

Business Voice



THE MAGAZINE OF THE THAMES VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE GROUP

Local Partners launch **Thames Valley Science Park** 'commercial opportunity'



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Bracknell takes centre stage at the MADE IN CAMPAIGN LAUNCH

Major organisations from across the town and wider region attended the highly anticipated Made in Bracknell launch. Held at the Capitol Building at the heart of the town, the event, which had a substantial turnout, was sponsored by Kronos and Capitol Big Business.



Banner networking in full swing

Bracknell & Wokingham College, Bracknell Forest Council, Carpe Diem Executive Cars, Grondon Waste Management, Icon Business Solutions, MD2MD, The Printroom Group and Redwood Technology Ltd were just some of the organisations in attendance.

The launch showcased the diverse range of exciting, innovative, international and entrepreneurial business based in Bracknell and the work carried out. It also celebrated the regeneration of Bracknell Town Centre and the opening of the Lexicon, which is set to become one of Berkshire's most vibrant shopping and leisure destinations.

Thames Valley Chamber CEO Paul Britton opened the event by thanking attendees for joining the launch of this new initiative and offering a "special thanks to the Bracknell Chamber Council members and Kronos team and the Capitol Building for supporting the campaign."

Further adding: "What you are about to hear is a call to action this morning to get involved, share your achievements and aspirations because we know Bracknell is a magnet for investment, we want to help the regeneration ambitions of Bracknell to become a reality, and we want to help showcase local businesses. Our Chamber works with companies

that consider the Thames Valley their UK Headquarters including Kronos."

Sharing one anecdotal experience Paul explained how he worked with a Nasdaq listed Fortune 100 Californian software company touring properties across the Thames Valley. The CFO of the company told him that there were very few places with "access to an international hub airport, a nation's capital and ability to access the best talent all in one place."

He ended his welcome by cementing the Chamber's commitment to the Bracknell region commenting: "If you get involved we will work with you to use the Chambers local, regional and international reach to share your successes and what makes you and the Bracknell business community special."

Shortly after Peter Smith, President, Bracknell Chamber outlined why Bracknell was an "excellent business environment for companies of all sizes, the wide-ranging employment opportunities and the exceptional living and playing environment."

Adding that he finds himself incredibly lucky to have re-located to such a "dynamic and thriving location". Peter also mentioned that residents have access to Bracknell & Wokingham College that is "rated amongst the highest for achievement in the country" as well as exceptional primary and secondary schools.



The Chamber team at the launch

He added that Bracknell Chamber “attempts to check the pulse of the area and report upwards to the Chamber at Group level who then feed into the Government via the British Chambers of Commerce and acting as a disseminator of information from the centre to members.”

Finally, he said that in his experience, there is no doubt being part of the “Chamber community can contribute to a more profitable future”. Ginette Gower, Head of Marketing & Communications, Thames Valley Chamber commented: “This campaign is part of a bigger ‘Made in’ initiative we launched in 2016 to celebrate success across the region.”

An exclusive video case study with Kronos was shown to the audience. David Morgan, HR Director at Kronos commented in the video: “Being based in Bracknell has contributed significantly to our ability to grow, particularly within the UK, but also across continental Europe because we have access to Heathrow which has made travel either to clients or within the business much easier. When you start looking for new talent outside and you talk about Bracknell, people will know exactly where that is, its benefits in terms of commuter route. This is going to be the attraction.”

Lianne Morten, SME Field Marketing Manager at Kronos further added:

“The Chamber has helped us increase our profile and develop awareness with other businesses within the area . . .

The Made in Bracknell campaign was a great event for Kronos as it gave us the opportunity to network with other businesses within the local area.”

After the formal presentations were over Maeve Flanagan, Building Manager at Capitol Building took to Twitter saying: “Excited to be hosting @TValleyChamber #madeinbracknell event this morning, networking underway!”

A dedicated page on the Chamber website will bring together case studies, hot topics on Bracknell news, business tips and thought leadership views as well as details on upcoming events. The campaign will be supported with a social media programme.



Left to right: Mr Matsumoto, Paul Britton, Mr Muta and Masako Eguchi-Bacon

Thames Valley Open for business

JAPAN ROUNDTABLE - Thames Valley Chamber invited 20 Japanese and UK owned businesses with experience of the market to join representatives from the Kansai Bureau of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI – KANSAI), Osaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry and JETRO to discuss future and ongoing opportunities for collaboration, delivering innovation, R&D and services as part of the UK’s changing global strategy.

Held at the stunning country setting of Danesfield House Hotel & Spa, Marlow, the roundtable lunch attracted businesses in the healthcare, smart energy, creative, gaming, automation and “Internet of Things” marketplace for which Japan has an excellent track record. With a series of high profile speakers, the roundtable proved particularly informative for the delegates.

Mr. Kazuhiro Muta, Director at METI – KANSAI opened the forum expressing his gratitude to those attending for not only their ongoing support, but also in helping develop and sustain the long-term region to region relationship between Kansai and the Thames Valley.

Showcasing the company’s ‘business tourism’ programme, which includes both traditional craftsmanship, food factories and breweries as well as high technology and a city tour guide, he highlighted why the region was proving popular with tourists and business people alike, bringing together commercial and sightseeing opportunities. After his highly entertaining speech he presented attendees with traditional Japanese chop sticks.

Strong collaborations between Japanese and Western companies were reviewed by Mr. Keisuke Matsumoto, Manager of International Division, Osaka Chamber who presented four individual case

studies on robotics. He outlined how Japanese companies were becoming ‘more open to work with startups, entrepreneurs and non-Japanese businesses.’

The final speaker, Nick Henry, Engineering Director at SST Technology, highlighted how the company were working closely with a Japanese agent with had specialist technical expertise and had put them in touch with likeminded businesses. Mentioning that whilst it has taken time to establish a presence and build relationships it had been worth it and that ‘perseverance’ and working with ‘experts’ in the field was key.

Masako Eguchi-Bacon, Japan Desk – Market Specialist, Thames Valley Chamber commented: “This was a great opportunity to bring together high level speakers and attendees in one room. This included Japanese companies based in the Thames Valley as well as local organisations who were or already are interested in pursuing a relationship with Japan. Sharing experiences, best practice and identifying ongoing opportunities were openly discussed and there is scope to engage with the Chamber’s activities over the coming months.”

The Japan Desk works extensively with UK businesses to help identify partnerships and strategy agreements within the Japanese market.

SWINDON FOCUS



New President for Swindon Chamber of Commerce

Kevin Gwilliam, General Manager, The Brunel Shopping Centre has been appointed the new President of the Swindon Chamber of Commerce. In a unanimous vote, Kevin was elected to lead the local Chamber Council and will be tasked with building closer working relationships with local government departments and the local business community over the coming months.

Commenting on his new appointment Kevin said: "The importance of promoting the Chamber in Swindon whilst engaging the community is paramount to the work we do. Whilst the local Chamber Council are continually speaking to companies we need to be flying the flag for Swindon even further and letting businesses know how they can benefit from membership".

It's an exciting time for the area and I'm looking forward to working closely with the community and showcasing how and why Swindon is known as one of the 'most productive towns in the UK'."

Kevin also sits on the Board of inSwindon. With extensive knowledge and experience of the national and local retail picture he will be an influential and strong leader ensuring the views and needs of businesses, including those from the town centre, are represented.

The Chamber has also announced the launch date of its 'Made in Swindon' campaign on the 15 September, hosted by Honda of the UK Manufacturing, at its world-renowned manufacturing plant. The event will also showcase video case studies from local companies including Honda and Beard Construction.

Introducing the Thames Valley Berkshire Business Growth Hub

The Growth Hub supports Berkshire businesses at all stages of their growth journey. It offers essential business information and advice, one-to-one business support, a programme of events and links to expert business support providers.



The Growth Hub is managed by Oxford Innovation who have a successful 30-year track record of incubating and accelerating high growth businesses. Oxford Innovation are working with a variety of partners to deliver a comprehensive, collaborative support service. These partners include GROW@, Slough Aspire, Newbury College, the Knowledge Transfer Centre at Reading University, Telos Partners, Bracknell Enterprise and Innovation Hub, Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce and Thames Valley Science Park.

The Growth Hub provides general business advice and information including: a dedicated high growth support programme focused around high growth planning and implementation; regular clinics delivered by Business Champions and partners in which businesses can discuss their

growth plans and receive expert advice; a variety of events providing businesses with guidance, insights and the opportunity to network with peers; an annual Pre-Accelerator in which early stage entrepreneurs are provided with an intensive 2 day 'Enterprise ready' programme; and monthly newsletters providing information about local businesses, networking events, key organisations and relevant news.

The Growth Hub's two Business Champions are Martin Hall (covering West Berkshire) and Phil Ashford (covering East Berkshire). The Growth Hub is funded by the European Regional Development Fund, the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Oxford Innovation. For more information contact Customer Services customerservices@tvchamber.co.uk or visit www.berkshirebusinesshub.co.uk



Justin addresses the audience in Swindon

Economic Lunch with Justin Tomlinson MP

Chamber CEO, Paul Britton welcomed members to the latest lunch, sponsored by Barclays Bank, took place at the Swindon Marriott with Justin as the guest speaker.

Justin has been the Conservative MP for North Swindon for seven years and made an excellent speech to the delegates, including newly elected Swindon Chamber President, Kevin Gwilliam, followed by a Q&A session. Justin was introduced by Ian Workman, Barclays co-head of business relationships in the UK, who lives in nearby Liddington.

Justin shared that he considered it was the right decision to call the recent General Election, due to the lead in the polls at the time: "several factors led to the result not being what the Party expected, including the length of the campaign and the fact that public engagement did not work well enough. However, no one wants another election and Labour is not confident of winning. I expect with this working majority this Government will last for five years."

He also felt that George Osborne's pre-Referendum budget and the stance that he took was not welcomed by the

public. He said that the EU is terminal decline and that we must embrace global opportunities. Honda had lobbied MPs to vote remain and Japan HQ were concerned. However, the firm changed its entire business model to focus on Swindon as a global hub.

Justin is cautiously optimistic about the economy and recognised that the UK is the No 1 destination for foreign direct

investment: "there is record employment in Swindon and growing business confidence and growth. It is good news that £5m is being invested in The Brunel Centre and there is considerable strength in leisure and independent retailing. However, the environment has to be right and we need more footfall."

Holly Angelinetta, manager at the Swindon Marriott commented: "We are pleased to be hosting the lunch once again. We are part of the Swindon business community and it's important that we are right at the heart of it."

Left to right: Paul Britton, Kevin Gwilliam, Justin Tomlinson and Ian Workman



UKEF launches plan to scale up support



UKEF's annual report and accounts for 2016/17 show that it provided £3bn of support – a 60% increase on 2015/16 – for exports to 63 countries, with 79% of the UK exporters benefiting from this support small and medium-sized enterprises. UKEF also lent a record £305m directly to infrastructure and energy projects.

Rt Hon. Greg Hands MP, Minister for International Trade, commented: "This government is putting export finance at the heart of trade promotion, and UK Export Finance's (UKEF) 2016/17 results show that the UK's world-leading exporters are supported by a world-leading export credit agency as they look to succeed in a global marketplace.

And UKEF's new Business Plan is a clear statement of intent: Britain is open for business, and we want to help even more companies realise the world of opportunity out there."

The plan identifies a number of concrete measures that will help more UK exporters and their suppliers benefit from

UKEF support, including a partnership with banks to deliver support directly to their trading customers announced last week.

It also sets out plans to use the availability of UKEF financing to create procurement opportunities for smaller companies in the UK supply chain, incentivising overseas buyers to look to the UK to source goods and services.

Underpinning its business objectives, UKEF will enhance its product range, digital offering and customer focus, engaging with business groups across regions and sectors to ensure that UKEF continues to meet their members' needs.

Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce becomes first UK COBCOE member

This Chamber has become the first UK Chamber of Commerce to become a COBCOE member. Until a change to the COBCOE articles of association at the AGM in April, members had to be based in continental Europe.

Paul Britton, Chief Executive of the Chamber commented: "Joining the established COBCOE network provides the Chamber and our aspiring international customers with unique and valuable commercial opportunities. We are delighted to be the UK's first Chamber member."

The Chamber has a strong international focus and was one of the first Chambers to become a network on the COBCOE Connects platform helping businesses find trusted contacts in new markets. It recently launched a new global membership package which includes membership of COBCOE Connects. The service allows members to not only look for business opportunities but also put forward opportunities across the

trusted network. The Chamber helps with facilitation of introductions and moderates the site.

Anne-Marie Martin, COBCOE Chief Executive, said: "We are both pleased and excited to have such an internationally focused and forward thinking Chamber on board as our first UK member. This brings a whole new dimension to our membership offering and will be of tremendous benefit to Thames Valley Chamber

members and the businesses within our membership network across Europe."

Thames Valley is one of the highest performing regions in Europe. It accounted for 15% of the UK's exports in 2016 and is the UK home of many global brands, including 11 of the world's top 15 tech companies. It also ranks highly for economic potential, human resources, cost effectiveness, quality of life, infrastructure and business friendliness.



Glynis Whiting, COBCOE at the Open for Business Launch

International Trade Autumn Events

Gulf Tour to the UK,
20 September 2017,
08.30-13.30, Green Park
Conference Centre, Reading

This event which is part of a Department of International Trade (DIT) led Gulf states tour of the UK will involve representatives from Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE. It brings together DIT representatives led by Alastair Long- Deputy Consul General & Regional Director, DIT and alongside business partners with a major presence in the Gulf to provide information and services.

EU-GCC total trade in goods in 2016 amounted to €138,6 billion. With exports to the GCC amounted to €100,8 billion, EU-GCC trade has been steadily growing between 2006 and 2016: total trade rose by 53% in ten years, with a peak in 2013 – corresponding to the peak of oil prices.

The programme will include a panel discussion and presentation on “doing business” and “setting up” in the Gulf markets, including opportunities and considerations as well as route to market.

Turkey Market Briefing, 27 September 2017,
18.00-20.30, Grovefield House Hotel, Burnham

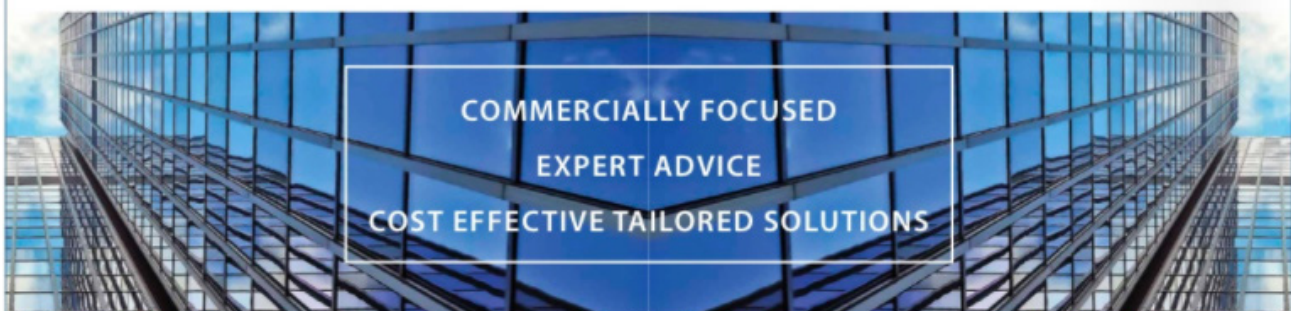
Turkey is the world's 17th and Europe's 6th in the GDP charts. It is predicted that the country will be the second fastest growing economy by 2018. Turkey is a large emerging market and, with an average growth rate of five per cent, it has recorded some of the highest rates in the OECD between 2013-2016. It is a huge market with a population of around 79.5m. The Median age in Turkey is 30.2 years. What's more, it has the world's 14th largest urban population at approximately 72.3m. The country - which is a springboard to the markets of Central Asia & the Middle East - signed a Custom Union agreement with the EU in 1995 and is officially recognised as a candidate for full membership. Ongoing Accession negotiations are the key driver for change in Turkey's business environment. With UK-Turkey bilateral trade totalling over £15.77bn in 2015 and UK exports to Turkey worth £5bn, it is a major trading partner of the UK.

To book visit www.thamesvalleychamber.co.uk/event



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UK export growth outperforms Germany and France

This growth has taken place for five consecutive quarters, according to the latest European Export Index by accountants and business advisers BDO LLP.

The Index – which tracks the export performance of the five largest European economies and the European Union on a quarterly basis – reveals that total UK exports are growing at a faster rate than exports in both Germany and France. The UK's Export Index – which charts annual export growth – sits at 104.4, above the long-term trend of 100, but falling from 109.4 in the first quarter of 2017.

The UK has performed well in export markets since the devaluation of

sterling and the more-recent pickup in the global economy. This is now the fifth consecutive quarter that the UK's export performance growth has outperformed Germany and France. German and French Export Indices sit at 103.3 and 99.2 respectively, up from 100.7 for Germany and down from 99.3 for France.

UK export growth has been driven by manufacturing with UK manufacturing exports increasing year-on-year, and strong recent order books indicated

by surveys from the Confederation of British Industry (CBI). April saw UK manufacturing exports rise 1% month-on-month and 3% annually. Meanwhile, the UK's food and drink exporters also saw an 8.3% annual increase in export value over Q1.

The UK's strong Q1 export performance was in part driven by services exports, worth £63.7bn during this period and has grown 8% year-on-year. However, with the current domestic slowdown in the services sector, the importance of a strong services export performance becomes even greater to the growth of the UK economy.

EU and Japan reach agreement in principle on Economic Partnership Agreement

This will be the most important bilateral trade agreement ever concluded by the EU and as such will for the first time include a specific commitment to the Paris climate agreement.

For the EU and its Member States, the Economic Partnership Agreement will remove the vast majority of duties paid by EU companies, which sum up to €1 billion annually, open the Japanese market to key EU agricultural exports and increase opportunities in a range of sectors. It sets the highest standards of labour, safety, environmental and consumer protection, fully safeguards public services and has a dedicated chapter on sustainable development. It also builds on and reinforces the high standards for the protection of personal data that both, the EU and Japan, have recently entrenched in their data protection laws.

The President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, the President of the European Council Donald Tusk, and the Prime-Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe made the announcement on the conclusion of the agreement in principle during the EU-Japan Summit.

President Juncker said: "Today we agreed in principle on an Economic Partnership Agreement, the impact of which goes far beyond our shores. Through this agreement, the EU and Japan uphold their shared values and commit to the highest standards in areas such as labour, safety, environmental or consumer protection. Working towards mutual

adequacy decisions, we also make a strong commitment to uphold the fundamental right of data protection.

Together, we are sending a strong message to the world that we stand for open and fair trade. As far as we are concerned, there is no protection in protectionism. Only by working together will we be able to set ambitious global standards."



Bucks New University celebrates 125th anniversary

Thames Valley Chamber CEO Paul Britton was invited to celebrate Bucks New University's 125th Anniversary at the House of Commons. More than 100 dignitaries, business leaders, staff and guests gathered at The State Rooms in Speaker's House to mark the occasion.



Paul Britton with Rebecca Bunting

The University was established originally as a Science and Art School thanks to a highly unpopular tax imposed on beer and spirits. This was levied to provide a compensation fund for owners of drinking establishments which were forced to close when the drinks trade became regulated.

The fund became so large that in 1880 Parliament decided to make it available for education purposes. Money from this education fund, Buckinghamshire County Council and local fundraising fairs provided the necessary finance to build the new institution at its original site in Frogmoor Gardens, High Wycombe. More than 10 name changes, and several sites and types of institution later, Bucks achieved university status in 2007 - making this year not only its 125th but also its 10th anniversary of being a University.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Rebecca Bunting added: "For 125 years we have been at the heart of education in High Wycombe, and today our reach also extends to our other campuses. Throughout our history we have changed lives through employment-focused and skills-based teaching which enables students from diverse backgrounds to achieve their ambitions. This may only be our tenth year as a university but we've been transforming lives for 125 years, and long may that continue."

Paul commented: "As a former student at Bucks New University I was delighted to join the anniversary celebrations."

BNU continues to provide outstanding opportunities for their students, and remain focused on producing graduates with modern and relevant experience for the benefit of businesses here in the Thames Valley and further afield. Congratulations to everyone involved."

Wycombe MP Steve Baker said: "The University has developed into an important educational institution not only for Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, but also further afield, winning several important awards. I congratulate the University staff and students past and present for their many achievements and hope for further success in the coming years."

A new bank in town:

Handelsbanken brings local, personal touch back to Windsor

Handelsbanken, the fast-growing relationship bank, recently opened its doors in Windsor, to service the communities of Windsor, Slough and Gerrards Cross.

Branch Manager, Mark Bradbury and his team of experienced local bankers have full responsibility for establishing their new branch in William Street, conveniently located to allow customers to access them easily.

Handelsbanken has over 800 branches in more than 20 countries worldwide. During the recent economic downturn, the bank has been able to more than double its British branch network, today supporting customers in 207 communities across the country.

Alongside Mark Bradbury, the Handelsbanken Windsor team includes Corporate Managers Wesley Willsmore and Fasial Khan and Individual Banking Manager Michael Robak. All team members are well-known within the local professional community.

Mark comments "Our overwhelming focus is on satisfying our customers. We achieve this by offering first class service, competitive products and by always providing our best advice for the customer, untainted by targets or bonus incentives. This brings us close to our customers and we are able to build strong, lasting relationships."

BMW Group announces next step in electrification strategy

The BMW Group has announced that the new battery-electric MINI will be a variant of the brand's core 3-door Hatch model.

This fully electric car will go into production in 2019, increasing the choice of MINI powertrains to include petrol and diesel internal combustion engines, a plug-in hybrid and a battery electric vehicle. The battery electric MINI's electric drivetrain will be built at the BMW Group's e-mobility centre at Plants Dingolfing and Landshut in Bavaria before being integrated into the car at Plant Oxford, which is the main production location for the MINI 3-door Hatch.

In other news, three women at MINI Plant Oxford have been named among the top-100 female 'Rising Stars' of the UK automotive industry. Helen Evans, Amy Druce and Annie Sekulla secured national recognition as part of Autocar magazine's 'Great British Women in the Car Industry' initiative. The aim of the programme, run by Autocar in partnership with the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT), is to identify and promote the automotive sector's most promising female rising stars and highlight career opportunities available.

Left to right: Helen, Amy and Annie



Blake Morgan welcomes eight newly qualified lawyers

Leading law firm Blake Morgan has announced the appointment of eight newly qualified lawyers who have successfully completed periods of recognised training with the firm.

Blake Morgan's trainee programme is recognised for its excellence in the legal industry, having climbed the rankings again this year in The Guardian UK 300 - a comprehensive list of employers that graduates would most like to work for.

In the latest round of NQ appointments, the firm welcomes Amy Fullerton to private law, Charlotte Marshall to employment and Matthew Blakebrough to the corporate team in its London office. On the South Coast, Daniel Conway joins the corporate team, Emma Ferdinando joins employment and Lizzie Dennis joins commercial litigation. The Oxford office welcomes Madeline Mould to employment and Leoni Dempsey to its real estate team.

Blake Morgan also retained 100% of its trainees in the March 2017 qualification process, meaning that overall 94% of trainees have qualified with the firm in 2017.

Blake Morgan runs a number of initiatives to attract the best young talent and give trainees opportunities to succeed in a nurturing training environment. The new recruits will be encouraged to progress their career to associate, senior associate and partner with the support of a personalised professional development plan. Each newly qualified lawyer will be invited to attend ongoing technical legal and business skills training to help them achieve their career goals at the firm.

Commenting on the appointments, Tony Coyne, Training Principal said: "At Blake Morgan we are committed to investing in our people and are delighted to announce the appointment of our newly qualified lawyers. We have been impressed by each of their achievements and their enthusiasm to take on extra responsibility. They have all shown great talent and will be a real asset to the firm. We wish them every success for the future and a long and exciting career at Blake Morgan."

EcoAlly Lighting Education

EcoAlly is a sustainable lighting consultancy that specialises in LED lighting.

Established in 2012, the firm is a family-run business based in Maidenhead with strong ties in the Middle East and operating in five countries. EcoAlly takes the role of educating and informing the market place about LED lighting very seriously. The consultancy shares its valuable skills, knowledge and expertise with business managers, facility managers, electrical retailers and bursars which are based on extensive experience of large-scale projects and LED lighting. EcoAlly educates them about the technology and how it functions, best practice implementation and provides guidance on selecting the right lighting to enhance different environments.

EcoAlly provides LED lighting solutions to enhance our daily environments by saving money through energy

efficiencies which can be reinvested further into other projects. As part of its corporate social responsibility, the company is dedicated to giving back to communities across the UK and beyond.

Reena Sandhu, Sales & Marketing Director, Ecoally said: "Currently, we are

running our 'Lights 4 Learning' scheme which offers free LED lighting solutions for businesses to reduce carbon footprint and improve the environment as a result of the 40-Watt bulb being phased out by 2020. This follows in the footsteps of the already banned 60W and 100W bulbs. This scheme has already proven to be a great success in helping local Thames Valley schools transition to LED lighting."



Blaser Mills law firm recruits first non-lawyer Partner

Blaser Mills' transformation and expansion is showing no signs of slowing after it promoted two key new Partners, making a total of six in 2017.

Hiren Gandhi, Business Development and Marketing Manager, becomes Blaser Mills' first ever non-lawyer to be made Partner, a rare move in the legal sector. Since joining the firm in 2013, Hiren has supported the Senior Management in the development and implementation of an ambitious growth strategy for the firm.

Hiren said, "Today, law firms must be run as businesses, exploiting the existing talent of its lawyers, working alongside those with other specialist knowledge of the market and gifts for business development and strategy. I have thoroughly enjoyed my role since joining the firm and I am proud to be entering the Partnership. I hope to play a significant part in taking the firm on to its next stage of growth."

The firm also welcomes Robert Cain, formerly Director of Cain Law, in to the Partnership. Robert has been tasked to develop Blaser Mills' Corporate and Commercial team and he joins with over 20 years' experience in the industry, with an expertise in technology, motorsport and brand distribution. Prior to establishing his own company in 2009, Robert worked in the Corporate and Commercial teams at several heavy-weight regional and global law firms.



Advice on Closure of the ISDN Network from STL Communications

Did you know that BT Openreach have publicly stated that they intend to close down its ISDN telephone network and migrate services to voice over IP calls (VoIP) by 2025?

This might sound like it's a long way off, but switching to Session Initiation Technology (SIP) technology should be a priority for businesses to future proof your communication lines with your customers and clients. Support for traditional ISDN lines are decreasing and funding and coverage of SIP VoIP lines is ever increasing as businesses look to protect themselves against the looming switch off.

SIP trunking enables businesses to both streamline their communications and dramatically reduce on-going costs. In addition to the commercial benefits, this technology enables the removal of physical telephone lines, therefore reducing restrictions around call capacity and your businesses location. It also allows for employees to extend their phone lines to other mobile devices using apps to increase their accessibility to their customers.

The key SIP benefits are: free calls to local / national and UK mobiles; cheaper line rental charges (up to 50% less than ISDN); unify your data and voice Infrastructure – use a single broadband service for both; keep your telephone numbers, regardless of your geographic location (even if you're moving to a different area code location); disaster recovery / business continuity inherent - control / divert your phone numbers on a live basis online or smartphone app; significantly enhanced service levels compared to ISDN line services <https://www.stlcomms.com/voice/>

Seymour Taylor Wins Apprentice and Young Person Employer of the Year Award

Leading Wycombe based Accountancy firm Seymour Taylor have won Apprentice and Young Person Employer of the year at the Buckinghamshire Business Awards.

The Awards are designed to recognise the most ambitious and forward thinking companies in the county and Seymour Taylor impressed the judges with their ongoing commitment to the recruitment and training of younger members of staff.

Seymour Taylor developed a buddy system within their business to ensure their younger employees feel supported every step of the way which has been instrumental in the development of younger employees. Seymour Taylor further impressed the judges with their track record of retention with many of their staff training with them from a junior level to then become managers and directors within the business. The business still has 16 trainees who started and trained with Seymour Taylor showing the ongoing commitment and development of the staff.

Seymour Taylor team receive the award



Simon Turner Managing Director of Seymour Taylor said "I am so proud that we have won this award which shows how much we value and support our young employees". "We recognise as a business that young employees bring great benefits to our business as they have a lot of new and innovative ideas as well as a great knowledge of technology and software". "The training that we provide opens opportunities for our younger staff in an array of areas". "The award is a fantastic achievement for us and a credit to all the training and development we do with our young employees". "It was made even more special to have won this in our Centenary year".

Newbury College's longest serving principal announces retirement

Dr Anne Murdoch, OBE, who has been Principal and CEO of Newbury College for 16 years, recently announced her intention to retire at the end of the year. As well as the College's longest serving leader, Anne is also the only female principal in its 70-year history.

Previously the Deputy Principal at Farnborough College of Technology, Anne Murdoch joined Newbury College in 2001. Anne oversaw the relocation of the College to its current, purpose-built site on Monks Lane in 2002, and has since developed the campus facilities to include a sports hall, construction training centre, training restaurant and, most recently, an engineering solutions laboratory.

Speaking about her career, Anne said: "It has been an honour and privilege to have spent most of my career within the education sector and my greatest joy to have served as Principal and CEO of Newbury College for over 16 years. The staff, students and partners have been an inspiration to me and I will miss them greatly.

"Now that the College has had another 'good' OFSTED inspection and is in a strong financial position, it's a good time to hand over the leadership. The College is moving into an exciting new phase of development, with a new primary school planned and excellent facilities for science, technology, engineering and maths in place – I have no doubt it will go from strength to strength.



Pitmans Law launches new brand identity and website

The new brand identity and website has been launched to underpin Pitmans' ongoing growth and development as a leading regional law firm.

The new brand is an evolution of their recognised and respected identity, with an adapted logo and enhanced brand positioning. Along with a new website, new marketing materials and promotional products, Pitmans Law Insights have been launched. This range of topical and educational legal insights includes new e-newsletters called Pitmans Points.

John Hutchinson, Pitmans Law Managing Partner, said: "For years we have been known as a great firm of personable, genuine and professional people who build long-lasting relationships with our clients. I'm delighted that our brand and website have been developed to truly reflect the values that have and continue to shape and define the character of our business. The contemporary and engaging website in particular is a huge transformation which differentiates Pitmans Law in our markets".

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