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New CEO appointed at FDR Law

WARRINGTON based full service law firm, FDR Law has appointed Mark Lockett as CEO following the departure of Oliver Burton last December.

Lockett, with over 18 years' experience in the legal sector joins FDR Law from a private consultancy where he worked with law firms advising on strategic requirements and helping them improve efficiency operationally.

He has previously held senior management roles at Foot Anstey LLP, Mills & Reeve and George Davies Solicitors LLP.

He will work closely with the partnership to further develop and execute the firm's business and growth strategy and his responsibilities will include all operations, projects, quality and compliance and on-site business functions supporting the offices in Warrington, Frodsham and

Stockton Heath.

On his move to FDR Lockett said: "I am joining FDR Law at an exciting time and am very much looking forward to developing and growing the business"

Commenting on his appointment, FDR Law Chairman Charles Agar said: "We are delighted to welcome Mark to the business, we were impressed with his considerable depth of experience and we are looking forward to utilising his expertise to develop our business further. We are confident he will be a tremendous asset to FDR Law and his appointment is testament to our commitment to growing the practice"



The Commonwealth - A Force for Good!

by Tricia Francis, Director, Tomorrow The World Ltd

As part of the Commonwealth Day celebration on 12th March, Warrington Chamber took part in the "How to Trade with the Commonwealth" event at Chester Racecourse, organised by the Cheshire & Warrington and Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnerships. The event was also an opportunity to launch the combined Merseyside and Cheshire Commonwealth Association and included a visit by Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex.

With companies always looking for new international trade opportunities, over 300 delegates attended to hear presentations from Commonwealth Trade Commissioners, Export Support Organisations and local businesses keen to tell of their sales experience with Commonwealth markets. These included Crewe-based ice-cream van manufacturers, Whitby Morrison, Knowsley-based power generation solutions providers, Clarke Energy, and Warrington's very own, four-time Queen's Award for Enterprise winner, ICC Solutions, a global leader in the provision of EMV (Chip & PIN) test and certification tools. Students from Great Sankey High School, Warrington also attended to learn more about international trade and the support available to UK businesses. Placing third amongst schools across the North of England in a 2017 'Exporting Excellence' pilot scheme for a new element within the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Skills Section, their enthusiasm for connecting with overseas markets is still very much alive.

So let's just recap on the Commonwealth countries and what they offer in terms of trade opportunities, as, with the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games set to start on 4th April, it would be good to know more than the weightlifting prowess of Nauru and Tuvalu or recall the memorable rugby sevens debut performance by Niue (population 1,190) at the 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games.

There are currently 53 members of

the Commonwealth (this includes The Gambia who rejoined in February this year) representing 2.4 billion citizens and 20% of global trade. UK-Commonwealth trade reached a peak of US\$ 120 billion in 2012, just before the global trade slowdown. Some Commonwealth countries have a higher reliance on trade with the UK than others, for example, 56% of Botswana's exports are to the UK, mainly beef and diamonds; almost all of St Lucia's banana exports are destined for the UK and Belize and Fiji fulfil the majority of our sweet tooth demands for sugar. From a UK perspective, the Office for National Statistics gives our top five Commonwealth export markets in 2016 as Australia (£8.6bn), Canada (£8.3bn) Singapore (£7.2bn), India (£5.7bn) and South Africa (£4.3bn). A collective "Other Africa" (not North) actually comes in above Singapore at £7.6bn and a good proportion of this will be Commonwealth countries, such as Nigeria (£2.1bn). A trade surplus for the UK is derived from all of these apart from India.

So why else do they say we should focus on increasing trade with the Commonwealth? It isn't a formal trading bloc and we can't just expect to sell more because we are a Commonwealth member. Or can we? Standard economic models look at the propensity of countries to trade with each other based on size of economy, distance apart, common borders and language etc. Looking at this voluntary association of 53 countries spanning the globe, a large question mark is thus bound to appear in your mind. However, a 2015 study shows that, when bilateral partners are both Commonwealth members, they tend to trade, on average, 20 per cent more and generate 10 per cent more foreign direct investment flows. This so-called "Commonwealth Advantage" implies bilateral trading costs between Commonwealth partners are, on average, 19 percent lower than those in other country pairings. Add into the equation historic ties, long-established trading relations, similar legal system, predominant use of

English for communication with foreigners, not forgetting the strong diaspora communities, then perhaps there is a case to look at currently under-utilised trade potential with Commonwealth countries.

Why not have a closer look at each Commonwealth country as a potential trading partner, and, whilst we wait for post-Brexit bilateral deals to evolve, let's get involved with the diaspora and help build connections now. The recently combined Merseyside and Cheshire Commonwealth Association may be one such organisation to consider.

As Prince Edward highlighted at the Chester event, outside the UK, "the

enthusiasm for the Commonwealth is somewhat tempered by the fact they don't really quite understand why Britain can be so vague about it...this is a force for good".

For some further reading, especially if you like trade stats, see:

Brexit and Commonwealth Trade, Commonwealth Trade Policy Briefing, November 2016;

Who Does the UK Trade With, Office for National Statistics, 3 January 2018 -<https://visual.ons.gov.uk/uk-trade-partners/>;

The Commonwealth - <http://thecommonwealth.org/>



From the Chief Executive

Colin Daniels

March 2017 Monthly Economic Review

(Based on February 2017 data releases)

Economic growth in Q4 revised up to 0.7% up from the previous estimate of 0.6% and is the fastest rate of growth since Q4 2015 in annual terms.

UK GDP was up by 2.0% in Q4.

Overall the latest GDP estimate confirms that the UK economy enjoyed a solid end to 2016.

The upward revision was driven by manufacturing sector output growing more strongly than previous expected Construction

output rose by 0.2% in Q4 up from the previous estimate of 0.1%. The service sector remains the main driver of UK GDP growth with output from the sector growing by 0.8% in Q4 and accounting for 80% of the growth recorded.



UK Trade Deficit

The UK Trade deficit narrowed by a third last year.

Compared to 2016 the gap between imports and exports reduced by £12.4bn to £28.3bn

over the 12 months according to the Office for National Statistics. The shift followed upward revisions to export levels for the final three months of last year.

The value of exports rose by 12pc to reach £68bn in 2017 surpassing the growth in imports which rose by 9pc to £55bn.

Separately ONS data on production industries including manufacturing offered some positive signs. Manufacturing recorded its ninth consecutive month of growth in January.

UK Growth

Once again the "experts" have got it wrong with The Office for Budget Responsibility having to make a u turn as it increases its forecast for growth just months after growth was suddenly downgraded strong numbers mean the economists expect the watchdog to reverse some of that gloom, a move that would shrink the deficit and deliver a £15bn windfall to the Chancellor.

Growth in the UK's dominant services industry has increased in the last three months at the fastest pace since November 2015 according to a new CBI survey.

Meanwhile confidence among businesses and professional services is growing with a further pickup anticipated in the coming three months.

The Alpha Group is coming to Warrington!

It's lonely at the top... The buck stops here.... the latter is a quote from FDR, I'm not sure about the first one.. but both are very true for the CEO or owner of a smaller SME business.

Who helps you? Who has had experience of 'your' problems, at your level, that you can go to for help, advice and who you can, critically, trust? A great Business Coach can help you to help you, as it were... but who has been there and done it, and will share how they did it?

And will help you stay focussed and accountable so you implement

and complete the actions you 'said' were good, and that you were going to execute?

Because its dead easy, when you're the boss, to either do what you what not what you need to do, or get sucked into the day to day that really should be delegated and managed..... and which you also shouldn't need to do...

The Alpha Group is coming to Warrington!

Successfully piloted for three years in Ringwood, Hampshire, and rolling now out globally, we are an exclusive organisation for just 20 elite, local, business people who are SERIOUS about business growth -

promise you will double the value of your business in 2-3 years of working with us, and dominate your niche - and we've never failed yet!

Call Alan Higham on 0795 636 8899 for more details and an invitation to our Discovery Day or email alan.higham@the-alpha-group.biz



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Colin Daniels, Chief Executive

Warrington & Vale Royal College Estate Review

Warrington & Vale Royal College is set to re-shape the college estate and operational aspects of the organisation. The Winwick Road campus in Warrington is the largest in the college's estate portfolio and will continue to thrive. The Warrington campus is absolutely central to the college strategy for growth.

Since the merger between Warrington Collegiate and Mid Cheshire College, the college has been committed to improving the learning experience for students across all its campuses whilst carefully monitoring current and prospective student recruitment, and changes to income and costs. Whilst significant work has been undertaken to market the curriculum, the college's income is set to reduce and a review of the college's estate has shown that the Hartford campus is seriously under-utilised.

Guided by the principles of best value for money and an enhanced learning experience, the Board of Corporation at the college has resolved to de-commission the majority of the Hartford campus from September 2018, preserving priority provision in engineering and advanced manufacturing. Displaced curriculum currently based at Hartford will be re-located to our state of the art campuses in Winsford - in the vast majority of cases - or Warrington, which will continue to be our key site.

A college spokesperson said:

"As stated in our original merger proposal, we committed to the consolidation of our estate and in-parallel, curriculum specialisation to match the Local Enterprise Partnership's strategic economic priorities and raise skill levels in

response to the government's Industrial Strategy. This, in turn, will facilitate investment in specialist, 'best in class' facilities and resources to meet and exceed industry standards and provide the best possible learning experience. This is part of our strategy to re-shape the Vale Royal aspect of the college's operation and estate, with a focus on Winsford".

"In keeping with the aims of the area based review, we will ensure that Warrington & Vale Royal College is financially sustainable and readily able to respond to any challenges ahead, meeting economic and skills priorities and the needs of the communities we serve, both now and in the future. Above all we aim to provide an excellent learning experience and a breadth of provision across the college estate, providing a range of clear progression routes at all levels, from Entry upwards, into positive destinations, higher level study and/or fulfilling careers".

"We have commenced a consultation with staff and trade unions about these proposals to achieve a strong and sustainable future for the college and to ensure that staffing levels are appropriate. 56 full time equivalents (FTE) out of 390 FTE are at risk but wherever possible, volunteers for redundancy from the affected employees will be sought to mitigate the need for compulsory redundancies".



HR work experience required

My name is Sheena Stuart, I am 40 years old, currently working as a Receptionist.

I had a little girl two years ago and decided I wanted a career rather than a job and most of all to be a role model to her.

The company I work for A. Schulman Limited kindly agreed to sponsor me and I am almost at the end of my Level 3 CIPD qualification looking to gain practical skills within an HR department.

I am excited to begin my career and would appreciate the opportunity to gain some experience within an HR department on a voluntary basis for one week at your convenience. You can contact me at sheena.stuart@schulman.com

Charlotte over the moon after being named joint apprentice of the year

CHAMBER members Rock Oil are delighted to announce Charlotte Thompson was the joint winner of the award for apprentice of the year at the Cheshire High Sheriff's Awards for Enterprise recently.

The event was held on March 22 at Chester Racecourse and supported by the University of Chester. To win the award was both unexpected and gratifying but one fully deserved after such a fantastic start to her Rock Oil career.

Charlotte joined the team some 18 months ago and has since become an integral member of the internal administration team, working well with her peers and offering superb service to the Rock Oil customer base.

Her work ethic and positivity is a credit to her and we look forward to seeing her develop her career with us in the coming years.

Charlotte said: "I am over the moon to have won this award and appreciate all of the help and support from my colleagues at Rock Oil. Apprenticeships are a great way to develop skills and knowledge within the working environment.

I would recommend an apprenticeship to any young person who wants to progress their career path and gain a qualification in their chosen field.

Rock Oil Managing Director Greg

Hewitt added: "Rock Oil has seen first-hand the huge difference that Apprenticeships can make both to young people and to the businesses that they work in. The calibre of all of the shortlisted apprentices

at the awards was exceptional and it's refreshing to see so many businesses supporting the future. We're delighted that Charlotte has been recognised at this level and are extremely proud of her."



Celebrating 50 years making and breaking news

Warrington-worldwide's publishers Orbit News Ltd is celebrating a golden year of making and breaking news in the town.

Founded by David Skentelbery in 1968, and now led by David's son Gary, Orbit News originally set up as a news agency breaking exclusives for the major national newspapers and continues to break news online via a daily online newspaper which runs alongside a range of free, monthly magazines read by more than 100,000 people every month, including its flagship publication Warrington Worldwide.

David – now aged 80 – stills works hand-in-hand with Gary on Orbit News' online and in print publications, which include Lymm Life, Village Life (serving Stockton Heath, Grappenhall, Appleton and High Legh), Culcheth Life, Frodsham Life and Lifestyle.

"My father is an incredible man and, despite being 80, he continues to enjoy the cut and thrust of making and breaking news for our online and offline publications," said Gary, who launched the magazine arm of the company in 1999 with former Warrington Mercury colleague Paul Walker, who heads up production.

In the tradition of many family businesses, David and Gary have received incredible support from their wives Patricia and Janet in accounts, with Gary's daughter

Hannah also recently joining the business to focus on digital content.

"News is in the Skentelbery DNA, it's what we've always done in the 50 years since Orbit News opened its doors for the first time," added Gary.

To mark the company's 50th anniversary, Gary will be raising funds for the Tim Parry Jonathan Ball Peace Foundation through a series of charity fundraising events, including 10k run and 24-hour tennis marathon later this year.

This year sees the 25th anniversary of the Warrington bombing, which claimed the lives of the two young boys. It is something incredibly close to the heart of Gary.

"I remember the day vividly," he said. "I was heading to play in a football match – so I was dressed in my goalkeeper kit – when I received the call into Orbit News from a national newspaper asking us to get to Bridge Street. I rushed to the scene, walking through the back streets and stepped straight into where the bomb had gone off. It was a scene I will never forget

"Despite all the pain the town went through – and the families in

particular – Colin and Wendy have since gone on to become special friends and we're incredibly proud to champion the charity and all the amazing work they do in our 50th year," said Gary, who is now the Peace Foundation's longest serving patron. He also sits on the board of the town's Chamber of Commerce and Warrington Disability Partnership.

He also spent 10 years at the board

at local football club, Warrington Town, serving as Chairman for several years before retiring as a director last year.

As well as a series of fundraising challenges throughout 2018, Orbit News is sponsoring the Warrington Business Awards and will be giving back through a range of events and activities to support for young people and businesses in the town.



LJLA sets out plans for growth through to 2030

Liverpool John Lennon Airport (LJLA) has launched its Strategic Vision to 2030 setting out how it intends to take the business forward, bringing further benefits for the Liverpool City Region, the North West and North Wales.

This strategy incorporates the Airport Master Plan to 2050 which in turn sets out the potential future infrastructure developments required to deliver the forecast expansion of the business and follows last year's public consultation of the draft Airport Master Plan.

Liverpool is one of the UK's major regional airports and plays an important role both as an international gateway and as a major driver of the local economy. It is already a large local employer in its own right and through its supply chain, and enhances the competitiveness of business across the region by providing access to international markets and supporting inbound travel.

The Airport has seen growth in passenger numbers of over 25% since 2014 with 5 million passengers per year now choosing to use Liverpool and has the potential to further enhance its economic and social impact across the region.

The Strategic Vision and Master Plan launched today sets out Liverpool John Lennon Airport's offer to collaborate with key stakeholders across the region to help realise the Airport's potential and maximise its benefits. With a

focus on the passenger experience, industry leading performance and a continued investment in its employees, Liverpool intends to be the Airport the region loves.

Building upon its recent success, the Airport has ambitious plans to serve more destinations including long haul, with passenger forecasts indicating the potential to grow passenger numbers to 7.8 million by 2030. These increases will require a planned investment of around £100m over the next 10 years, in a proposed expansion of the terminal building, additional car parking, passenger facilities including hotels, retail, food and drink services and a potential extension of the runway.

There is also significant potential to grow cargo operations at LJLA, to attract specialist aviation businesses and to develop a cluster of related high quality employment opportunities.

The increase in passenger throughput and investments in the Airport's physical infrastructure has a potential to increase total annual GVA impact to £625 million, and will enable it to support over 12,000 jobs across the City Region by 2030, benefitting the wider Northern Powerhouse too.

Increased employment both on site and within the Liverpool City Region also has the potential to generate around £270m every year in additional GVA through non-aviation development.

Robert Hough, Airport Chairman

commented, "Since investing in the business over 20 years ago, the Peel Group have always believed in this Airport's tremendous potential and today sees the launch of the latest chapter in what has been a tremendous success story for the Airport and the region.

Liverpool is the Faster, Easier, Friendlier Airport of choice for passengers from across the region, millions of whom now choose to take advantage of flying from an Airport with a relaxed, hassle free environment and best in class operational performance. However we cannot afford to stand still in what remains a very challenging economic and competitive environment, which is why we have set out our strategic vision for

the Airport going forward in order to deliver continued success."

New Airport CEO John Irving commented, "Prior to joining the Airport Company I was well aware of Liverpool's recent success story and the excellent reputation it has within the aviation industry.

The Peel Group's continued investment in the Airport has seen Liverpool become one of the UK's stand-out regional airports. By working with stakeholders from across the region to implement our latest strategic vision, there is every reason to believe that by building on our success, this growth can continue, bringing tremendous economic benefits for the City Region, the North West and beyond."



Drone Technology touches down at Blue Whale Media Ltd

Blue Whale Media Ltd is excited to announce recent developments at the web design and media agency in the way of drone technology. Soon the agency will be providing businesses with 5.2K resolution drone footage courtesy of the Inspire 2 company drone.

Currently, the in house Graphic Designer Lewis Jarvis is undergoing a formal qualification to be a certified commercial drone pilot. The qualification is recognised by the CAA (Civil Aviation Authority) and it an absolute must for businesses wanting to take advantage of the remarkable technology.

“I am looking forward to finally getting the drone off the ground for its first commercial flight and capturing footage on behalf of clients. The training to become a commercial drone pilot is not easy and currently takes up a considerable amount of my time. Test runs and practice flights with the Inspire 2 and the Parrot have given me a huge amount of confidence in my growing ability and I believe that this new dynamic to the business has the potential to be massively successful” Lewis Jarvis. In house Graphic Designer and training Drone Pilot at Blue Whale Media.

The up and coming service of drone commercial flight footage has already begun to attract attention, with several local businesses enquiring after seeing posts on Blue Whale Media’s social

media channels and recent blogs regarding drone technology.

Some of the businesses include golf courses and leisure centres, caravan parks, property developers amongst many more.

They feel however, that many businesses can certainly benefit from high quality, aerial footage which makes the perfect basis for promotional videos or advertising campaigns.

Prior to now, Blue Whale Media has built a reputation within the community of Warrington for their work with local businesses. They are known for creating bespoke websites as well as designing and implementing online marketing strategies for small to medium sized businesses that are seeking to establish or develop their online presence.

“we are living in the digital age, businesses just like most aspects of modern life, are moving towards digital representation rather than traditional methods. Having a website is a necessity if you want to truly compete within your industry. People however, are missing out and their businesses

are underperforming due to an unwillingness to take the plunge into the online world. Blue Whale Media seeks to rectify this, with a simplistic and transparent approach to web design and digital marketing that could reassure even the greatest of technophobes. In essence, we want to make well designed websites, effective digital marketing and SEO accessible to the masses, not just the few with large budgets and national sized businesses”. Gary Sweeney, Managing Director at Blue Whale Media.

The recent branch into drone technology is an example of how the agency continues to develop

and react to current demand within the technology marketplace.

You can expect even more new and innovative services to become available in the future, so be sure to keep up to date with the Birchwood based technology agency.

If you wish to speak to the agency yourself about a potential project, you can reach them by calling: 01925 552050 or by sending an email to: hello@bluewhalemedia.co.uk. Blue Whale Media offer services relating to web design, web development, graphic design, content and copy writing, drone technology, animation and much more.



VAT ruling on Nesquik fruit-flavoured powders provides food for thought

With Nestlé recently losing its appeal in relation to the VAT treatment of Nesquik fruit flavoured powders, it has got Alison Birch, Director of VAT at Mitchell Charlesworth thinking about the weird and wonderful subject of VAT and food.

Nestlé argued that as the flavoured powders are to encourage the drinking of milk, they should be zero-rated. The chocolate powder is already zero-rated but this has nothing to do with the fact that is linked to the drinking of milk;

rather because it contains cocoa which is zero-rated as a food. The Upper Tier Tribunal examined the law but dismissed the appeal. Therefore, we have a situation where we have 3 similar products and two are subject to VAT but one is not.

So what other interesting rules are there?

Most people are aware of the Jaffa Cake situation (this even had a mention on Coronation Street many years ago). A Jaffa Cake is

zero-rated but a chocolate digestive, which also has chocolate covering on the top, is standard rated. Why is this? Well a Jaffa Cake is, as the name would suggest, a cake which is zero-rated (regardless of how much chocolate is on the cake). A biscuit is only zero-rated if it is not partly or wholly covered in chocolate and as a chocolate digestive is partly covered in chocolate, it does not qualify for zero-rating. So how much chocolate is required to be partly covered in chocolate? It is accepted that a biscuit with only a few decorative dots (e.g. a gingerbread man) is not partly covered and therefore zero-rated and a chocolate chip cookie which could contain as much chocolate as a chocolate digestive is also zero rated because it isn't covered in chocolate, just contains it. Additionally, if the biscuit is covered in caramel or some product not similar in taste and appearance to chocolate, it can qualify for zero-rating.

Snacks seem to be the main area of confusion and we discuss below the issues with crisps, nuts and other items for snacking. Crisps made mostly from potato are standard rated but crisps made from cereals can be zero-rated unless the cereals are 'swollen'. For example, tortilla chips are zero-rated as they are made from corn and not swollen but monster munch which are also made of corn are standard rated because they are swollen.

Vegetable crisps (which are neither potato or cereal) are zero-rated, as are Twiglets and Mini Cheddars. Salted or roasted nuts are standard rated but nuts in their shells are zero-rated. This in theory makes it quite straightforward (although pistachio nuts are salted even when they are in their shells) but there is the added complication that if these products are held out for sale for home baking then they can still be zero-rated. This point also applies to sweetened dried fruit which is standard rated when held out for snacking but if it is held out for sale for snacking and home baking, then it will be zero-rated.

Confused? Understandably so. The VAT liability of food items can be complicated and Mitchell Charlesworth's VAT team has significant experience of reviewing product listings to determine the correct VAT rates which in numerous occasions has resulted in VAT reclaims. The team has worked with supermarkets, pharmacies and coffee shops. With the latter it's not just because of the cakes; it's about the drinks too because if they sell a cold, milk based drink to be taken away these are zero-rated. If it doesn't contain milk, is hot or doesn't leave the premises then it is standard rated.

Determining whether you are charging the correct rate of VAT on the products you sell can sometimes require additional support.



Birchwood Park celebrates 20th anniversary with record occupancy

Leading North West business destination, Birchwood Park, is celebrating its 20th anniversary with a record occupancy level of 96 per cent.

Today marks 20 years since MEPC's purchase of Birchwood Technology Park in 1998. Since then, the park (now owned by Warrington Borough Council) has almost tripled in size, providing 1.1million sq ft of office and warehouse space. A total of 33 new buildings have been developed – most recently a 70,000 sq ft mixed-use industrial development at Cavendish Avenue.

Over 165 businesses and 6,000 employees now call Birchwood Park home, ranging from start-up's and SMEs to global corporates. The park is also one of the key sites in the Cheshire Science Corridor Enterprise Zone and is nationally recognised as the UK's hub for the Nuclear Services industry. High profile firms include Rolls-Royce Nuclear, Sellafield, Wood Plc (formerly Amec Foster Wheeler) and Atkins.

In the last 18 months, the park has been bolstered by a raft of lettings to international businesses, including Ricoh, Müller, TATA and Dr Schär.

To celebrate the 20th anniversary, the park has created a series of special events over the coming months, commencing today with the opening of 'The Woodshed' café located at the award-winning Bridgewater Place development. The grab-and-go service will offer Starbucks coffee and artisan street food, as well as traditional sandwiches. The new offering is the park's latest investment in onsite amenities and has been introduced in response to occupier demand.

Martin O'Rourke, commercial director at Birchwood Park, commented: "Since the park's inception it has been driven by our ethos that businesses should expect more from their workplace – be that through excellent amenities, transport connections or a real community feel. It's this ethos that has seen us repeatedly invest in creating a vibrant business environment to rival any location in the North West, and it's this which has continued to prove a real draw for occupiers."

Existing amenities onsite include conference, meeting and event space at The Centre, a fully equipped gym, a purpose-built nursery, and a number of restaurant and drink outlets across the park.

Martin continued: "Looking ahead, we have over 800,000 sq ft of development space with outlined

planning consent on the park and we expect to continue our growth so we can accommodate even more businesses in the years to come. Wellbeing will continue to be a leading focus for us – we firmly believe that happier staff are more productive and will be doing all we can to facilitate the best working environment for our occupiers."



Blue Air celebrate 12 months based at LJLA

Blue Air are celebrating their first anniversary since opening their base at Liverpool John Lennon Airport (LJLA) 12 months ago.

Liverpool became Blue Air's eighth European base in March 2017 with the basing of one of the airline's 144 seat Boeing 737-700 aircraft at LJLA. This aircraft has operated from Liverpool to Rome, Milan and Alicante throughout the past 12 months and carried over 140,000 passengers in what has been a successful year for the carrier.

Blue Air also operate flights from the Romanian cities of Bucharest, Cluj and Bacau carrying a further 100,000 passengers over the past year on these routes too.

As well as benefiting the region's travellers, Blue Air's decision to base one of their aircraft at Liverpool had an immediate impact on the local economy too, with the airline creating 38 jobs for pilots, cabin crew and engineers. Whilst also providing direct access for more overseas visitors to the Liverpool City Region.

The region's travellers have been full of praise for the airline and their support has helped to encourage Blue Air to add more destinations from Liverpool, with flights due to start in June 2018 to Malaga and Palma.

All Blue Air passengers flying out of Liverpool were treated to special anniversary cakes as part of the celebrations.

Tudor Constantinescu, Blue Air's Chief Commercial Officer said, "The tremendous Liverpool welcome we received 12 months ago has been followed by strong levels of support that have enabled us to further expand our operations from Liverpool.

Our passengers appreciate the great value for money and high levels

of customer service that we offer and we look forward to continued growth at Liverpool over the next 12 months."

Paul Winfield, Director of Aviation Development for LJLA commented, "We are delighted to welcome Blue Air's first anniversary of their base operations at Liverpool John Lennon Airport. They are very much part of the airport family and we are delighted to see new routes to be launched later this year to Malaga and Palma.

"Their complimentary on board food and drink allow passengers from across the North West to travel to their favourite destinations in style, from the Fastest, Friendliest and Easiest Airport in the North West."

Aimee beats the odds to secure Cambridge offer



A STUDENT who enjoys solving linguistic problems has conquered one of the biggest challenges of all – how to secure a place at Cambridge.

Aimee Cartwright, who is currently studying A-Levels at Priestley College, faced a day of interviews and tests at the university before receiving an offer.

In doing so, she becomes the first member of her immediate family to secure a place at university.



LJLA's Aviation Development Manager Declan Maguire (far left) and Paul Winfield (3rd from right) join Blue Air cabin crew to celebrate today's anniversary.

2018 brings continued growth for LJLA

The first two months of 2018 have seen a continued increase in passenger throughput at Liverpool John Lennon Airport (LJLA) with passenger numbers up 3% for the year to date compared to the same period in 2017.

With 2% growth in January and 4% growth in February, almost 20,000 more passengers have chosen to use Liverpool so far this year compared to last and it has been the busiest January and February period since 2010.

A mix of warmer and colder leisure destinations have been proving popular with the region's travellers. Many passengers have been choosing to take advantage of flights to warmer destinations including Alicante in southern Spain and Lanzarote in the Canary Islands, whilst others have been heading off in search of even more snow despite the recent wintery spell, with destinations such as Geneva and Salzburg proving popular with the region's skiers.

Growth is expected to continue during the year with six new routes having already been announced from Liverpool for 2018 with Blue

Air to operate new flights to Palma and Malaga, easyJet to serve Pula, Dalaman and Palermo and Ryanair to fly to Shannon.

Paul Winfield, Director of Aviation Development for LJLA commented, "2018 is already proving to be another good year for the Airport with encouraging passenger numbers using Liverpool. The Airport has seen 70,000 more passengers use Liverpool than in February three years ago.

The North West market is the largest aviation market outside London and by focusing on our best in class operational performance and high levels of customer satisfaction, Liverpool is becoming the 'Faster, Easier, Friendlier' airport of choice for more and more passengers as passengers take advantage of direct flights to over 60 short haul destinations."



Aspire Computers welcome new IT Support Apprentice

CHAMBER members Aspire Computers Ltd., as part of their continued commitment for growth and development, are proud to announce the addition of an IT technical apprentice to their existing team.

Ethan Clarke aged 18, joined the team in March providing in-house support, initially manning the helpdesk and performing remote system diagnostics and repairs. His two year apprenticeship is supported by Baltic Training Services who provide the Level 3 Infrastructure Technician qualification, with experienced IT staff at Aspire adding practical experience and mentoring in their central Warrington workshop.

Aspire Director, Geoff Plass commented, "We are very pleased to

welcome Ethan who has integrated very well with the team so far. We look forward to partnering with Baltic Training for completion of another apprenticeship, following on from the positive experience gained during Sophy Bostock's Social Media and Digital Marketing apprenticeship."

Aspire Computers Ltd. work with Warrington based businesses providing IT support, hardware supply, data backups, enhanced security, cloud based hosted exchange email, Microsoft Office software, websites and social media support.

Contact Aspire Computers on 01925 251143

Website: www.aspire-computers.com



TUI UK launches new Dalaman route from Liverpool for Summer 2019

TUI UK's first programme launch after last year's re-brand unveils a new route to Dalaman, Turkey from Liverpool John Lennon Airport for summer 2019.

The new summer programme for customers travelling from Liverpool and the surrounding area next summer reflects the resurgence of Turkey.

TUI UK's Commercial Director Richard Sofer said: "Summer 2019 is the most ambitious programme we have ever introduced. We are focusing firmly on expanding access to our amazing range of holidays through an extended regional flying programming concentrated on the core destinations holidaymakers want to travel to, while offering the flexibility of holiday duration they want.

"We've increased our capacity out

of Liverpool John Lennon Airport adding 6,000 additional seats and launching our new route to Dalaman for summer 2019."

Paul Winfield, Director of Aviation Development for LJLA commented: "This latest development by TUI at Liverpool is great news for the Airport with this new service to Dalaman complementing TUI's existing services to Palma and Ibiza from here. This new departure will give many more TUI customers the opportunity to choose to fly from Liverpool - the region's faster, easier, friendlier airport."

Thousands of free kids' places will be available across all TUI and First Choice holidays and deposits will be just £50pp short and mid haul and £125pp long haul. Summer 2019 holidays will be on sale from Thursday 5th April.

EU businesses say goodbye to UK suppliers as Brexit bites

A Brexit survey carried out by the UK organisation which represents the procurement profession has found that 63% of EU customers are moving away from placing business with UK companies.

The survey by the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) found that nearly two-thirds of EU businesses expect to move their supply chain out of the UK. Mark Parker, Head of Centre for Aspire Procurement Training Ltd, who are the CIPS Centre of Excellence for Warrington commented, "This will significantly reduce the current amount which the UK exports to the EU and is further evidence of the damage Brexit will cause to the UK economy. If we lose 63% of our £160 billion EU export market then we will all pay the price for Brexit."

The survey also found that two-fifths (40%) of UK businesses are looking to replace their EU suppliers

25% of large UK businesses* have spent over £100,000 preparing their supply chains for Brexit

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of EU businesses who work with UK suppliers expect to move some of their supply chain out of the UK as a result of Brexit according to a survey from the Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply (CIPS). This is a dramatic shift from May, when just 44% of EU businesses were expecting to move out of the UK.

The survey of 1,118 supply chain managers in the UK and Europe also finds that two fifths (40%) of UK businesses with EU suppliers have begun the search for domestic suppliers to replace their EU partners, up from 31% in May. Just over a quarter (26%), however, are taking the opposite approach and investing more time to strengthen their relationship with valuable suppliers on the Continent.

The shift comes as the Brexit negotiations appear to be deadlocked with half of UK businesses saying they are becoming less confident that the UK and EU will secure a deal which continues to offer 'free and frictionless trade', while 35% of UK businesses feel unable to prepare due to the lack of progress on a future trade relationship.

This uncertainty has meant that one in five (20%) UK businesses with EU suppliers have found it difficult to secure contracts that run after March 2019. Indeed, despite a formal separation still being some time away, nearly one in ten (8%) of UK businesses said their organisation has already lost contracts as a result of Brexit with 14% believing part or all of their

organisation's operations will no longer be viable.

Supply chain managers are clear where the Government should focus as the next phase of the negotiations begin with 73% saying keeping tariffs and quotas between the UK and Europe to a minimum should be the main priority for the negotiations.

The supply chain cost of Brexit

UK businesses suffering extra costs as a result of currency fluctuation 64%

EU businesses who plan to move their supply chains out of the UK 63%

UK businesses struggling to secure contracts that run until after March 2019, 20%

UK businesses that have postponed or cancelled contracts due to the uncertainty created 15%

Large* UK businesses who have spent more than £100,000 preparing for Brexit 25%

The cost of preparing for Brexit

A quarter (25%) of UK businesses with more than 250 employees* have already spent at least £100,000 preparing their supply chain for the split. These costs

come in addition to the daily impact of currency fluctuation with 64% of UK businesses saying this has made their supply chains more expensive to manage. Businesses are still not doing enough to adequately prepare however. Only 14% of UK businesses with EU suppliers feel like they are sufficiently prepared for Brexit.

Gerry Walsh, Group CEO, CIPS, commented: "The Brexit negotiating teams promise that progress will be made soon, but it is already too late for scores of businesses who look like they will be deserted by their European partners. British businesses simply cannot put their suppliers and customers on hold while the negotiators get their act together.

"While the TV cameras are fixed on Brussels, the deals which will determine the future prosperity of Britain and Europe are being struck behind closed doors in businesses large and small. The lack of clarity coming from both sides is already shaping the British economy of the future – and it does not fill businesses with confidence.

"The success of the negotiations should not be measured on the final deal only but on how quickly both sides can provide certainty. The clock is ticking."

Tim and Johnathan did not die in vain – Warrington remembers 25 years on

THE two youngsters who died following the IRA bomb attack on Warrington 25 years ago today, Tim Parry and Johnathan Ball – did not die in vain.

These were the words of Tim's father Colin Parry as he recalled the tragedy which changed the lives of many when two bombs exploded on Bridge Street, killing the two boys and injuring more than 50 shoppers.

A special service of remembrance, attended by HRH The Princess Royal, Princess Anne, was led by former Borough Minister Revd. Stephen Kingsnorth, with music from pupils from Great Sankey High School and Barrowhall Primary School and Warrington Male Voice Choir.

Hundreds of people lined the streets to pay their respects as Warrington again showed the world how to respond to atrocity with dignity.

Addressing the crowds Mr Parry said: "This is a poignant day for the families of those killed and injured and reflect with pride on how as a town and victims responded with dignity.

"Wendy and I were determined that Tim did not die in vain. Looking back at how events unfolded I can tell you neither Tim or Johnathan died in vain."

The memorial service was Led by Freeman of the Borough, The Rev Stephen Kingsnorth M.A., until recently Warrington Borough

Minister, a town centre clergyman 25 years ago.

The Warrington Male Voice Choir sang 'Across the Bridge of Hope.'

There were reflections from children of 25 years ago: Tim Parry's friend Gareth Boldsworth and Ruth Picucci, whose handprint is moulded in the River of Life

Words were also said by Tim Parry's nieces, Isla and Evie, accompanied by Olivia and Arthur and Hannah Evans, daughter of Bronwen, a victim of the tragedy who died a year after the bombing, accompanied by her sister Harriet Vickers

Reflections were led by The Rev Ian Elliott & Canon Christopher Cunningham, town centre clergy in Warrington, 25 years ago:

Following a minutes silence Sankey High School and Barrow Hall Primary School sang John Lennon's 'Imagine.'

Faith leaders then lead a blessing...

The Chair of the Council of Faiths, Afthkar Quayyum;

The Free Church Moderator's Representative, The Rev David Easton;

Of the Roman Catholic Church, Bishop of the Liverpool Archdiocese,

The Rt Rev Thomas Williams; Of the Anglican Church, the Bishop of Warrington, the Rt Rev Richard Blackburn;

A Final Song was then performed by the Male Voice and Schools' choirs: "Something inside so strong"

Following the service on Bridge Street HRH the Princess Royal, visited Warrington Peace Centre, where she met peace campaigners Colin and Wendy Parry and other

victims and their families.

Former deputy leader of the council Cllr Mike Hannon and Rev Kingsnorth were both made Honorary Patrons following the event in recognition of their great work towards peace and reconciliation.



UKTI e-Exporting programme

By joining UKTI e-Exporting Programme, UK companies and brands can reach consumers through e-marketplaces.

An e-market is an online location that provides a platform for companies of all sizes to do business through e-commerce.

Popular e-marketplaces include Amazon, Tmail and ebay. UKTI have identified over 400 e-marketplaces worldwide.

When you realise your filters AR-GON and production comes to a halt

Downtime is dangerous to any manufacturing group. After all, the old saying that compares time to money is true. If people or machines are idle, then products are not being made, which certainly affects the business's bottom line — minimizing manufacturing downtime makes money for a company.

So when a world leading industrial gas company came into a critical situation where production stopped of their Argon manufacturing line due to having no replacement in-line filter – Croft Filters Ltd (Warrington) came to the rescue.

Croft is a bespoke filter manufacturer who can also react quickly to supply an urgent requirement within hours of the request from the customer by use of their priority service. In this particular case the gas company provided the dimensions and specifications for the filter needed (a combined mesh and perforated plate constructed withes hat strainer) and Croft had the filter

completed within 6 hours ready for collection as requested by the customer. As the normal process of obtaining such a filter from most suppliers can be anything from 3 days to 6 weeks Croft were the obvious choice to help and the gas company were up and running the next morning back to normal.



Ryanair adds Paphos to destinations

Ryanair have added Paphos in Cyprus to their growing list of destinations from Liverpool with flights to the Mediterranean island to start at the end of October, for the Winter 2018/19 season.

Flights will operate twice weekly on Sundays and Wednesdays, commencing on 28th October 2018 with prices starting at just £38.99 one way with passengers able to book flights as far out as March 2019.

Paphos takes the number of routes operated by Ryanair from Liverpool to 33 and follows last month's news that Ryanair will recommence flights to Shannon from Liverpool for Summer 2018.

Paul Winfield, Director of Aviation Development for LJLA commented, "We are delighted to see Ryanair take the opportunity to add flights to Paphos from Liverpool which is on one of the largest unserved markets from here.

This new service will allow passengers from across the North West to fly to Paphos from Liverpool John Lennon Airport and enjoy a best in class passenger experience."

Ryanair's Robin Kiely added, "We are pleased to launch this new route from Liverpool to Paphos in Cyprus with a twice weekly service from the end of October, as part of our Winter 2018 schedule which goes on sale at the Ryanair.com website.

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- Increase the reach of your brand globally
- Identify new e-marketplace around the world
- Set up on e-marketplaces around the world
- Set up on e-marketplaces quickly
- Attend events and webinars about retail/e-commerce opportunities

How to Join

Email UKTI's retail team

consumerretail@ukti.gsi.gov.uk if you're interested in joining the programme or need more information.

UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) with its team of expert advisers located across the globe, can help you fulfil your international ambitions. It can assist you at all stages of the business planning cycle, from inception to completion. Whether you're a seasoned exporter or just beginning to expand overseas, talking to UKTI is one of the best moves your company can make.

Through a range of unique services, including tailored support programmes, participation at selected trade fairs, outward missions and providing bespoke market intelligence, we can help you crack foreign markets and get to grips quickly with overseas regulations and business practice.

For further information please contact Warrington Chamber of Commerce on 01925-715150 or info@warrington-chamber.co.uk

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Ice Skating success for University of Chester student

A University of Chester student has won the Trophy d'Ecosse in Dumfries, Scotland with her synchronised ice skating team, Bladerunners.

The Trophy d'Ecosse is an International Skating Union (ISU) competition for teams of synchronised ice skaters. Bladerunners achieved first place in the adult category of the competition, beating international teams from across the world.

Gina Rimmer, aged 20, studies Marketing with Business and is part of the winning synchronised ice skating adult team, Bladerunners. She said: "We were over the moon at beating our main competition, who ended up coming second. Even though we were competing against each other, it was a very friendly and supportive atmosphere. It was a lovely competition with lots of international teams - we even got to see the world champions Nexxice skate, which was just incredible."

Synchronised ice skating is a team sport where up to 20 skaters move together as one unit to create flawless routines. The team performs to music and includes specific technical ice skating elements and dance steps.

Bladerunners also came second at the British Championships in Nottingham earlier this year, achieving a personal best score. The British Championships are held every year for all abilities, from beginners to seniors, and offers

the opportunity to compete in the World Championships.

Gina said: "I find the British Championships very exciting as each year it grows with more teams competing. This year there were 63 teams competing in a number of categories with a total of 1,262 skaters. Since Dancing On Ice has come back on TV, we have lots of the stars training at our rink, Altrincham Planet Ice, including Brooke Vincent from Coronation Street. She even came to a training session of ours and skated with us all!"

Gina is coached by Sam Ozard, a British junior medallist for Great Britain, and international junior and senior competitor. Sam said: "It has been wonderful to see Gina grow in confidence as she has skated with her Synchro teams through the years, not only in her own skating ability but in personality too. She has shown great dedication, training at 6am for years and her hard work has paid off, resulting in her becoming the British Adult Champion 2017 and has successfully helped her team improve over the last year to gain more skills and improve their score at the British Championships 2018.

"She has developed her own personal knowledge and successfully gained her Level One Coaching Certificate and has been a good help to me with the younger skaters. It is a pleasure to teach her."

In total Gina has won 22 medals, seven of which were gold. She won two of these gold medals at the British Championships in 2010 and 2017. She has travelled to Scotland, Belgium and Hungary to compete in various competitions where she has competed against teams from around the world. Gina competes alongside University of Chester alumna Alice Williamson in the same team.



Left – right: Sofia Farrugia, Gina Rimmer and Alice Williamson at the Trophy d'Ecosse.

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