

LONDON

Business Matters



Mastering the challenges of world trade

DP World's Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem talks to *LBM*

Pages 20-22

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Letter from the editor

I had the pleasant task last November to travel to Dubai to interview the hugely effective Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem, president of DP World, and attend the Global Freight Summit which took place in the same venue that hosted the last amazing World Expo, an event covered at the time in some depth by *LBM*. I was also given the opportunity to tour Jebel Ali, one of the world's leading ports and free zones. What DP World and its inspiring chair, one of the Middle East's most powerful business figures, have achieved in Dubai – and beyond, London Gateway is part of its portfolio – is truly remarkable. Read about it on pages 20-22.

Employment

Nearer to home, it is the case that many UK businesses have expressed deep concern about the government's Employment Rights Bill as picked up strongly in LCCI's recent survey (p 6) and expressed by the British Chambers of Commerce (p 10). There are many considerations that businesses should be aware of so an expert opinion from Giambrone Law is provided on page 48.

Knowledge

New Year's resolutions can often feature a thirst for knowledge so our business book reviews (p36-7) offer some suggested reading. Why (and

how) 'quiet' leadership can work; dealing with the challenges of artificial intelligence; changing an organisation's culture; and a road map for family businesses are the topics covered.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves has called for a closer, pragmatic UK-EU relationship to boost trade, support businesses and improve living standards (p 8) and there is a lot of business support for that. There are other important markets too of course, such as India (p 26), and Turkey (p 30), not to mention the overseas business opportunities listed from a variety of countries (EU and non-EU) on page 27.

Renowned

All this is part of globalisation – the “process of increasing interconnectedness between countries through trade, technology, and cultural exchange.” Is the world retreating from this to ‘deglobalisation’? On page 27 the question is posed in a report on an event which was hosted by renowned BBC diplomatic correspondent James Landale.

Finally (and staying with the trade theme), *LBM* is pleased to report that LCCI chief executive Karim Fatehi was recognised for his service to international trade and awarded an OBE in the New Year's Honours List (p 7). Congratulations!

Peter Bishop
editor@londonbusinessmatters.co.uk

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Deep concern about growth prospects

A survey of over 200 business leaders who are LCCI members has revealed deep concern about the government's ability to deliver growth over the next five years

In a snap survey following the Budget and measures announced in the Employment Rights Bill, 81 per cent of business leaders revealed they were not confident that the government will listen to and address concerns from the business community, while 77 per cent were not confident that the government will deliver on its commitment to economic growth.

Disappointment

Businesses also revealed their disappointment with measures announced in the Budget. Seventy eight per cent of businesses of all sizes said that increased employer national insurance would negatively or very negatively affect their business, leading to many respondents predicting a hiring freeze and lower pay for staff over the coming years.

Significant impact

Firms predicted the upcoming Employment Rights Bill would have a significant impact on their operations. Over a third predicted the changes would mean a hiring freeze, whilst 16 per cent were concerned it would lead to redundancies. In total, 76 per cent felt that the government has not meaningfully engaged with the business community on the Employment Rights Bill.

Family businesses showed concern over measures announced on Inheritance Tax. Twenty-one per cent of family businesses indicated that they were likely to wind up their companies



instead of passing it on due to the changes announced in the Budget.

Worst fears

Commenting on the survey, Karim Fatehi OBE, LCCI chief executive, said: "This snap survey has confirmed our worst fears; the business community views the combined package of increased employer National Insurance Contributions, cuts to business rates relief and the Employment Rights Bill as a serious threat to their operations over the coming years.

Ability to invest

"It also shows that London businesses are fast losing faith in the government's economic growth strategy. Having weathered a cost-of-living crisis, soaring inflation, higher borrowing costs and

trade tensions, businesses need the operating conditions conducive to economic growth, rather than measures that curtail their ability to invest in their business, hire new people and train their staff.

Perfect storm

"The government has indicated that it is taking tough decisions to help repair public finances. Whilst we agree with this sentiment, the policies announced in the Budget and Employment Rights Bill have created a perfect storm for businesses in the capital. Curtailing their ability to invest, innovate and drive prosperity across the entire country will result in the government being unable to deliver the long-term growth which it has made a cornerstone of its strategy."

Reading the barometer

More London businesses are expecting turnover and profitability growth in 2025 than they did entering 2024, according to new research from Lloyds' Business Barometer. In summary:

- More than eight in ten of London businesses expect to see their turnover increase over the next year, up from 60 per cent polled in December 2023
- 84 per cent per cent are confident of

greater profitability

- Nearly a third will be investing in staff training, while nearly a quarter will invest in increasing wages for employees
- More than a third are aiming to enhance their technology through automation or AI.

Kirsty Sadler, regional director for



London at Lloyds, welcomed the results: "London's businesses are entering 2025 with widespread growth expectations and clear ambitions – from boosting productivity to enhancing environmental sustainability and technological capabilities."

www.lloydsbank.com

Honoured

LCCI chief executive Karim Fatehi was awarded an OBE in the New Year Honours List for services to international trade

Welcoming the news, LCCI chair Julia Onslow-Cole spoke of Fatehi's "unwavering commitment to supporting international trade and fostering global collaboration has been instrumental in driving progress for businesses across London and beyond. His tireless advocacy, innovative leadership, and dedication to the growth of SMEs on the global stage reflect the very best of our organisation's values.

Wider community

"This recognition is a testament not only to Karim's exceptional contributions but also a reminder of the excellent work done across the wider community of professionals and organisations working tirelessly to expand opportunity and prosperity through trade. Under his guidance, LCCI continues to champion international trade and provide invaluable support to our



members as they navigate the complexities of the global marketplace."

Service

Also honoured was London Mayor Sadiq Khan who has become a Knight

Bachelor "for political and public service" and Miles Celic, chief executive of TheCityUK, who has been awarded a CBE for his contribution to finance and professional services. A CBE was also the award for Amanda Berry (services to the creative industry and charity), lately chief executive of Bafta with whom LCCI has joined forces in the past.

LBM is also pleased to note the OBEs bestowed on Simon Murphy,

former chief executive of Battersea Power Station Development Company (services to real estate), and Louisa Harrison-Walker, chief executive of Sheffield Chamber of Commerce, who was honoured for services to business and the economy in South Yorkshire.



SPONSORED COLUMN

Unpacking the Budget: Key tax changes and useful planning tips

By Phil Moss, Tax Partner



In her recent budget, Chancellor Rachel Reeves unveiled several significant updates to tax legislation that will impact individuals and businesses alike.

This summary provides some key insights and considers essential planning strategies.

Changes to Capital Gains Tax (CGT)

The government has implemented sweeping changes to CGT rates with a general top rate of 24% from Budget Day and the rate for carried interest increasing to 32% from April 2025.

Taxpayers should review their assets and plan strategically with expert professional advice.

Reforms for Non-Domiciled Individuals (Non-Doms)

The seismic shift in the taxation of non-doms is effective from April 2025. The remittance basis, which previously allowed non-doms to pay UK tax only on UK income and remitted foreign income for up to 15 years, will be abolished. A Temporary Repatriation Facility ('TRF') may allow a 'cleansing' of past untaxed income & gains at a cost of only 12%.

A new four-year FIG regime will benefit new UK residents, while the scope of IHT is to be expanded to the worldwide assets and trust interests of 'Long-Term Residents' (LTRs) after 10 years in the UK.

Affected taxpayers should assess the impact and may consider restructuring their assets or reducing their ties to the UK.

Updates to Inheritance Tax (IHT)

Capped reliefs:

Business Relief (BR) provides an exemption from IHT for unlisted qualifying businesses (so excluding any with over-riding investment activities), whereas Agricultural Relief (AR) currently ensures that no IHT is due on most farmland. This will change from April 2026:

- 100% BR and AR will be capped at a combined £1 million per estate from April 2026.
- Above £1M the relief will be given at 50%, effectively resulting in an IHT rate of 20%.
- AIM shares will be excluded from the above limits with any BR limited to 50% of their value.

Inherited pension funds

- Starting April 2027, unused pension funds will be subject to IHT at 40%, except those transferred between spouses or civil partners.

As a result of the above changes families should review their retirement planning and potential IHT exposure to identify necessary changes to their Wills or wider plans. They might consider general lifetime gifting strategies to transfer wealth, as well as drawing pensions earlier to fund such gifts or tax-efficient investments.

If you would like to discuss the recent changes, and how to optimise your tax position, please contact Phil Moss, Tax Partner (philmos@lubbockfine.co.uk) at Lubbock Fine.

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Breaking down trade barriers

Chancellor Rachel Reeves has called for a closer, pragmatic UK-EU relationship to boost trade, support businesses and improve living standards

Addressing EU finance ministers in Brussels – the first such visit by a UK Chancellor since Brexit – Reeves emphasised breaking down trade barriers and strengthening economic ties as part of the government's *Plan for Change*. While ruling out a return to the single market or customs union, Reeves highlighted shared challenges like supporting Ukraine and enhancing security. She also committed to a 2025 trade strategy to reduce regulatory burdens and foster economic growth.



invasion, delivered most recently through a G7 loan of \$50 billion backed by the extraordinary profits on immobilised Russian sovereign assets.

While in Brussels, the Chancellor attended a series of bilateral meetings with European counterparts. International economic partnerships are a crucial part of the government's mission to grow the economy.

Export more

Commenting on the visit, Shevaun Haviland, director general of the British Chambers of Commerce, said: "If our economy is to grow, then we must export more. That's why we urgently need a better trading relationship with our closest

and biggest market, the European Union. The current arrangement isn't working for our members.

"Right now, UK firms wanting to trade with Europe are struggling under huge regulatory and paperwork burdens. Businesses will be encouraged to hear the Chancellor talking about a reset in our relationship with the EU which genuinely breaks down barriers to trade.

"A better deal can't come soon enough for UK exporters. It's vital that talks move at pace in the coming months to make life easier for businesses to thrive."

The UK and the EU share the world's second largest trading relationship, facilitating over £660 billion (€750 billion) in trade each year.

Support

Reeves also underscored the importance of the UK and EU's unwavering support for Ukraine over 1,000 days since Russia's

Rachel Reeves By Lauren Hurley / No 10 Downing Street - Number 10 Flickr page, OGL 3, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=150044082>

Confident about business growth

Almost nine in every 10 private business owners in London and the South East are confident of delivering growth in 2025, according to KPMG UK's first ever Private Enterprise Barometer

The new poll gauged optimism among 1,500 private business owners, including more than 250 in the capital and the South East, across a range of sectors covering professional services, finance, technology, industrial manufacturing and retail. More than a third of London and South East firms identified an improving outlook for the UK economy as the main reason for this confidence.

Diversifying

Looking ahead, over two thirds plan on diversifying through new products or services in the next five years. Similar numbers plan to target international expansion in the same time period. Firms in London were the second most likely of all UK regions to have plans to invest in AI in the future, joint with Scotland and trailing only

the West Midlands. More than half of South East firms reported increased demand for their products and services, underpinning the region's optimism.

New technologies

Securing and developing the necessary skills for businesses to capitalise on the opportunities of new technologies continues to represent a challenge though. Firms in the South East were less confident than their peers in being able to recruit people with the right qualifications and experience for their business (48 per cent compared to the national average of 55 per cent). However, more than half of London firms are confident that they can.



With just a fifth of firms across London and the South East having difficulty accessing funding, it's notable that private equity was seen as the most popular external source of funding (cited by 40 per cent of respondents) to support long-term diversification – substantially ahead of bank debt.

Ambitions

Anna Purchas (pictured), London Office senior partner at KPMG UK, commented: "The last few years have not been easy for firms in London or across the South East but this level of confidence shows the scale of their growth ambitions going into 2025."

www.kpmg.co.uk

The Rachel papers

LCCI chief executive Karim Fatehi MBE hosted a lunch for Rachel Blake MP last November

Guests at the famed Mosiman's Club in Belgravia heard from the Member of Parliament for the Cities of London and Westminster on the government's plans for business in her constituency – and the capital's economic prosperity.

Guests included representatives from Capital City College Group, CIBC World Markets, Dell, Heathrow, Luton and Stansted airports, HSBC, Middlesex University, SSE Energy Solutions and UPS.



Rachel Blake MP with Karim Fatehi OBE

How modern management can help you streamline your business systems

Technology is ever-evolving, so it's natural that from time-to-time software, programmes and systems are updated and even replaced. For example, Microsoft has announced that Windows 10 will reach end of life (EOL) on October 14 this year, so it's time to look at your systems – are you running Windows 10? What won't work when transitioning to Windows 11?

Modern Management is designed to take the stress out of upgrades and future-proof your IT infrastructure.

Why act now??

Upgrading a system can present several challenges, particularly for businesses with complex IT environments.

• Hardware requirements

For example, Windows 11 has stricter hardware standards, including the need for modern processors and Trusted Platform Module (TPM) 2.0. Older devices may not meet these specifications, which could require hardware replacements.

• Compatibility with legacy systems

Many businesses rely on legacy systems that might not be fully compatible with a new operating system or software, causing disruptions if compatibility issues aren't addressed in advance.

• Scale of upgrades

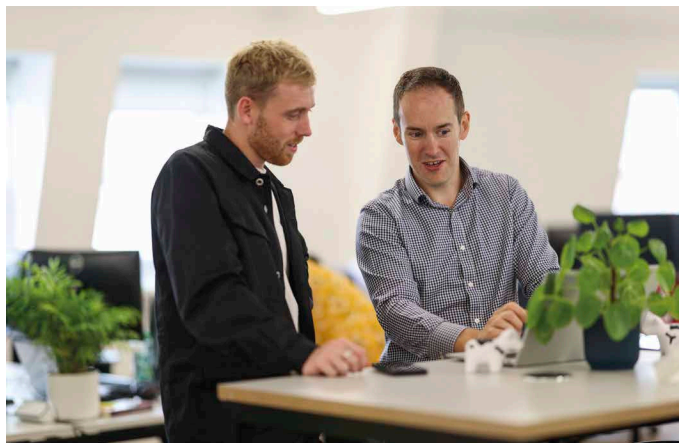
For organisations with many devices, upgrading is a significant undertaking - without a clear strategy, this process can become overwhelming.

Why use modern management?

Working with an expert, like Waterstons, means you fully understand the complexities of IT transitions, and means a tailored service to help you every step of the way.

• Assessing your needs

Transitioning to a new system begins with understanding where you stand, needing a comprehensive review



of current hardware and software, identifying devices that meet the new system requirements, and flagging those that need upgrades or replacements. Examining your software environment can pinpoint potential compatibility challenges, giving you the opportunity to develop practical solutions to prevent bottlenecks.

• Streamline your upgrade process

Upgrading doesn't have to be a burden – you just need a plan. Experts will craft a detailed roadmap that breaks the transition into manageable phases from acquiring and configuring new hardware, to deploying a new system across your organisation, managing

the process end-to-end and ensuring minimal disruption.

• Futureproof your IT

A new system, like upgrading to Windows 11, is an opportunity to set your organisation up for long-term success. Using modern management can ensure your IT environment stays secure and efficient, including looking at adopting cloud-based solutions for device management, automating updates to keep your systems current, and implementing robust cybersecurity measures. By aligning your IT with best practices, you can build a resilient infrastructure that can adapt to future changes seamlessly.

On Windows 10? Don't wait until it's too late!

The closer we get to October 2025, the more businesses will be rushing to upgrade. By acting now, you can avoid the last-minute scramble and ensure a smooth transition.

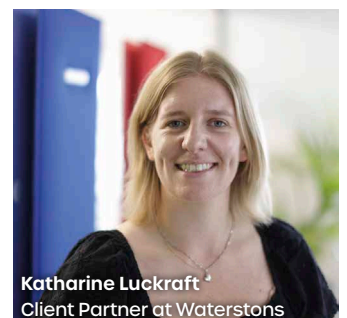
• Evaluate your current setup:

Take a close look at your hardware and software to understand what's compatible with Windows 11.

• **Reach out to us:** Let us guide you through the process with our Modern Management service. We'll help you create a tailored upgrade plan and ensure your business stays ahead of the curve.

Every business is unique, and so is our approach; whether you have a handful of devices or a sprawling IT estate, we'll tailor our solutions to ensure the most efficient and cost-effective outcome.

No matter what the transition, make it seamless with our experts, and modernise your IT infrastructure in the process – get in touch with Kat directly at katharine.luckraft@waterstons.com



Employment Rights Bill – business concerns

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) used an evidence session on the Employment Rights Bill to highlight businesses' serious concerns about the legislation and the speed and detail of consultation.

A lack of detailed consultation on wide ranging changes to trade union powers. Businesses are keen for further consultation on the new laws which will make the recognition process easier for unions, lower the voting threshold for taking industrial action, and halve the notice period for unions to inform employers they are about to take action.

Greater restrictions and penalties for firms who need to make workforce changes. Businesses feel proposals on zero hours contracts are mainly sensible, allowing workers to enjoy this flexibility when it suits them. But the requirement to offer guaranteed

hours after only 12 weeks could be disastrous for firms who need to respond to seasonal and fluctuating demand - especially those in hospitality and agriculture.

More responsibilities, costs and complexity for employers. There are concerns that increased restrictions for firms who need to make changes to the workforce – together with the ramping up of financial penalties for those who make mistakes in the process – could be crippling for SMEs.

Wide-ranging BCC believes that the Bill includes some of the most significant and wide-ranging changes to employment laws for decades. Employers are concerned that major decisions have been taken and written into the

Bill without detailed consultation with business.

The government's own assessment suggests that the legislation will cost businesses almost £5 billion per year, with SMEs impacted the most.

Breakneck

BCC director general Shevaun Haviland commented: "Businesses welcome the overall aim of this Bill to guarantee job security, offer employees a fair reward and provide them with workplaces free from discrimination. "But the scale and scope of the changes are huge, with many feeling they are being rushed through at breakneck speed."



See pages 48-49 for an in-depth look at the Employment Rights Bill

Shaping industrial strategy

The government has announced the Industrial Strategy Advisory Council, a new body tasked with shaping and monitoring Industrial Strategy. Comprising business leaders, academics and trade union representatives, the council aims to boost economic growth and living standards by focusing on high-potential sectors and regions.

Independent

Chaired by Clare Barclay, president, enterprise & industry for EMEA at Microsoft, the council will provide independent advice on investment, innovation and policy interventions to support key growth-driving

sectors. Members include Dame Anita Frew, chair of Rolls-Royce, Greg Jackson, chief executive of Octopus Energy, and Henry Overman, professor of economic geography at the London School of Economics.

Breaking down barriers

The Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves and Business and Trade Secretary Jonathan Reynolds attended the inaugural meeting of the council last December. Hosted at Lloyds Insurance in the City, members used the first meeting to discuss investment, innovation, and breaking down barriers to growth in key sectors, as well as some emerging themes in response to the

government's Industrial Strategy Green Paper.

Reynolds (pictured) said that the UK was one of the most connected places in the world to do business. "Investors should be in no doubt that Britain is back on the global stage, helping attract investment into the most productive parts of the UK economy.



"Whether it is investment into new film studios, cutting-edge technologies or green energy, the expertise and work of the Industrial Strategy Advisory Council will be key to giving investors the solid foundation on which to build, helping to support local skilled jobs and raising living standards in communities across the UK."





Karim Fatehi, Marsha De Cordova, Jo Rigby, and Beverley Corson

Doing the business in Battersea

Marsha De Cordova, MP for Battersea, LCCI chief executive Karim Fatehi OBE, Beverley Corson, Wandsworth Chamber chief executive, and Jo Rigby, Wandsworth Councillor and High Streets Champion, visited Reyes café, Raynsford's greengrocers, Jack & Beyond, and Ellie's Hair Salon.

Unique

Businesses like those on Battersea High Street are more than just places to shop – they are central to the fabric of the community. Each business has its own unique story, from the ambition of a

new entrepreneur to the legacy of a family-run business spanning decades. Supporting local businesses isn't just about buying goods or services; it's about backing the people and ideas that sustain our neighbourhoods and bring communities to life.

Powerful

Small Business Saturday is a powerful reminder of why local businesses matter. They create jobs for the local community, sustain livelihoods, strengthen community ties and encourage entrepreneurship.

Mail order



The government has approved the acquisition of International Distribution Services, Royal Mail's parent company, by Czech billionaire Daniel Křetínský after a national security review.

Golden share

This marks the first foreign

control of Royal Mail since 1635 but a retained 'golden share' allows the government to oversee key changes to ownership, tax residency or headquarters. Royal Mail continues to face challenges, including a £10 million fine for missed delivery targets.

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A New Year, A New Hope?



A Happy New Year to all. The title was not meant to reference Star Wars, although 2024 certainly does feel a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away. Whilst our resolutions will be in full swing (or already falling to the dark side), businesses will be looking for a strong start to 2025. To assist those looking ahead, I have set out predictions for the year across some of the UK's main industries.

HOSPITALITY AND LEISURE

There is a mixed outlook for the hospitality and leisure sector for 2025. The hotel market is doing well with increasing travel numbers following COVID and rising rooms rates, in particular in larger cities.

Unfortunately, forecasts do not bode well for the restaurant and bar trade. There has been little recovery following COVID and, with a large number of employees still partly working from home, the number of normal trade days these businesses are seeing has reduced. This is not helped by the recent budget which will further tighten already thin margins.

RETAIL

It won't surprise you that it looks to be another tough year for retail. Trading conditions remain tricky, contributing to the decline in the number of physical stores. Trade has not been helped by rising Employer NIC and shoppers being savvier with their spending with the rises in inflation.

Some growth has been predicted for retail, however, this will be dependent upon interest rate cuts and inflation coming down.

TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS

Continued challenges are expected for transport and

logistics businesses in 2025 and, should fuel prices remain high, insolvencies are also predicted to rise.

With growing importance around environmental concerns, managing emission levels to reduce their impact will be key to long-term success in this sector.

Concerns are also raised with expected US tariff changes from President Trump triggering shipping costs to already double, creating fears that prices will remain higher for longer.

MANUFACTURING

Like several other industries, rising employer costs, in particular the increase in NIC contributions, will be a cause of significant financial challenges to those companies with large workforces.

PROPERTY AND CONSTRUCTION

Also facing a mixed outlook for 2025 is the property and construction sector which historically has shown resilience to economic changes.

The government's promises for new housing may give a needed boost provided the funding is available and there being enough capacity in the market to meet the 165,000 new homes target set.

2025 certainly looks set to be a pivotal year for businesses across all sectors.

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MENZIES
BRIGHTER THINKING

Calls for government action

by Vittoria Zerbini

LCCI featured in *The Guardian* and *Transport Weekly* and on the BBC in recent months in calls for government action on business support, growth and competitiveness.

Expectations

UK businesses currently face declining growth expectations, with most firms predicting reduced activity. This downturn follows Chancellor Rachel Reeves's budget which introduced tax increases aimed at stabilising public finances, exacerbating a broader slowdown across services, manufacturing and retail. In *The Guardian*, LCCI warned that these measures, coupled with employment rights changes, create a "perfect storm" for London businesses.

Chief executive Karim Fatehi OBE highlighted waning confidence, citing inflation and rising costs and urging reforms to support investment and hiring. LCCI also flagged the downside of pending inheritance tax changes, with the risk of family businesses closing instead of passing them on to the next generation.

Second runway

Travel Weekly reported that business groups are urging the



government to support Gatwick Airport's plans to bring its northern runway into full operational use. LCCI and Gatwick Diamond Initiative have written to Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander supporting the project which promises a £2.2 billion privately-funded investment, 14,000 jobs and £1 billion in annual economic benefits. Karim Fatehi highlighted the importance of strong aviation links for London's global competitiveness, calling the project crucial for trade, tourism and investment.

Priorities

Interviewed by the BBC for *Politics London* on the impact of the new government's first autumn budget on businesses, Fatehi said that there were four key topics to address, namely business rates, reform of the Apprenticeship Levy, transport improvements – particularly referencing sustainability and aviation – and VAT free shopping. The government and UK institutions, he said, needed to provide confidence to businesses to thrive and work in a competitive market. "Ultimately, London needs to grow, thrive and compete."

Vittoria Zerbini is media and policy assistant at LCCI

Congestion charge



Transport analytics company Inrix have rated London top in Europe and fifth globally in their traffic congestion chart which assessed over 900 cities in 37 countries.

The 2024 Global Traffic Scorecard estimates that drivers in the UK capital lost 101 hours sitting in congestion, a two per cent increase from 2023. The total cost to London was £3.85 billion, averaging £942 per driver.

Traffic

For the UK as a whole, the country lost £7.7 billion, £200 million more than in 2023. The average UK driver lost 62 hours due to traffic congestion

last year, up only one from the previous year, equating to £581 per driver per year.

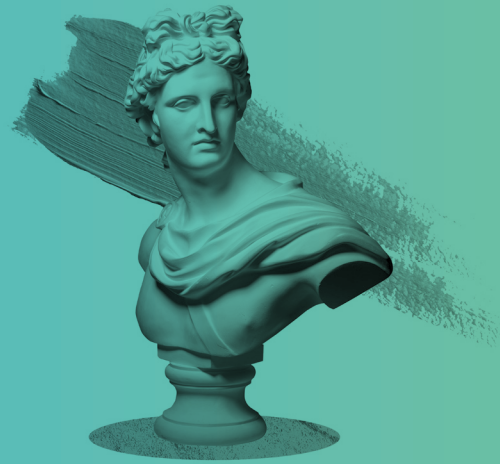
Bob Pishue, transportation analyst and author of the report said: "While the UK did see a slight increase in congestion again this year, overall congestion has remained steady. Roadworks in key corridors such as the M25 Wisley Interchange caused considerable traffic on a main artery into the capital.

While London only had a modest increase in time lost, it still represented half of the entire country's delay.

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Celebrating Scotland

No surprise that Scotland House put on a good show to celebrate St Andrew's Day last November. The event at their riverside HQ at Blackfriars featured speeches from author Damian Barr and Angus Robertson MSP, a Cabinet Secretary in John Swinney's government. He is recognisable by many as the leader of the Scottish National Party in the House of Commons for many years.



Damian Barr



Angus Robertson
MSP

Luminaries

Barr, author of the best-selling *Maggie & Me*, was one of the star turns at the inaugural St Andrew's Book Festival trailed by organiser Susan Pym at the event. The highlight of the festival may have been a gala

dinner at the Caledonian Club with Sir Alexander McCall Smith but the majority of events were held at St Colomba's in Chelsea and featured such Scottish luminaries as Andrew Marr, Judy Murray, Andrew O'Hagan, Lorraine Kelly, Gavin Esler and Ian Rankin.

www.standrewsbookfestival.org





Travelling the silk routes

LBM published an article in the recent past examining the background to the burgeoning number of free trade agreements and how they had developed since the earliest days of trade

Power of traders

The article noted that people have exchanged or traded goods since the dawn of time as they sought to obtain or sell products or materials which they couldn't produce or didn't exist in their part of the world. It acknowledged the role of the 'silk route' which transcended geographical borders and demonstrated that the power of traders could trump that of country officials. Traders had their own protecting forces, set tolls and tariffs, and exchanged and spread cultures and religions as well as goods such as silk and precious stones.

Many routes

However, as the fascinating exhibition – Silk Roads – currently running at the British Museum makes clear, it was not the story of one road. It is "one of many routes, crossing

mountains, skirting deserts, navigating seas and rivers. People, objects and ideas flowed in all directions

along these complex networks. Of course, silk was only one of the goods that travelled."

Unique

The museum has worked with a host of global partners to present objects from many regions and cultures alongside those from their own collection to create an exhibition that offers a unique chance to see objects from the length and breadth of the Silk Roads. "From Tang Chinese ceramics destined for ports in the Middle East to Indian garnets found in Suffolk, they reveal the astonishing reach of these networks."

There is also the opportunity to encounter individuals "entwined with the Silk Roads, including Willibald, an ingenious balsam smuggler from England, and a legendary Chinese princess who shared the secrets of silk farming with her new kingdom." Not to be missed.

Silk Roads at the British Museum runs until 23 February
www.britishmuseum.org



The Knowledge

LBM's test of what readers know about London

- 1 Which store in Oxford Street opened its doors to the public in 1864?

- 2 What sport is associated with Queen's Club in W14?

- 3 Who described the British capital as "London, a nation not a city" in the 19th century?

- 4 How many London Boroughs have directly elected mayors?

- 5 In what year was the first Cycle Superhighway introduced?

- 6 Who designed the Cenotaph, the memorial in Whitehall built originally to honour those killed in the Great War?

- 7 How many pods are there on the London Eye?

- 8 Who is the current Deputy Mayor for Business at City Hall?

- 9 Who wrote the novel *Absolute Beginners*, set in the emerging youth culture in London in the 1950s?

- 10 Which market features in the 1971 musical film *Bedknobs and Broomsticks*?

Find the answers on page 67

SPONSORED COLUMN

Contemplating redundancies as a consequence of the budget?

The October 2024 budget has seen businesses forced to weigh up the prospect of increasing employee costs following a rise in national insurance tax and paying higher minimum wages. A survey of recruiters by KPMG and the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC), reports that vacancies in the market have fallen at their fastest pace in four years. Simultaneously, we have seen an increase in enquiries from employers considering reducing headcount.

If your business is contemplating reducing staff, it is important to demonstrate a *genuine redundancy* situation that meets the legal definition. This is i) the business is closing or has already closed; ii) there is a change in the types or number of roles needed to do certain work; or iii) there is a change in location.

Once a genuine redundancy is identified, it is important to ensure that a *fair process* is followed to avoid a claim for unfair dismissal. Even for those employees who do not have the requisite 2 years' service to bring such a claim, employers want to avoid any allegation of discrimination where, for example, it is suggested that prejudicial selection criteria was used to select an employee for redundancy.

As a minimum, a fair process requires a 'genuine and meaningful' consultation take place with those employees identified as 'at risk' to discuss the reasons for the proposed redundancies, the skills and experience needed going forward and the criteria used for selection. The consultation should include ways in which redundancy might be avoided,

such as applications from staff to work flexibly on job shares or on reduced hours or, reducing or prohibiting non-contractual overtime. If any alternative options are not viable, then it is important to explain why this is the case. Employers should also consider if any 'suitable alternative work' is available, engaging and inviting suggestions from the 'at risk' employees.

While there is no strict timeframe within which consultations should be carried out (except in redundancies of 20 or more employees which is beyond the scope of this article), these should take place over a sufficient period to demonstrate a fair and meaningful process.

Redundancies are difficult for everyone involved and a fair and transparent process can avoid ambiguity for employees and the potential of legal claims for employers.



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Visit: www.quastels.com

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QUASTELS

LEGAL ADVISERS



Human rights



commented: "I've given the work a 'pop-art aesthetic to draw in the younger generation but in a way that also appeals to other audiences. However, instead of containing plants, it holds two huge monolithic boulders which are precariously balanced on top of each other threatening the entire structure should they topple".

Ian Hislop, editor of *Private Eye* magazine and mainstay of the BBC's long-running *Have I Got News for You*, unveiled the 'Human Rights Greenhouse' last December to mark the anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

The greenhouse, which displays 30 UDHR articles, was created by installation artist Tony Heywood who

"However, instead of containing plants, it holds two huge monolithic boulders which are precariously balanced on top of each other threatening the entire structure should they topple



Ian Hislop with Chris Guinness of the Myanmar Accountability Project and Adam Hug, leader of Westminster Council

Confronting the fraud crisis

by Chris Hayward

“**Fraud is a ‘silent epidemic’ affecting millions and costing billions. While it rarely captures headlines like other crimes, its consequences are just as damaging. It undermines public trust, weakens our economy, and leaves millions of victims in its wake – including businesses that face significant financial and reputational damage.**

The City of London Police (CoLP), as the national lead force for fraud, plays a crucial role in the policing response. But no single entity can solve this challenge alone. To tackle it, we need a clear, unified response from government, law enforcement, and industry. Fraud is a global challenge. It demands international collaboration, innovation, and unified enforcement to disrupt criminal networks that operate across borders.

Government leadership

For too long, fraud has been treated as a secondary issue compared to crimes that ‘bang, bleed, or shout.’ The government must elevate fraud prevention as a core national policy, integrating online safety into security and economic strategies to prevent fraudsters from exploiting victims in the digital age.

The pledge from the Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, to expand fraud prevention efforts is a step forward. We also welcome the increased ministerial focus on fraud within the Home Office under Lord Hanson’s portfolio. This leadership must be matched by action. A united, whole-of-government approach to preventing fraud must be embedded across departments to send the message: fraud will no longer be tolerated.

Private sector collaboration

The private sector is on the front line

of this fight. Banks, tech companies, telecoms, and other industries have the capabilities and responsibility to act. Initiatives like the Dedicated Card and Payment Crime Unit, led by the financial sector in collaboration with CoLP, have saved over £750 million and show what’s possible when industry takes a proactive stance.



But there is more to be done. Companies profiting from online services must take more responsibility for fraud prevention, implementing stronger measures to detect and disrupt scams on their platforms to stop fraudsters exploiting digital platforms. Businesses must leverage their expertise against the fraudsters – before the government is forced to intervene with stronger regulatory action.

The City Corporation’s role

The City Corporation is leading efforts to combat fraud with initiatives like the APP Fraud synthetic dataset to refine anti-fraud technologies, the AI Innovation Challenge accelerating solutions to tackle fake identities, and partnerships advancing digital verification solutions that could prevent £3 billion in fraud losses by 2030. Innovation and collaboration with the private sector can help the UK lead in tackling fraud.

Strengthening policing

Fraudsters are increasingly sophisticated, using technology to operate at speed and across borders.

The City Corporation is supporting efforts to close this gap, investing over £600 million in new facilities and technology as part of the Sailsbury Square development. But tackling fraud requires more investment in policing, with better training, advanced technology, and stronger intelligence-sharing between agencies.

Measuring impact is critical. Every police service in the country must be held accountable for how it tackles fraud. HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services should explicitly assess fraud prevention and investigation as part of their reviews, so all police services take this equally seriously.

Targeting the profits of crime

Fraud is driven by profit and so we must target its financial underpinnings. Strengthening asset recovery mechanisms is essential – not only to compensate victims but to disrupt criminal enterprises.

Recovering and reinvesting the proceeds of fraud into policing and prevention would send a clear message: crime does not pay. By depriving fraudsters of their ill-gotten gains, we can weaken their operations and reinvest resources into protecting the public.

A national priority

Government, businesses and law enforcement must unite to build a system that prevents fraud before it happens, holds perpetrators to account and restores confidence in our digital and financial systems.

Fraudsters exploit the shadows, preying on gaps in our defences and complacency. Tools like Cyber Griffin – which offers free services to help businesses and individuals protect themselves from cybercrime – show how collaboration can empower people to fight back.

By working together, we can ensure fraud is a crime that is relentlessly pursued and prevented at every turn. The stakes – diminished economic growth – are too high to settle for anything less. ”

Chris Hayward is policy chair at the Corporation of London

www.cityoflondon.gov.uk

London's leading role as a world city



London's position as a leading global city has been reaffirmed in Kearney's 2024 Global Cities Report. For the sixth year in a row, the UK capital ranks second in the Global Cities Index. Despite the ongoing political and economic uncertainty, it has demonstrated "consistent strength across key dimensions, including business activity, human capital and cultural experience."

London maintained its second-place ranking overall, continuing to rival New York which came first in the index overall.



Competition

London maintained its second-place ranking overall, continuing to rival New York. However, its business activity dropped four places to 7th, reflecting increased competition from cities like Paris, Tokyo and Beijing. The city's capital markets remain strong, with London climbing from 11th to 8th in this sector, overtaking major hubs like Shanghai.

Student population

In human capital, London retained its 2nd position globally, driven by

a strong presence of international students and leading universities, including top-ranked medical institutions. London's international student population has now surpassed Melbourne, taking the top spot. The city continues to attract top-tier talent, staying ahead of Melbourne, Tokyo and Chicago.

Culture

London holds the top spot globally in cultural experience, ahead of Paris and New York. With its renowned museums, international sporting events and diverse culinary scene, the city remains a top destination for international travellers, strengthening its position as a global cultural hub.

However, London's information exchange performance dropped, retaining its 4th rank but suffering

from poor internet speed, where it ranks 97th globally. This has become a significant drawback compared to cities like Singapore, Berlin and Toronto which are excelling in digital infrastructure and connectivity.

The 2024 Global Cities Index assesses 156 cities worldwide based on their global connectivity, influence and potential for future growth. Cities are evaluated across five key dimensions: business activity; human capital; information exchange; cultural experience and political engagement.

New metrics introduced this year include digital readiness and human mobility, reflecting shifts in the global operating environment. Cities that adapted well to changes in global trade, geopolitical instability and digital transformation saw improved scores.

www. Kearney.com



Foggy days at the zoo

On 15 February 1925, London Zoo announced it would install lights to cheer up the animals during London's foggy spells. The winters of the mid-1920s often saw heavy snowfall – it snowed in London, East Anglia and the North East. Seven inches of snow were recorded in Norwich

Poisonous

Well into the twentieth century, London was infamous for its 'pea-soupers' – a thick fog that contained soot particulates and poisonous sulphur dioxide gas. It often had a yellow, green or black tinge, hence its resemblance to a thick pea and ham soup. They were mainly caused by people burning coal fires and from coal-burning factories. These industrial winter fogs were a part of London life which often proved fatal to anybody with respiratory disorders. During the worst fogs, pedestrians could not see their feet and car passengers had to step outside to guide the driver.

Morale

The animals at London Zoo, on the same Regents Park site as now, were clearly suffering from being unable to see, so it was decided to provide artificial light to aid the animals' vision and boost their morale. The decision to supply lighting to brighten up the animals' days coincided with measures to improve the quality of life for London Zoo's inhabitants.

For many years, it was believed that tropical animals could not survive London's cold climate in

the open, so they were all kept inside until 1902. All this changed when Sir Peter Chalmers-Mitchell, a Scottish zoologist, was appointed secretary of the London Zoological Society. He initiated a major re-organisation of the zoo's buildings and enclosures. Many animals were brought out into the open, where they often thrived. Zoo buildings were redesigned to provide greater light.

Warmth

One of Britain's first modernist buildings was the Round House, designed by architect Berthold Lubetkin, who was part of the Tecton Group of architects. Constructed during 1932-33, the Round House was built for the male and female gorilla, Mok and Moina. The state-of-the-art design included an open-air enclosure in summer and a climate-controlled indoor enclosure for winter. The latter provided warmth for the gorillas, not dissimilar to their native rainforests. In addition, visitors would be able to see the animals all year round.

Outstanding

Lubetkin and his team also designed the Penguin Pool, which quickly became an outstanding example of modern architecture. Constructed around an elliptical pool, it had two interlaced spiral ramps made from toughened concrete. Its purpose was to demonstrate natural penguin behaviours to visitors. The Penguin Pool's features included open viewing windows (no cages), built-in nesting boxes and a diving tank with a glass front.

Mitchell also planned for a new 600-acre park outside London and in 1926 he purchased Hall Farm, near Whipsnade Village in Bedfordshire. In

Adult elephant walking in ZSL Whipsnade Zoo



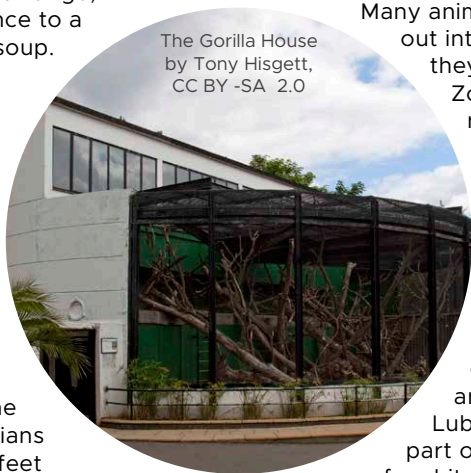
1931, Whipsnade Wild Animal Park became the world's first open zoological park.

Atmospheric pollution affected the animal as well as the human population of London. A report published in the journal of the National Smoke Abatement Society in 1936 showed that many of the animals at London Zoo had dirty coats because of the smoke and fog so prevalent in London. Polar bears and birds with soft white feathers became filthy. At Whipsnade, they remained clean. This proved detrimental not only to the animals' appearance but to the quality of their coats and overall health.

It was not until the 1950s that London's air quality began to improve. The 1956 Clean Air Act introduced controlled areas in towns and cities where only smokeless fuels could be burned. These measures were strengthened by the Clean Air Act 1968 which made it illegal to discharge dark smoke from a chimney.

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

The Gorilla House by Tony Hisgett, CC BY-SA 2.0



The Penguin House, by gillfoto - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0



Going up

The City of London Corporation has approved proposals for what will become the City's tallest tower

Planned to be built between the 'Gherkin' and the Leadenhall building, the 74-storey office tower known as 1 Undershaft will be a notable addition to the square mile's future skyline and an important part of the City's target to deliver 1.2 million square metres of new office space by 2040.

Communities

Proposals for the site revise the previously consented scheme to better respond to post-pandemic office needs, as well as the changing context and aspirations set out in the City Corporation's City Plan 2040 to redefine the area as a welcoming, seven day and evening destination, for all communities.

In addition to the office space provided, the proposals will feature a free-to-visit elevated public space and children's education space, operated in partnership with the London Museum.

Inclusive

The move is in line with the City Corporation's Destination City agenda to boost footfall and economic growth across the Square Mile, with the educational space to create an inclusive cultural and public offer in the heart of the cluster.

The City's established public roof gardens, terraces and viewing galleries are significantly contributing to increasing footfall, with the Sky Garden, 120 Fenchurch's roof garden, 'The Lookout' at 8 Bishopsgate and 'Horizon 22' at 22 Bishopsgate having collectively greeted more than 13 million people, since they opened.

Unique

1 Undershaft will also feature a unique 2,500 sqm publicly accessible podium garden 42 metres above street level with a striking structural glass floor, complete with food, drink and

Original plans for 1 Undershaft were submitted almost a decade ago (Image: City of London Corporation)



retail amenities, as well as cultural attractions across levels 10 to 12. The garden will provide outstanding new views of surrounding historic assets, including the Lloyd's building, offering a unique destination within the square mile.

The City Corporation's decision to approve the proposals comes as the latest Deloitte Crane survey revealed that new construction project starts fell across London, except in the square mile, where new construction activity edged up by seven per cent, as the City remains a favoured location to invest and develop.

Cultural offer

Chair of the City of London Corporation's Planning and Transportation Committee, Shравan Joshi, said that not only would the building help deliver on the demands for economic growth, through the high-quality office space it offers, "but also contribute to the City's growing cultural offer and tourist appeal.

"As another, much-needed office development gets approved in the City of London, it speaks to the confidence that global investors have in the London real estate market and the UK economy more widely."

www.cityoflondon.gov.uk

UK Electronic Travel Authorisations scheme – is your company prepared?

By Laura Devine at Laura Devine Immigration



What is the Electronic Travel Authorisations scheme?

An Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) is a form of advance travel permission required by certain individuals to visit the UK. The ETA was tested on Gulf states and Jordan from 19 February 2024. From 27 November 2024, the ETA application process opened to nationals of the Americas, Asia and Oceania, including the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea. Nationals of these continents will require an ETA to visit the UK from 8 January 2025.

From 5 March 2025, the ETA scheme will open to nationals of EU/EEA countries and Switzerland for UK travel from 2 April 2025. Individuals or businesses with employees visiting the UK should make applications well in advance of travel.

Who does not need an ETA?

British and Irish citizens, individuals with UK immigration permission (including settled or pre-settled status), individuals with a British overseas territories citizen passport and those already requiring visitor visas to enter the UK do not require an ETA. There is also an exemption for people who are legally resident in Ireland

and travelling to the UK from Ireland or elsewhere in the Common Travel Area.

Application procedure

ETA applicants must complete the following steps online or via the mobile app:

- submit basic personal details;
- answer security, criminal records and employment-related questions;
- submit a photo or scan of their face and passport; and
- pay a £10 application fee.

Decisions are typically provided within three working days, though times may vary. ETAs are valid for two years and allow multiple entries to the UK.

Implementation period

During the implementation period until at least Summer 2025, travelling with an application pending may be possible. If a traveller does not have an ETA when attempting to travel, the carrier or airline should request that they submit an ETA application immediately. There is a risk that individuals who do not have an ETA may be refused boarding, so advanced applications are advised.

Laura Devine is the Managing Partner of Laura Devine Immigration, a transatlantic boutique immigration firm with offices in London and New York.

www.lauradevine.com

LAURA DEVINE
IMMIGRATION

Mastering the challenges of world trade



| Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem, President of DP World, in discussion with *LBM* editor Peter Bishop

DP World is a hugely successful global logistics company. Dubai-based, it specialises in cargo logistics, port terminal operations, maritime services and free trade zones (FTZ) – Jebel Ali, the company’s flagship site, is one of the world’s busiest ports and a potential model for London Gateway, the UK capital’s expanding logistics facility, also operated by DP World.

Top stories

I met the company’s president, HE Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem, at the Global Freight Summit in Dubai last November, the day after the two lead stories in Multi Modal news, one of the industry’s top commentators, were: *Gemini picks London Gateway for UK port calls* and *London Gateway launches new £350m fourth berth with arrival of first ships*.

The first headline related to the Maersk & Hapag-Lloyd partnership’s decision to use London Gateway as the ‘optimal port’ in the UK to serve their customers’ import and exporter cargo. The second referred to the operational launch of the world’s first all-electric berth “marking a significant milestone at one of the UK’s most sustainable and advanced logistics hubs.”

Confidence

Both are good news for London and the UK and I asked the DP World President

what gave him the confidence to make the investment. “We looked at London Gateway and made a decision based on fundamentals. The UK has the best company law in the world, the best stock market, a good financial system and a strong economy.

“I heard with pleasure Prime Minister Starmer’s words at the London investment summit in October where he stated his desire for more growth and less regulation. And I was reminded of Sheikh Mohammed’s vision for Dubai. ‘Build it and the people will come.’”

“And I was reminded of Sheikh Mohammed’s vision for Dubai. ‘Build it and the people will come.’”

I asked about parallels between Jebel Ali, which he has steered from an early stage, and Thames Gateway, often described as ‘Jebel Ali’s little brother’. Both, for example, were formerly sites of oil refineries. “The Jebel Ali project has been an amazing learning experience. It was built as an industrial park and a port and

only really took off when it became a free port. London Gateway reminded me of it. In fact there is a photo of me on reclaimed land at the London site and it looks like I was in Dubai in the early days!

“We made Jebel Ali, a difficult place, work. It now provides 500,000 jobs and makes up 30 per cent of Dubai’s GDP. With port-centric activities, London’s numbers can be even bigger.”

Globalisation

Moving on to global trade issues, I asked how worried he was about the threat of tariffs and a curtailment of globalisation under President-elect Trump “I don’t think globalisation is under threat. Many people believe in **free** trade. President Trump believes in **fair** trade and he is saying ‘how come we have difficulties selling into China’? My view is that people will manufacture and people will buy. Trade will find a way. “

Supply chain

The Global Freight Summit, being held on Dubai’s impressive exhibition site where Expo 2020 so memorably took place, recognised the massive importance of the supply chain. Covid, I suggested, had much to do with this. What lessons had DP World learned from the experience? “Not just us but the whole world realised that the chain was fragile. Near-shoring

become the order of the day and it has a part to play. It was perhaps ironic that the Belt and Road initiative was based on China's lack of confidence in the ability of global ports to receive their goods. All of a sudden the source of those goods was seen as the problem."

DP World's boss is also chair of Dubai International Chamber (on whose board LCCI chair Julia Onslow-Cole sits) and was acutely aware of the role of Dubai Chambers in the emirate's development. "Trading is the bread and butter of Dubai – we have no agriculture or mining. It is a city of merchants who, since the Chamber's establishment in the 1960s, have been able to tap into its services and facilities."

Leadership

The interview was coming to an end and the chairman was shortly due to

meet Ryan Reynolds, Hollywood star, Welsh football club owner, and one of an eclectic range of fascinating speakers at the summit so I just had time for a couple of more personal questions. Why, I asked, had he chosen a career in the freight industry? I learned that, appropriately, it had all started at Jebel Ali – whose success has been so linked to Ahmed Bin Sulayem's leadership. As a trainee Customs officer, he got what many colleagues considered to be the short straw when posted to the port's site, 45 kilometres from the centre of Dubai. "There wasn't much happening so I was pleading for things to do, like showing potential customers around. I got some training in sales and marketing from an American company and soon realised that cargo owners were the most important people. The freight business is not something you can learn

effectively at college. You learn from the experience of being in it, by meeting everyone involved in the industry – the forwarders and shipowners as well as the cargo owners. Knowing them as I do gives us the ability to invest only in what will be of benefit to the customer."

Finally, I was keen to know what one of the Middle East's most influential businessmen did in his spare time. "I enjoy working so that is a pleasure for me. Putting my brain to work makes me excited and happy. But so does spending time with my family and travelling with them. I also love fishing, including spear fishing, and scuba diving, though not for a while now." I surmised that mastering the challenges of world trade, as bin Sulayem was clearly doing, was pretty much a full-time job.

www.dpworld.com

Smashing it



Acting on the opportunities of a changing world was the strap line for the three-day Global Freight Summit event hosted by DP World last November. It took place in the same arena where the company created one of the most stunning pavilions at Expo 2020 with its comprehensive guide to the origins of trade that a museum would be proud of.

In many such events, it can often be the contacts made and the exhibition stand learning curve that prove to be most beneficial, with the speakers as a bit of a side show. Not in this case.

Vast

Yong Kim, former World Bank president, the charismatic Tony Fernandes, founder of Air Asia, leadership guru Robin Sharma, Dr Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, UAE Minister of State for Foreign Trade, and DP World chair Sultan Ahmed Bin Sulayem were on stage sharing their vast knowledge and experience – and that was just the first day!

What was the key message from the event? Supply chains will not survive unless they meet the changing demands

of the customer. Important but not surprising, given that DP World believes that the new-world demands coming from consumers and retailers is driving change amongst cargo owners, which is forcing them to look at more creative options for transporting goods.

Impressive

In between sessions, there was ample time over three days to make inroads into meeting some of the 400 exhibitors – from Abrao Group and Aegon Shipping to Zajel Courier Services and Zhenghe Logistics

representing aspects of the freight business in an impressive array of countries with large contingents from China, India and Singapore as well as the Arab World. I also met exhibitors from Canada, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Guatemala, Indonesia, Italy, Mexico, Morocco, Panama, Spain Switzerland, USA, and a couple of firms from the UK.

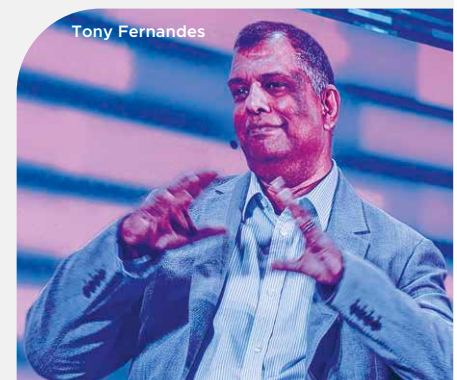
Around 8,000 logistics professionals were estimated to have visited the event, intent on discussing concrete actionable solutions to the major challenges affecting global trade. Businesses were urged to innovate, offer a 'hyper-personalised' approach to customer demands and partner with firms that can deliver solutions to build resilience at a time of global uncertainty.

Improved efficiency

The importance of technology in building supply chain resilience to navigate the road ahead was also underlined. By 2030, the market for AI in supply chains is expected to reach over \$40 billion, driven by the need for improved efficiency and the ability to manage complex logistics operations. Experts highlighted the role of AI to drive positive change, enabling time reductions, cost savings and reducing risks across the whole operation.

Diversion

Perhaps the most popular stand at the summit was labelled *Smash it like Sachin* – the legendary Indian cricketer Sachin Tendulkar was also a speaker – and gave delegates the chance to pit their skills against a bowling machine – a welcome diversion for a freight industry going through interesting times.



Jebel Ali leading the world

Jebel Ali is perhaps the jewel in the crown of DP World's expanding portfolio of ports and has echoed the rise of Dubai in its development, becoming what is now one of the leading ports and free zones in the world – with services and a scale of operations that others see as the benchmark.

It is the brainchild of Sheikh Rashid who believed that the establishment of a new, bigger port for the area was an essential plank in his vision to transform Dubai into a world city. Jebel Ali was chosen as the best site following extensive research despite its distance from the city centre – deep water was a key factor in its selection – and its opening was inaugurated by HM Queen Elizabeth II in 1979.

Logistics hub

Six years later it gained free zone status providing tax exemptions which, with its strategic location, led to its magnetic appeal for shipping traffic drawn to its logistics hub and commercial site. Now it is home to 150 Fortune 500 companies and is one of the busiest ports in the world, handling 20 million containers per year, and responsible for 35 per cent of Dubai's GDP.

DP World's evident success in growing Jebel Ali into a leading world port did not go unnoticed and concessions to run ports as diverse as Constanta,



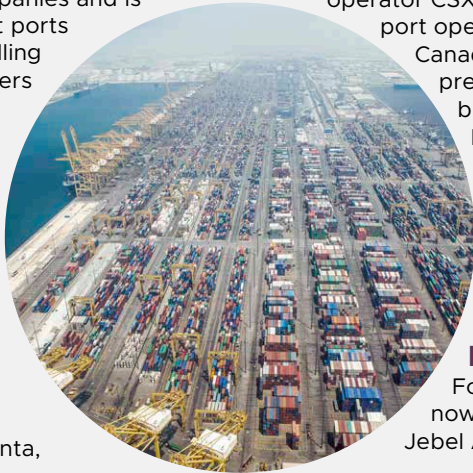
Jeddah and Djibouti were won by the company. In the mid-2000s, growth by acquisition was achieved with the purchase of the international port operator CSX. This move into port operation in the US, Canada and Hong Kong preceded a winning bid for P&O which bought them into the UK market and the management of two ports – Southampton and what is now London Gateway.

BoxBay

Four terminals are now in operation at Jebel Ali – its latest,

built in true Dubai fashion, extends into the Persian Gulf on reclaimed land. It is the location of BoxBay, DP World's pioneering container racking system developed in partnership with SMS, a renowned German industrial technologist.

In basic terms, BoxBay is a storage system that creates tall stacks of containers which can be accessed individually. Space is forever at a premium at ports – especially on the quayside – and this system is a solution that revolutionises how containers can be moved around. Coated with solar panels, the BoxBay structure is environmentally friendly and must have been a factor in Jebel Ali being declared the Industrial and Sustainable Free Zone of the Year 2024.





James Landale, Olivia O'Sullivan and Peter Foster

Richard Moir

Deglobalisation – are we at a turning point?

James Landale, the BBC's renowned diplomatic correspondent, recently chaired a thought-provoking panel event on global trade at LCCI. With Peter Foster, FT public policy editor, and Olivia O'Sullivan, Chatham House world programme director, he explored whether 'peak deglobalisation' had been reached and examined how the return of Donald Trump to the White House might shape the future of global trade, investment trends and international cooperation.

Richard Moir, LCCI board member and international strategic advisor, hosted the event and opened the discussion by highlighting the pivotal role chambers of commerce play in navigating global trade.



Stateside

The discussion began with the implications of Trump's return to power, with panellists debating whether this marks a return to isolationism or a continuation of tough but strategic global engagement.

Olivia O'Sullivan saw the Trump presidency as a clear shift from Biden's transatlantic diplomacy to renewed protectionism. However, Peter Foster observed that Trump's and Biden's trade policies were not as far apart as either might make out, particularly regarding China, and noted that the Biden administration hadn't overturned many of Trump's previous protectionist measures.

Trade deal

Scepticism was expressed that Trump would prioritise a trade deal with the UK. More likely the incoming President would focus on 'American First' policies,

with trade negotiations becoming more transactional. The panel also warned that threatened tariff hikes and a subsequent trade war could be incredibly toxic and cautioned that the UK could face tricky choices as it tries to balance its relationships with the US and the EU, as well as manage its own trade and regulatory policies.

In navigating these challenges, London's unique standing as a global business hub provides the UK with a vital advantage. Its deep-rooted connections to international markets make it an essential player in shaping and sustaining global trade flows amid shifting geopolitical current.

Opportunities

A central theme of the discussion was how middle-power nations like the UK should approach its diplomatic and economic relationships with the US and China. Several areas of opportunity were suggested:

- **Leveraging relationships with 'Middle powers':** countries like Japan, South Korea, and Australia could serve as valuable examples for the UK. These nations have successfully balanced relationships with both the US and China without being forced into full alignment with either.
- **Promoting economic cooperation and understanding:** Richard Moir underscored the vital role that chambers ('merchants of peace') played in fostering diplomacy and resolving conflicts through trade and economic collaboration.
- **Emphasis on shared economic interests:** chambers can serve as a bridge between diverse stakeholders,

reinforcing the stabilising power of global commerce in an increasingly polarised world. As Moir noted, "countries that trade together tend to stay together".

Role of business

Businesses in the UK play a key role in upholding globalisation through international trade and investment. In 2023, the UK saw a trade surplus with the US, its largest trading partner, showing the importance of bilateral trade relationships.

In order to maintain and strengthen this 'special relationship', the panellists pointed out the need for businesses to adopt a nimble approach in how they structure their operations. Emphasising the importance of diversifying supply chains and exploring alternative manufacturing hubs, they underscored these strategies as key means for businesses to mitigate the risks posed by growing trading tensions.

The panel concluded with a call for pragmatic leadership, strategic policymaking, and multilateral cooperation to navigate and address the complexities of deglobalisation in the years ahead.

Globalisation: the process of increasing interconnectedness between countries through trade, technology, and cultural exchange.

Deglobalisation: the retreat from global interconnectedness, often marked by rising protectionism and reduced cross-border collaboration.

Share acquisitions: general disclosures from a buyer's perspective

When acquiring shares in a company, the selling shareholders give warranties in the share purchase agreement (SPA). These are statements about the company and its business. If a matter exists that makes a warranty untrue, the buyer can bring a claim against the seller for breach of contract, subject to a major caveat. The buyer cannot bring a warranty claim where the seller has disclosed the relevant matter to the buyer.

General and specific disclosures

The disclosures are set out in the disclosure letter, which contains general and specific disclosures. General disclosures cover information and documents in the public domain of which the buyer has had access to or which it should be aware of from searches carried out. At completion of the SPA, general disclosures are made against the warranties as a whole and potentially qualify any of them. Specific disclosures, by contrast, concern identified matters that render a specific warranty untrue.

As general disclosures could apply to any of the warranties, and often cover large amounts of information, the buyer should carefully consider such disclosures. They have the potential to increase the buyer's exposure to potential liabilities and undermine the protections in the SPA.

Two examples of general disclosures which a seller may seek to include in the disclosure letter are the contents of the data room and correspondence between the parties.

General disclosure of the data room

During the due diligence process, information on the company and its business may be uploaded to an electronic data room, which can be accessed by the buyer. This can include a vast amount of information, including financial and tax information about the company.

The seller (or their advisers) will often argue that it is 'market standard' to accept general disclosure of the contents of the data room in its entirety, because the buyer has had access to the data room throughout the transaction.

Unless the buyer has reviewed every document in the data room, however, there is a risk that the buyer would be unaware of issues which have technically been "disclosed" to them, potentially undermining the protection of the warranties. In addition, the buyer might not be aware of the significance of a

particular document and its (potential) application to a particular warranty (whilst the seller should be given their greater knowledge of the business and company documents).

General disclosure of correspondence between the parties

A similar risk applies to the acceptance of general disclosure of the correspondence between the parties during negotiations up to completion of the transaction.

Anything contained in correspondence (e.g. emails) between the parties during this time will potentially qualify the warranties in the SPA and undermine the buyer's protection. An issue might be mentioned in an email to the buyer, but without a specific disclosure being made against the relevant warranty. The buyer might not fully understand the significance or context of the issue being referred to.

Drafting points

In both examples, the risk is that the buyer does not understand the (negative) significance of information that is generally disclosed.

To combat this, the buyer should ensure that what constitutes "disclosed" as defined in the SPA should equate to "fairly disclosed", i.e. in sufficient detail to identify the nature and scope of the matter disclosed. Failure to include this qualification could mean that anything mentioned in correspondence or a document in the data room qualifies the warranties in the SPA, regardless of whether the disclosure was sufficient for the buyer to understand the issue.

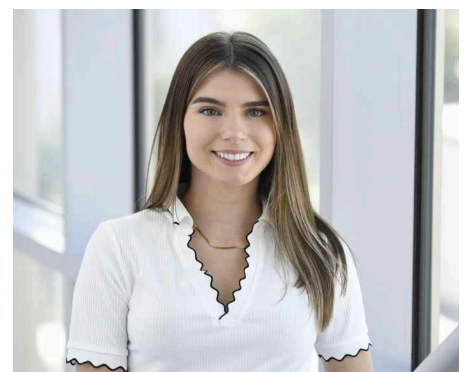
General disclosure of the data room should only be accepted where the buyer is confident that all documents in the data room have been reviewed in sufficient depth – in other words, do not accept disclosure of documents that have not been reviewed.

General disclosure of correspondence should be strongly resisted by the

buyer. At a push, disclosure of specific correspondence can be accepted if the buyer fully understands the significance of its contents.

Ideally a buyer should be in a position where the seller makes clear, specific disclosures against the warranties where they are untrue. The buyer's solicitors should always seek to limit the matters that are generally disclosed. General disclosures should only include matters that the buyer is confident they are fully aware of the contents and their significance.

If you would like assistance with any of the matters mentioned in this article, please get in touch with **Matthew Ratcliffe** or **Jen Banfield**.





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India in the spotlight

Market insight, intelligence and expertise on India held the attention of the audience at an LCCI seminar last November *writes Annabel Fogden*

The event was timely given the UK government's announcement of the re-opening of negotiations for the UK-India free trade agreement (FTA) to start at the beginning of this year.

Economic growth

Speaker Liz Martins, senior economist UK, HSBC highlighted India's strong economic growth, the rise of UK export services, and the opportunities for British entrepreneurs. Market entry strategist Pratik Dattani flagged the importance of approaching and understanding this enormous market at a State level and the value of building long term relationships. Sarah Bell, public affairs director at UPS UK, spoke of the huge growth in eCommerce – predicted to be worth \$350 billion by 2030 – and the benefits of keeping supply chains short.



Strength

Event chair Rob Lewtas of the Department for Business and Trade stressed the strength of the British brand and said that success came to those who invested time, energy and money in developing overseas markets – alongside the government support available.

On track

India has become one of the fastest growing economies in the world, with real GDP expected to have grown by 6.5 per cent in 2024. India has surpassed the UK as the fifth largest economy and is widely reported to be on track to become the world's third-largest economy by 2027, moving above Japan and Germany. The benefits of the forthcoming FTA promise to be substantial for trade in goods and services, for both the UK and India

Annabel Fogden is senior international business and events manager at LCCI

HSBC and UPS Ltd are LCCI international programme partners

www.hsbc.co.uk

www.ups.com



Serbia and the Western Balkans

With UK trade with the Western Balkans growing a colossal 330 per cent in the last five years, and Serbia announcing a €17 billion investment plan to help deliver its hosting of EXPO in 2027, there are vast opportunities to collaborate for UK businesses and companies in the Western Balkan region.

This was the background to a recent conference in Belgrade at which UK Ambassador Edward Ferguson and

LCCI board member and international committee deputy chair Richard Moir both spoke.

Infrastructure

The conference, run by the Department of Business and Trade, and hosted in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia, the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the British Serbian Chamber of Commerce attracted over 250 delegates

from 150 companies, with areas of focus including infrastructure and renewable energy, tech and agri-food.

Integration

Opening the Conference, Serbian President Vučić called for stronger political and economic relations with the UK. The UK was spoken of as an excellent partner possessing the technology, services and know-how needed to power the region's growth, development and green transition as well as the business culture and practices to help Serbia and other countries in the region to achieve European standards and support their integration into the European market.

Serbia is projected to be the fastest-growing economy in Europe this year. With a strategic location, growing economies, skilled and affordable labour, proximity to UK and European markets and supportive government initiatives, it is a good time to explore economic opportunities in the region.

www.dbt.org

<https://www.britisrbcham.com/>



Overseas business opportunities

A selection of business co-operation offers made by companies wishing to work with UK firms taken from the Enterprise Europe Network Partnership Opportunities Database. To find out more about these and similar opportunities, contact Innovate UK Business Growth at <https://iuk-business-connect.org.uk>

Latvia

Company offers tailored data solutions, including price monitoring, brand protection and compliance monitoring. Company is seeking international distributors, resellers and partners to expand its global presence and deliver advanced data insights.

REF: BOLV20241211007

Germany

This SME is offering its own worldwide patented materials to manufacture an environmentally friendly and biodegradable alternative to conventional plastic. The raw and pure materials they are offering are exclusively available.

REF: BODE20241203013

Lithuania

A software development company offers tailored solutions for business process automation, cost savings and efficiency improvement. Specialising in AI, data science, DevOps and full-stack development, company delivers cutting-edge technologies to businesses across industries. They are looking for partners seeking innovative and scalable software solutions.

REF: TOLT20241211002

Romania

Manufacturer of a wide range of pasta (including gluten free), flour and corn flour of superior quality. Products are made using modern technology which ensures high nutritional levels. The company is interested in identifying new international

distributors and resellers to expand its market. Co-operation will be based on commercial agreements.

REF: BORO20241209004

Netherlands

SME specialises in the design and production of reusable drinkware, made from recycled materials. The products are made from post-consumer waste, ensuring a fully circular lifecycle. They seek distributors, resellers, retailers and wholesalers to expand their presence.

REF: BONL20241210007

Greece

Bio-company with a deep respect for tradition and nature seeks suppliers of organic products. The company already exports and imports to many countries and is looking for a supplier of organic certified strawberries, dehydrated or freeze-dried, in slices, flakes or pieces.

REF: BRGR20241209009

Sweden

Creator of sophisticated, sustainable and stylish pet accessories with a focus on Scandinavian design aesthetics and natural materials. Their product range includes leashes, collars, harnesses and innovative add-ons like AirTag-compatible bags. The designs prioritise comfort, durability and seamless integration across product lines.

REF: BRSE20241209001

Poland

A well-established manufacturer of pneumatic, hydraulic and ATEX-certified components seeks partners for commercial agreements. Founded in the 1980s, the company is recognised for its innovative solutions and sustainable practices. The portfolio includes high-quality pneumatic cylinders, distribution valves air preparation units, and customised solutions for industrial applications.

REF: BOPL20241206013

Spain

The company offers its mental health platform solution focused on digital therapy and psychological support services delivery; for partners willing to collaborate in advanced digital health care services based on AI technologies.

REF: BOES20241106010

Ukraine

A company specialised in design, formulation, manufacture and commercialisation of special liquid fertilisers and biostimulants. The company offers a wide variety of organo-mineral fertilizers for all types of agricultural crops.

REF: BOUA20241204002

Slovakia

This company specialises in creating and managing innovative, ticketless parking systems for shopping centres and supermarkets. These systems are centrally monitored to ensure seamless

operation, positioning the company as a European leader in this field.

REF: BOSK20241202004

Italy

This company, operating in the health and biomedical technology sector, is willing to join European consortia in order to submit proposals for European calls. The company core activity is the research and development of medical devices, innovative materials and customised solutions. The collaborations will be carried out under research and development cooperation agreements.

REF: TOIT20241120006

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



Dubai in London

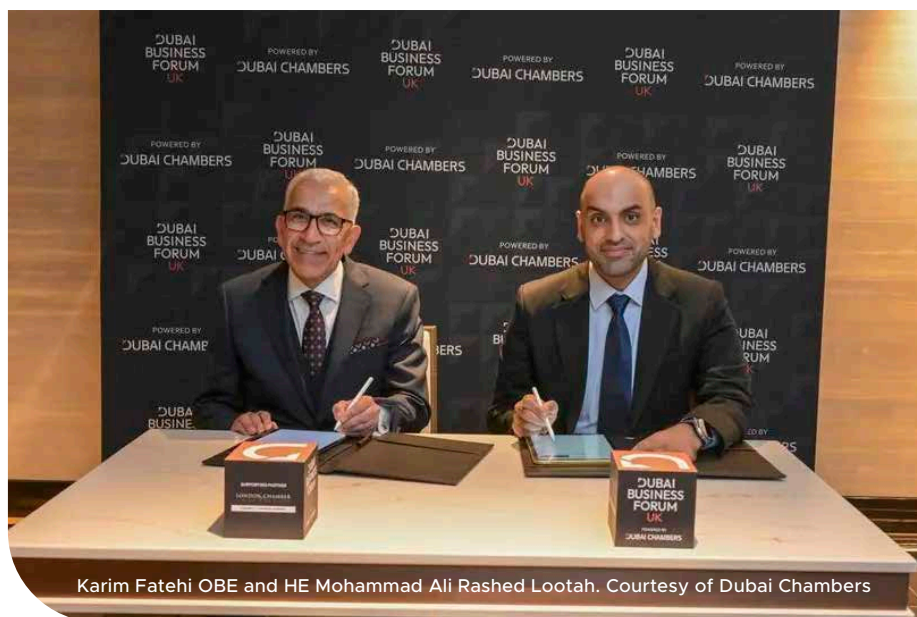
Dubai Business Forum UK – Driving Mutual Growth – took place at the Peninsula Hotel, Hyde Park Corner last November and built on the strong historical cross-border collaboration between business leaders from the UK and Dubai. Powered by Dubai Chambers, the forum was designed as a platform for shaping the future of business and innovation and creating interactions with the aim of strengthening bilateral relations.

Economic and investment ties

LCCI was a supporting partner for the event which concluded with a dinner for delegates in Kensington Palace. Previously LCCI and Dubai Chambers signed a memorandum of understanding to “support the growth and diversification of bilateral economic and investment ties”. The agreement aims to strengthen connections between the business communities in Dubai and London and foster enhanced collaboration on joint initiatives.

Visionary

HE Mohammad Ali Rashed Lootah, president and chief executive of



Karim Fatehi OBE and HE Mohammad Ali Rashed Lootah. Courtesy of Dubai Chambers

Dubai Chambers, said his chamber was “committed to strengthening international partnerships and building constructive relationships that cement Dubai’s position as a leading global hub for trade and investments.” Karim Fatehi OBE, LCCI chief executive,

commented that the agreement was “a testament to what can be achieved when visionary leaders, members and communities come together to build a shared future.”

www.dubaichamberinternational.com

Taking the global route

Going Global was a key part of the Golden 50th edition of The Business Show at ExCeL last autumn. LCCI hosted a busy stand and had a steady stream of visitors keen to learn more about its international trade services.



Levi Roots

Sauce and a *Dragons’ Den* success story, He shared his journey with a packed crowd, leaving them with practical insights and inspiration drawn from his unique experiences.

Fresh perspectives

Overall, the show provided plenty of moments to celebrate - bringing together people, ideas and opportunities in a way that reflected what the business world is all about. It was a chance for attendees to connect, learn and leave with fresh perspectives to take back to their own ventures.

Next year’s event, also at ExCeL London, takes place on 12-13 November

www.goinggloballive.co.uk

Interactions

In the highly appropriate words of the organisers, “the show reminded everyone of the value of face-to-face interactions. Many businesses are looking to strengthen these personal connections, and this theme emerged repeatedly throughout the event. It was clear that in-person engagement still plays an important role, even in a tech-driven world.”

Journey

One of the most popular speakers at the side events was Levi Roots, the entrepreneur behind Reggae Reggae



Why bird proofing your building in January is crucial

Bird proofing for seagulls and pigeons is an essential task for property owners, especially during the winter months. January presents a critical window to address potential bird infestations before the breeding season begins. After the birds have started nesting, it's too late to take action says Cleankill Pest Control Managing Director Paul Bates.

Seagulls and pigeons, while a familiar sight in urban and coastal areas, can cause significant damage to properties and pose health risks. Acting early not only helps mitigate these problems, but also ensures long-term peace of mind.



Image shows a fire escape covered in pigeon droppings. This would make it dangerous to use and it is also unsightly.

The Winter Advantage

Most birds begin their breeding cycles in early Spring, making the winter months an opportune time to implement proofing measures. By acting now, property owners can prevent birds from establishing nests on roofs, ledges and other parts of their buildings. Once nests are in place, removing them becomes more challenging due to legal protections that safeguard nesting birds.

January is also an ideal time to inspect properties for vulnerabilities. With fewer birds around, it's easier to identify potential entry points, such as gaps in roofing or broken vents. Sealing these areas early ensures that birds cannot gain access and settle in when the breeding season begins.

The Risks of Bird Infestations

Seagulls and pigeons can cause significant problems for properties if left unchecked:

• Health Hazards

Both seagulls and pigeons are carriers of diseases, including salmonella, histoplasmosis, and psittacosis, which can spread through their droppings. Accumulated droppings can also create a slippery, hazardous surface and pose risks to pedestrians.

• Property Damage

Bird droppings are acidic and can corrode building materials such as metal, concrete, and paint. Nests can clog gutters and drainage systems, leading to water damage. Over time, this damage can result in costly repairs.

• Noise and Aggression

During nesting season, seagulls can become aggressive, attacking humans who come too close to their nests.

• Impact on Business Image

For businesses, bird infestations can tarnish their reputation. Droppings on signage, walkways, and outdoor seating areas create an unsightly and unhygienic environment that deters customers.

Effective Bird-Proofing Measures

Cleankill Pest Control offers a range of bird-proofing solutions tailored to your property's needs. These include:

• **Netting:** Effective in preventing access to roofs, balconies and other vulnerable areas.

• **Spikes:** Installed on ledges, beams, and other perching areas to deter birds.

• **Bird Wire:** A discreet and humane solution for protecting building edges by stopping birds from landing

• **Deterrents:** Visual and sound-based deterrents to keep birds at bay.

Cleankill also has a team of Harris hawks with trained handlers who can visit your premises on a regular basis to deter gulls and pigeons. Using predator birds is the most natural form of bird control and is highly effective even in built up areas.

Bird-proofing for seagulls and pigeons in January is a proactive step toward protecting your property and avoiding the challenges that come with bird infestations. By acting early, you can ensure that your property remains safe, clean, and welcoming throughout the year.

With offices in Surrey, East Sussex, Bristol and Buckinghamshire, Cleankill has many customers throughout London, Surrey, Sussex, the Home Counties, Bristol, Gloucestershire and Somerset.

Award-winning Cleankill Pest

Control was founded on the desire to create an operation that places professionalism, customer service, respect for the environment, care for the community and staff development on an equal footing with profitability.

Cleankill was the first pest control company in England to attain the Gold Investors in People standard and was named 'Company of the Year' in the British Pest Control Association Awards. Accreditations include: BPCA, CHAS Premium Plus; Avetta; SafeContractor; ConstructionLine; PICS; CEPA; ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and EN 16636 - the European quality standard for pest management services.

For more information or to book a free survey or cost comparison go to www.cleankill.co.uk



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Independence celebrations and travel challenges



Peter Bishop's Istanbul diary



The Turkish flag and Kamil Ataturk's image were even more prevalent than usual when I visited Istanbul last autumn for a World ATA Carnet Council meeting. Pennants inscribed with 'ATA' adorned train carriages, metro stations and ferries, nothing to do with the 'passport for goods' gathering but a celebration of the 101st anniversary of the country's independence. It made one wonder about the scale of the event for the previous year's centenary.



Complex

The Turkish economy is a complex picture. Economic growth rates are forecast to be three per cent in 2024, down from 4.5 per cent the previous year. Inflation is high and foreign investment dwindling. Yet Istanbul's expensive restaurants are packed, the shops are busy and the marinas bursting with yachts.

The country is famously the bridge between Europe and Asia and carries much weight politically, not least because of this geography. At a recent BRICS summit, president Recep Tayyip Erdogan was invited to put the case for Türkiye to take its place alongside

Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Nearer home, Erdogan is taking the lead in the Organisation of Turkic States, a vehicle for co-operation in an increasingly wide range of sectors including economic measures, education and foreign policy.

Equilibrium

Türkiye ranks 17th in the list of UK trade partners and runs a significant trade surplus. The country's Toyota plant is a big supplier of vehicles while imports into the UK include clothing, electrical devices and fruit such as bananas, grapes and tomatoes. British presence in Türkiye includes Vodaphone, GlaxoSmithKline, Marks & Spencer, BP and HSBC. It is hoped that the putative new free trade agreement will get the UK nearer to trade equilibrium.

Clout

The Carnet Council meeting was hosted by TOBB, the umbrella organisation for chambers of commerce and commodity exchanges. The organisation's president, Rifat Hisarcikloğlu, has been chair of the ICC World Chambers Federation since 2023 and clearly has some clout. You had to be impressed though by the photos of him with world leaders in the foyer of TOBB's HQ. The UK was well represented: the late HM The Queen Elizabeth II, the then Prince Charles, Tony Blair and David Cameron prominent. Other pics featured him with Justin Trudeau, Joe Biden, Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping and Narendra Modi.

Football ranks high in Turkish enthusiasms and Istanbul is home to three world famous clubs. Galatasaray rank first and played (and beat) local rivals Beşiktaş during my stay while, on Istanbul's Asian shore, Fenerbahçe faced Manchester United in a European Cup match which ended in a draw. The Turkish side's boss José Mourinho, who previously managed two London clubs, said after the game that he was disillusioned with European competitions and would only return to the UK to manage teams who were not likely to qualify. I can't see any teams in the capital being tempted by such a proposition but you never know.

Atmospheric

Istanbul is a stunning city with a fascinating history and a long list of varied tourist attractions.

Some you don't have to queue for, like a stroll across the Galati Bridge over the Golden Horn past a stream of fishermen, or a wander around Sirkeci rail station. This was where in 1883 the Orient Express first pulled out from Constantinople, as it then was, on its journey to Paris.

Now the station is home to a mainly local train service (just two international trains each year) but maintains an atmospheric and delightful restaurant from the period and has a (free to visit) Orient Express museum.

Replacement

Since I last visited Turkey's cultural and commercial centre, the Istanbul Kart, a travel card similar to the Oyster, has been introduced and certainly makes getting around easier. It is a big city with vast distances. I flew into Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen international airport on the Asian side then took the metro (20+ stops) to Kadıköy where I boarded a ferry across the Bosphorus to Karaköy, then a taxi to my hotel in the financial district, north of Taksim Square in the heart of the city. Fascinating of course but quite a palaver and one which made me think fondly of the Heathrow Express and the transport links in London. The fondness subsided considerably though when I returned to the UK and discovered that part of the District line was suspended for weekend maintenance work and a rail replacement service was in operation.



Risk ratings in a fragmenting world

International SOS has released its annual Interactive Risk Map 2025 which reflects heightened geopolitical tensions in what is described as a fragmenting world.

The map provides organisations with underlying medical and security risk ratings which replace the impact of disruptive events such as conflict, infectious diseases and impacts of extreme weather events.



Variables

International SOS has also enhanced its security and medical risk ratings service for clients. In addition to the established country and sub-national risk ratings, they can now access detailed risk information on 1,000 cities and some of the key risk factors that drive the ratings. Managers can see the latest data on variables such as conflict, crime, infrastructure and natural disasters, as well as access to healthcare, health threats and air pollution.

Complex world

Sally Llewellyn, global security director at International SOS, explains: “Our

increasingly complex world is reflected in the Risk Map. We haven’t decreased security risk ratings for any country this year. Geopolitical tensions have been the most prominent trigger, with changes to risk ratings for locations such as Sudan and Lebanon, where the intensity and expansion of conflict now impact more population centres and have pushed the overall risk rating up.”

Changes

Sudan, Lebanon, Israel, Iraq and Myanmar have all undergone multiple risk rating reviews and expansions of high or extreme-risk zones throughout 2024 as a result of conflict. Other increases in security risk ratings include New Caledonia increasing from low to medium, based on an assessment of the longer-term impact of social unrest, economic decline and related crime. Crime trends and increased social unrest have resulted in changes to specific countries or regions in South Africa, Mexico and Kenya. Also, reductions in militancy have resulted in changes in risk ratings in parts of the Philippines, Thailand and Laos.

Significant impacts

Along with the Risk Map 2025, International SOS recently released its 2025 Risk Outlook report, revealing essential insights into the mounting challenges for organisational and workforce resilience, alongside risk predictions for the forthcoming year. The research uncovers a “fragmenting world” with 65 per cent of the surveyed senior risk professionals perceiving that risks have increased over the past year, while 69 per cent predict significant impacts from geopolitical challenges alone in 2025. This comes as 78 per cent predict that burnout and stress are likely to have a major impact on businesses in the year ahead.

Permacrisis

Even in the ongoing permacrisis environment, the new research highlights that some of the most significant risks are those for which respondents said they were least prepared, including conflict, geopolitical tensions and protests.

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Exports slowing but services in better shape

William Bain, head of trade policy at British Chambers of Commerce, has commented on recent ONS data on trade. He has noted the slowdown in both services and goods trade in the three months since July last year and believes that this links in with other economic data showing a dampening of demand.

Volatility

Bain says: "Trade data from Germany also shows a 2.8 per cent fall in goods exports during October, so the UK is not alone in facing a slowdown. Although goods exports in October did not see the volatility of previous months, there was still a 2.6 per cent drop in volumes. Goods exports to the EU fared better than exports to the rest of the world.

"However, the story for services was very different, they took a divergent trajectory – with a 2.5 per cent increase



in exports volumes. The World Trade Organisation forecast that global trade in goods should increase by three per cent in 2025 so there is hope that demand in goods trade will pick up.

"But geopolitical factors still have the potential to weigh heavily upon traders as 2024 comes to an end. The government's trade strategy due in 2025 must deliver a clear plan to boost export performance in key sectors if it is serious about driving stronger economic growth."

Goods

Goods imports volumes to the UK rose by 2.9 per cent in October 2024, driven by a five per cent rise from the EU, with a lower one per cent increase from the rest of the world.

In terms of EU goods imports there was a noticeable rise in machinery and transport equipment (aircraft imports

from Germany and automobiles from Spain), together with fuel imports (refined oil from the Netherlands). Machinery and transport imports from the rest of the world also performed well (mainly electrical machinery from China) and more clothing from Bangladesh.

Modest rises

EU goods exports volumes increased by 1.1 per cent but were offset by a 6.2 per cent fall in rest of the world volumes.

In value terms, the modest rises in exports to the EU were of miscellaneous manufactured goods, chemicals, fuels, transport goods and machinery. Notable falls in exports to the rest of the world included fuels (crude oil to the USA), material manufactured goods, transport goods (aircraft to Switzerland) and machinery. UK services exports volumes increased by 2.5 per cent, while imports to the UK decreased by two per cent.

www.britishchambers.org.uk

ICC UK – Bilimoria at the helm



ICC believes that this marks an exciting new chapter for them and that Lord Bilimoria's extensive experience and vision will lead them into a new era of innovation and global trade leadership.

Outstanding

ICC thanked Paul Drechsler CBE for his "outstanding leadership and dedication over the past four years in his role as

chair and the seven years he served as a board member. Paul's tenure has been pivotal in positioning ICC as a trusted voice on the international stage, navigating challenges such as Brexit and the global pandemic. His contributions have been invaluable, and we are grateful for his continued involvement in ICC's work."

www.iccwbo.uk

Tips for supply chain optimisation

Hayley Hedley offers expert insight on the best ways to optimise supply chains, from investing in the right technology to fostering collaboration

From global shortages of materials to transport delays and lack of personnel, supply chains in the UK have experienced several issues in recent years, with at least 20 per cent of businesses experiencing some sort of disruption.

Ninety-three per cent expect the pressure on supply chains in our country to persist, meaning their operations might suffer as a result. However, the good news is that, even if most organisations have made necessary adaptations to limit problems with their supply chain, further steps can be taken to enhance and refine the process.

Plan carefully

Planning in a timely fashion is crucial, especially when it comes to order fulfilment.

This is because it will allow you to prevent potential issues with your logistics chain and avoid delays that could leave you without the raw materials and products you need to carry out your operations seamlessly.

What's more, if you fail to plan your orders early, you may end up in a situation where you'll have to ask for urgent deliveries – and added costs can rack up pretty quickly.

Planning carefully includes looking at any potential process change, evaluating how it might impact the flow of your supply chain and whether it might affect your bottom-line gains.

This gives you the opportunity to prepare and account for worst-case contingencies. Hopefully, they will never happen – but if they do, you will have a plan of action to tackle them effectively and with confidence.



Promote communication and collaboration

Communication and collaboration are the lifeblood of any organisation, as they create an environment where expectations are clear and everyone rows in the same direction.

In addition to fostering co-operation among various departments within your business, it is important to extend a culture of open communication with your suppliers and logistics providers. In fact, this can promote a stronger sense of trust, improve responsiveness to changes, eliminate confusion and lead to a more fruitful relationship overall.

If you are using more than one supplier, communication and collaboration become even more essential. By staying in constant touch with all your suppliers, you can keep everything ticking as it should without the risk of delays or misunderstandings.

Take advantage of analytics tools

Harnessing the power of data analytics is another great way to optimise your supply chain and give your business a competitive edge.

For example, analytical tools allow you to evaluate your sales figures, understand customer preferences and predict future demands.

Based on the data, you can then make more conscious and confident business decisions, such as forecasting demand and recalculating inventory levels to suit both your business and customers' needs.

In short, analytics tools allow you to monitor customer behaviour, keep your stock at appropriate levels, and contact your supplier with more accurate orders and requests.

Embrace technology

Technology can act as a much-loved friend in terms of streamlining processes and optimising supply chains.

Almost half of UK businesses are not yet relying on modern tech, such as AI, robotics, machine learning and augmented reality in their day-to-day activities.

However, embracing innovations can have a wide range of benefits when it comes to improving speed and accuracy. For example, blockchain technology can automate repetitive and physically draining processes, increase visibility and enhance decision-making within the supply chain.

What's more, implementing specific software can aid inventory management, allowing you to track locations in real-time and facilitate operations within the warehouse.

From planning in advance to promoting collaboration, there are many steps you can take to optimise your supply chain and ensure your business is operating constantly at its best.

So, despite the challenges of recent times, having a few handy tips can make the all-important difference between struggling with disruptions and maintaining efficiency at prime levels.

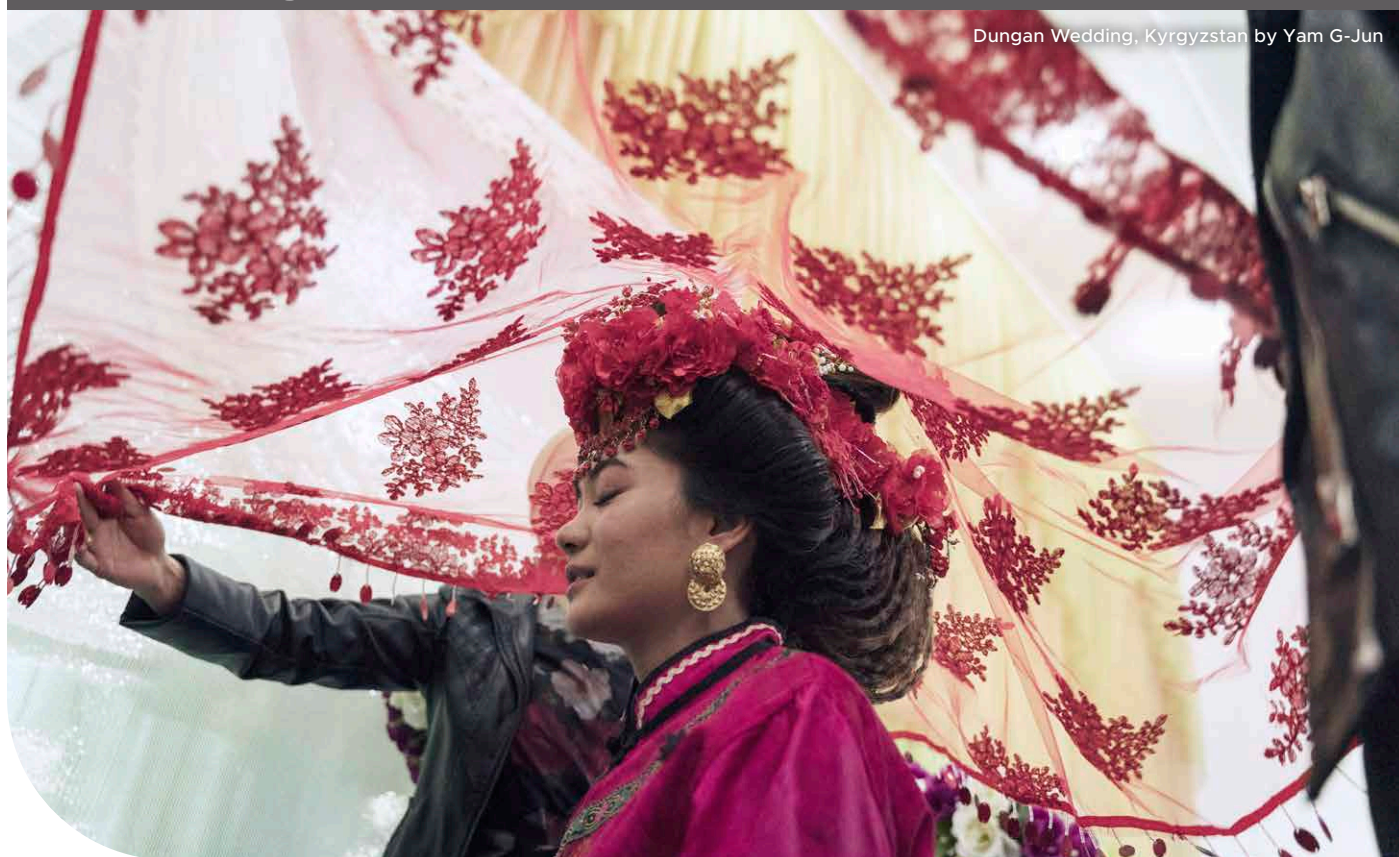
Hayley Hedley is head of commercial at Cleveland Containers, a leading supplier of shipping containers

www.clevelandcontainers.co.uk/containers/40ft-containers



Yintong talks with...

a few good women of China



Dungan Wedding, Kyrgyzstan by Yam G-Jun

“Leading up to the opening of the Global SinoPhoto Awards *Culture Identified* exhibition at Christie’s London in January 2025, I took the opportunity to have a discussion with our circle of sponsors. They all happen to be Chinese and all of them are women – they are my heroines.

Mission

Connecting East and West,

as well as business and culture, has been my lifelong mission and core belief. Through years of involvement in business, cultural and marketing projects, I have come to believe firmly that business and the arts are a perfect union. Culture relies on business support to sustain itself, while business can benefit from the cultural sector by enhancing its reputation with society. At the same time, businesses can use cultural platforms to express their corporate social responsibility, foster goodwill with their existing customers, and reach a new audience. Jointly, the cultural projects, such as our exhibition, will bring people together and enrich our lives.

Different path

LBM readers may remember my articles on Chinese business entrepreneurs

when I was focusing on the consultancy part of the business. Since 2020, my career has taken a different path. I launched the Global SinoPhoto Awards, an annual photography competition that connects people through photography and promotes photographers internationally.

Yü-Ge Wang

Now in its fifth year, we are opening a special retrospective exhibition – *Culture Identified* – in January 2025, just ahead of the Chinese New Year. We are partnering with Christie’s London and staging the exhibition at their splendid SW1 premises for the second year running.

As a relatively unknown photography competition, it’s my good fortune to have met Yü-Ge Wang and to have her advocating our awards. The connection is not completely random. She was born in Beijing, brought up in Germany and is

working in London, speaking English, German and Mandarin Chinese fluently. Professionally, she is the first Asian female auctioneer outside Asia in the company’s 258-year history. Yü-Ge is also the associate director at Christie’s, looking after business development and client relationships.

Yü-Ge told me that as an international art business, it is important to understand a variety of cultures to ensure they get the nuances right in their communication and to show respect and understanding for each culture. Her Chinese heritage and European upbringing help to build cultural bridges; showing understanding is of incredible importance in such an emotional and international business such as the arts. Collaborating with organisations such as the Global SinoPhoto Awards is a great way to encourage more dialogue and understanding.



Winnie Cao

Having an outstanding venue to showcase our remarkable images is an important aspect of our awards activities. Like most art projects, the awards also need financial support to be sustainable. With this in mind, I picked up the phone with a contact of almost 20 years and spoke to Winnie Cao, a partner at Blick Rothenberg. Having lived in the UK since she was a teenager, Winnie understood the importance of promoting goodwill and connecting deeply within the clients' community. Blick Rothenberg became our first sponsor in the second year.

A sterling support in the last few years, Winnie told me: "Our firm places significant value in diversity and inclusion, and has a multicultural team serving international clients. Our purpose is to improve the lives of our colleagues, clients and communities sustainably.

One way of giving back to the community is through sponsoring art and cultural-related initiatives. We are completing our B-Corp journey, which is a great milestone recognising the contributions we strive to make.

Qingxiao Zhang

For the first time this year, our awards have partnered with the law firm Raymond Legal as our principal sponsor, working closely with its partner Qingxiao Zhang. The law firm was born in the same year as our awards in 2020, and the organisation

has rapidly developed into a real powerhouse facilitating Chinese businesses via its offices in Paris, London and Shanghai.

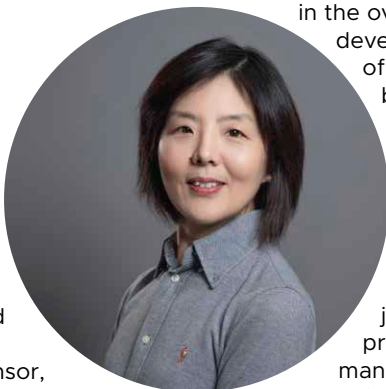


Talking about its decision to support an art project such as ours, Qingxiao says: "Now that we have become more established, we have started

to work on our vision for the future. We want to embrace our corporate social responsibility and integrate into the societies in which we operate. Connecting with the Global SinoPhoto Awards is a great step towards achieving our objectives. Practically, we also feel that working with art and culture projects will help us stand out in the industry; the alignment can also be integrated into our own business culture, encouraging our colleagues to become involved, ultimately enhancing our quality of service and style, and helping us excel further within the industry."

The technological capability and adaptability of client corporations investing in Europe in recent years have seen significant improvement. More international talent is becoming involved in the overseas development of Chinese businesses, and the industry has undergone substantial change. It is no longer just about production and manufacturing; there is now

a higher level of technological innovation, and the international market share is increasing."



More international talent is becoming involved in the overseas development of Chinese businesses, and the industry has undergone substantial change.

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Advocates

We are fortunate to have these brilliant women involved with the Global SinoPhoto Awards exhibition *Culture Identified*. Their personal connections make them natural advocates for bridging the East and West, while their professionalism in promoting cultural awareness, social responsibility and unwavering loyalty to their

company's vision form the true foundation for realising business collaborations with culture in a logical and effective manner. ”

Yintong Betser is the founder and managing director of the Global Sino Photo Awards

Culture Identified is open to the public 13-31 January at Christie's London SW1

www.sinophoto-awards.com

Global SinoPhoto Awards



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Quietly does it ...

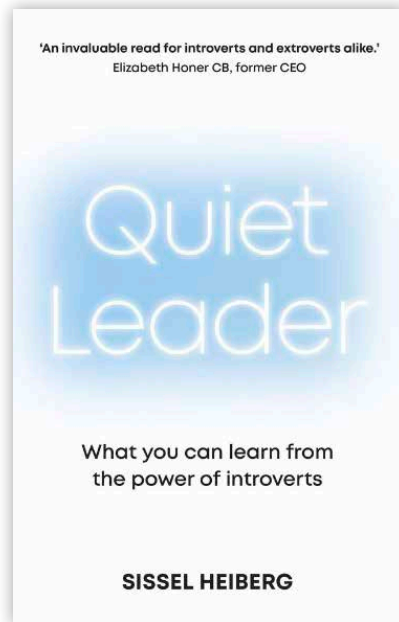
Research suggests that up to 50 per cent of people are introverts, and yet so much conventional leadership wisdom focuses on developing people's 'extrovert' qualities in order to succeed at work.

What if introversion isn't something to 'fix', and being quiet could actually make you a better leader?

Perspective

In a world where extroverted leaders often dominate the conversation, Sissel Heiberg's new book *Quiet Leader* offers a refreshing perspective. It empowers introverted individuals to embrace their unique leadership strengths such as humility, good listening, being reflective and staying calm.

The book helps introverts in business understand the value they add and how to overcome the extrovert bias they might encounter. Rather than trying to change personalities, *Quiet Leader* encourages introverts to use their natural strengths to bring out the



best in colleagues and team members and give everyone – extroverts included – a better understanding of how to become leaders.

Team performance

Author Sissel Heiberg, a quiet leader herself, with experience in large corporations, has witnessed that the loudest voices often dominate discussions and self-promote which can lead to misguided decisions and the selection of unsuitable leaders. This has fuelled her passion to raise awareness about organisational dynamics, the bias against introverts and to help organisations better use the right skills at the right time to enhance overall team performance.

Tangible

Building on research and interviews, each chapter focuses on an introvert strength, explaining why it is a valuable leadership trait and includes a toolkit with tangible examples, strategies and ideas for using this strength in the workplace

Quiet Leader: What you can learn from the power of introverts by Sissel Heiberg is published by Pearson

www.pearson.com

Thriving with artificial intelligence

Should we be scared of AI taking our jobs? Are AI chatbots ruining your business? Why is the algorithm so addictive? Why is AI still not delivering the promised value? How must my leadership style in the age of AI change? What shall I do with my people? What must we learn and unlearn to continue to thrive with AI?

Roadmap

So many questions ... and the good news is that in *A Strategy for Human-AI Symbiosis*, research scientist Dr Alexandra Diening provides answers and offers a roadmap for how to thrive in the AI revolution. Using a human-centric approach, the book keeps people and humanity at the core of all decisions. The most successful AI is symbiotic with people – this book shows a path to uniting profit and human benefit.



Human-centric

A Strategy for Human-AI Symbiosis is described as the definitive guide for anyone ready to navigate the seismic shifts AI is bringing to the world. It is packed with practical, real-world insights drawn from nearly two decades of hands-on experience building AI solutions for Fortune 500 companies, transforming industries like healthcare, retail and finance. Dr. Diening has spearheaded AI transformations that unlocked groundbreaking business value, improved operational efficiency and reshaped entire sectors. Using over 70 case studies, she combines her experience with science to create a proven human-centric approach.

The Strategy for Human-AI symbiosis: concepts, tools and business models for the new AI game by Dr Alexandra Diening. Self-published



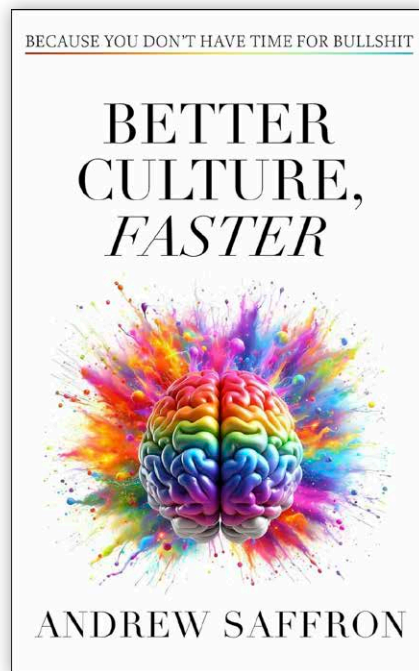
Culture change

Goals

More recently, organisations have started to realise that their culture directly impacts their ability to achieve their business goals. Yet amidst this new-found enlightenment is a lack of understanding about how to change culture, and a false assumption that it will take years to do so. What about organisations whose performance is plummeting and don't have years to change? What about those who have an amazing product/service but are battling stiff competition in a tough economic climate?

Manual

The answer is that culture can be changed rapidly and, in his new book *Better Culture, Faster*, Andrew Saffron shows how. Saffron, a former NHS chief of staff in the Covid years, distils 30 years of experience working with the biggest global organisations to outline



a step-by-step instruction manual about how to define what changes need to be made to culture and how to apply them rapidly.

Better Culture, Faster pulls no punches, drawing on this experience to cut through practices such as “plastering your office with values posters or handing out branded mugs” to deliver a blueprint for huge culture shifts in short periods of time, without massively increasing spending.

This is because, the author maintains, “culture change is not hard.” Or at least the method is simple. Changing people’s individual and collective behaviour is hard. However, that will happen if you use the right method.

***Better culture, faster* by Andrew Saffron is published by Practical Inspiration Publishing**

www.practicalinspiration.com

In the family business way

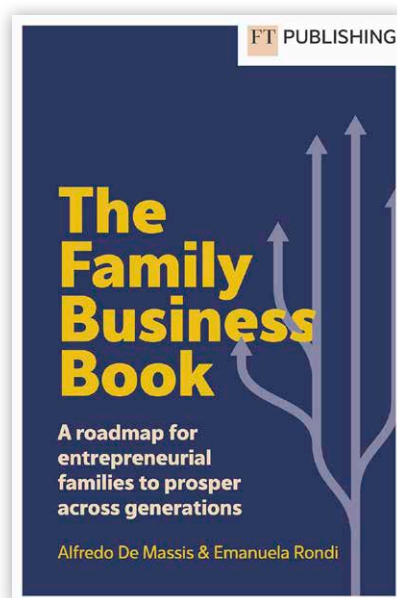
Families are the most prevalent type of business owners in any global economy – the UK is no exception. They collectively control a huge proportion of the world’s wealth and play a significant role in shaping wider society.

Dynamics

However, succeeding across generations is notoriously difficult. Family dynamics and emotions add an extra layer of complexity to leadership and decision making, and only few family businesses continue to prosper beyond the first generation.

Legacy

So why is it that some families are able to build a legacy that will last far into the future, while others fade away? This book, written by professors and world-leading experts in entrepreneurship and family business Alfredo De Massis and Emanuela Rondi, provides a practical roadmap to help families navigate these challenges and thrive across generations. The



Family Business Book blends over 20 years of research with practical, real-world experience, to provide a unique combination of academic rigor and actionable insights.

Deep dive

Readers will learn how to understand the subtle nuances, complexities and key challenges of the journey undertaken by entrepreneurial families across generations. Through its entrepreneurial family galaxy concept, the book shows how to disentangle complicated and emotionally charged family dynamics, to build a strategic plan that will ensure long-term success and a lasting legacy for the future.

The Family Business Book takes a deep dive into the complex world of family business and is an essential read for family entrepreneurs, managers, professionals, business students and anyone interested in the dynamics of entrepreneurial families.

***The Family Business Book: A roadmap for entrepreneurial families to prosper across generations* by Alfredo De Massis and Emanuela Rondi is published by FT Publishing**

www.ft.com

Five scams to be wary of in 2025

Metro Bank's head of fraud and investigations **Baz Thompson** states that: "Fraud is always evolving and with criminals now exploiting AI and machine learning, our expectation is that scams will be increasingly more sophisticated. Our systems have to evolve constantly to protect our customers, but we would remind all consumers and businesses to be wary of anything that seems too good to be true and think twice before sharing any financial or personal information to help protect themselves." Here are five scams to watch out for.



police, HMRC, delivery companies and utility providers asking for payment or personal and financial details – but these requests are all scams.

Ahead of the new financial year in April, this time of year HMRC scams are rife. Threatening calls from HMRC asking you to act quickly to pay an outstanding tax bill should be a red flag to pause.

Contact HMRC directly if you have concerns and do not respond to any urgent demands, share any personal information or click on any links provided.



Investments in crypto via a rogue broker

However attractive this type of investment may seem, it is inherently risky as online platforms can be breeding grounds for fraudulent schemes, so thorough research and caution are crucial.



Off-platform ticket sales

Popular sporting events and major music tours are natural targets for scammers. Be wary of any tickets not offered through known, reputable sites.

Car finance reimbursement scandal

Lenders and dealers have been accused of hiding commission payments made when cars were bought on finance

deals. Motorists are being encouraged to sign up for compensation – be wary of sharing your bank details

with a random text or email about this compensation scheme. Instead, check out the form and tool guide on Martin Lewis's MoneySavingExpert.com website. Ensure you use the correct link to this site as opposed to any links sent via email or other means as the fraudsters do impersonate well-known celebrities to make the scam look more attractive.

Easy steps

Take Five is a national campaign that offers straightforward and impartial advice to help everyone protect themselves from financial fraud.

Three easy steps can help prevent a scam from being successful:

1. Stop: take a moment to stop and think before parting with your money or information. It could keep you safe.

2. Challenge: ask yourself, could it be fake?

It's OK to reject, refuse or ignore any requests. Only criminals will try to rush or panic you.

3. Protect: contact your bank immediately if you think you've been scammed and report it to Action Fraud.

www.metrobankonline.co.uk

www.moneysavingexpert.com

www.takefive-stopfraud.org.uk

www.actionfraud.police.uk

Facebook marketplace purchase scams

Peer-to-peer selling on Facebook Marketplace has been targeted by scammers offering goods that simply do not exist. Be wary of any deal that seems too good to be true and be cautious of new profiles. Ideally, only pay on collection when you have had a chance to review the goods in person. In the last 12 months, we have seen an increase in fraudulent merchants offering goods for sale at attractive prices and then convincing the customers to purchase with card payments being accepted. So, not only do you need to be mindful of sellers asking for you to make a payment, but there are also sellers who accept card payments that you need to be aware of.

Impersonation of reputable organisations e.g. bank staff/police/courier firms/HMRC

Consumers are being bombarded by phone, text or email from 'trusted' organisations such as their bank, the

Data Centres Expo – innovation and excellence

LCCI will be hosting a stand at Data Centres Expo at Olympia in February which will shine a spotlight on the outlook for the sector as demand for data centre spaces increases.

Insights

The event will provide valuable insights from industry leaders and opportunities to network with experts from the largest data centre providers. It will also enable delegates

to examine key topics such as building AI-ready data centre infrastructures, building scalability and sustainability into the centres, and cultivating the right hardware solutions.

Over 7,000 attendees are expected at the Expo which takes place on 5-6 February at Olympia, London. Register free to attend

www.datacentrecongress.com/global/register-to-attend

DATA CENTRES EXPO
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AI and copyright

The government has opened a consultation to address copyright challenges between the creative industries and AI developers, aiming to provide legal clarity and boost growth in both sectors. Central to the proposals is a balanced approach allowing rights holders to control and monetise their content while giving AI developers legal certainty for training models.

Key measures include new transparency requirements for AI datasets, licensing provisions for creators, and the potential introduction of a copyright exception for AI training.

New path

The creative industries and AI development are both sectors central to the government's Industrial Strategy. These proposals aim to forge a new path forward which will allow both to flourish and drive growth. Key areas of the consultation include boosting trust and transparency between the sectors, so rights holders have a better understanding of how AI developers are using their material and how it has been obtained.

Content

The consultation also proposes new requirements for AI model developers to

be more transparent about their model training datasets and how they are obtained. For example, AI developers could be required to provide more information about what content they have used to train their models. This would enable rights holders to understand when and how their content has been used in training AI.

Ground-breaking

Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, Peter Kyle, spoke of the UK's rich and diverse cultural sector and a ground-breaking tech sector which was pushing the boundaries of AI. "It's clear that our current AI and copyright framework does not support either our creative industries

or our AI sectors to compete on the global stage."

Legal certainty

Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Lisa Nandy, said that the government believed that the country's musicians, writers, artists and other creatives should

have the ability to know and control how their content is used by AI firms and be able to seek licensing deals and fair payment. "Achieving this, and ensuring legal certainty, will help our creative and AI sectors grow and innovate together in partnership."

The consultation runs until 25 February 2025

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/copyright-and-artificial-intelligence



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How AI will impact businesses in 2025

by Marc Warner



Dr Marc Warner is chief executive of Faculty which helps organisations make better decisions using human-led AI

www.faculty.ai

1. AI becomes essential, not experimental

The next wave of AI (artificial intelligence) adoption will require a shift in perspective from senior leaders to stop viewing AI as experimental and to start treating it as essential to business transformation. The novelty of experimenting with tools like meeting summaries should not distract from much bigger gains that AI can offer in 2025 and beyond.

AI needs to be involved at the level of core business processes to achieve its full value. As a rule of thumb, AI use cases should be mapped to top level key performance indicators to have a meaningful impact.

2. Executives finally realise there's no such thing as complete data

Today's businesses are inundated with data, and the solution to making better, faster solutions is not adding more data to sort through. Instead of pursuing 'complete' data to make decisions, businesses need to identify the problems they want to solve and use that to help them find the right data.

Rather than trying to build perfect data infrastructure across the organisation, businesses will benefit most from adopting a decision-centric approach. One that separates data noise from signal by focusing on the specific problems the organisation needs to solve.

3. Business strategy will trump AI strategy

In 2025, the businesses that are most successful will integrate AI as a solution to their existing goals, rather than introducing standalone AI strategies. Introducing new goals driven solely by AI has the potential to over-complicate business processes and distract

from solving key challenges.

Some businesses may rush to use AI as widely as possible but the number of AI use cases at play is not a measure of successful implementation. There must be a clear link to top level business priorities as a guiding principle to identify valuable use cases.

4. Big AI transformations will start incrementally

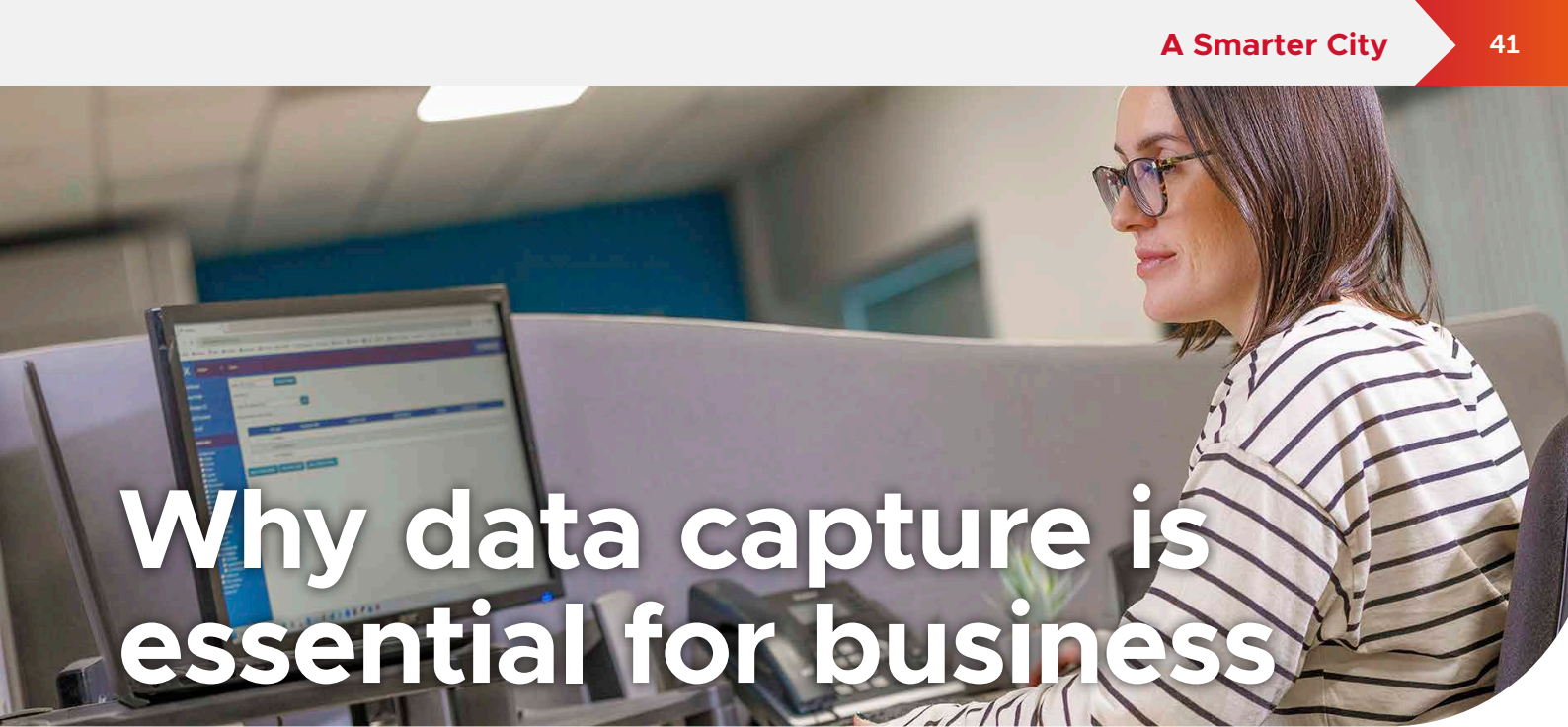
There are two major pitfalls for businesses to avoid when implementing AI – being unambitious and being over-ambitious. Limited AI programmes with one or two isolated use cases will not produce a sea change in the overall performance of a business. On the other hand, trying to overhaul entire business operations all at once is unlikely to deliver as planned.

The biggest AI breakthroughs in 2025 will come from incremental changes. This means implementing AI in small, targeted ways that deliver immediate value individually and drive large-scale transformation over time.

5. Humans are augmented, admin is automated

AI will impact jobs in 2025 but the way it affects them will depend on how the technology is deployed. Organisations can implement AI in a way that supports workers through a combination of automation and augmentation.

Regarding automation, AI's strengths are ideally suited to tackling repetitive admin work. This will be a welcome transformation for many employees who feel that admin distracts from the core of their job. The role of augmentation will be to support decision making. Human judgement will remain in the driving seat but AI can play a complementary role in enhancing the speed, quality and execution of the decisions being made.



Why data capture is essential for business

| by Farhan Baqi

Data capture is the process of collecting and converting information, whether from paper-based documents or digital formats, into structured data which can be used, processed and analysed by business systems, enabling more informed decision-making and improving operational efficiency.

Its scope has grown significantly over the years. In the past, this might have involved manual data entry where individuals would input data into spreadsheets or databases. Today, however, advancements in AI technology allow for the automatic collection and conversion of unstructured data from a wide range of sources into formats that can be easily stored, retrieved, and analysed.

Processes

Data capture can occur through both manual and automated processes:

Manual data entry: involves employees inputting information into a system and can be slow, prone to errors and resource-intensive.

Automated data capture: businesses can automatically extract information from physical or digital documents. This process can recognise text, convert images to data, and integrate this data into business systems with minimal human intervention. This reduces the time taken to process data and improves accuracy.

For example, a finance department might scan invoices, and an automated system will extract key information such as invoice numbers, dates and

amounts, storing it in a digital database without any manual input. This data can then be used to analyse cash flow, track payments or generate financial reports.

Benefits

Improved accuracy: automated data capture reduces human error. When data is entered manually, mistakes are inevitable. Automated systems can reduce these errors, ensuring that information is accurate and reliable. This is particularly important when handling critical data such as financial records or customer information where even small mistakes can have far-reaching consequences.

Time and cost efficiency: manual data entry is time-consuming and labour-intensive. Automating the data capture process not only speeds up operations but also reduces costs associated with manual labour. Employees who were once tasked with entering data can focus on higher-value tasks, such as analysing data to make strategic decisions. The savings on labour costs, combined with improved processing speed, can significantly impact a company's bottom line.

Enhanced decision-making: accurate and timely data is essential for making informed business decisions. By converting unstructured information into a structured format, businesses can access insights faster, allowing for real-time decision-making. For example, data captured from customer surveys or sales reports can help businesses tailor their marketing strategies to improve customer satisfaction.

Conversion

While many businesses already manage digital data, there remains a significant amount of information stored in physical formats. Legacy paper-based records, such as contracts, invoices and HR files, still exist in many organisations, creating a bottleneck for efficient data management.

Digital data conversion involves scanning and converting these paper-based documents into digital formats. This makes the data easier to access and store and enhances security and compliance, especially in regulated industries like healthcare, finance and legal sectors.

Digital conversion ensures that businesses can easily search, retrieve and analyse historical data. It also helps with data security, as digital files can be encrypted and stored in secure cloud systems, safeguarding sensitive information against loss, theft or damage.

Management

Automated data entry is the foundation of effective business data management. By integrating automated data capture systems with a business's existing systems, companies can ensure that their data is always up-to-date and accurately maintained.

Having reliable and structured data is vital for smooth operations. Whether it's customer data, financial records or supply chain information, automated data entry ensures that businesses are working with the most current information, reducing the risks associated with outdated or inaccurate data.

Farhan Baqi is director of business development at Storetec Services

www.storetec.net

eVisa regulations and implementations

by David Cullum



David Cullum is global business visa consultant at Barar & Associates

www.bararassociates.com

The governments of the UK, EU, Japan and Thailand all intend to install eVisa programmes on visiting, visa-exempt nationals who intend to travel to their countries for business and tourism purposes. They will join the USA, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Australia and New Zealand who also have their own eVisa programmes. Various governments are under pressure from their electorates to track visiting foreign citizens with more accuracy; alas the days of a simple entry and exit stamp are soon coming to an end. The movement of persons between countries and continents is moving further digitally and online. This itself presents new challenges towards businesses and individuals.

Stages

With all the administrative stress involved in preparing and submitting eVisa applications, it is unsurprising that various small, subtle considerations are often neglected or dismissed altogether. Whilst it is plain that the core 'hard and fast' requirements of a given visa route must be met to a sufficiently high standard in successful applications, the process of applying for an eVisa is far from black and white. The chain of various different stages, processes and parties involved can often obscure the fact that one's case will eventually likely be evaluated by a real human being, rather than a mere administrative machine.

Considerations

While much of the eVisa application process consists in gathering, assembling and submitting documentation or information, it is the way in which these processes are done that has particularly interesting implications. Additional considerations that come to mind are that of

persons who hold dual nationality, hold minor criminal convictions and religious heritage (Indian eVisas and Saudi eVisas are affected by such considerations and outcomes vary drastically).

It is easy to develop a sort of tunnel vision when working on an application, which can lead one to forget the fact that their application is being considered alongside hundreds of others each day.

In my experience as a business visa consultant over the years, I have learned that applications always need to be thoroughly analysed and reviewed. Clear and honest communication between the intended applicant must be maintained for the quickest and most positive outcome for both parties.

Clear and honest communication between the intended applicant must be maintained for the quickest and most positive outcome for both parties.

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Processing

All eVisa applications require the careful uploading and inputting of correct data, and formatting of documentation and photographs. eVisa websites are known to not be user-friendly and hence can lead to mistakes or irregularities being made. Clarity, precision and consistency in presentation is a subtle but essential aspect of eVisa applications.

Greater than the sum of its parts

Irem Yerdelen attended COP 29 in Baku last autumn. These are edited highlights of her summary of the vital climate conference

“COP29 last November was a key moment to demonstrate commitment and progress on the Paris Agreement pillars. Focus has been on the climate finance goal that requires strong political engagement and leadership. This COP also marked a pivotal opportunity to accelerate clean energy transition and resilience, ensuring that advancements benefit all nations equitably.

UN Climate Change executive secretary Simon Stiell emphasised the urgency of global collaboration to keep climate goals within reach. Stiell highlighted the \$2 trillion investment in clean energy in 2024 as evidence of strong growth and an unstoppable shift toward sustainability. There is momentum and businesses are acting because it makes economic sense.

Ambition

Some governments, including UK, indicated ambition early on with their new NDCs – nationally determined contributions. Mexico, the last G20 nation to commit to net-zero emissions, announced a 2050 target, pledging to ramp up renewables, improve energy efficiency and clean up environmental damage.

Energy transition

The energy transition is an innovation journey and provides opportunity – those who stay behind will lose out. Leading companies are expanding beyond their own decarbonisation to drive sector-wide transitions, although large scale investments still face barriers.

International co-operation is vital for decarbonisation. Indonesia is leading in



bio diesel and China's efforts in hydrogen and clean energy are critical. Whilst addressing costs and technical challenges are important for effective implementation, understanding principles in energy demand and evolving policies is also key for sustainable procurement. A range of initiatives highlighted during COP29 have shown progress in 'green' shipping, steel and cement sectors.

Transition planning

Many companies are focused on transition planning, challenging to begin with, but with the prospect of opportunity at the same time. Developing an integrated, resourced comprehensive plan with a strong narrative to engage stakeholders is essential. Investors choose to engage with companies who demonstrate a convincing plan to deploy capital.

UN secretary-general António Guterres urged businesses and financial institutions to create accountable transition plans by COP30 that demonstrate how research, renewable investments and policy alignment will support fossil fuel phase-out and contribute to achieving net-zero targets, emphasising transparency and integrity in climate strategies.



Nature

There has been a clear message that nature and climate must be united into one agenda in future COPs so that no silos are created. Integrating nature metrics into performance management and customer markets is essential to valuing and rewarding progress. It is also important that we don't keep these topics in silos. Nature-based solutions are essential to climate adaptation.

Sustainable finance

The need was highlighted to manage carbon the same way businesses manage money – integrate it into risk assessments, management accounting, innovation agendas, transition plans, corporate strategy and incentive schemes.

Independent High-Level Expert Group released its third report on climate finance, outlining an action agenda for financing climate investments in emerging markets (excluding China), covering areas such as clean

energy, adaptation, loss and damage, natural capital and just transition.

Insurance

The insurance sector – and its enabling role – came under the spotlight. Real examples were given across financial risk reduction and mobilisation of capital, optimisation of operational and project performance, and public policy implementation and market expansion.

Innovation and digital

It will be the new technologies, collaborations and business models that will differentiate those who thrive or flounder through the transition and those who flounder. Leveraging technology and AI for climate adaptation is key, bridging the gap between physical climate risks and business/local area adaptation to build long term resilience and improve data accessibility. Scaling-up solutions require partnerships and collaboration to create impact while private capital is required to back up climate tech solutions.

Developing countries

The final announcement on new collective quantified goal – NCQG – included a commitment to mobilise at least \$300 billion annually for developing countries by 2035 with developed nations taking the lead and voluntary contributions from developing countries.

This year's COP may not be remembered for its end result but rather for its strong convening power and being a gathering greater than the sum of its parts. ”

Irem Yerdelen ACII MSc is managing partner for sustainability and climate solutions at ERM and a Councillor at City of London Corporation where she is lead member for sustainable finance

www.erm.com

Actions to take for business – Irem Yerdelen's tips

- Take transition planning seriously
- Understand your Scope 3 emissions risk and opportunity
- Have a clear view on the interface between digital and climate in your business
- Be clear on what physical climate changes mean to your business
- Consider the role of credible carbon off-sets in your business strategy.



How London can meet its net zero targets

by Dave Radley

“Will London reach its net-zero deadline? The clock is ticking and 2030 is just around the corner.

More sustainable homes are built every day but how do we make existing buildings more energy efficient?

If we want to meet net zero targets, we need to retrofit homes to make them more energy efficient, with up to 236,500 buildings needing to be retrofitted in London by 2030.

London needs retrofit, as its homes and workplaces are responsible for 68 per cent of carbon emissions.

The net zero deadline isn't the only factor; rising energy costs are a huge factor in the cost-of-living crisis, and low-earning families are suffering the most. Retrofit holds the potential to slash bills across the city.

Despite this, London is retrofitting at a rate **ten times lower** than the rate required, so we need to work out why can't we reach this rate.

Skills gap

In London – a city with 8.8 million people, only 4,000 are working in retrofit.

Approximately 410,000 of London's workers are in construction – meaning around 10 per cent have retrofit skills.

It's entirely possible for the city to meet net-zero targets. We have the workers, but they often don't have the right skill set. The skills gap is one of the biggest factors in the slow retrofit roll-out.

To meet demand, London's construction workforce must mobilise and become 'retrofit-ready'.



The Mayor of London is currently committed to funding skills development with millions of pounds put into funding training each year.

Mobilising construction workers

The funding is there – so why aren't people using it?

It's not that people don't want the skills. In fact, a lot of construction workers already have transferable skills that would allow them to work in retrofit.

However, the biggest barrier to training is the structure of the industry versus training requirements, where in most cases, workers cannot afford time off to take training. This can be remedied by on-the-job training which is now widely available and in many cases funded.

Helping people develop existing skills with short on-the-job training will be the key to beating the retrofit deadline.

Skills pathways

Most construction workers already have the skills to work in retrofit.

As an example, plasterers could have the fundamental skills that are involved in external wall insulation.

Instead of taking time away to sit in a classroom, most of the skills needed can be developed on-site.

With the skills they already have, a plasterer usually would have the hand skills and use similar tools to that of an external wall insulation operative but may need to train in the use of new materials or apply them in a slightly different way due to setting times and/or nature of

material. Training to 'upskill' in this area could be minimal and prior learning could be used to shorten courses.

This example alone could result in many construction workers progressing into the retrofit workforce.

If London's construction companies can take advantage of on-site assessment and training, more could become Publicly Available Specifications (PAS) accredited – essential for gaining retrofit work.

The future

Retrofit work throughout London needs to accelerate and is essential for the future of the industry.

The main barrier seems to be awareness in these key areas:

- Construction workers (and companies) understanding routes from existing trades into retrofit/green skills roles (and transferable skills required to get there)
- Understanding where to access funding and what can be funded
- Knowing PAS (and Construction Skills Certification Scheme) requirements and how qualifications and training link to them.

Training providers and colleges need to focus on helping London's construction industry find the right pathways and information if we want to boost the retrofit rate.

We can meet the retrofit goals – as long as we equip London with the best tools to do so. ”

Dave Radley is managing director of DMR Training

www.dmr-training.co.uk

UK-Norway energy partnership

The UK and Norway have launched a Green Industrial Partnership aimed at advancing clean energy, boosting economic growth, and creating skilled jobs.

Carbon capture

The collaboration will focus on carbon capture projects in the North Sea and

other clean energy innovations, with the goal of making the UK a clean energy superpower by 2030. The partnership follows the signing of carbon capture contracts and includes projects like Net Zero Teesside. The UK and Norway also plan to enhance cross-border carbon transport and storage, and support offshore wind developments.



Navigating the complexities of litigation – strategies for business

| by Adam Haffenden

In today's highly volatile corporate environment, litigation is an ever-present risk for businesses operating in London. From contract disputes to regulatory challenges, navigating the legal landscape demands careful strategy and preparation. For businesses, understanding the complexities of litigation and adopting proactive measures can save significant time, cost and reputational damage.



Litigation landscape

London has long been a leading global hub for legal disputes. Its courts are renowned for their impartiality, expertise and ability to handle international matters. The High Court and specialist divisions like the London Circuit Commercial Court attract litigants worldwide. However, the same factors that make London an attractive legal setting also contribute to the challenges businesses face: complex procedures; high stakes; and significant legal costs.

Brexit hasn't helped by adding further layers of confusion to proceedings. Disputes over jurisdiction and enforcement of judgments between the UK and EU countries have increased, creating uncertainty for businesses engaged in cross-border operations. Furthermore, the rise of collective actions and the growing use of third-party litigation funding have made it easier for claimants to pursue claims, increasing litigation exposure and risk for companies.

Risk management and compliance

To mitigate litigation risks, businesses must adopt a clear and proactive approach to dispute management. This begins with vigorous contractual practices. Well-drafted and unambiguous contracts reduce the

likelihood of disputes and strengthen a company's position in case a dispute materialises. Including arbitration clauses or jurisdiction agreements in contracts can offer greater predictability and control over dispute resolution processes. They can resolve a dispute much quicker, saving considerable cost, rather than going through the courts.

Another critical aspect is compliance. Keeping au fait with regulatory changes and conducting regular audits ensures that businesses reduce the risk of non-compliance, which can initiate costly enforcement actions or lawsuits. Engaging a dispute resolution solicitor early before disputes escalate can often lead to more favourable outcomes for the business.

Alternatives to litigation

Given the costs and time involved, businesses increasingly turn to alternative dispute resolution (ADR) methods such as mediation and arbitration. These approaches are typically quicker, more cost-effective and confidential compared to court proceedings.

Mediation allows parties to reach mutually agreeable solutions with the help of a neutral third party, preserving commercial relationships. Conversely, arbitration offers a binding resolution and is often preferred in complex international disputes due to its speed of resolution and enforceability.

Businesses should also consider pre-litigation negotiations. Demonstrating a willingness to resolve disputes amicably cannot only save resources but also strengthen a company's reputation.

Technology

Technology is playing an increasingly crucial role in litigation management.

From e-discovery tools that streamline disclosure exercises to case management software that tracks progress and deadlines, digital tools can significantly reduce the administrative burden and improve efficiency.

Additionally, legal analytics can provide insights into judicial trends and outcomes, helping businesses to assess their chances of success and inform their approach. Embracing such innovations allows businesses to stay ahead of the game and be better prepared for potential disputes.

Planning for the unexpected

Despite the best safeguards, some disputes inevitably escalate to litigation. In such cases, preparation is vital. Businesses must ensure they have access to experienced legal representation and a clear understanding of their goals – whether to settle quickly, protect intellectual property, save their reputation or defend against unwarranted claims.

Cost management is another important consideration. Litigation budgets can escalate out of control, especially in complex, high-value cases. Third-party litigation funding, where an external financier covers legal costs in exchange for a share of the potential recovery, can provide an alternative for businesses without deep pockets.

Pragmatic steps

Litigation is a significant challenge for London businesses. By taking pragmatic steps to manage risks, exploring ADR methods and leveraging technology, companies can navigate the complexities of the legal landscape with greater certainty. While litigation should always be a last resort, being well-prepared ensures that businesses are ready to protect their interests when disputes arise.

Adam Haffenden is a partner and head of dispute resolution at TV Edwards LLP

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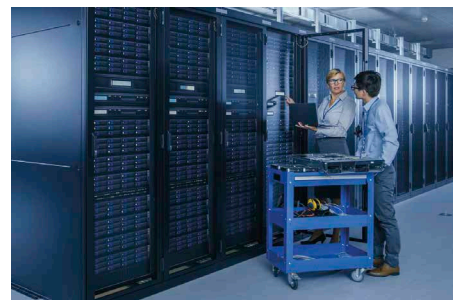
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How the Employment Rights Bill will change the workplace

by Cameron Jack

New proposals introduced by the government last October in the form of the Employment Rights Bill aim to provide employees with numerous new rights. This has created concern amongst employers, many of whom are not fully aware of the radical changes to the law or the extent.

The Business and Trade Committee (BTC) is launching an inquiry into the Bill and chair Liam Byrne has said his committee was determined to make sure it would be good for the economy.

Whilst the Bill will come as positive news to many employees, some of the issues that many employers feel will be



difficult to implement involve the 'from day-one' rights. They consider the day-one rights, coupled with the staff training required to update existing staff on the new law, updating policies, and the changes in the workplace, will be the most arduous to fulfil. This will place more pressure on HR staff, and business owners to ensure they are following the rules.

With the Bill now at committee stage, the following need to be considered:

- How proposals will contribute to the government's goal of achieving the fastest growth in the G7
- Whether the Bill will adequately

protect workers, improve security at work and raise living standards in every part of the country

- The impact the Bill will have on businesses, including investment and start-up rates, the supply of labour and the employment rate
- How to ensure adequate protection against exporting poor labour standards.

Reforms

Employers will have to cope with a considerable number of proposed major reforms. Many of the employee protections today are the product of 1990s legislation. There is not only the responsibility to act on any breaches of the law but also it is strongly suggested that employers should educate the workforce on how to



avoid contravening their colleague's increased rights, once these are fully introduced. Providing the workforce with training on the proposed new rights will be essential to ensure that businesses do not become burdened with potential Employment Tribunal claims when any new laws take effect.

Considerations

The reforms are aimed at improving work conditions and job security. Failure to meet these standards could expose employers to legal risks if they are found to be non-compliant. Whilst there may be modifications to the new law during the course of the Bill's transit, employers need to start considering the changes that they will have to introduce.

- The removal of zero hours contracts will compel employers to introduce guaranteed hours with prior notice of shifts and compensation for short notice cancellation of shifts.

- Prevention of fire and rehire and replace practices by regarding any dismissals of employees for failing to agree to changes as automatically unfair, unless a business genuinely has no other choice.
- Protection from unfair dismissal arises from day one. However, a statutory probation period would mean that it would be easier to dismiss an employee during their statutory probation. Albeit that the statutory probation period is subject to consultation, the government has expressed a preference towards a nine-month period. Currently, save for limited circumstances, many statutory protections only become available to employees after two years (qualifying period of employment). Day one rights, even coupled with a statutory probation period will be a vast change for employees and employers alike.
- Employers must consult and notify staff where there are 20 or more redundancies to be made across the workforce.
- Existing entitlements to Paternity Leave and Unpaid Parental Leave to be available from 'Day One' of employment.
- Bereavement Leave: this is unpaid and will now extend from the first day of employment.
- Protections for the dismissal of women who are pregnant will extend for six months after they return to work.
- Employers will now have to explain the reasons for refusing a request for flexible working from day one.
- Employers must take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of employees by third parties. Sexual harassment must now be added to the list of issues that employees can make protected disclosures on.
- Outsourced workers may report a pay gap issue.
- Equality Action Plans to be introduced to set out how gender pay gap issues can be addressed and support employees going through menopause.
- All workers have the right to statutory sick pay from day-one, removing the waiting period.
- School Support Negotiating Body to be reinstated to improve conditions for school support staff.
- Fair Pay Agreements process to be established in the adult care sector.
- Tipping Law to be strengthened to ensure that employees receive their full tips donated by customers

Tipping Law to be strengthened to ensure that employees receive their full tips donated by customers collected by employers, tipping policies must be revised in consultation with the workers.



collected by employers. Tipping policies must be revised in consultation with the workers.

- Trade Unions to be given extended freedom to organise, represent and negotiate of behalf of employees.
- Repeal of the Trade Union Act 2016.
- Strengthen trade unions' right of access and introduce rights and protections for trade union representatives.
- Employers will now have a duty to inform employees of their right to join a trade union.
- Extended protections for blacklisting.
- A Fair Work Agency to be established.
- Penalties for unpaid employment tribunal awards.
- Businesses that operate as 'gang masters' in certain sectors to be licenced.
- Employment agencies and businesses to be regulated.
- Enforcement of National Minimum Wage and Statutory Sick Pay.

Consultation

The government expects to begin consulting this year with the majority of reforms likely to take effect no earlier than 2026. Employers therefore have a time to prepare for changes but should begin considering the potential impact as early as possible to start preparing their staff and updating policies.

The government is focused on improving the working environment through new employment laws. It reflects a shift towards worker-centric policies that not only enhance employee rights but also compel employers to adopt fairer and more transparent working practices.

Cameron Jack is a paralegal in English employment law at Giambrone Law

www.giambronelaw.com

Evolution of HMRC's risk review process

| by Danielle Ford

As announced in last October's budget, the government has committed to investing in recruiting additional HMRC compliance staff – its aim being to increase their tax yield and crack down on avoidance. Inevitably this will lead to an uptake in compliance activity, and with the availability of increasingly reliable data sources, this activity will be more targeted than the randomised reviews which have historically been used.



The current practice is that before starting an enquiry, HMRC's Risk & Intelligence Service (RIS) analyses data to identify tax risks. RIS reviews occur if a taxpayer's affairs raise flags, intelligence is received or the taxpayer is part of a targeted compliance campaign.

RIS usually undertake an analysis of a particular taxpayer under three circumstances:

- An aspect of their tax affairs has raised a flag on HMRC's various system.
- Intelligence has been received
- Or, the taxpayer fits within a category of taxpayer for which HMRC has an active compliance campaign.

Occasionally, individual HMRC officers may have identified a risk themselves and requested that a risk review be undertaken.

Information sources

HMRC now has more accurate and detailed information than ever before.

This is analysed using their 'Connect' software. Connect links various data sources, highlighting connections in bank accounts, companies, properties, online platforms and more.

Supporting this software are HMRC's records which include historic tax returns and a detailed UK property database linked to the Land Registry, showing full transaction details. HMRC also receives significant information from jurisdictions around the world under the Common Reporting Standard (CRS). The automatic exchange of international data sharing means HMRC is given financial information provided by overseas financial institutions on those who have a UK address, which includes their account numbers, balances, income received and disposal proceeds.

There is also open-source information - such as Companies House, Zoopla, or Rightmove, or Google Maps to view the exterior of a taxpayer's property and any improvement works and their vehicles, plus social media to gain an understanding of their lifestyle.

Infallible process?

Despite HMRC's extensive data and analysis, tax inspectors still face challenges due to errors in data and interpretation. Identified risks need critical review by trained investigators.

To illustrate this, the incredibly detailed data HMRC owns about property ownership and transactions links this

to a taxpayer by name. The HMRC software identifies and collates this detailed information. However, where two or more taxpayers have the same name, anomalies can arise; therefore, the need for review by the inspector before an enquiry is raised.

Inaccurate reporting is often seen in overseas financial information to HMRC by the financial institution. For example, an account balance being reported as income, leading HMRC to believe a large insufficiency of tax has been paid. In addition to this, we have seen incorrect reporting of beneficiaries of a discretionary trust and more commonly incorrect interpretation of data that has already been reported. This is typically due to currency conversation or calendar year versus UK tax year.

While some investigations may lack a solid foundation, HMRC's refined methods and data sources improve accuracy in assessing tax positions. However, the data is not always correct.

Action required?

If you receive a HMRC communication, it will likely be based on identified tax risks. Properly managing the process is crucial to minimise its duration and potential penalties. Seeking professional advice is essential.

If you find errors in your tax filings, it is recommended to make a disclosure to HMRC before they contact you. Unprompted disclosures result in lower penalties, sometimes as low as nought per cent, which won't apply if prompted.

Danielle Ford is head of tax disputes and resolutions and a partner at HaysMac LLP

www.haysmac.com

Business at Bow

LCCI's Business Owners Club Winter Networking Reception took place last November at Balfour At Bow Wine Vaults. Guests heard from John McLoughlin, the charismatic boss of J2 Software

and networked in the shadow of the famous Bow bells.

LenovoPRO are programme partners for the club

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Tackling the problem of an underqualified workforce

| by David Banaghan

Statistics reveal that 28 per cent of the UK workforce are underqualified for their jobs across many of the country's major industries.

This suggests that many employers and workers need to find new ways to improve floundering productivity, with a further 27 per cent citing a lack of digital skills required for increasingly tech-centric job roles.

The twin problems of Brexit and Covid coupled with the digitisation of many jobs have left many employers ill-equipped to deal with today's working problems, with the most prominent shortfall found in digital skills.

However, while the skills gap indicates a wider national malaise, it does present individual, forward-thinking businesses with opportunity if they take time to understand skills shortages within their industry and act accordingly.

Understanding the skills gap

This widening disconnect between supply and demand has emerged due to several factors. Rapid technological progress has outpaced current education and training efforts, rendering some skills obsolete while creating a demand for new ones.

This also leads to changing job requirements as industry demands necessitate specific skill sets, which in turn leads to a mismatch between available skills and employer needs.

This is further compounded by outmoded education systems and insufficient training opportunities.

Impact on business

Some forecasters speculate that inadequate digital skills alone could cost the UK GDP a cumulative £145

billion between 2018 and 2028.

In the short term, this may disrupt a company's business as usual as underqualified employees struggle to perform their duties effectively.

This can lead to missed deadlines, increased error rates, poor client work, and heightened employee frustration and disengagement levels.

The longer-term repercussions, meanwhile, can be more profound. A workforce lacking essential skills hampers innovation, stifles growth opportunities and risks falling behind its more agile, adaptable counterparts.

Plugging gaps

While the skills gap presents a formidable challenge, it also presents an opportunity for proactive intervention and strategic adaptation.

Key steps businesses can take:

- **Invest in continuous learning:** embrace a culture of lifelong learning within your organisation. Provide employees with access to training programmes, workshops, and educational resources to continually upskill and reskill in line with your own bespoke industry trends.
- **Collaborate with educational providers:** forge partnerships with schools, colleges and universities to ensure that curriculums align with the job market's specific needs. Offer internships, apprenticeships and work-study programmes to facilitate smoother transitions from education to employment.
- **Implement mentorship programmes:** pair experienced employees with newcomers to facilitate knowledge transfer and skills development. Mentorship

programmes not only foster professional growth but also strengthen employee engagement and retention.

- **Embrace technology:** leverage technology-enabled learning platforms and tools to deliver personalised, interactive training experiences. From online courses to virtual reality simulations, technology offers opportunities to enhance learning outcomes and bridge the skills gap.
- **Promote diversity and inclusion:** recognise the value of diverse perspectives and experiences in driving innovation and problem-solving. Create inclusive work environments where individuals from different backgrounds feel valued, empowered and supported in professional development.
- **Encourage upskilling and reskilling:** identify emerging skills gaps within your organisation and proactively support employees in acquiring the necessary competencies. Offer incentives, such as tuition reimbursement and certification programmes to encourage continuous upskilling.

Collaboration

The skills gap will likely require collaboration between employers, education providers and the government.

To succeed, businesses should develop a culture of continuous learning by fostering collaboration, embracing technology, and promoting diversity and inclusion through recruitment.

This can tackle skills gaps and unlock new opportunities for growth and innovation.

David Banaghan is co-founder and interim chief executive of Occupop

www.occupop.com



Padel – the new corporate hotspot

| by Jon Booker

“You’d be forgiven for thinking that ‘brat’ was the official word of 2025 (well, technically, it is if you consider Collins Dictionary to be the authority on the matter). However, to you, dear reader, I offer an alternative...

In my mind, there can be no word that more accurately sums up the zeitgeist of the past 12 months than ‘Padel’.

Stemming from 1960s Mexico, Padel (pronounced “paddle”, not “pad-del”) is widely regarded as the UK’s fastest-growing sport. Since 2020, almost 500 new courts have sprung up across the country – a figure the Lawn Tennis Association’ hopes to double by the end of 2026. Whether it’s The Queen’s Club in London, the coveted Court 3 at Daylesford Farm or a converted Toys’R’Us store in Gloucester, chances are there’s a Padel court near you.

Nicknamed ‘tennis’ rebellious younger sibling’, thanks to its relaxed dress code and emphasis on socialising, it’s adored by A-listers

and the general public alike. From David Beckham to big brands like Nike and Adidas, everybody’s rushing to get in on the action.

Superpower appeal

It is this emphasis on community and socialising that I believe gives Padel its superpower appeal.

Designed to be played as doubles, it naturally encourages teamwork and connection. The court is also a relatively small size (about a third of a tennis court), giving it a more intimate feel. Equally critical to its general pizzazz is its simplicity. The rules are easy to learn, and it isn’t as technically demanding compared to tennis.

Addictive

All this makes the Padel court an inherently great place to network, meet new people or take your

colleagues for a post-work social. As it’s so addictive, you’re more or less guaranteed that follow-up meeting...

Of course, Padel’s growing popularity isn’t lost on employers and HR professionals. There is a lot of interest among corporates in having Padel as part of a broader workplace wellbeing offering. Until now, employers might have provided free or subsidised gym memberships or access to yoga classes. With the rise of Padel, all of this is changing.

Then there are companies that are taking it one step further and installing Padel courts on-site.

While this isn’t currently as common in the UK, I anticipate that this, together with multi-use games area spaces, will become popular options among bigger employers who own their premises.

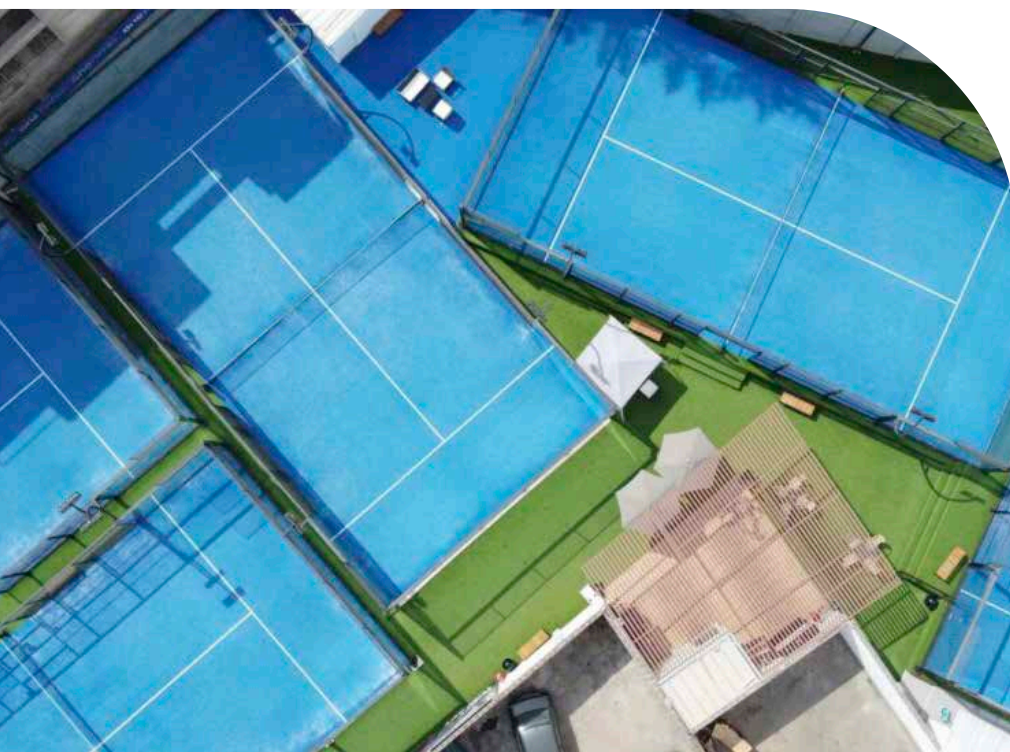
Productivity

Like all team sports, Padel is fundamentally a great way to relax and unwind and, in some cases, let off some steam. Playing with colleagues provides a unique opportunity to strengthen interpersonal relationships. A 2017 study from Loughborough University found that participating in team sport at work significantly improved physical fitness, communication and social bonds among employees, with participants reporting enhanced workplace relationships and productivity.

The evolution of Padel as a place for employers to encourage their employees to go is not just about staying on trend; it’s about creating environments that promote health, communication, and meaningful connections. With the A-lister following, you never know who you might end up rubbing shoulders with. ”

Jon Booker is a corporate fitness expert at Westfield Health

www.westfieldhealth.com





Bombay mix

Hotelier and philanthropist Tony Matharu welcomed guests to the LCCI's Asian Business Association (ABA) winter reception at the renowned Bombay Brasserie last November.

ABA chairman Matharu spoke of the huge contribution that Asian business made to the London economy and the role of the private sector in modern communities.

University of Westminster are the programme partners for ABA

www.westminster.ac.uk

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Common problems tradespeople face at work and how to deal with them

With most of the UK experiencing the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, it is important that unexpected costs are avoided where possible. However, those working in skilled trades face several challenges in their roles which pose a financial threat

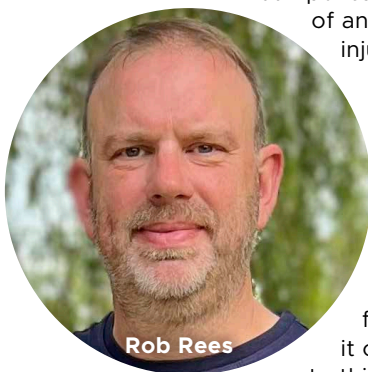
Rob Rees highlights the costliest problems which tradespeople could be putting themselves at risk of facing and the necessary precautions and solutions to avoid a devastating impact.

1. Workplace Injuries

Tradespeople face a higher risk of personal injury due to the nature of their work. The construction sector, in particular, records one of the highest rates of workplace injuries according to Health and Safety Executive data. Common injuries include slips, falls, accidents from heights, strains and sprains, often related to lifting heavy objects.

Business owners are responsible for their workers' safety, and for trades

businesses with employees, arranging employers' liability insurance is a legal requirement if you employ staff. It can cover your legal expenses and compensation in the event of an employee being injured at work.



Rob Rees

Sole traders, on the other hand, should ensure they have insurance covering personal injury. While public liability insurance is popular and vital for tradespeople, it only covers injuries to third parties, not the tradesperson themselves.

To cover personal injuries sustained whilst at work, occupational personal accident insurance can help by providing an income whilst you are unable to work.

2. Damage to third party property

In the world of trades, even the most skilled professionals can occasionally make mistakes that result in damage to property. The range of issues can vary from minor mishaps, such as paint spills on floors and furniture, to potentially catastrophic events like fires. Such damage can lead to disputes, project delays and potential legal actions, all of which have the potential to place strain on a tradesperson's financial stability.

To minimise the negative impact of damage, here are some essential steps to follow:

- **Assess the damage:** before taking any action, carefully evaluate the extent of the damage. Determine whether it resulted from your work or existed beforehand.
- **Notify the client:** promptly inform



the client about the damage and discuss the situation.

- **Consult your public liability insurance provider:** contact your insurance provider to report the incident. Provide them with as much information as possible so they are best placed to support you.
- **Follow insurance guidance:** if the damage resulted from your work, follow the guidance provided by your insurance provider regarding next steps and potential coverage.
- **Prevent future incidents:** implement measures to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future, such as enhanced safety precautions or improved work processes.

Taking these steps can help you to better address property damage incidents, protect your reputation and maintain the financial stability of your trades business.

3. Tool theft, damage and loss

A survey has found that 57 per cent of tradesmen who had their tools stolen

suffered financial losses. Among them, 41 per cent reported losses exceeding £2,500, a substantial amount amid rising living costs.

Tools are often stolen from vans, with 41 per cent of thefts occurring either at home or on-site. Tool theft not only hits finances but also disrupts work due to the time lost in replacing tools, and similar financial challenges arise when tools are lost or damaged during on-site work.

To safeguard your tools, take necessary precautions such as:

- Adding extra locks/alarms to your vans
- Removing tools overnight
- Parking in secure locations
- Using visual deterrents like alarm stickers and CCTV.

Additionally, to alleviate the financial burden of tool theft, consider taking out tool insurance, which covers the cost of replacing stolen equipment and extends to tools lost at sites or damaged due to factors like flooding or fire. Surprisingly, 25 per cent of tradespeople are unaware of tool insurance, despite its benefits.

These measures can help protect your valuable tools and your livelihood.

4. Project delays

One study showed that the primary reasons builders faced project delays was due to material shortages and a shortage of skilled labour. Other common reasons for delays include poor time management, health issues, equipment problems (including theft), subcontractor issues and weather-related setbacks. Delays can lead to financial losses, as well as harm your reputation.

To minimise the financial impact of delays, develop contingency plans for common delay factors. Once you've identified the potential delay factors, develop specific strategies to address each one. These may include:

- Building buffer time into the project schedule to account for unexpected delays.
- Researching and identifying alternative suppliers for critical materials needed for the project.
- Keep a buffer inventory of essential materials on-site or readily available to mitigate the impact of sudden shortages.
- Keep all project stakeholders informed about potential material

shortages and the steps being taken to address them.

These plans allow for quick responses when problems arise. Open communication is also essential; if delays occur, communicate early and clearly with your clients about the reasons and potential timeline adjustments. Managing their expectations can help to prevent dissatisfaction and strained relationships.

In more challenging situations, familiarise yourself with the legal aspects of project delays, including contract clauses related to delays, penalties and dispute resolution mechanisms.

Being proactive and transparent can help you navigate project delays more effectively while safeguarding your monetary interests and professional relationships.



Being proactive and transparent can help you navigate project delays more effectively while safeguarding your monetary interests and professional relationships.

5. Unexpected legal costs

Unexpected legal fees can pose a significant and unforeseen challenge for tradespeople, potentially jeopardising finances and livelihoods. Whether it's disputes with clients, issues related to overdue payments, or unexpected legal situations stemming from your work, the cost of legal advice can quickly add up.

Seeking legal guidance at the earliest signs of conflict can help prevent matters escalating into a legal dispute or court case, so to safeguard your financial stability and professional reputation, you should consider proactive measures. This includes having a contingency fund specifically allocated for legal advice or making use of legal helplines.

Rob Rees is divisional director of Markel Direct, specialist insurer of tradespeople

www.markeluk.com



Julia Onslow-Cole



Winterlude

Fortnum & Mason once again was the venue for LCCI's winter reception which took place last December.

Chair Julia Onslow-Cole and chief executive Karim Fatehi MBE welcomed over a hundred guests to the world-renowned store in Piccadilly which had generously offered a range of their much-prized gifts for the raffle draw.



Karim Fatehi OBE





LCCI Member News



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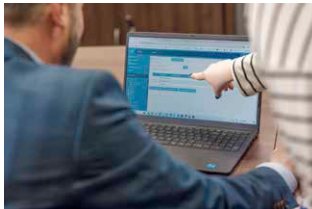
"Transforming the lives of those with hearing loss"

Vision Consulting Sponsors Successful Charity Appeal for Bionics Institute

Vision Consulting is a boutique firm of chartered accountants and registered auditors set up to service the business needs of their clients. Established in 2002 by the Managing Director, Ghulam Alahi, and registered with the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW).

In a show of support, Vision Consulting sponsored a charity appeal for the Bionics Institute, raising over \$150,000. The Bionics Institute, renowned for its pioneering research and development of medical devices to assist with hearing loss, is at the forefront of technological advancements that transform lives.

Mackenzie Arnold the West Ham United player, who has personally benefited from the innovative work of the Bionics Institute due to her hearing impairment, sat down with Nancy Baker. In this heartfelt conversation, Mackenzie Arnold shared her journey and how the Bionics Institute has made a significant impact on her life.



Storetec Services Limited

Storetec, a leader in digitisation and data management, is proud to announce its approval as a G-Cloud 14 supplier by the Crown Commercial Service (CCS). This approval allows Storetec's MDI Cloud platform to be listed on the G-Cloud 14 Digital Marketplace, offering secure, reliable, and cost-effective document management solutions to the UK public sector.

The G-Cloud 14 framework simplifies procurement for public sector organisations seeking trusted cloud software. MDI Cloud provides secure storage, global search, and Intelligent Document Processing (IDP), delivering flexible and intuitive data management. Nick Knight, Storetec's Chief Revenue Officer, said, "We're delighted to join G-Cloud 14, reinforcing our commitment to robust, secure solutions for the public sector." CCS supported £3.8 billion in public sector savings in 2022/23. Storetec continues to provide scalable, compliant services tailored to evolving organisational needs.

Contact us for more information
<https://storetec.net/>



Tolk

Tolk Launches in the UK: Revolutionizing Language Services

We are excited to announce that Tolk is now available in the UK! As members of the LCCI, we bring innovative AI-powered translation and interpretation services to meet your critical language needs.

Our platform blends AI efficiency with human expertise, ensuring accurate and culturally sensitive communication. We match translators and interpreters with the right skillset and who are geographically close, ensuring timely and effective service for your specific domain needs, whether it's social services, education, or business meetings.

Transform your communication today. Contact us for your most critical translation and interpretation needs and experience the future of language services with Tolk. For more information or to partner with us, visit Tolk.co.uk or contact us on jaskarn@digitaltolk.com



Walk the Walk

Join the MoonWalk London 2025 and Make a Difference! Get ready for an unforgettable night-time challenge with the MoonWalk London 2025! Taking place on Saturday, 17th May, this iconic event invites you to power-walk a Half or Full Marathon through the streets of London—all while raising essential funds those affected by cancer.

Thousands of participants will unite under the stars, proudly wearing decorated bras or bra t-shirts as a symbol of strength and solidarity. Starting at Clapham Common, the MoonWalk London is a fun, inspiring, and meaningful way to get active and support those affected by cancer. Whether walking solo or as part of a team, this is your chance to make every step count.

Don't miss out on this unique experience! For more details and to register, visit walkthewalk.org.

Let's walk together to create a brighter future!



Belu Water

For businesses with sustainability and social procurement in mind, Belu has just launched their NEW workplace water tap – The Belu Curve.

Sleek and stylish, compact, accessible and built with advanced digital technology, the Belu Curve delivers chilled, ambient, still, sparkling and hot filtered water at the touch of a button.

As well as reducing waste, lowering carbon footprint and boosting workplace wellbeing, choosing the Belu Curve means partnering with a purpose led social enterprise that invests in UK nature based projects, champions circular economy and gives 100% net profit to WaterAid.

The Curve's standout features include an intelligent energy-efficient system with an eco-mode that activates in idle or low-light conditions, ultraviolet LED purification for chemical-free sterilisation, and airless rapid cooling technology. With a high-capacity undercounter unit and user-friendly design.

A simple switch to Belu can help deliver global change, supporting Belu's mission to change the way the world sees water.



Primera Ventures Advisory

I'm thrilled to share that Primera Ventures Advisory has been recognised by Wealth & Finance International as a winner in their latest awards programme! This recognition highlights our commitment to helping mid-market business owners achieve exceptional outcomes through M&A as a Service (MAAAS), integrating pre-transactional exit planning, and value-building initiatives with transactional M&A. At Primera Ventures, we pride ourselves on guiding entrepreneurs and business leaders through the complexities of acquisitions and exits, positioning their companies for high-value opportunities and future success!



Insight House

Customer data is the core strength of your business

Autumn is here, and it's a time to slow down after the busy summer... eat well, exercise,

look after yourself, be mindful – get in shape and build inner strength.

Businesses can also build inner strength, and their superpower is their customer data.

Chamber member Angela Hall, director at The Insight House, says: "When we work with new clients, we view their customer data as the gold in a treasure chest, we just lift the lid and dive straight in. "Everything in your business can be built around what the data tells you, from what products or services to promote to which customers to; how to communicate with your customers, even the frequency, language and channel of that communication."

Only a fraction of data held is usually used by companies – but understanding what gems lay hidden, and how to tap into their value, will give real opportunities for strategic growth and competitive advantage.

insighthouse.co.uk



MMC

MMC, a research and insights agency founded in Sunderland, has announced it is expanding into London.

The firm provides organisations with the data and insights they need to drive informed decisions, engage with their customers, employees and stakeholders, and validate product and service ideas for the market.

The London base will allow founder Natasha McDonough and the team to build stronger relationships with clients, particularly in the Private Equity and SaaS sectors where the company has been making great strides, with VC organisations such as Perwyn and Silvertree already working with MMC.

The expansion formalises Alice Broomhall's involvement as a key figure for MMC in the capital. Alice has played a crucial role in driving the company's service delivery outside of the agency's North East home since 2021. The agency aims to drive an additional £100,000 in revenue from the London hub over the next 12 months.

<https://mmc.agency/>

Coming up...



JANUARY

LCCI Quarterly Economic Survey

Tuesday 14 January, 10.00am – 12.00pm
Haysmactintyre

- LCCI will discuss the latest results for the Capital 500 – London's largest and most authoritative regular business survey. We will be joined by guest speakers Ian Daniels, Property Partner from HaysMac, Vicky Pryce, Chief Economic Advisor and Board Member for Cebr, and James Rentoul, Director at Savanta ComRes, to hear their thoughts on the Q3 2024 results. This complimentary event is open to all Members, Community Network and Non-members.

Sponsored and Hosted by HaysMac

HaysMac⁺

- Go Connect Networking at Genesis Studio**
Thursday 16 January, 12.00pm – 2.00pm

Maximise your Membership at LCCI

Tuesday 16 January, 3.00pm – 5.00pm

LCCI

LCCI Members are invited to attend our forthcoming in-person Maximise Your Membership event in our Members' Lounge in the heart of the City. Join us for drinks and networking with fellow members and the Chamber team. Learn what your benefits are and how you can access them. Meet key staff who can help explain how to maximise your membership from the start.

- EU Trade – How to reduce red tape and costs when exporting goods from the UK – Online**

Monday 20 January, 1.00pm – 2.00pm

Embracing AI for Business Growth Briefing and Networking Reception

Wednesday 22 January, 4.00pm – 6.00pm

LCCI

Box and LCCI are collaborating to bring together businesses to explore their critical business needs where AI can help streamline, current AI initiatives and challenges, and how to plan for successful AI implementation and innovation to help businesses grow. Free to attend for all LCCI Members, Community Network and Non Members.

In partnership with Box



- London Chamber Open Week Networking Event at LCCI**

Thursday 23 January, 3.00pm – 5.00pm

- How to build a culture of Psychological Safety and Trust in your organisation - Online**

Monday 27 January, 1.00pm – 2.00pm

Business Owners Club New Year Reception

Tuesday 28 January, 5.00pm – 7.00pm

Hawksmoor Spitalfields

Join us for an exclusive New Year celebration at the renowned steakhouse Hawksmoor Spitalfields, where up to 60 business owners will gather for an evening of networking and connections. Open to LCCI Patron and Premier Plus members only at £25 inclusive of VAT per person.

Programmer Partner: **LenovoPRO**

LenovoPRO ✓

- **Digital Trends in Africa - Online**

Wednesday 29 January, 2.00pm – 3.00pm

- **Coffee and Connect Networking at Assmann Furniture Showroom**

Thursday 30 January, 10.00am – 12.00pm

FEBRUARY

- **Mastering Recruitment and Retainment – Online**

Monday 3 February, 1.00pm – 2.00pm

- **Ring in the Employment Laws - Online**

Monday 10 February, 1.00pm – 2.00pm

- **Go Connect Networking at Balls Brothers Minster Court**

Wednesday 12 February, 5.00pm – 7.00pm

- **Property & Construction Networking and Briefing with guest speaker Keith Janes, Property Director, Landmark at LCCI**

Thursday 13 February, 12.00pm – 2.00pm

Programme Partners: Menzies and Forth Ports

MENZIES
BRIGHTER THINKING



FORTH PORTS LIMITED

LCCI Asian Business Association New Year Networking Lunch

Tuesday 18 February, 12.00pm – 3.00pm

Chatora

▪ Kickstart the new year by expanding your network and celebrating 30 incredible years of the LCCI Asian Business Association. Join us for a special New Year Networking Lunch at Chatora Restaurant to connect with a variety of industry professionals, share ideas, and enjoy delicious cuisine in a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere. Tickets start at £78 inclusive of VAT for LCCI Members.

Programme Partner: University of Westminster

**UNIVERSITY OF
WESTMINSTER**



- **Funding the Transition – Supporting Businesses to Access Sustainable Finance report launch at LCCI**

Tuesday 25 February, 3.00pm – 5.00pm

Programme Partners: CIBC, Panin and SSE



- **How to foster motivation in your team using psychology - Online**

Wednesday 26 February, 12.00pm -1.00pm

MARCH

- **Driving Gender Equity - Empowering women in Leadership and Management – Online**

Monday 3 March, 1.00pm – 2.00pm

- **Maximise your Membership at LCCI**

Thursday 6 March, 3.00pm – 5.00pm

- **Go Connect Networking at Lucky Voice Holborn**

Tuesday 11 March, 5.00pm – 7.00pm

- **How to Deal with Rejection – Online**

Monday 17 March, 1.00pm – 2.00pm

- **The Pathway to Sustainable Finance - Online**

Monday 24 March, 1.00pm – 2.00pm



Two minute interview

Jeremy Skidmore of Richborne Media



Who are you?

I am director of Richborne Media. We specialise in media training, presentation training, corporate videos and PR representation. It's all about telling a company's story in different ways. My background is in the travel industry, so around 70 per cent of my clients are from that sector but we are always looking to expand into other markets and we work with big and small brands.

What is your connection with the London Chamber of Commerce?

A contact recommended it and suggested I join. I have Premier Plus membership.

What was your first job in London?

A sports reporter on a national newspaper – in reality, I spent all hours making tea and being a go-fer for the occasional chance to write a story. At the beginning I was working week-to-week and they let me go one Friday, saying they had to make cuts. On my way out, the office manager asked if I'd like to come back and do some filing for him. I jumped at the chance and gradually worked my way back into reporting.

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

A hotel company senior executive told me our training was the best they'd ever had and that attendees had got so much from the day. It feels great when you exceed expectations and people are very happy with your work.

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

I wouldn't. People get hung up on certain celebrity entrepreneurs and swallow numerous business books, thinking they will find the magic formula for being successful. Obviously experienced people have good advice, but take what works for you, believe in yourself and follow your own path.

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

The flow of people needs to be better managed during peak hours – main tube stations are chaotic

during rush hours and it is so frustrating when you have to try to get somewhere quickly.

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

The biggest cause of frustration is internal red tape from companies who delay in paying invoices. With some big brands it seems that invoices need multiple sign-offs before payment. It's lack of cash-flow, not lack of profit, that can damage small businesses. We're often paying people and VAT on a job before we've had an invoice paid. That said, I think the situation is getting better. Years ago we could be chasing invoices for several months.

What is your favourite and least favourite thing about London?

Love the buzz and excitement. Hate the time it takes to get anywhere.

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

Tougher action to combat violent crime. It's heart-breaking to read about so

many young people losing their lives.

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

Is this where everyone says Brad Pitt or Leonardo DiCaprio? I'd go for Michael Sheen because he's such a brilliant actor that I'm sure he could portray me in any way he wanted.



By iDominick - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/82924988@N05/13408249074/>, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=37564522>

What is your favourite quotation?

'Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.'

Oscar Wilde.

www.jeremyskidmore.com





LCCI Member Offers

S T A Y

■ STAY

STAY Camden are offering all LCCI members 10% off their beautifully designed and fully furnished serviced apartments. With all the comfort and convenience of home combined with the luxuries of a boutique hotel, the one, two, and three-bedroom apartments boast fully equipped kitchens, private terrace, private Wi-Fi connection, weekly housekeeping, eco-friendly welcome pack, and access to the on-site gym. Minimum stay 7 nights.

Contact

jane.hawthorne@stay.com
www.stay.com

OFFER

**10% off STAY
Camden - Serviced
Apartments**

LCCI member discount
Valid until 13/11/2025

selfdrive.uk

■ PINWOODS TECHNOLOGY UK LTD

SelfDrive Mobility is at the forefront of revolutionizing the car rental industry in the UK, making a remarkable impact since its launch in 2023. Originally headquartered in the UAE, SelfDrive Mobility has swiftly established itself as a significant player, now operating in **100+ locations across 20 cities**. With ambitions set for further expansion into **Europe in 2024**, SelfDrive Mobility is set to reshape the landscape of vehicle rentals and subscriptions.

Contact

Ready to experience the future of car rentals?
Download the **SelfDrive App**, visit **SelfDrive Mobility** website or call us at **+44 20 30 974296**

OFFER

SelfDrive Mobility is offering exclusive discounts: **25% off daily and weekly car rentals** and **15% off monthly subscriptions**. This initiative not only supports the LCCI community but also highlights SelfDrive mobility's dedication to fostering valuable business connections.



■ HYATT PLACE LONDON CITY EAST

Your stylish base in the cosmopolitan heart of London, Hyatt Place London City East is close to the vibrant Brick Lane, Spitalfields Market, Tower of London and the artistic streets of Shoreditch. Alluring interiors and irresistible food, drink and event rooms await. Take in London's east end skyline whilst enjoying creative cocktails from our rooftop bar.

Contact

**City Hotel in East London |
Hyatt Place London City East**

OFFER

Host a private event in our rooftop bar between January and March 2025, celebrate with us and stay for free!* (*minimum 50 attendees - one room for the organiser).

ALCON MADDOX
More Than Consultants | Partners In Growth

■ ALCON MADDOX

Alcon Maddox is a boutique sales strategy consulting firm whose focus is unlocking growth potential for SMEs. Our management consultants help organisations improve their performance by providing advice and guidance on how to solve problems, create value, maximise growth and improve business performance. Our Principal Consultant and Managing Partner, Richard Richie, is offering LCCI members and business owners who want to grow their business or just break through to the next level of performance, a free one-hour strategy session.

Contact

Click the following link to book in –
<https://www.alconmaddox.com/managementconsulting>

OFFER

FREE business strategy session.

During this session Richard will help you gain absolute clarity over your most pressing business issue and put together a blueprint for action.

If you are a member of LCCI with an offer for other members, contact membersoffers@londonchamber.co.uk

Two minute interview

Jen Norris of Isio

Who are you?

I am head of employee support at Isio, a pensions, investment, reward and benefit and wealth advisory business with a vision to deliver greater financial confidence for everyone.

I advise employers on how to optimise their pension and benefit packages. This includes leading our team delivering financial education and support to individuals via employers and benefit schemes – through group and individual financial coaching or advice.

What was your first job in London?

I was working for Isio (although we were part of KPMG at the time) when I came to London around 10 years ago. I started my career in Birmingham, but after qualifying as an actuary decided to explore a new city. Coming from the northern countryside, I had previously found London quite intimidating but I immediately felt at home and I've never looked back. I've made many friends here and it has definitely stolen my heart.

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

After partnering with us to support their employees with financial understanding and confidence, one of my clients won an award for Best Financial Education Strategy of the Year. It was fantastic to see their efforts recognised, and of course to celebrate with them!

Even more rewarding is the feedback from our clients' employees, who remind us regularly of the impact the support has had on their lives. In a country where many of us have had little to no financial education, I'm proud we can provide a safe space for more people to talk about money, to become more financially confident and to take positive action.

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

I've learned that looking at how other countries do things can be a good way to dream big.



I'm a (summer only) road cyclist and would feel a lot safer if there were more dedicated cycle highways or cycle lanes, à la Amsterdam. There is recent news that a new central London cycle lane is planned, so I'll be looking out for that. And in the meantime, I'll be making sure I stay focused on the many hazards we cyclists encounter.

Perhaps slightly more ambitious – having recently visited Japan, I would love to see our rail travel match up to theirs. Trains leaving on time is a given in Japan, plus they

have rotating seats which means everyone always faces forwards. Bliss.

What is your favourite and least favourite thing about London?

Perhaps surprisingly, my favourite thing is the weather. I love that London is significantly warmer and a lot less rainy than where I'm from (the north-west of England). Of course London can't compete with the climate of most other countries but that's what holidays are for ...

Least favourite is more difficult but I think I would say the foxes. I love animals (including foxes) in general, but when they are littering the streets or screaming during the night (and in one case, perching himself on my sofa), I wonder whether we (and they) might be happier if they took themselves off to the countryside.

www.isio.com

Cyclists using the New TFL Cycle Superhighway in London



LCCI Partners and Patrons Noticeboard

HaysMac[★]

HaysMac

Award-winning top 10 London accountancy firm haysmacintyre has unveiled its new name, HaysMac, and branding. HaysMac's modernised identity emphasises its progressive and unique approach in the accountancy, audit and tax sector.

In the face of never-ending financial complexity, you need a firm that is big enough to tackle problems at scale, but with the right attitude to care about how they are solved. You need recognised experts with intimate sector and market knowledge, who are driven by a single motivation: your best interests.

HaysMac, the friendly face of exceptional advice and financial know-how, offers a wide range of professional services, including audit and assurance, taxation, outsourcing, business advisory and transaction support. Whatever you need, HaysMac has dedicated specialist teams with the technical knowledge and experience to help you. HaysMac's new look website, www.haysmac.com, includes valuable resources to enhance your knowledge.

For Business. For People. For Good.

PANIN

BRING LIFE TO GLASS

PANIN's "Phygital" Mall: Empowering SMEs

PANIN is proud to launch the first-ever "Phygital" Mall at the University of East London (UEL) campus, a pioneering initiative designed to empower local SMEs and foster innovation in London. This scalable model, which combines physical and digital retail, offers a unique opportunity to support local businesses and can be replicated at universities across the country. Featuring energy-efficient Sustainable Photonic Displays (SPD), the mall minimizes environmental impact and reduces carbon emissions.

The "Phygital" Mall will provide SMEs with an affordable, high-visibility opportunity to showcase their products through dynamic pop-up stores. UEL students will engage as consumers and contributors, with the mall also acting as a job portal. Students can connect with SMEs for project-based collaborations and employment opportunities based on their skill sets, creating pathways for career growth and entrepreneurship.

Through this initiative, PANIN is advancing sustainable retail practices while fostering business growth and student entrepreneurship in London.



UPS

UPS are thrilled to offer an **exclusive UPS discount code**, now extended through the end of 2025! Businesses can avail of this discount by using the promo code **UPSLLCCISAVE** on: [UPS.com/GB](https://www.ups.com/GB) at <https://tinyurl.com/yc8xx79y>

To make things even easier, UPS have curated a selection of helpful videos and guides designed to streamline the export and delivery process for LCCI members.

Watch and learn with UPS' podcast series:

- **Exporting Made Easy:** Gain expert insights and tips to master the art of exporting at <https://tinyurl.com/5bv3trhj>
- **UPS Delivery Experience:** Your ultimate "how-to" guides to address all delivery-related questions with ease at <https://tinyurl.com/sx6jhxts>



Heathrow

Making every journey better

Heathrow

Heathrow has announced a £2.3 billion investment over the next two years to upgrade the airport, ensuring the UK's only hub airport and international gateway continues to move forward and provide better service for passengers and businesses. It is an uplift of £244 million on previously forecast investments which will be used to enhance capabilities across all terminals, including baggage delivery and projects to support punctual departures and arrivals, improving service, resilience, passenger experience, and sustainability for all passengers at Heathrow. You can find out more at: <https://mediacentre.heathrow.com/pressrelease/detail/21584>

Heathrow's Investment Impact Report: Powering the UK's Hub Airport outlines our continued financial commitment, the impact of 2024's £1.1 billion investment, showcasing some of our largest and most complex projects including the £1 billion Next-Generation Security Programme and £100 million runway resurfacing programme. Each and every one of our projects keeps Heathrow running, connecting to 239 destinations in 89 countries, supporting jobs and growth in every region and nation across the UK, including the 60% of our supply chain made up of SMEs. It can be found at <https://www.heathrow.com/content/dam/heathrow/web/common/documents/company/about/economic-growth/Investment-Delivery-Report.pdf>

MENZIES

BRIGHTER THINKING

Menzies

Menzies LLP is a leading UK business advisory and accountancy firm with international reach. With one of our key specialist sectors being Property and Construction, we offer a full range of services including audit, tax, business strategy,

and corporate finance. With approximately 700 trusted advisors, we help clients optimise financial, operational, and strategic performance. Our Partner-led approach, combined with our Brighter Thinking

methodology, ensures tailored solutions that empower clients to navigate increasing complexity. For insights, articles, podcasts, events and further information visit <https://www.menzies.co.uk/>



New Members



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

B3C Online Ltd

www.3c-online.co.uk

Call center

A&N Chartered Accountants

T: 01428 645398

ami.sharma@aruna.com

www.aruna.com

General practice accountancy

ABL Recruitment

www.ablrecruitment.com

Recruitment

Adamas Tech Consulting UK PVT LTD

marketing@adamastech.in

www.adamastechconsulting.com

IT consulting

AlForce Dynamics Smart Sales Solutions Limited

T: +90 538 796 44 85

bekir.ugur@ekmob.com

www.gocust.com

Software development for sales teams

Alps Biosciences Ltd

info@alpscure.com

Bioscience

Angela Mortimer Plc

T: 020 7287 7788

www.angela-mortimer.com

Recruitment services

Astris Advisory

T: 020 8040 4976

kim@astrisadvisory.com

www.astrisadvisory.com

Financial advisory

BASSE Solutions Limited

www.bassegroup.co.uk

Property support solutions

BBRB Properties Limited

rashmi@impratech.com

Real estate

Belkins Inc.

T: +1 302 526 4716

vladislav@belkins.io

www.belkins.io

Lead generation

Bjorn Diamonds Ltd

www.bjorndiamonds.com

Diamond sales

Black Society

www.theblacksociety.co.uk

Charity

Bowem Limited

www.bowem.co.uk

IT services

Bridge Insurance Brokers Limited

www.bridgeinsurance.com

Insurance broker

Bright Content Ltd.

T: 01273 282094

welcome@brightercontent.com

www.brightercontent.com

Coaching, consulting, copywriting

BYD (UK) Co Ltd

www.byd.com/en

Electric cars

BYP Network

www.byp.network

Black careers

Carelink Health Travel Ltd

www.carelinkhealthtravel.co.uk

Marketing consultancy

Chelci Group LTD

T: 020 7352 1010

www.chelci.co.uk

Property services

Chic Consulting Limited

T: 07944 113821

smita@chicconsultingltd.com

www.chicconsultingltd.com

Consulting

Dijkstrack Ltd

www.dijkstrack.com

Software development services

Dynamo Global Limited

T: 020 3696 6685

contact@dynamo-global.com

www.dynamo-global.com

Microsoft Dynamics specialists

Emultiservices Ltd

www.emultiservices.com

Consultation and legal advice

Finofield Business Solutions LLP

T: 01204 927792

finofield@gmail.com

www.finofield.com

International trade

Gateshead College

T: 0191 4900 300
start@gateshead.ac.uk
www.gateshead.ac.uk
College

Goldfinch Executive Ltd

T: 020 3728 8884
info@goldfinchexecutive.co.uk
www.goldfinchexecutive.co.uk
Transport

ICEX Ltd

T: 01376 503900
andrew.wright@icex.co.uk
www.icex.co.uk
Repurposing corporate technology

ICP Logistics Ltd

T: 07483 369069
sunil.chand@icpuk.uk
www.icplogistics.co.uk
Leading 4PL logistics operator

InnoVent

T: 07786 704131
info@innovent.co.uk
www.innovent.co.uk
IT solutions

International Business and Investment Union

T: 020 3642 0260
govrelations@ibiunion.org
www.ibiunion.org
Non profit organisation

IvyU Limited

jessica.wu@ivyuedu.com
Innovation through education

Kanj Technologies

T: 0207 965 7358
enquiry@kanj.co.uk
www.kanj.co.uk
IT management and solutions

KP Pharma Ltd

www.kp-pharma.co.uk
Online pharmacy

Lendoe

support@lendoe.com
www.lendoe.com
Funding for entrepreneurs

Marktlink London M&A Ltd

T: 07469 140080
info@marktlink.com
www.marktlink.com/uk
Mergers and acquisitions specialist

MB Productions Limited

matt@mbpltd.com
www.mbpltd.com
Video production

Mertex Plc

www.mertex.co.uk
Metals trading and processing

MFP Services Ltd

www.mfp-services.com
Financial services

Minds2Perform Ltd

stu@minds2perform.com
www.minds2perform.com
Mental performance coach

MMC Research and Marketing

Natasha@MMC.agency
www.mmc.agency
Market research

NC LAW Solicitors

T: 020 8879 9400
www.nclaw.co.uk
Solicitor

Ocean Capital Exchange Ltd

www.oceancapitalexchange.com
Finance

Openshaw & Co

T: 01252 741741
mail@openshaw-and-co.com
www.openshaw-and-co.com
UK and European patent attorneys

Penntech IT Solutions

T: 020 3371 1810
elaine.ladyman@penntech-it.com
www.penntech-it.com
Managed IT support solutions

Phoenix Management Consulting

T: 07860 774994
sarah.poole@phoenix-management-consulting.co.uk
www.phoenix-management-consulting.co.uk
Management consulting service

Radanks Ltd & Dynamic Silence Ltd

T: 07574 174459
contactus@radanks.com
www.radanks.com
International legal services

Recovery Advisers

T: 020 3836 8955
info@recoveryadvisers.com
www.recoveryadvisers.com
International commercial recoveries

Rotary in London

www.rotaryinlondon.org
Action and change

Rotary Means Business

T: 020 3633 9545
hello@rmbplondon.co.uk
www.rmb-london.co.uk
Business networking

Ryan T Williams

ryan@ryantwilliams.com
Mentor

Soarswell Solutions Limited

T: 07983 650532
team@soarswell.com
www.soarswell.com
IT consulting

Softomate Solutions Limited

T: 07442 569900
hi@softomatesolutions.com
www.softomatesolutions.com
AI software development and automation

Source AZ Limited

T: 07401 871758
office-hr@sourceaz.uk
www.sourceaz.uk
Sourcing and manufacturing

Storetec Services Limited

T: 01482 608630
sales@storetec.net
www.storetec.net
Trusted document management services

Studio Grey

T: 07764 801420
mark@studio-grey.net
www.studio-grey.net
Corporate photography and PR

Sulzer Chemtech UK Ltd.

www.sulzer.com
Industrial maintenance

Systemico

T: 07970 943673
miguel@systemico.co.uk
www.systemico.co.uk
Building viable and resilient businesses

Taurus Group

www.taurus-group.co.uk
Professional security services

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Dr Theodora Thomadaki, David Coughtrie, and Samie John



Leading the way

The 2024 David Coughtrie Leadership Awards have been picked up by Dr Theodora Thomadaki, employer engagement officer at the University of East London (UEL) and – young leader award – Samie John, project manager at East London Alliance

Exemplary

Dr Thomadaki was praised for “exemplary leadership which has transformed opportunities for students at UEL. Her initiatives ... have created pathways to success for students, securing invaluable connections with top organisations such as IBM, Grimshaw, and ITV.”

Samie John “demonstrated extraordinary leadership with his Equibalance programme, inspiring young people from under-represented backgrounds to pursue careers in high-level corporate roles.”

Common traits

Reflecting on leadership, David Coughtrie, an inspirational leader

himself, said: “Leaders come in a variety of forms but all successful leaders possess common traits: the ability to recognise what is needed to do the right things; the determination to achieve their goal; to motivate others to a successful outcome; and to communicate their vision.”

www.thecet.org

Obituary: Sir James Blair Duncan

Sir James Blair Duncan was a renowned and highly respected business leader who included in his impressive portfolio of appointments chairmanship of the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry and its Commercial Education Trust.

He was born in Glasgow and trained as a Scottish chartered accountant. After relocating to London to join Transport Development Group (TDG) in 1953, Sir James became a director of TDG in 1960, ran the Australian division of the company from 1964 to 1970, and was chief executive and chairman from 1975 to 1992.



Buying and selling

As the leader of a company with subsidiaries in four continents, Sir James travelled the world buying and selling transport businesses during his 39-year-long career with the company. He was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 1981 for his public service.

Business leader

During the time Sir James was linked with the London Chamber, former LCCI finance director and company secretary Robin Booth perhaps knew him best: “I was

fortunate to work with Sir James during his time as chairman of the Commercial Education Trust when it was running the long-established and well-regarded LCCI Examinations Board. His vast experience as a business leader proved invaluable as the charity successfully underwent a period of change.”

Philanthropist

Sir James was a philanthropist and contributed generously to many organisations. Donations may be made to his chosen charities: Charities Aid Foundation, Salvation Army, Stroke Association, Age UK, Macular Disease Society, British Red Cross, and Gurkha Welfare Trust.

Sir James Blair Duncan 1927 – 2024

Answers to The Knowledge

On page 14

- 1 John Lewis. The store received a Royal Warrant from Queen Elizabeth II in 2008 as “suppliers of haberdashery and household goods”.
- 2 Tennis. The club was established in 1886.
- 3 Benjamin Disraeli in 1870. London was one of the busiest trading ports in the world at the time.
- 4 Five. They are Croydon, Hackney, Lewisham, Newham and Tower Hamlets.
- 5 2010. In July of that year CS3 (Barking to Lancaster Gate) and CS7 (Merton to the City) were up and running.
- 6 Sir Edwin Lutyens. It was unveiled on Armistice Day, 11 November 1920.
- 7 Thirty-two – corresponding with the number of London Boroughs.
- 8 Howard Dawber. He was appointed in December 2023.
- 9 Colin McInnes. It was the second book in his London trilogy, the others being *City of Spades* and *Mr Love & Justice*.
- 10 Portobello market which provides the backdrop for the song *Portobello Road*.



By Smithr32 - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0



Howard Dawber

CORRECTION

In the last issue of *LBM*, question 9 in The Knowledge on page 15 should have read: Which sporting venue hosted the IBF heavyweight championship of the world between Anthony Joshua and Daniel Dubois?

The answer is: Wembley Stadium. The fight between the two Londoners – Dubois was born in Greenwich, Joshua in Watford – ended in victory for Dubois in round five.

Deeper devolution

The government published its Devolution White Paper last December, outlining plans for deeper devolution across England. Key proposals include creating Mayoral Strategic Authorities and giving mayors enhanced powers, particularly in transport and infrastructure management.

Local collaboration

The government also aims to expand Integrated Settlements, enabling regional authorities to receive consolidated funding across key areas like skills, transport, and economic development. The White Paper emphasises the importance of local collaboration, including the involvement of district councils and employers in shaping local skills improvement plans.

Business involvement

In response British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) have urged that business must be part of devolution plans. BCC policy manager Jonny Haseldine commented:

“More devolution to communities across England is something business will welcome if it helps drive forward local economic growth. Delivery is key.

“As local leaders get more powers, it’s vital that businesses are always at the table helping to mould policy. That must include shaping local growth plans and helping to deliver the industrial strategy.

“As many of our Chambers are already co-ordinating Local Skills Improvement Plans effectively, we will be looking for more clarity on how the proposal for joint ownership will work in practice.”

www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth



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CAPITAL MATTERS

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Unlock the Future of Cybersecurity with Penntech IT Solutions

Secure Your Digital Realm

Are you ready to elevate your cybersecurity game?

In an era where cyber threats constantly evolve, staying one step ahead is paramount. Here's an example (but not limited to) how Penntech can help revolutionise your security landscape:

Cyber Essential: Certify Your Security

Cyber Essentials is a comprehensive security framework designed to safeguard your organisation from cyber threats. Protections include automating OS and third-party applications and securing cloud service and uniformity across company devices. Penntech helps prepare for and attain Cyber Essentials certification with minimal effort required from you or your team.

Penetration Testing: The Ultimate Security Check

Penetration testing is a strategic approach to identifying and rectifying system vulnerabilities before they can

be exploited by malicious actors. By simulating realistic cyber-attacks, it ensures that an organisation's defences are strong, thus enhancing its overall security posture. Regular penetration tests expose hidden weaknesses and offer actionable recommendations to strengthen network security. Trust Penntech for comprehensive penetration testing services to safeguard your digital assets and ensure seamless business operations.

Cybersecurity Awareness: Training Your Workforce

Human error remains one of the most significant vulnerabilities in cybersecurity. Through engaging and interactive modules, Penntech can educate your staff on the latest security practices, transforming your employees into your strongest line of defence.

Next Steps:

Join the ranks of forward-thinking organisations that have partnered with Penntech to protect their digital assets, empower your workforce, and streamline operations with our cutting-edge solutions. The future of cybersecurity is here. Are you ready to unlock it?

Penntech IT Solutions, founded in 2017 in London, excels in offering comprehensive IT Managed Support Services to SMEs in the area. They specialise in 24/7 IT support and implementing robust cybersecurity measures, including Penetration Testing.

Penntech's dedication to cybersecurity is evident in its innovative approach and comprehensive range of services. It employs a multi-layered security strategy designed to protect sensitive data and ensure the integrity of its clients' IT infrastructure. By integrating advanced technologies, Penntech enhances its threat detection capabilities, enabling it to identify and mitigate risks before they can cause significant harm.

Their tailored solutions cater specifically to the unique needs of SMEs, recognising that smaller enterprises often face resource constraints that can make them particularly vulnerable to cyber threats. Penntech offers scalable solutions that grow with the business, ensuring sustained protection without compromising performance or efficiency.

A key aspect of their service is their focus on regulatory compliance. Penntech assists businesses in adhering to industry standards and legal requirements, such as GDPR, by implementing stringent data protection measures and conducting regular compliance audits. This secures the business from cyber threats and helps avoid costly penalties associated with non-compliance.

Furthermore, Penntech's disaster recovery and business continuity planning ensure clients can quickly recover from cyber incidents with minimal disruption. Their comprehensive backup solutions and incident response plans are designed to restore operations, safeguarding business continuity swiftly.

Penntech's client-centric approach means they go beyond mere technical support; they partner with their clients to understand their specific challenges and objectives. This collaborative mindset allows them to deliver bespoke solutions that enhance overall business resilience.



Lewis Pennell, Founder

With a proven track record and a steadfast commitment to excellence, Penntech IT Solutions represents a reliable ally for SMEs seeking robust IT support and cybersecurity services. Their holistic approach, combining cutting-edge technology with continuous monitoring and education, positions them as a leader in the cybersecurity domain, dedicated to protecting businesses against the ever-evolving landscape of cyber threats.

Contact us today to learn more and begin your journey towards a safer digital environment.

02033 711810 | hello@penntech-it.com | www.penntech-it.com



CYBER SECURITY HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH TECHNOLOGY

If that headline sounds wrong perhaps that is why there is a surge in the number of successful cyber-attacks even with increased focus and spending on cyber protection. The team at J2 Software understand that cyber security is not about technology, being secure in the modern, connected world is having visibility and building resilience around the core areas of digital business risk. You cannot protect what you cannot see. Being secure is not about purchasing shinier tech with blinking lights or pretty dashboards.

Often the discussion around cyber security moves to this being a pure I.T. issue, rather than having the understanding that cyber risk is an inherent risk to the ongoing operations of the business and should be measured that way.

No doubt that technology enables effective defence, but doing this in isolation does not address the underlying risk in the modern, digital world we work in, and your business will never be secure.

Most businesses do not understand the severity of the risk they face from cyber criminals and the statistics from the National Cyber Security Centre back this up. Successful cyber-attacks have gone up threefold in the last year. While more money is thrown at cyber security more attacks are taking place. How is this possible?

One reason is that businesses purchase multiple tools to overcome their cyber worries, each of them addressing an element of cyber security. These are single point solutions, each doing something different from the next and none of them being a part of a simple to understand cyber resilience framework. Smooth talking salespeople draw a frightening picture and then tell their unsuspecting clients that their shiny piece of tech will be the silver bullet that stops all things. Rubbish.

People are lulled into a false sense of security by these promises



and are then left to mop up the mess when the inevitable cyber event takes place. The business is left with massive costs and often no way to recover, other than to pay a criminal to unlock their business. These payments, further fuelling the growth in cybercrime gangs and other illicit industries.

COUNTING THE COSTS

Cybercrime costs can be divided into direct and indirect impacts. Direct costs include the loss of revenue caused by prolonged and immediate downtime. After an attack, restoring business operations can take weeks, during which companies may experience a significant loss of revenue.

In addition to lost revenue, businesses must bear the expenses associated with system restoration, breach investigations, and compliance with regulatory bodies. The process often involves hiring external cyber security experts, further straining the company's financial resources.

Indirect costs can be just as devastating, if not more so. A successful cyber-attack can severely erode customer, public and partner trust, leading to long-

term losses as clients choose to take their business elsewhere. Rebuilding a tarnished reputation takes time and resources and many organisations will never recover.

After a breach, organisations must comply with regulatory reporting requirements and provide protective measures for individuals affected by the attack. These obligations, combined with legal fees, can rapidly accumulate, creating additional financial exposure.

Finally, there is a people cost. Our ongoing research into the effects of cyber attacks on the mental health of those affected shows the mental toll it brings to both the victim and the people required to get systems back up and running. The effects are long term and affect both personal and business relationships. The after effects include a lack of confidence, loss of sleep, anxiety and depression with severe cases leading to thoughts of self-harm.

BUILDING RESILIENCE TO REDUCE CYBER RISK

We now know that cyber security has nothing to do with technology, it's about managing digital risk through a structured, cyber resilience program that addresses

the five key areas of digital risk. This program entails putting in practical controls to protect your primary areas of digital risk:

- **Users** – the people who interact with all other areas of risk.
- **Email** – the most widely used business application in the world.

- **Data** – the IP, knowledge and value of the modern business lives in their data.
- **Machines** – the physical equipment used to do business.
- **Internet** – the platform we all use to perform modern work, especially in a hybrid working world.

While we can't stop attackers from trying to attack, an effective framework empowers businesses to detect and respond to threats before they cause significant damage.

Security is built on visibility. Resilience brings visibility, and visibility provides the capability to respond.

J2 SOFTWARE - MANAGED CYBER RESILIENCE FOR EVERY BUSINESS

J2 Software is a cyber security focused service provider founded in 2006. Our team of experts provide additional capacity to our customers to provide cyber resilience and security that is effective, practical and allows them to work securely from anywhere.

We service in excess of 700 customers of all sizes on five continents with physical presence in the UK and South Africa.

Do not expect loads of tech jargon, J2 Software provides simple options to protect your digital assets using a proven cyber resilience framework. This is what our customers have to say:

"We've been working with J2 since 2021 and find their team really stand out amongst our supply chain as consistently helpful and pragmatic in their approach to cyber security. They keep our organisation running safely and securely." **Executive Director - UK Headquartered Global Professional Association**

"We signed up to J2 following an email hack. They helped put processes and monitoring in place to prevent this happening again. We now have a partner we can rely on and that explains things in simple terms. This gives us peace of mind." **Managing Director - Electrical Wholesalers.**



MANAGED CYBER SECURITY FOR EVERY BUSINESS

J2 CYBER SECURITY CENTRE

Providing Unified Security for accelerated threat detection and incident response:



SIEM

- Log Management
- OTX Threat Data
- SIEM Event Correlation
- Incident Response



ASSET DISCOVERY

- Active & Passive Network Scanning
- Asset Inventory
- Software Inventory



BEHAVIOURAL MONITORING

- Netflow Analysis
- Service Availability Monitoring



VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT

- Continuous Vulnerability Monitoring
- Authenticated/Unauthenticated Active Scanning
- Remediation Verification



INTRUSION DETECTION

- Network IDS
- Host IDS
- File Integrity Monitoring

J2 Software is a cyber security focused technology group founded in 2006.

Using our proven approach of Getting Things Done, we provide real solutions to ever-changing cyber security problems, no matter the size of your business.

If you want to know if your email environment is secure J2 will provide a no-risk cloud email security risk assessment.

Scan here to find out more



The Importance of Cybersecurity for Small Businesses

by Simon Newman – Cluster Lead and Director, Cyber London



Small and medium-sized business (SMEs) are the lifeblood of London's economy representing 99% of all businesses in the Capital. But with half of all businesses reporting at least one cyber-attack or breach in the past 12 months, building resilience against common cyber threats is something that every business should be prioritising as attacks become more sophisticated and widespread.

THE GROWING THREAT LANDSCAPE:

The impact of cyber-crime on SMEs can be devastating. This could result in websites being taken offline, a loss of data or access to important company information such as customer records and intellectual property. A cyber-attack or breach can also cause reputational damage and incur large fines from regulators. In extreme cases, it may even cause the business to cease trading.

So why are SMEs vulnerable to cyber-crime? Unlike larger firms, who may have teams of highly-skilled staff or third parties managing their cyber security, smaller organisations often lack the resources to implement basic control measures. We can't expect every business owner to be a cyber-security expert, but a lack of awareness about how they may be vulnerable to common cyber threats makes it easier for cyber criminals.

But there are also other reasons. SMEs are less likely to invest in cyber-security than larger businesses. They are also less likely to have cyber insurance, a cyber incident response plan or offer security awareness training to their staff - making it harder to spot common tactics used by cyber criminals, such as phishing.

We also live in an increasingly connected world where SMEs rely on technology to do business. This may include using third party software which could be vulnerable to attack or by being part of a complex supply chain.

THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF CYBER-CRIME CAN BE PREVENTED:

The good news is that the overwhelming majority of cyber-crime can be prevented by implementing a few simple control measures that every business should prioritise. Not only will these steps reduce your vulnerability to common cyber threats and minimise their potential impact, but they will also help demonstrate to customers and staff that your organisation takes cyber-security seriously.

1. Passwords:

The first thing every SME should do is to implement a robust password policy. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) suggests that you avoid using predictable passwords, such as dates, family names and pets, and instead use three random words to create a memorable password that's hard for other people to guess.

You should also enable two-factor (TFA) or multi-factor authentication (MFA). This means that in addition to typing in your password, you will also be required to confirm your identity through an authenticator app or another method, such as a one-time password sent by text. This additional layer of security can make it much harder for criminals to gain access to your accounts.

2. Staff Awareness Training:

Staff can be the strongest line of defence against a cyber-attack or breach. Regular training and awareness sessions can help them identify common threats, including malicious emails. Cyber Griffin (part of City of London Police) offers a free baseline briefing to businesses across the Capital. The Metropolitan Police offer something similar through their Cyber Protect Officers. Alternatively, the NCSC have produced a free cyber security awareness training programme for staff which you can find by clicking here.

3. Backing-Up Data:

Regularly backing up any important data you hold can help mitigate the impact of a cyber-attack so that a business can recover from a ransomware attack or other forms of data loss. Backups should be stored in a separate secure location, such as the cloud or on removable media (such as a USB stick, SD card or external hard drive) to prevent them from being compromised in the event of an attack.

4. Install and Update Security Software:

Out-of-date software can give hackers an easy route into your network. To avoid this, make sure you switch on 'automatic updates' for all computer operating systems, anti-virus software and firewalls that you use. Regularly updating security software ensures that

the business is protected against the latest vulnerabilities.

5. Get Cyber Essentials:

Cyber Essentials a simple and effective Government backed scheme that will help protect your organisation against a range of the most common cyber-attacks. It has been designed around 5 controls that have been proven to keep businesses safe online and is increasingly seen as the minimum standard for cyber security.

If you need any support in preparing for the Cyber Essentials certification process, help is at hand via the NCSC Cyber Advisor scheme, which offers cost effective cyber security advice and practical support on the implementation of the technical controls set out in Cyber Essentials. You can out more about both schemes here.

These simple steps can help make SMEs more resilient against common cyber threats while giving business owners the confidence to embrace technology without compromising security. Best of all, they can either be done for free or for very little cost.

However, in the event of a cyber-attack or breach, it's important for SMEs to know what to do in order to minimise disruption and damage to your business. One way of doing this is through an Incident Response Plan that sets out a series of actions that your organisation will need to take in the event of a cyber incident. A good plan should be exercised regularly and linked to disaster recovery and business continuity plans.

SMEs should also make sure that they report any incidents to Action Fraud.

LAST WORD...

Treating cyber-attacks and breaches like any other risks to your business can help mitigate the impact and reduce your vulnerability against common cyber threats. Investing in cybersecurity is not only a smart business decision - it is essential to safeguard a business's long-term success and survival. Start by implementing these simple steps and boost your resilience today.

Cyber London is the official Cyber Cluster for London, recognised by UKC3 and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology.



Learn more about us at: www.cyberlondon.com.



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CYBER

**CERTIFIED EXPERTS DELIVERING
TAILORED SOLUTIONS AND
STRESS-FREE SUPPORT TO
BUSINESSES ACROSS EUROPE -
OUR PRIORITY IS KEEPING YOU, YOUR
STAFF AND YOUR BUSINESS SAFE**



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Why your business should aim for complete cyber confidence in 2025

No matter the size of your organisation, cybercrime will be one of the biggest threats you face in 2025. Some 50% of businesses and 32% of charities experienced an attack in 2024. But there is a not-so-secret weapon in the fight against criminals: complete cyberconfidence.

What is complete cyber confidence?

Complete cyber confidence refers to your business's trust in its ability to protect its data and systems from cyberattacks and data breaches. It differs from existing approaches to cybersecurity by taking into account the whole of an organisation's security posture, rather than focusing on one or two elements.

For example, while compliance with popular cybersecurity standards like Cyber Essentials and regulations is important, it's of limited use if you only think about your security in the run-up to your yearly audit or assessment.

Likewise, when it comes to cybersecurity, many businesses focus heavily on tools and software. However, 68% of all breaches are the result of human error, so the most advanced tools on the market won't protect your business if you haven't empowered your people to protect themselves through practical training.

What does complete cyber confidence look like in practice?

The most helpful way to think about your business's cybersecurity is to compare it to your personal health. Good personal health isn't solely about hitting the gym regularly, getting your eight hours in, or even eating well. You need all these things combined to feel your most confident and healthy.

In addition, chances are, even if you do all the right things, you'll

still need access to healthcare occasionally. After all, things go wrong from time to time, it's part of being human.

The same is true for your business's cyber health. Yes, investing in the right tools for your business is important. Whether it's anti-virus software, zero-trust solutions, or vulnerability management, you need everyday protection to deal with the most common threats.

However, to achieve confidence in your cybersecurity, this needs to be paired with cyber awareness training so your people have the skills to detect and avoid cyber attacks. Plus, policies for who in your company is granted access to sensitive data and the use of strong passwords and multi-factor authentication.

To return to our healthcare analogy, you need backing when something does go wrong. Even the best-laid cyber defences can fall prey to a sophisticated attack or simple mistake. This is where cyber insurance comes in. Cyber insurance can help cover the costs associated with the attack, help you determine how it happened, and help get your business back on its feet.

The best part? Implementing the other elements of your cyber posture can help you qualify for cyber insurance and could lead to reduced premiums.

How does your business get there?

The steps we've laid out so far might sound a little daunting. Where do you start? Well, fortunately, nothing we've outlined requires deep technical

knowledge or huge investment. Instead, you just need an idea of where your cybersecurity is at today and a process for how to improve it.

A great place to start is by getting Cyber Essentials certified. Implementing the technical controls required to pass a Cyber Essentials certification, will immediately improve the baseline level of your defences. According to government research, organisations with Cyber Essentials are 92% less likely to claim on cyber insurance policies. What's more, Some Cyber Essentials assessment bodies will even offer a year's free cyber insurance upon completion, so it's well worth doing.

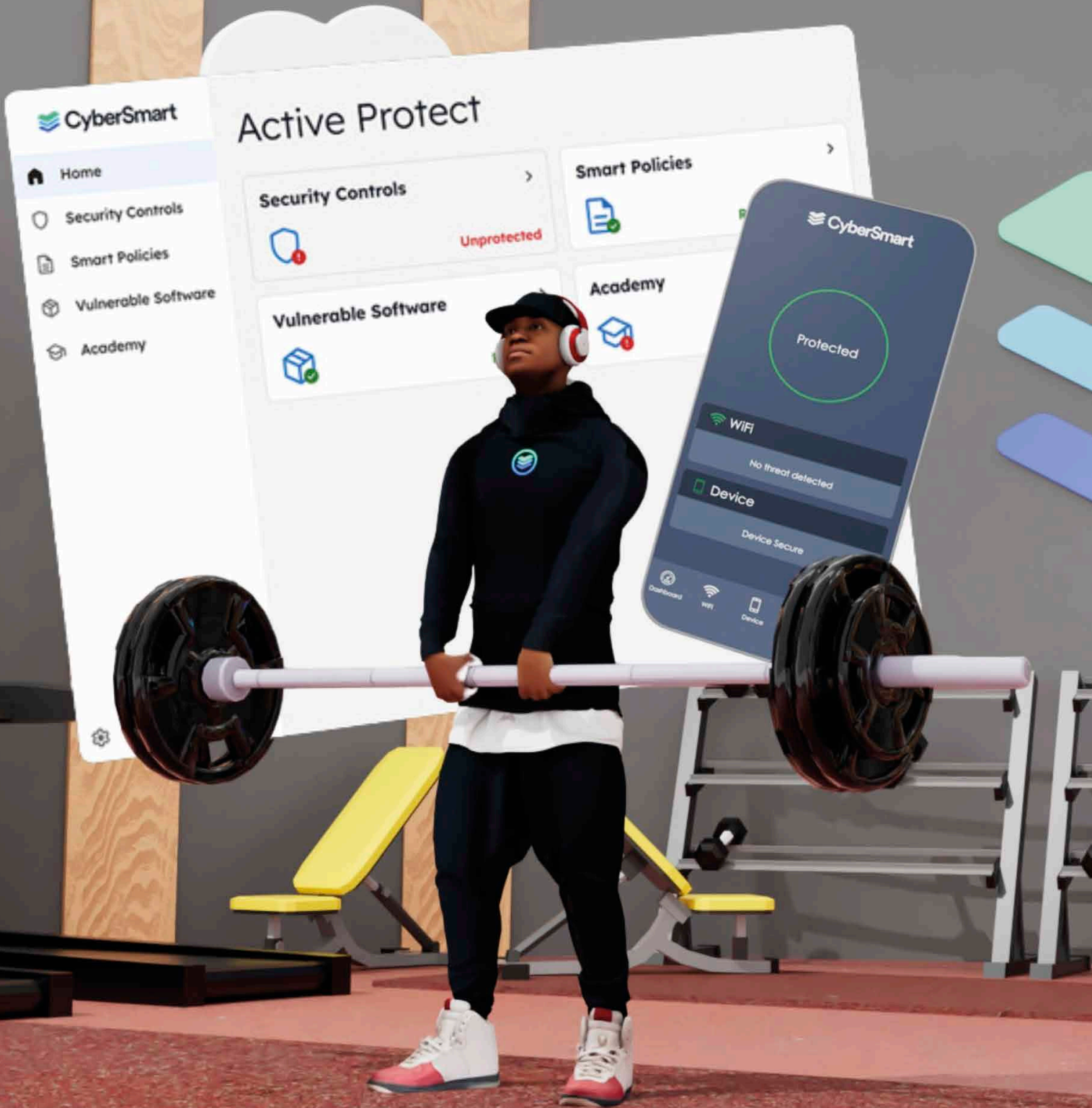
Once you have the technical controls in place, it's simply a case of maintaining them year-round and adding the other components of cyber confidence, such as staff training, policies, and tooling.

And you don't have to do it alone. Most managed IT service providers will also be able to help you get the basics of cybersecurity in place. By the same token, if your IT is managed in-house, many cybersecurity providers can also help you improve your business's cyber baseline.

Make 2025 the year you prioritise your business's cyber health.



CyberSmart



Make 2025 the year you prioritise your business's cyber health

Cybersecurity made simple for small and medium sized businesses

CyberSmart.uk/ldncc



The Future of Workforce Development: Solving Skills Gaps with Apprenticeships

The UK is on the brink of a workforce revolution. As the economy evolves, driven by rapid technological advancements, the transition to Net Zero, and global competitiveness, businesses face an urgent challenge: how to secure a skilled, adaptable, and future-ready workforce. The numbers are stark. By 2030, the UK could face a shortfall of **4 million skilled workers**, and the demand for green, digital, and technical skills is growing faster than the supply.

In this landscape, apprenticeships have emerged as the cornerstone of sustainable workforce development—bridging the gap between education and employment while delivering measurable benefits for businesses, individuals, and society.

The Workforce Challenge: A Skills Gap to Address

- **78% of UK businesses** report skills shortages are hindering productivity (*Open University Business Barometer 2024*).
- The UK will need **1.2 million new green jobs** by 2050 to meet the government's Net Zero targets, yet employers are struggling to recruit talent with the necessary expertise.
- Hard-to-fill vacancies in industries like healthcare, construction, engineering, and digital technology have increased by over **50%** since 2020, with demand continuing to grow.

Employers know that relying on traditional recruitment strategies won't suffice. The solution lies in investing in apprenticeships, which equip individuals with practical skills and industry-specific knowledge while embedding them in organisations from day one.

Apprenticeships: A Strategic Investment for Businesses

Apprenticeships are much more than an education pathway—they are a strategic workforce solution designed to meet real-world business needs. For employers, the advantages are clear:

1. Zero National Insurance Contributions for Apprentices Under 25

Hiring apprentices under the age of 25 allows employers to avoid National Insurance contributions, significantly reducing payroll costs. This incentive is a direct financial benefit for businesses investing in young talent.

2. Financial Support from the Government

- Employers can access **95%-100% government funding** for apprenticeship training costs, making it one of the most cost-effective talent development models.
- Additional payments of **£1,000 per apprentice** are available for hiring young apprentices aged 16-18 or those aged 19-25 with special needs or care experience.
- **The Apprenticeship Levy** provides a dedicated funding stream for larger

businesses, ensuring they have the resources to build robust apprenticeship programmes.

3. Cost-Effective Talent Development

The Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) estimates that the average apprentice generates a net benefit of over **£4,000 per year** for their employer. Apprenticeships also help reduce recruitment costs, with **80% of employers reporting increased staff retention** for those who complete apprenticeships.

LSBU Group: Leading the Way in Apprenticeship Excellence

London South Bank University (LSBU) Group is at the forefront of the apprenticeship movement, helping businesses across London and beyond build future-ready workforces. With over **125 years of expertise** in work-based learning, LSBU Group has earned a reputation for delivering high-quality, innovative, and impactful apprenticeship programmes.

Award-Winning Excellence

- Named *Best University for Apprenticeships* at the *2024 Apprenticeship Guide Awards*.
- Ranked the **highest university in London** and top 50 nationally in the *Rate My Apprenticeship Awards*.

Employer Partnerships

- Collaborating with over **500 businesses**, LSBU Group delivers tailored apprenticeship programmes that align with industry trends and address specific skills gaps.
- Key partnerships include the Lee Marley Brickwork Academy, which trains up to 36 apprentices annually to tackle construction industry shortages.

Outstanding Results

- **85% of LSBU apprentices** secure permanent roles within six months of completion, far exceeding national averages.
- Apprenticeships support business growth while enhancing diversity and social mobility, with **40% of LSBU apprentices** coming from low-income backgrounds.

Innovating for the Workforce of Tomorrow

At LSBU Group, we don't just respond to today's workforce needs—we anticipate the demands of tomorrow.

1. Green Skills for a Sustainable Future

LSBU Group launched the UK's first *Low Carbon Heating Technician Level 3 Apprenticeship*, equipping apprentices with the expertise needed to support the green energy revolution. As the government targets Net Zero by 2050, LSBU is preparing businesses to lead the charge.

2. Healthcare and Allied Professions

With healthcare workforce shortages at a critical level, LSBU supports over 300 apprentices in allied health professions. These apprentices are instrumental in addressing the NHS Long-Term Workforce

Plan's objectives and ensuring communities receive quality care.

3. Digital and Technological Expertise

Programmes in areas like cybersecurity, data analytics, and digital marketing empower apprentices to thrive in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, meeting the rising demand for tech-savvy professionals.

4. Diversity and Social Impact

LSBU apprenticeships actively promote diversity, helping businesses engage underrepresented groups such as BAME communities and women in male-dominated fields like construction and engineering.

Why Businesses Choose LSBU Group

- **Tailored Programmes:** LSBU works closely with employers to co-design programmes that meet specific industry needs.
- **Flexible Delivery Models:** Apprenticeships are delivered through online, in-person, or hybrid models, ensuring they fit seamlessly into business operations.
- **Comprehensive Support:** A dedicated Business Engagement Team provides end-to-end support, from recruitment to compliance and training coordination.

The Financial and Social Case for Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are more than an investment in skills—they are an investment in the future of your business and society.

- Apprenticeships generate a **240% return on investment**, according to the Learning and Work Institute.
- Employers report **improved employee morale and loyalty**, with **80% of apprentices staying with their company long-term**.

Act Now to Build Your Future Workforce

The UK government's continued support for apprenticeships, combined with financial incentives like zero National Insurance contributions for apprentices under 25, makes now the perfect time to invest in talent development.

Partner with LSBU Group to create a workforce that is innovative, skilled, and ready for the challenges of tomorrow.

Contact us today to start your apprenticeship journey:

- Email: apprenticeships@lsbu.ac.uk
- Phone: **0207 815 5767**

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Q&A on the value of apprenticeships with an ageing workforce with Roy Graves, Technical Support Manager at ercol

ercol Furniture Ltd is a family run business synonymous with craftsmanship and quality. Established in 1920 by the Italian designer Lucian Ercolani, ercol maintains a family ethos and in 2002 moved into a purpose-built factory in Princess Risborough, Buckinghamshire.

WHY DID ERCOL INTRODUCE AN APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME?

We re-established our apprenticeship scheme in 2017 and this has been running now for 8 years. This year we onboarded 6 apprentices following on from 6 the previous year. Our plan for the next 4 years is to take on a further 3 to 5 apprentices each year.

We have a long history with apprenticeships and believe the skills and knowledge learnt are repaid throughout the apprentice's career, and this is of great value to both the business and the individual - we all build and grow together. We have seen the long-term benefits that our apprentices bring to the business, so we know the value of nurturing them and investing our time and expertise in developing their skills to support them in achieving their qualification.

At ercol, we offer apprenticeships in a variety of subjects including electrical maintenance, machining, finishing/polishing and assembly, also we look to apply the apprenticeship programme to other areas of the business where possible. Our apprentices learn how to work safely and efficiently, and the different areas they become skilled in means that they have different paths open to them within the business, such as design and development to manufacture and installation.

WHAT VALUE DO APPRENTICES BRING TO ERCOL?

Apprentices bring a fresh and exciting perspective to the business - they encourage us to think differently and try new approaches to things. They are also integral to meeting workload, as they provide an increase in production capacity, allowing us to increase the quantity of the new products that we develop, as well as restoring products previously made with our offshore manufacturing partners. The excitement that they bring energises our established workforce to adapt to meet new business challenges. Additionally, simply the act of mentoring and training the apprentices brings the need for creative thinking within our more senior team members, learning to teach in a way that best suits the individual. These principles and techniques are then used to provide training for all employees, both old and new.

We utilise some of the best training providers available and work with them to adapt and improve our apprenticeship programme. The training providers supply regular feedback to achieve the best outcome for the apprentices and the company. This gives the opportunity for the apprentices to develop a career in the furniture industry with us, or more widely.



ROY GRAVES, TECHNICAL SUPPORT MANAGER AT ERCOL

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF HAVING A YOUNGER AND OLDER WORKFORCE?

Our older workers bring experience and unmatched knowledge, which is then passed onto our apprentices - and other younger colleagues. Currently, over half (56%) of our staff are over 50 and they're passing on their skills to future generations. In turn, the younger generation and apprentices offer a fresh perspective, by sharing new ideas to evolve the business.

That said, having an older workforce does come with challenges, such as our team members retiring. The skills gap that opens as our senior and experienced colleagues retire is one of our main motivations for seeking talent and hiring apprentices. We still want to maintain a good mixture of ages within the business, so we do hire older apprentices as well as those starting out. We also have a great retention rate of people staying at ercol throughout their career, so we know that once people come through the door it's likely they will want to stay and grow with us.

At ercol, we need a variety of skills to support our business - some of these require more technical knowledge such as machine operation, whereas others need more physical skills and involve strength. Physical skills do get harder with age as strength declines as you get older. We make sure we have the right team available when it comes to these tasks as they involve heavy lifting with tools and furniture as well as assembling.

Another benefit is that we see many different opinions and perspectives on tasks which come from our team members. The age of our workforce ranges from 17-year-olds to 80-year-olds so as you can imagine, we get new perspectives and ideas all the time, which is incredibly valuable. We also want to make sure that everyone's voices are heard within the business. All ideas are welcome and important to help improve our work experience or to create positive change.

Having a highly skilled workforce has always been our most valuable asset for over a hundred years at ercol, we remain committed to investing in the craftspeople of the future.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE OTHER EMPLOYERS CONSIDERING USING TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SCHEMES FOR THE FIRST TIME?

It can be difficult to find the right apprenticeship for your job role, so it is worth taking some time to review these initiatives. You can find out more through the Department of Education's Skills for Life campaign.

Finding the right apprenticeship provider is also important. Providers are key to helping run these training programmes smoothly, they can help you recruit apprentices, as well as screen for appropriate candidates. You can work with them to tailor the apprenticeship to your business needs as best as possible, but remember the apprentice may be learning skills you may not require in order to make them a valuable employee more widely.

I recommend taking the time to visit local careers events that are run by the council or ask when your local schools are having their events to see if you could attend. By attending these events, it gives you the opportunity to network with other businesses who are already looking to recruit, and you can seek advice from their experiences. Local schools are a good source of potential employees and engaging with them will provide benefits to the school as well as the business. These events offer good opportunities to network and gather information about the provider, the courses run and those businesses making use of them. This can help you work out what will work best for you, your employees and your business.

If you're interested in learning more about employing apprentices for your business, go to <https://tinyurl.com/bdf3r9fj>



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INTRODUCING 1 NEWBRIDGE SQUARE A LANDMARK OFFICE DESTINATION IN THE HEART OF SWINDON



Swindon is emerging as a town on the rise, with ambitious regeneration efforts, a growing business community, and increasing investment all coming together to reshape its future. Known for its exceptional connectivity and central location, Swindon is fast becoming an attractive destination for businesses seeking opportunity and growth outside the capital.

At the forefront of this transformation stands 1 Newbridge Square, an exciting new development redefining the town's business district. Having recently undergone extensive refurbishment, 1 Newbridge Square offers premium Cat A office and retail spaces designed to support wellness, sustainability, and innovation, making it a key catalyst for Swindon's evolution.

A prime location with unmatched connectivity

Situated just a two-minute walk from Swindon railway station, 1 Newbridge Square benefits from unrivalled transport links to London and the South East. Its central location ensures seamless connectivity for both businesses and visitors, making it an ideal choice for those seeking convenience and accessibility. Swindon's position on the Great Western Main Line and its proximity to the M4 corridor also strengthen its appeal as a business hub, connecting it to major cities and economic centres across the region.

For businesses that prioritise accessibility, this connectivity positions Swindon as a gateway to growth, combining the advantages of regional affordability with easy access to metropolitan markets.

A major milestone: FigFlex's arrival at 1 Newbridge Square

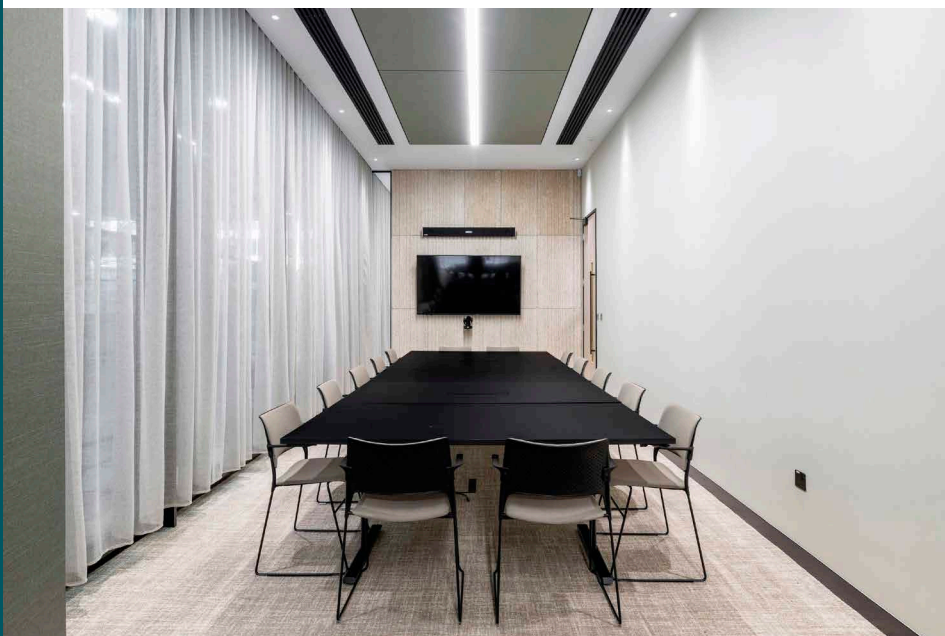
1 Newbridge Square has now secured its first letting, with FigFlex Offices expanding their presence in Swindon. Building on the success of their existing location at 3 Newbridge Square, FigFlex is taking an additional 5,240 sq ft of premium space on the first floor of 1 Newbridge Square, further cementing their confidence in the Swindon market. This alongside many other conversations in significantly advanced stages. This milestone is accompanied by several other advanced negotiations currently underway.

The new FigFlex space, set to complete in Q2 2025, will deliver:

- 3 additional meeting rooms accommodating 8–30 delegates
- A Grade A serviced office environment
- A ground-floor business lounge featuring breakout areas, booths, and kitchen facilities
- A first-floor business club offering coworking spaces, booths, and additional collaborative spaces

This significant expansion not only reflects FigFlex's trust in the future of Swindon's business landscape but also underlines the increasing demand for high-quality, flexible office solutions. Businesses of all sizes, from startups to established organisations, will benefit from the professional facilities and community-focused spaces FigFlex provides.

Meanwhile, their existing location at 3 Newbridge Square, a separate building within the Newbridge Square complex, continues to thrive. It offers 8,277 sq ft of space, 117 desks, four meeting rooms for 4–12 delegates, and a recently refurbished business lounge on the first floor. The success of this location



demonstrates how new office developments are able to meet the evolving needs of modern businesses. Together, 1 and 3 Newbridge Square provide a seamless combination of flexibility, convenience, and quality, offering businesses an unparalleled choice within Swindon's commercial centre.

A commitment to sustainability and wellness

1 Newbridge Square has been designed with environmental responsibility in mind, achieving a BREEAM Excellent accreditation and an EPC A rating. These standards are a testament to the development's focus on creating spaces that not only reduce their environmental impact but also support the health and wellbeing of occupants. Furthermore, the development features a carbon net-zero fit out, Fitwel accreditation, and WiredScore certification – enhancing its commitment to sustainability, occupant wellness, and digital connectivity.

The development incorporates a range of sustainability features, such as energy-efficient systems, electric vehicle charging stations, and ample green spaces. These elements are

complemented by wellness-focused amenities, including breakout spaces, fitness facilities, large living wall and thoughtfully designed communal areas. By integrating these features, 1 Newbridge Square offers a balanced environment in which both businesses and their employees can thrive.

As businesses increasingly prioritise environmental, social and governance (ESG) goals, 1 Newbridge Square provides a workplace that aligns with these values, helping occupiers meet their sustainability targets and ensuring employee satisfaction.

Strengthening Swindon's urban fabric

The development is also acting as a significant catalyst for the regeneration of Swindon town centre, as the local authority spearheads a



£100 million investment programme over the next three years. This ambitious plan focuses on public realm improvements, enhanced transport links, and the creation of a new Cultural Quarter. These initiatives aim to attract fresh investment, drive footfall, and transform Swindon into a vibrant hub for business, culture, and community.

Swindon Borough Council's 'Heart of Swindon' vision outlines eight ambitions to be realised over the next decade. These include creating new mixed-use neighbourhoods, supporting the growing creative community, and investing in green spaces to enhance the town's liveability. By aligning with these strategic priorities, 1 Newbridge Square is playing a pivotal role in Swindon's transformation into a leading business destination in the South East.

Embrace the future of work

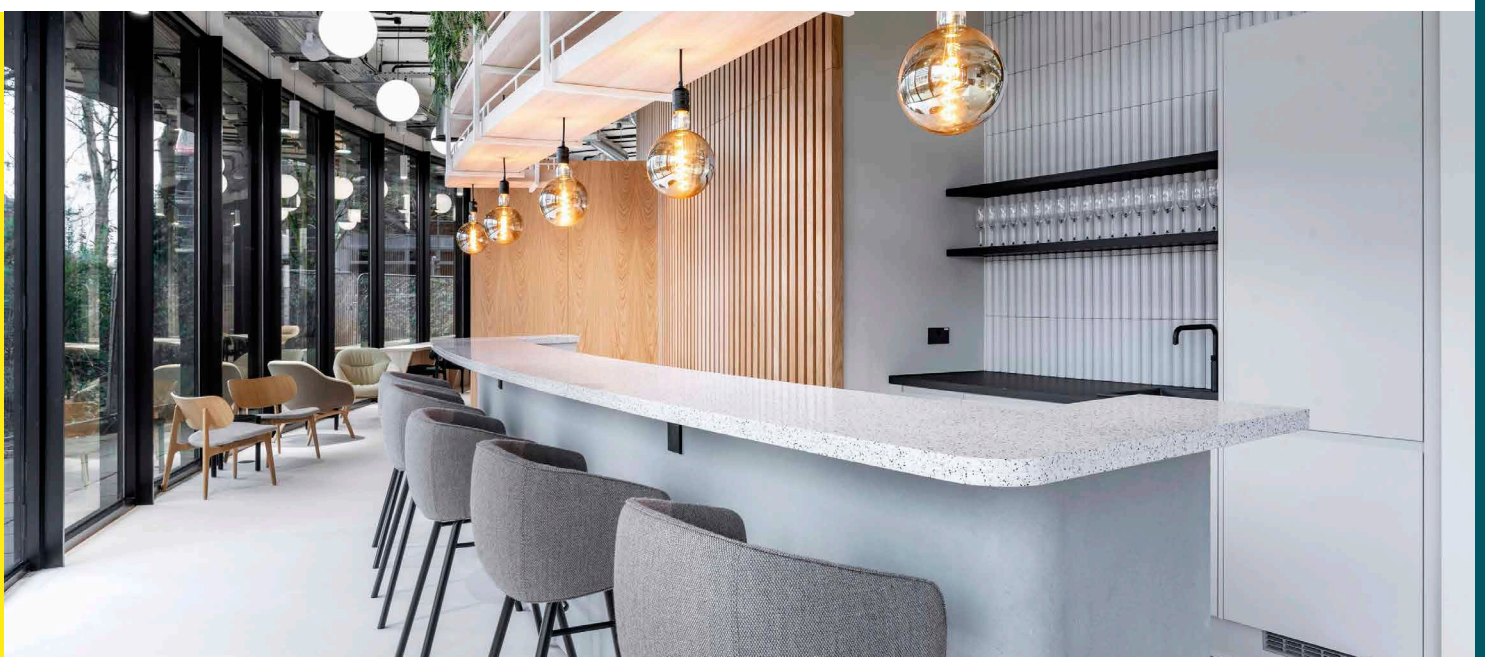
Choosing 1 Newbridge Square means becoming part of a supportive business hub, where occupiers can grow in an environment that's been specifically designed to help them

succeed. The focus on creating spaces that encourage collaboration, productivity, and wellbeing sets this development apart as a forward-thinking workspace.

The development offers opportunities for networking and on-site collaboration, creating space for valuable connections to be made and allowing businesses to flourish as part of an exciting new community.

1 Newbridge Square is more than just an office space; it's a lifestyle choice for its occupiers. The development embodies the future of the new working world. With its prime location, flexible high-quality spaces, commitment to sustainability, and pivotal role in Swindon's wider regeneration plans, it presents an unparalleled opportunity for businesses seeking to advance and lay down roots in the heart of Swindon.

For more information or to arrange a viewing, please visit www.1newbridgesquare.com or contact Dom Knowles at FI Real Estate Management on dknowles@fi-rem.com or enquiries 0845 500 6161



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