hybrid-working revolution and the ongoing drive for sustainability. Over 80% of the businesses operate a hybrid office/work-from-home mode. However, most businesses' office space strategies have now crystallised, with few intending to shed square footage soon.

Charlotte Laherty, director, head of commercial property management & investments at Caxtons, said: "Of those who expect to either increase or decrease their office footprint, nearly 80% expect to move premises to achieve this. It is notable that more than 64% of survey respondents have already or expect to change their interior office space layout to be better for flexible working."



Charlotte Laherty, Director, Head of Commercial Property Management & Investments, Caxtons

# Executive Event Transfers Chauffeur Concierge Service

**How do smart business owners regularly get additional time to focus on their businesses?**

They know that using Executive Events Transfers concierge chauffeur service will stop them spending valuable time sitting at the wheel of their own vehicle, which they can instead devote to driving their business forward, improving their work life balance or spending more time with family and friends.

Owned by Gary Johnson, a certified member of the Guild of Professional Chauffeurs, Executive Event Transfers offers a bespoke chauffeur concierge

service for business or personal journeys.

The chauffeur concierge service can be booked 24/7 365 days a year, for business travel, dinner and theatre trips, airport transfers or sporting events throughout the UK and across the continent.

Using the concierge service gives you a personal chauffeur to pick you up from your home or office, spend a couple of hours, a day, a few days or longer, looking after you, dropping you off outside and waiting for your return. The chauffeur can also pick up your favourite coffee and if you

spill it enroute they can probably get you a new outfit too.

The Executive Event chauffeurs drive professionally valeted Mercedes-Benz S Class saloons or V Class People Carriers, which offer WIFI, Android and iPhone charging cables, three-pin plugs to charge laptops, chilled water, light refreshments, travel sweets, throws for night journeys or very early starts and umbrellas.

**Find out more about what the experienced chauffeur team can offer by visiting: [www.executiveeventtransfers.com](http://www.executiveeventtransfers.com)**

# New storage solutions improve efficiency, productivity, and safety in the workplace



**System Store Solutions, a leading provider of FAMI storage solutions, has recently completed an installation of workbenches, bespoke solutions and cabinets at Marshalls Aerospace, a company specialising in aerospace engineering and maintenance.**

The installation was designed to improve the efficiency and productivity of Marshalls Aerospace's technicians.

The project involved the installation of a range of workbenches and shelving, including tool cabinets, mobile cabinets, and workstations. The cabinets were designed to provide ample storage space for tools, equipment and parts, while the workstations were designed to provide a comfortable and ergonomic workspace for technicians.

One of the key benefits of the installation has been a significant improvement in efficiency. With the new workbenches and cabinets,

technicians have been able to organise their tools and equipment more effectively, reducing the amount of time they spend searching for what they need.

The new workbenches and cabinets have also helped to improve safety in the workplace. With tools and equipment stored in designated locations, there is less risk of accidents or injuries caused by misplaced items. The workstations have been designed to reduce strain on the body to allow technicians to work comfortably for extended periods of time.

The installation was not without its challenges, however. One of the biggest obstacles was the need to work around Marshalls Aerospace's busy schedule. With technicians working around the clock to keep aircraft in service, it was important to minimise any disruptions caused by the installation. System Store Solutions worked closely with Marshalls Aerospace to plan the installation in a way that would minimise downtime and ensure that work could continue as usual.

Overall, the installation of workbenches and cabinets at Marshalls Aerospace has been a resounding success. The new storage solutions have improved efficiency, productivity, and safety in the workplace, and have helped Marshalls Aerospace to maintain its reputation as a leader in the aerospace industry.

<http://www.systemstore.co.uk>

## Benenden Hospital: Building a sustainable future

**Nestled in the Wealden countryside, Benenden Hospital has been providing first-class treatment to patients for over 100 years. The only private hospital in Kent to be rated Outstanding by the Quality Care Commission, it delivers exceptional care in comfortable modern facilities for a wide range of specialities, from orthopaedics to cosmetic surgery.**

As a hospital that prides itself on innovation and adaptation, it has evolved sustainably, always with the local community and patients at its heart. As part of this evolution, Benenden has established a robust sustainability strategy, limiting the impact the hospital has on the surrounding environment and people.

Michelle Anderson, Director of HR, explains: "We find ourselves increasingly exposed to the effects of consumption, pollution and climate change and the devastation this is having on our planet. It is therefore vitally important that we act now to minimise the ongoing effects and to protect future generations.

"The aim of our strategy is to ensure that sustainability is part of our daily language and a core value of our organisation."



The hospital has focused heavily on reducing light pollution, supporting the local Dark Skies Initiative and installing technology to minimise the amount of light the hospital emits overnight. The catering team use local food suppliers where possible, and cleverly compacting the hospital's waste has resulted in a 50% reduction in collections, cutting down on unnecessary heavy goods vehicle journeys.

Michelle adds: "Our internal transport fleet is all electric and we have made strides towards home and hybrid working to reduce the carbon footprint from our staff."

"We're committed to driving positive change in the workplace, and taking responsibility for the impact of our activities and those that we are directly responsible for."

<https://www.benendenhospital.org.uk/>

## Why coaching starts with setting goals



**If you don't know where you're going, how can you get there? It's a commonly used phrase but it's so true.**

Business coach Rosemary Williams from RW Coaching says: "Goals shouldn't feel like mountains – they need to be small and achievable. If the goal is too steep, failure is more likely."

"Think about what happens now, what you want to change and what outcome you'd like – what will be different once you've reached your goal?"

Be more productive, use time more effectively, equalise the work/life balance, streamline the business, increase profits, diversify – all are goals.

### Why do you want to set this goal?

- Is it your goal or someone else's?
- Is it realistic?
- What will be better once you have achieved it?

### What's your end aim?

- What's your ideal situation?
- Can it be measured?  
(e.g: grow the business by 50% in 5 years)
- Is it subjective?  
(e.g: Handle challenging situations better)
- Once achieved, will it make the change you want and expect?

### Where are you starting from?

- How far are you from your goal now?
- What's in place already?
- What's working in favour of your goal already?
- Are the foundations strong?

### What do you need to do?

- What steps do you need to take to start reaching the goal?
- How many are there?
- When do they need to be done by?
- Who do you need to get involved?
- How will you measure them?
- What do you need to do and when?
- How will you know you are making progress?
- What's going to trip you up or stop you?

**Rosemary Williams - RW Coaching**  
For more information visit: [rw-coaching.co.uk](http://rw-coaching.co.uk)

# Welcome to our new members

## 11 TwentyTwo Ltd

### Whitstable

07967 217983

[www.11twentytwo.co.uk](http://www.11twentytwo.co.uk)

Creating a Strategy for a Profitable, Sustainable Future for Companies

## 3six5 Digital Enterprises Ltd

### Maidstone

0808 186 6365

[www.3six5digital.co.uk](http://www.3six5digital.co.uk)

Design, Develop, Optimise & Scale Webflow Websites

## AB Marketing

### Minster

0845 5708725

[www.abmarketingservices.co.uk](http://www.abmarketingservices.co.uk)

Professional & Affordable B2B Marketing

## Abigail's Footsteps

### Rochester

07868 379941

[www.abigailsfollowsteps.co.uk](http://www.abigailsfollowsteps.co.uk)

Providing Support for Bereaved Families

## Accurox

### Chatham

01634 940710

[www.accurox.co.uk](http://www.accurox.co.uk)

Accountants & Business Advisors

## ACE Finance Director

### Sittingbourne

07525 807941

[www.acefinancedirector.co.uk](http://www.acefinancedirector.co.uk)

Helping Businesses Achieve their Objectives. Supporting Growth Strategies and Business Turnaround

## Adams & Bowles Wealth Management Ltd

### West Malling

01732 525989

[www.adamsandbowleswm.co.uk](http://www.adamsandbowleswm.co.uk)

Providing Bespoke Face to Face Financial Advice to Individuals and Businesses across London and the South East of England

## Adastra

### Sandwich

07903 078151

[www.adastra.group](http://www.adastra.group)

Specialise in Designing and Delivering Bespoke Programmes that focus on the Mental Fitness and Wellbeing of Individuals and Teams

## Ankaisu Ltd

### Gravesend

07725 577502

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

Inclusion Training & Coaching

## Bluebell Hill Engineering (Aylesford) Ltd

### Aylesford

01858 565635

[www.powerlogic.co.uk](http://www.powerlogic.co.uk)

Design, Manufacture, Install & Maintain Bespoke Industrial Battery Transfer Systems/Charging Areas

## Blueprint Film

### Northfleet

020 3371 1060

[www.blueprintfilm.co.uk](http://www.blueprintfilm.co.uk)

Commercial Video Production and Social Media Content Marketing

## Dads Unlimited

### Ashford

0808 802 4040

[www.dadsunltd.org.uk](http://www.dadsunltd.org.uk)

Dads Unlimited is an Award-Winning Charity that Supports the Emotional Safety of Men and Those They Care About

## Drop 'N' Go Laundry Services Ltd

### Ashford

01233 611119

Laundry Services

## Ecolab

### Caerphilly

0800 232 6522

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

Pest Elimination

## ETAG Ventures t/a Speedy Freight Chatham

### Chatham

01634 369045

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

Professional Freight Services

## Get Indemnity

### London

0345 625 0711

[www.getindemnity.co.uk](http://www.getindemnity.co.uk)

Digital Insurance Broker

## Groves Solutions Ltd

### Deal

07970 468354

[www.groves-solutions.co.uk](http://www.groves-solutions.co.uk)

Software Development

## Hell4Leather Cricket Ltd

### Tenterden

07769 817517

[www.h4l.co.uk](http://www.h4l.co.uk)

Manufacture of Sports Goods

## Inca Geometric Ltd

### Canterbury

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

Providing a Fully Comprehensive Subcontract Machining and Assembly, Retooling and Re-Engineering Service

## ISWUK Ltd

### Ashford

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

Specialists in both the Interior and Exterior Design, Supply and Installation of High-Quality Glass and Stainless-Steel Design Solutions

## Kids Fingers and Thumbs Ltd T/A Fingers and Thumbs

### Woodchurch

07974 371944

[www.kidsfingersandthumbs.co.uk](http://www.kidsfingersandthumbs.co.uk)

Gloves that Help with Kicking Habits such as Skin Picking, Skin Biting or Compulsive Hair Pulling

## LM Renewables

### Maidstone

07853 686869

[www.lmrenewables.co.uk](http://www.lmrenewables.co.uk)

Renewable Energy Systems

## Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Charitable Fund

### Maidstone

01622 224799

[www.mtwcharity.org.uk](http://www.mtwcharity.org.uk)

NHS Trust Charity





## Enhance



## Protect



## Connect

### Marcus James Office Solutions Limited

#### Ashford

01233 733267  
www.marcusjamesos.com  
Office Supplies

### Network Communications Group (Kent Division)

#### Enfield

0208 370 8370  
www.netcomms.co.uk  
The Network Communications Group Create Provide Reliable and Advanced Communication, IT and Security Services

### OlightOn Limited

#### Dartford

07884 874059  
www.olighton.com  
Providing World-Class Career Coaching, Training and Employability Services

### Orchard Farm Kent Ltd

#### Whitstable

07900 985053  
www.orchardfarmkent.co.uk  
Orchard Farm is a Development Site located in Kennington - Planning to Create the First Sustainable Self-Built Community in Kent

### PICH Telecoms Ltd & Skill Beacon Training Centre

#### Ramsgate

07464 446010  
www.pichtelecoms.co.uk  
Specialists in the Planning, Installation, Certification and Handing Over of Fibre Networks

### Power Cable Services Ltd

#### Rochester

01634 253838  
www.powercsl.com  
Specialist Engineering Company providing Subsea Power Cable and Umbilical Jointing Products and Services to the Global Offshore Renewable Energy and Oil & Gas Industry Sectors

### Prime Consultancy Group

#### Maidstone

01622 768400  
www.primeconsultancygroup.co.uk  
Health and Safety Consultancy, Training and Vocational Qualifications

### Professional Engineering Services Ltd

#### Ashford

01233 754808  
www.pesme.co.uk  
Electrical Engineering

### RD-UK Resource Development (UK) Limited

#### Rochester

01634 297500  
www.rd-uk.co.uk  
Distributor and Remanufacturer of IT Hardware

### Recruitment Best Practice

#### Margate

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Recruitment Consultancy

### Safety and Compliance

#### Maidstone

07584 620580  
www.safetyandcompliance.co.uk  
Safety Compliance

### Sigma Enterprises Ltd

#### Sittingbourne

01843 841822  
www.sigma-enterprises.com  
International Trading & Procurement Service

### Signs & Imaging (South East Ltd)

#### Rochester

01634 739009  
www.signsandimaging.com  
Manufacturer and Printer of Signage, Banners & Graphic Decals

### Squiggle Consult Ltd

#### Ashford

01233 659796  
www.squiggleconsult.co.uk  
A Team of Independent Consultants, offering a variety of Estate Planning Services such as Wills, Trusts, Power of Attorney and Probate

### Syncline Solutions

#### Hythe

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www.synclinesolutions.com  
Offering a Range of Services including the Installation and Maintenance of Automatic Doors, Gates, Barriers and other Entry Systems

### T. Denne & Sons Ltd

#### Ashford

01233 720871  
www.tdenneandsons.co.uk  
Kent Wildflower Seeds, Grain Marketing, Seed, Mobile Seed Cleaning, Farm Management & Advice

### The Duke Voyagers Shipyard Ltd

#### London

07497 627862  
www.thedvs.co.uk  
Our Vision is to use Sustainable Materials and Innovations within the Yacht Building Industry to make the Future Greener and Carbon Neutral

### Travel Counsellors - Jo Harris

#### Ashford

01233 380064  
www.travelcounsellors.co.uk  
Travel Expert

### Valley Hospital Charity

#### Dartford

01322 428256  
www.valleyhospitalcharity.org.uk  
Fundraising to Buy the Latest Medical Equipment to offer Available Care to our Community in their locality; Enhance the Hospital environment for our patients, making it welcoming and comfortable

### Viatris

#### Sandwich

01304 626200  
www.viatris.com  
We Leverage our Best-in-Class Manufacturing and Scientific Expertise to bring Quality Medicines to Patients

### Wine Tours of Kent

#### Tenterden

07930 357173  
www.winetoursof Kent.co.uk  
Wine Tasting Tours

## Last Word

### Martin White Founder Green Business Hub



**Martin White is Founder and Director of Green Business Hub - [www.greenbusinesshub.eco](http://www.greenbusinesshub.eco) and the bi-weekly Biz Connect Radio Show - [www.kentbizconnect.co.uk](http://www.kentbizconnect.co.uk).**

Our Green Business Hub business purpose can be defined simply as; helping safeguard our environment through informing businesses and consumers and encouraging them to adopt more sustainable practices and choices.

Is your business coming under increasing pressure from customers and stakeholders to adapt and embrace sustainability? This can be quite daunting!

I offer practical help and advice with;

- Initial Carbon Footprint Audits
- Net Zero Strategy and Planning
- Green Procurement
- Grant Funding Advice

#### What was your first job and what was the pay packet?

Account Executive in a London Advertising Agency – not enough!

#### What do you always carry with you to work?

My Discovery Park office security badge otherwise I wouldn't get in!

#### What is the biggest challenge facing your business?

Helping business owners understand why and how they should be proactive in investing to make their business more sustainable today, before their customers ask them tomorrow!

#### If you were Prime Minister, what one thing would you change to help business?

Create an independent post Brexit 'Business Britain' UK plc task force, recruited directly from enterprise to develop a medium to long term plan for UK growth; looking at everything from corporation tax to government backed investment in green innovation and UK relocation/onshoring tax incentives for businesses.

#### What can you see from your office window?

A perfect white sandy beach and turquoise sea with two recliners and a reserved sign on them – in my dreams!

#### If you could do another job what would it be?

Professional golfer – but only if I can play like Rory!

#### As a business person, what are your three main qualities?

Purpose Driven, Emotional Intelligence, Resolute.

#### What was your biggest mistake in business?

Asking Naomi Campbell for her autograph during the lunch break on a photo shoot she did for us for Persil Washing up Liquid. We paid her £70K for three hours work 'to get into rubber' (gloves!) and she still tore my head off!

#### What advice would you give to aspiring entrepreneurs?

The person you are today won't be the person you become tomorrow. Surround yourself with people you can trust who have the experience to help you make the right decisions.

#### Who do you most admire in business?

Jo James of course... 33 years of service and dedication to the business community in Kent, 15 as Chief Executive! Jo epitomises everything we look for in a leader. The strength and breadth of the Kent Invicta Chamber today and the Kent economy as a whole are testament to her years of investing personally in the well-being of the individual members, myself included!

## Imogen Fleur new President of Kent JLD

**Trainee solicitor Imogen Fleur, from the Tunbridge Wells-based law firm, CooperBurnett LLP, has been voted in as president of the Kent Junior Lawyers Division (JLD). She has been a member of Kent JLD since joining CooperBurnett at the beginning of last year. She spent a year working within the firm's corporate and commercial team and has recently moved into commercial property.**

"I'm honoured to take on the role as president of the Kent JLD and look forward to continuing to build a professional support and networking group for

junior lawyers," said Imogen. "Networking can be daunting but it can bring so many benefits to your career and wellbeing. We have some exciting events in the pipeline for the coming year - watch this space."

The Kent JLD – which comes under The Law Society of England and Wales - holds events designed to assist the professional development of junior members of the legal profession in a sociable and enjoyable way.

Imogen completed her Legal Practice Course (LPC)/Master of Laws (LLM) at BPP Cambridge, having graduated from the University in Essex with a first-class degree in law.

## Movers and Shakers



"Imogen is the first member of our team to become president of the Kent JLD and we are incredibly proud, particularly as it comes at the same time that I am president of Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge & District Law Society," says professional litigation partner John Spence. "Imogen has impressed everyone with her can-do attitude and eagerness to learn. We know she'll be a fantastic president."

## Award winning lawyers join Tassells Solicitors in Faversham

**Alexandra Gordon, formerly a partner at leading law firm Brachers in Maidstone, joins as a third partner.**

Alexandra is the immediate past president of the Kent Law Society being their 10th female president and their youngest in their 205-year history. She was named as one of e-private client's Top 35 under 35 in 2019, was a finalist for the International STEP (Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners) Trusted Adviser of the Year Award in 2021 and won Mentor of the Year at the Inspirational Women in Law Awards 2021.

She specialises in tax and estate planning, preparation of wills, trust creation, lasting powers of attorney, and estate administration. Alexandra is a chartered tax adviser and Notary Public making her tri qualified.

Alexandra is a trustee of Catching Lives, a homeless charity in Canterbury, and Red Eagle Foundation, a charity that provides for disadvantaged children and grants wishes to children with life limiting illnesses.

Sophie Wallace, formerly a chartered legal executive at top tier law firm Warners, joins Tassells in April. Sophie recently won the Kent Junior Lawyers Division Junior Lawyer of the Year Award in November and has also been shortlisted for several national awards in the same category over the last two years. Sophie is a trustee of Young Lives Foundation, a charity which provides resources and opportunities to young people across the county to help them lead fulfilled lives.

Tassells Solicitors was established in 1792 and remained within the



family for over 100 years. For more than 180 years, the Tassells lived in or near Faversham and between 1850 and 1970 they held all the key legal positions in Faversham – then town clerk, rural clerk, clerk to the justices, clerk to the tax commissioners and clerk to the navigation board. Tassells took up its current home on West Street, one of the oldest streets in Faversham, in the 1840s. Its current owners Dr Ann Astbury and James Matthews joined in 2000 and 2001 respectively.

Both Alexandra and Sophie strengthen their private client offering.

## Sarah Dance named new Chair of South East LEP

**Arts and creative industry champion Sarah Dance has become the new Chair of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), having moved into the role from her former position of Deputy Chair and succeeding Christian Brodie, who was Chair for seven years.**

Sarah - who has worked in the arts and creative sector for over 25 years - officially became Chair of the LEP in December 2022 for an initial two year term.

A highly successful consultant for the culture and creative industries, Sarah set up her own consultancy in 2002 and has led and worked

on a wide range of cultural organisations and partnership projects, from England's Creative Coast through to the Legacy Trust's Olympic and Paralympic partnership project for the South East.

"I am delighted and honoured to chair the South East Local Enterprise Partnership for the next two years, overseeing our activities as we navigate this challenging economic period," Sarah said. "The work of the LEP is more important now than ever-along with the Board of Directors, I will do my utmost to ensure that our partnership delivers real opportunities for the people and businesses of the South East."



Sarah was named a top influential figure in the arts and creative world in the Alt Power 100 Artlyst 2021. She is Co-Chair of the South East Creative Economy Network and Chair of Creative Estuary and has led the visioning of the Thames Estuary Production Corridor.

**To find out more about how SELEP is supporting the South East economy to grow, visit: [southeastlep.com](http://southeastlep.com)**



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