



Insight

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The Journal of the

WARRINGTON CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

in association with
VALE ROYAL
The heart of Cheshire

The very best of Cheshire business celebrated at Awards Evening



THE best of Cheshire business has been celebrated in this year's High Sheriff's Awards for Enterprise.

The Awards celebrate the initiative, innovation and impact of the region's organisations – and the people behind them. Now in their 15th year, the Cheshire High Sheriff's Awards for Enterprise, held in partnership with the University of Chester, have established a reputation as the premier business awards for Cheshire, Halton and Warrington.

The winners were announced by Chancellor of the University, Dr Gyles Brandreth, at the University's Queen's Park site with the prestigious event introduced by the High Sheriff of Cheshire, Robert Mee DL, and the University's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Eunice Simmons.

Professor Simmons said: "These Awards very much align with our aspirations for the University, its students and communities. One of the key themes of our Citizen Student Strategy is building social capital. For us, this means finding new and creative ways to 'open doors' for our students. We want to ensure that our students and graduates have the connections they need to create and seize opportunities for their personal, academic and career development.

"Enabling our students to define their development in this way means that 'success' emerges as a much more meaningful picture than academic achievement alone. All of the businesses involved contribute to this, and it's so important to recognise and celebrate that."

The High Sheriff of Cheshire, Robert Mee DL, said: "It is really inspiring to see so many incredible businesses and business leaders here in Cheshire creating employment and opportunity in our region. Now in their 15th year, I am extremely proud of the Awards and would like to thank our generous sponsors, everyone involved in the organisation and everyone who entered and took part."

The winners were:

- The High Sheriff's Award for Excellence in Enterprise, sponsored by the University of Chester was presented to Altimex Ltd, an electronics manufacturing and fibre optics solutions company, based in Ellesmere Port.

Davinder Lotay, Managing Director of Altimex, said: "We are absolutely thrilled to have won the High Sheriff's Award for Enterprise this year. It is a humbling commendation of the hard work the team puts into the business and an acknowledgement of the strategies we have in place. Winning this award is an encouraging motivator to fuel our determination to continue to strive further with our business."

The runner-up was HCD Economics, based in Daresbury, which was created out of an alliance between the public and third sectors in response to the ever-growing demand for economic analysis within healthcare and specifically the need for health economics and business intelligence within the public and third sectors.

- High Sheriff's Award for Exceptional Start-Up, sponsored by Warrington Borough Council, was presented to Bio&Me, based in Chester, which makes 'gut-loving' prebiotic granola.

Jon Walsh, CEO and Co-Founder of Bio&Me, said: "Bio&Me winning the best start-up award was a huge honour for my co-founder Dr Megan Rossi (The Gut Health Doctor), the team here in Chester and myself. We work so hard to make the best, tastiest gut health granolas, porridges, and yoghurts possible, then to have it validated by external experts is just wonderful."

The runner-up was Sean Bailey Wellness CIC, a health and wellbeing coaching and training company in Runcorn.

- The High Sheriff's Award for Digital Innovation, sponsored by Driveworks, was presented to Think Beyond, a management consultancy based in Knutsford.

Mercè Cozens, Co-Founder at Think Beyond, said: "The team and I are delighted to have won the Digital Innovation award for our neuroscience research services on how we can predict or measure emotional response to brands, campaigns, experiences (customer experiences and employee experiences) as well as packaging. Thank you to the High Sheriff and the University of Chester for this fabulous award."

The runner up was Aptus Clinical, a specialist full-service Clinical Contract Research Organisation (CRO,) based in Alderley Edge.

- The High Sheriff's Award for Outstanding Family Business, sponsored by Roberts Bakery, was presented to Amelia Knight, a beauty brand based in Knutsford.

Mark Salmon, UK Manufacturing Director and Group Technical Director at Amelia Knight, said: "I was honoured to collect the award for Outstanding Family Business. We really are a family business with the other Directors being my Mum, Dad, three brothers and sister. However, we couldn't achieve anything without our amazing colleagues right across the business. Our Chairman, David Salmon, believes passionately in a family business ethos as well as engaging and helping local communities."

The runner up was Hydraulics Online Ltd, a hydraulic equipment supplier in Alsager.

- The Young Business Person of the Year, sponsored by Mornflake, was presented to Matt Pyke, from Fly High Media in Hooton.

Matt Pyke, Founder and Managing Director of Fly High Media said: "I am absolutely delighted to receive such a prestigious award. The award is not only for me, but my fantastic team at Fly High Media who consistently provide an excellent digital marketing service to our clients."

The runner-up was Christopher Bullock from QV Bioelectronics in Alderley Edge.

Laura Columbine, Programme Lead at We Mind the Gap, said: "We feel privileged to have won a High Sheriff's Award for outstanding community engagement, recognising the genuine care and support our team have shown to those who need it most."

The runner-up was Sean Bailey Wellness CIC, a health and wellbeing coaching and training company in Runcorn.

- The Apprentice of the Year, sponsored by Barlows, was Aiden Melbourne, from Chester-based chartered accountants Shaw Austin. The runners-up were James Ellison from Essar and Ben Edwards from Encirc 360.

Michael Robinson, Client Portfolio Manager at Shaw Austin Chartered Accountants, said: "I am really pleased for Aiden that his hard work has been recognised by winning this year's High Sheriff's Awards

for Enterprise – Apprentice of the Year. This is a testament to his hard work to date whilst working at Shaw Austin and studying towards his AAT (Association of Accounting Technicians) qualification."

- The High Sheriff's Survive and Thrive Award for Charity was presented to My CWA, which offers domestic abuse support and advice and is based in Crewe.

Beverly Wrighton, Deputy Chief Executive of My CWA, said: "For over 40 years, My CWA has helped people across Cheshire to live free from the fear of domestic abuse. Our dedicated team of staff and volunteers work tirelessly in often difficult circumstances and the pandemic presented us with exceptionally trying circumstances. However, our dedicated team remained creative and tenacious in ensuring our clients continued to have access to the support they needed and felt safe in a time where isolation has been an issue across our communities. We are honoured to have their efforts recognised by the prestigious High Sheriff of Cheshire's Awards for Enterprise."

The runner-up was Chapter (West Cheshire) Ltd, a mental health charity based in Ellesmere Port.

- The Award for Outstanding Cheshire and Warrington Business Leader, sponsored by Cheshire Business Leaders, was Adrian Curry of Encirc 360 based in Elton, the only company to offer a full 360 approach to the beverage supply chain, creating flexibility, support and minimising carbon impact.

Adrian Curry, MD of Encirc, said: "I am honoured to have received this wonderful accolade. My thanks go to the whole team at Encirc, without whom this would never have been possible. We have begun an incredible journey to represent our region in the best way we can, and lead the decarbonisation of our sector globally. I very much look forward to ensuring that we keep Cheshire and Warrington firmly on the map with some very exciting times ahead."

The winners were decided by a panel of judges made up of senior members of the business community. All the shortlisted finalists were invited to the Awards evening.

The evening concluded with thanks from Lady Alexis Redmond MBE, Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire.

From the Chief Executive

Stephen Fitzsimons



THE 1970s was a decade to forget in many ways, not least for some horrendous hair-cuts.

Economically, the UK became the "Sick man of Europe" with a number of serious issues, including the double whammy of stagflation – a stagnating economy with high inflation. With price rises of 9%, GDP shrinkage of 0.1% and looming industrial action, it is starting to feel like the decade that fashion forgot.

Whilst there was no accounting for some global shocks such as the war in Ukraine, others were flagged to the government many months ago.

The cost of raw materials, recruitment, exporting and energy have been rising for the

last 18 months, with Covid and Brexit largely to blame. Belatedly, support has been offered to the public to tackle the cost of living crisis, however businesses continue to face similar challenges, with very little assistance.

On a more positive note, the Chamber has been contributing to local levelling up discussions and how best to spend the Shared Prosperity Fund from central government. This is the replacement to European Union funding and although it's about a third less than we received previously, there are less restrictions on how to spend it.

Business support is a key focus and we'll be exploring further how we can better support Warrington

based companies, especially new start-ups. We have a proud history of enterprise in the town and we want to encourage the business leaders of the future.

It only seems like a few weeks since we successfully delivered the Warrington Business Conference, however it was last November (!) and we are already planning the next one, with the 16th September pencilled in.

We incorporated a green economy panel discussion last time and may well extend this further into an overall conference theme. Do let us know what you would like to see and hear on the day because it is of course your event.

We will also have sponsorship opportunities available to those

who want to increase brand awareness to an audience of local businesses.

So we still face tough times ahead as the national economy continues to splutter, however locally there are plenty of positives to keep our businesses growing.

Take care,

Stephen

Healthcare specialist scoops top business accolade

WARRINGTON-based preventative healthcare specialist, PAM Group, has scooped a special Business of the Year Award for companies with turnover of £25m-£40m.

The award was presented to chief executive James Murphy and his team at a ceremony held at the Kimpton Clocktower Hotel in Manchester, hosted by broadcaster Nicholas Owen.

James said: "It was a huge honour to have been nominated alongside some fantastic and successful businesses.

"To have won is a great achievement and recognises the hard work put in by all our team to make PAM Group the success it is.

"I am so proud of the 650 colleagues who have built and delivered such an amazing business for our clients and their employees, and one that provides us all with long-term, secure jobs.

"We are immensely proud to be based in the north west and continue to invest and create employment opportunities across the region, and beyond."

PAM Group is one of the largest

occupational health, employee assistance programme and wellbeing providers in the UK. It offers a range of integrated services to public and private sector clients, supporting more than one million employees at over 1,000 businesses and organisations.

The group's services include absence management, physiotherapy, employee assistance programmes, psychological support, corporate health assessments and neurodiversity assessments, drug and alcohol screening.

It also has a retail arm which supplies fitness, exercise and rehabilitation equipment to consumers, sports clubs and sports and physiotherapy professionals.

PAM is looking to double turnover to £80m over the next few years through continued organic growth and acquisitions. Last year the company received backing from private equity firm LDC to support its growth and the launch of new products and services.

The group has seen revenues surge from £29m in 2020 to £40m in 2021. The pandemic has

brought the issue of employee health and wellbeing into sharp focus, leading to an expanded customer base alongside the introduction of new services.

Over the past 12 months PAM has undertaken a multi-million pound investment in a new warehouse and office complex, made a number of key senior appointments and created dozens of jobs.

Last month, PAM unveiled a social value plan outlining a range of

measures to help its staff, clients, stakeholders and communities to live better, healthier and happier lives.

The blueprint includes giving staff 1.5 days' paid leave each year to volunteer with local organisations, a new charity fund giving employees the opportunity to nominate their chosen good causes for grants, a pledge to support apprenticeships and work placements, sustainability policies and the expansion of its staff learning academy.



■ PAM Group wins MEN Business of the Year Award - Jason Roberts Photography.

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Stephen Fitzsimons, Chief Executive

Warrington out-performs London as a "hiring hotspot"

WARRINGTON is out-performing London as a hiring hotspot, according to recruitment platform Indeed.

And a significant increase in remote and hybrid working roles is helping to drive new opportunities across the UK, according to the data.

Using its own recruitment data, Indeed has worked with Zoom to identify the locations across the country that have seen the most significant growth in remote and hybrid job opportunities, analysing the difference in postings between February 2020, prior to the pandemic, and March 2022, when most restrictions had been lifted.

In each of the top 25 locations, job adverts that offer candidates the flexibility to work remotely have more than tripled and grown at a faster pace than the local jobs market overall – indicating that the rise in remote roles over the last two years has driven up opportunity in each area.

Warrington comes 17th in the rankings with a growth of 249 per cent in jobs offering remote working and 47 per cent in all job posting compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Worthing ranks first with a 650 per cent increase in remote roles and a 50 per cent increase in total jobs available. This is followed

by Burnley, Stoke, Southend and Dundee, all of which today have more than four times as many remote roles on offer compared to before the pandemic.

London is ranked 22nd with a 230 per cent increase in posts offering remote work and a 26 per cent increase in all job posting.

The new data comes as part of a wider report launched by Zoom on how the UK can strive to become a pioneer in hybrid work, which calls on the Government to take a number of steps to help capitalise on this economic opportunity. Zoom will be discussing the report's findings on a panel with Small Business Minister Paul Scully organised by Westminster think tank Onward on the June 6.

"The UK has the potential to be a global leader in hybrid working, and Indeed's data shows how greater access to remote roles is already helping to drive growth in overall opportunities across the country," said Phil Perry, head of UK and EMEA North at Zoom.

"During the pandemic, adoption of video conferencing tools like Zoom by SMEs was higher in the UK than in any other G7 country, and we are now beginning to see how greater availability of hybrid roles is expanding opportunity in areas outside of London and the South East. This underlines the vital role hybrid technologies can play in levelling up the country,

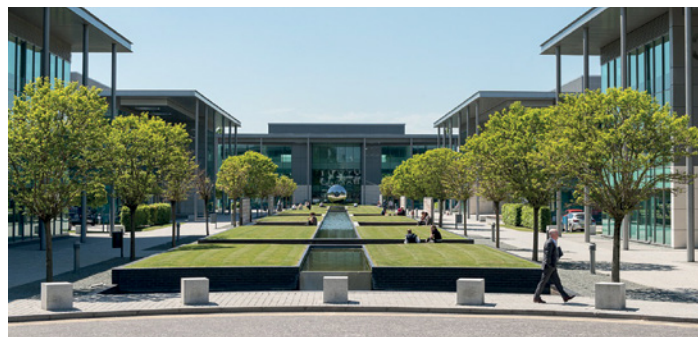
and getting the conditions right now will help the UK reap long-term economic benefits."

"The increased availability of remote and hybrid options across the UK is a boon for workers, giving them much greater choice over where they live and work," says Jack Kennedy, UK Economist at Indeed. "It's particularly important for those who want or need flexibility to accommodate their commitments outside of work. Employers benefit in being able to widen geographic access to talent and accommodate workers who would otherwise face barriers, which is especially valuable in a tight labour market. Moreover, being able to offer employees better work-life balance means organisations can reap the benefits of a happier and more productive workforce."

While cities have seen an

increase in the share of jobs that offer remote options, such as Manchester with a 291 per cent rise compared to pre-pandemic levels, these benefits are also being felt in towns such as Warrington, Northampton and Birkenhead, where there are now more potential opportunities for people to stay local and work remotely or on a hybrid basis.

As well as providing potential for local growth, increased job opportunities across the country are leading to the emerging trend of 'Zoom Towns' – a phrase coined during the pandemic that describes new regional economic activity as workers moved away from traditional city hubs. This has the potential to help drive the regeneration of both rural and suburban areas, particularly those which were previously commuter towns that may have rarely seen high street visitors during the day.



Priestley alumna scoops top journalism prize

A FORMER Priestley student has been rewarded for her journalism by the George Orwell Society.

Meg Byrom, who left Priestley with A*s in Geography and English as well as an A in Politics, won the review category of The Orwell Society Young Journalist's Award.

"It was a big surprise to me as I'd pretty much entered the prize as a way to distract myself from exam revision," said Meg, who is now studying Politics at University of Cambridge.

"I really was over the moon, The Orwell Society is an amazing organisation working to keep his works and political thought alive and relevant. I'm very honoured that they felt my review aligned with their mission."

The Orwell Society Young Journalist's Award, organised in conjunction with the NUJ, George Orwell's union, recognises the writing of promising students of journalism or working journalists aged 30 or below.

Prizes totalling £4,000 were awarded across two categories, with each winner receiving £1,500 and £500 going to each runner-up.

Former Hope Academy pupil Meg, who was also Priestley's College Council president, said she planned to put the prize money towards a holiday and her career.

"I think I'll invest most of it back into my career as it'll allow me to undertake some work experience, which I couldn't have done because most are unpaid and in London," she said.

Meg's competition entry was an arts review of singer Sam Fender and his most recent album 'Seventeen Going Under'.

She discussed Fender's left-wing music, with his discussions of poverty, alienation, his distinct regional identity, and how his narratives have gathered support from large swathes of the North East.

Talking about what inspired her, Meg said she knew she wanted to write about 'The North'.

"Orwell's works from 'The Road to Wigan Pier', to his political essays on English nationalism and beyond felt as though they could be written about our current moment, with the striking inequalities between north and south," she said.

"Now living in Cambridge, I hear so many generalisations about northern voters and northern politics, classist opinions of Brexit voters, virtuousness from so-called 'left-wing' activists and a sort of elitism that views anything outside of London as irrelevant. I felt like Orwell understood our region better than academics or politicians and I think Sam Fender does too."



Annual Property Review reveals Warrington again shows strong resilience despite challenging times

DESPITE extremely testing circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Warrington Property Review has once again shown "strong resilience, community spirit and partnership" in the town, providing confidence for the future.

These were the key messages at the 24th annual Warrington Property Review, hosted by Warrington & Co and Warrington Chamber of Commerce at the Park Royal Hotel.

Returning face to face after an absence of two years, more than 150 local business delegates attended the popular event which highlights the local property market.

Warrington & Co Chair Prof. Steven Broomhead said: "Warrington's 24th Annual Property Review reflects on another year of significant challenge due to the impact of COVID-19 and more recent economic uncertainties. We have faced extremely testing circumstances, but I am pleased to say that we have once again shown strong resilience, community spirit and partnership, which can give us confidence about our future."

Over the past 12 months, our commercial property market has enjoyed a number of success stories. Within this year's Property Review, you will find a range of independent statistics which show that economic momentum is building once more in Warrington. We remain fully committed to providing an environment where our business sector can thrive. During the pandemic, we have taken every step to support our businesses, paying out more than £100 million in government grants. At the same time, we have maintained strong dialogue and partnership working with our retail and hospitality sector who, in turn, have shown real positivity, adaptability and innovation.

This has paid dividends, with the recent Cities Outlook report finding that the resilience of high street spending in Warrington during the COVID-19 pandemic has seen the town outperforming most other large towns and cities.

This is reflected in our property market, with overall investment on the rise and some significant office deals completed, including the University of Chester relocating all of its teaching provision to Warrington town centre.

We have also seen a huge uplift in house sales and prices, with plans moving forward for a brand new hotel close to Warrington Bank Quay train station. Meanwhile, the growth of our town continues.

We have secured over £22m in Town Deal funding, which will see us delivering a programme of seven transformative projects. The first of these on site, a brand new, cutting-edge bus depot, will support

one of the largest all-electric bus fleets in the UK.

Other success stories include our state-of-the-art Warrington Youth Zone, which opens later this year, while our £142.5m Time Square development continues to go from strength to strength, with the completion of deals for Parlour and Costello's meaning almost all units are now filled. We continue to invest in our transport infrastructure, buoyed by the success of Centre Park Link which is visibly reducing congestion in the heart of our town and which, in its first year, has been used by an estimated three million vehicles. We are now moving ahead with a comprehensive active travel programme, which will transform the way people move around our town. We were also pleased by the Government's announcement on Northern Power Rail.

Although it will take some time to deliver, it will make Warrington a truly inter-connected rail hub.

Nowhere was Warrington's confidence more on display than when we hosted the Tour of Britain cycling race for the first time, in September. It was a huge success, boosting our local economy, bringing an influx of visitors and showcasing our sporting credentials to a global audience. We are also looking forward to being a host town for the Rugby League World Cup later this year.

All of this gives us every reason for optimism as we continue on our journey towards a bright and successful future," added Prof Broomhead.

Last year's investment activity saw a slight increase as the number of deals rose. Transactions of HQ office buildings, as well as larger logistics premises in established commercial locations, demonstrated a sustained investor appetite for property in the Borough.

With over £26 million transacted in the town, the year's largest office deal saw Emerson Group purchase Buildings 2 & 4 at Cinnamon Park in Fearnhead for £4.25 million. Frankel Brow also purchased the now rebranded and comprehensively refurbished 110 Birchwood Boulevard for £2.25 million and Bridge Properties expanded its office portfolio with the purchase of Dominion House, also in Birchwood.

A total of 18,284 sqm of floorspace transacted in 2021, comprising 35 deals above 200 sqm. Almost 70 percent of this floorspace was transacted on a leasehold basis, with the number of deals in line with the average achieved across the last five years.

The University of Chester accounted for the two largest deals of the year, taking almost 3,500 sqm of office space in the town centre. This will see the University relocate all teaching provision from its existing

site at the Fearnhead Campus.

Twenty deals were recorded in Birchwood across the year, which accounted for over 42 percent of floorspace take-up in 2021. Centre Park also boasted a strong level of take-up, accounting for almost 10 percent of the year's total.

Despite the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic still lingering amongst the retail and leisure sector, Warrington proved resilient to outperform many other big cities and towns in 2021. Research by Centre for Cities placed Warrington as the second-best performing of the UK's 62 largest destinations in terms of reduced high street spending.

Data from Zoopla indicates that 2,100 sales were completed in Warrington within the last 12 months, a huge 58 percent uplift on the previous year. 2021 also saw a rise in the average sale price achieved, up 15 percent to £249,778.

The annual housing data, supplied by Warrington Borough Council, demonstrated that a total of 595 homes were completed in the 2020/21 reporting period, of which 113 were affordable. The figures indicate an uplift of 6.4 percent on the number of completions reported in the previous period.

Activity within the Omega Zone was most prolific, with 174 completions reported across seven schemes. This delivery was primarily driven by activity within the Miller Homes, Redrow Homes and Taylor Wimpey schemes, which accounted for 115 completions, or just over 19 percent of the Borough's total.

Warrington Borough Council's Cabinet Member for economic development and innovation, Cllr Tom Jennings, said: "It was fantastic to be able to return to a physical event for this year's Annual Property Review. The event was a huge success, giving our businesses the opportunity to gain a valuable insight into Warrington's economic performance."

"We have a robust, innovative and resilient business sector, which has left us in a strong position to meet the unprecedented challenges of the past two years. Now, we are looking to the future – and we can be very encouraged."

"Warrington remains a very attractive place to do business, and the new investment we are seeing coming into our town gives us every reason to feel confident about our ongoing growth. It was great to be able to share this confidence with business leaders from across the borough."



Top employment lawyer takes up role at Warrington Disability Partnership

A TOP North West lawyer has been appointed as a non-executive director of Warrington Disability Partnership (WDP), a user led charity helping disabled people, their families and carers.

Adam Haines, Employment Law Partner at Aaron & Partners, has been appointed to the role at WDP, whose aim is to relieve the needs of disabled people across England and Wales by providing mobility and independent living solutions.

Adam will advise on internal employment and HR issues for a minimum of three years, as well as the charity's wider business strategy.

He said: "I've been looking for the right charity to get involved with for a while and WDP presents a superb opportunity for me to use my skills and experience to give back to the community in a meaningful and proactive way.

"It's a fantastic organisation that helps improve the lives of people impacted by disability and long-term health conditions."

"Their vision of a world fairly recognising everyone's abilities, and their power to speak globally on issues such as disability access truly inspired me. I can't wait to get started."

Aaron & Partners is headquartered in Chester but has a presence right across Shropshire and the North West including Warrington. Adam is primarily based at the legal firm's

Manchester Airport office.

A partner at the firm and specialist in employment law, his expertise focuses on senior executives and complex employment contract terminations, business restructuring, outsourcing, discrimination and whistleblowing claims, and he has worked extensively in the private sector with businesses of all sizes from SMEs to multi-national PLCs.

As well as strategic advice, the voluntary role will also see Adam get involved with the charity's various community fundraising events.

Events run by the charity include the Disability Awareness Day – Warrington's largest annual community event and the world's biggest voluntary-led pan-disability independent living show.

Launched in 1991, WDP has designed, developed and now delivers 27 mobility and independent living services, many of which are based at its Centre for Independent Living. It is run by a team of around 50 members of staff and 200 volunteers.

Dave Thompson MBE DL, founder of WDP, said: "Over the past 30 years, we have developed the charity and our social enterprise into a trusted partner of statutory, private and other third sector organisations, one that is led by disabled people, but still desperately need the expertise of people like Adam to help us deliver

against our purpose of supporting disabled people and those living with long-term health conditions.

"We're thrilled to have him on board and look forward to making the most of his extensive knowledge and skillset."



Up-and-coming entrepreneurs enjoy Business Excellence style awards

INSPIRING business leaders attended a celebration of burgeoning entrepreneurial talent at Chester Business School recently and awarded students for their enterprising journey.

Among the guests were all the experts who the students have heard from throughout their course, including: C-Lash Founder Codilia Gapare; Alumnus Bishir Sulemain, Head of Content at Real Buzz Media; Robin Proctor a retail supply chain innovator, who became a FTSE 100 Exec Co Director at 33-years-old and Athalia Dangerfield, Director of A Mind to Thrive.

The experts were invited to celebrate the learners' achievements by presenting them with awards which celebrated sustainability, social enterprise, branding, profitability and the Entrepreneurial Student of the Year and were held in the impressive Boardroom at the University's Queen's Park site.

The idea of Lecturer Fran Shollo, who teaches the Essentials of Entrepreneurship, the awards aimed to inspire, encourage and engage students to achieve on the module.

Fran said: "The students were

delighted with the ceremony comparing it to the Oscars and all said how it meant so much. They have been a fantastic group of students getting stuck into our 'pitch in a minute' presentations and enjoying hearing from the 22 guest entrepreneurs over the year.

The winning students were chosen from over 60 students for their one-minute pitch ideas given throughout their course.

The winners were: Aaron Jones – Most Profitable Business; Jade Mcardle – Most Socratic Award and Entrepreneur Student of the Year; Piyush Choudhari – Most Inquisitive and Entrepreneur Student of the Year; Eleanor Jones – Entrepreneur Student of the Year; Daniel Wookey – Best Branding; Lydia Oguchukaey – Meme Master Award (for hybrid learning); Sam Barwell – Most Sustainable Business Idea and

Hannah Courtney – Best Social Enterprise.

Jade Mcardle is studying International Business Management and was thrilled with her Entrepreneur Student of the Year award: She said: "It's motivating to know that what I am doing now is getting me closer that my future career goal, which is to be a business analyst within the cosmetics industry."





Former British Gas Director of Sales joins fast growing industry disrupter Heatable

THE former head of sales at British Gas, Phill Cox, will help the fastest-growing Warrington-based boiler industry disrupter Heatable continue on their upwards trajectory.

Cox has enjoyed an illustrious career in the UK's domestic heating market, holding several senior positions at British Gas including National Sales Performance Manager, Regional Sales Manager and most recently holding the prestigious position of

Director of Sales.

With over 20 years' experience delivering sales and operation growth, Phill is the ideal candidate to help a thriving market disruptor like Heatable take their expansion to the next level.

Heatable's founder Sam Price added: "It's a real honour to have Phil join our team here at Heatable."

"Since launching, we've achieved

consistent, rapid and continued growth — double digit, year-on-year. What's more impressive is that we've continue to be profitable throughout our expansion, unlike many who operate in this sector". "In order to maintain that continued growth, we see hiring top-tier talent as a key component and a vital part of us taking the business to the next level."

"With such a prestigious background and impressive track

record, Phill was obviously not short of offers from inside and outside of the industry so we feel particularly privileged that he saw something special in Heatable."

There is little doubt that the individual that presided over British Gas operational leadership will have a huge impact, especially when you consider they currently sell an estimated 100,000 boilers every year and hold around 10% market share.

National Minimum Wage Increases 2022

NEW rates of the National Living Wage (NLW) and National Minimum Wage (NMW) came into force on 1 April 2022.

The NMW rates are as follows:-

- Age 23 or over (National Living Wage) £9.50
- Age 21 to 22 £9.18
- Aged 18 to 20 £6.83
- Under 18 £4.81
- Apprentice £4.81

An apprentice must be paid the apprentice rate if:

- they are under 19 years of age
- if they are 19 or over and in the first year of their current apprenticeship agreement

If they are over 19 and have completed the first year of their apprenticeship they are entitled to the minimum wage for their age.

Workers entitled to the NLW/NMW.

The NLW and NMW apply to workers who are full-time or part-time and, as well as apprentices, will include agency workers, casual workers, home workers, those on zero hours contracts and employees on probation.

Some of those not included are workers who are genuinely self-employed, volunteers and company directors.

Failure to pay the NLW or NMW

Diane Massey of Warrington solicitors DSM Legal Limited, says:

"It is crucially important for employers to keep abreast of the NLW and NMW regulations which change every year in April. Failure to do so can lead to an employee making a claim to an employment tribunal or an anonymous report to the Inland Revenue, who will then carry out an investigation."

HMRC can issue a fine and order an employer to pay any shortfall going back for a period of 6 years.

An employee can make a claim in the employment tribunal for unlawful deduction from wages going back 2 years.

Checking the correct amount of the NLW/NMW

There is a useful calculator on the Government website which can be used to calculate the correct amount of NLW/NMW which should be paid. <https://www.gov.uk/am-i-getting-minimum-wage>

Business continue to come under pressure due to the end of the furlough scheme, rising costs, particularly with oil and gas prices since the invasion of Ukraine and there is no doubt that the Country as a whole is facing a period of squeezed living standards which can be seen in increased prices for consumer goods and food.

Whilst businesses are doing their best to absorb the increase in costs so as not to pass them onto their customers, in most cases it is inevitable that increased costs will have to be passed on at some stage to ensure that businesses can continue to meet their legal obligations whilst ensuring that they remain profitable.



Employment “heavyweights” join local law firm

LOCAL law firm, Primas Law, has appointed two new employment partners, David Walton and Danielle Ayres.

This comes as part of a commitment to expand its team and offering, in line with its other commercial disciplines.

Their appointment represents a significant statement of intent by the practice, to both meet existing client demand and contribute to the continued expansion of Primas Law as a whole.

David will lead the Employment team and comes with over 20 years' experience as a specialist employment solicitor. He is a seasoned litigator and Employment Tribunal advocate, with an exceptional case success rate. He also has extensive experience as a corporate employment lawyer, providing support across a whole range of transactional and commercial work.

David has particular expertise with disability discrimination issues and supports a range of groups and charities where such issues are prevalent, not least in his role as Honorary Employment Adviser to the ME Association.

Danielle joins the team as Partner and has a loyal base of employer clients, whom she advises on day-to-day basis on all aspects of the employment relationship, such as recruitment, disciplinarys and contractual issues. In addition to her general employment

practice, Danielle is nationally recognised for her work in relation to pregnancy and maternity discrimination issues, as well as parental rights.

These appointments add to the firm's existing Employment Partner, Catherine Kerr.

David said of his appointment: “I am thrilled to be joining the team at Primas Law. It is the epitome of the modern legal practice: agile, forward-thinking and receptive, both in terms of its approach to client service delivery, but also in terms of how it looks after its staff, which means a great deal to me.

“Danielle and I are really looking forward to helping grow something special in terms of the future employment offering at Primas Law, alongside an incredibly dedicated and talented team of commercial lawyers across all departments. Primas Law really does offer something fresh and exciting within the legal marketplace, and I am proud to be able to be part of its ambitions and growth in the short and long term.”

Primas Law is a boutique commercial law firm which specialises in property, litigation and insolvency law, with offices in Manchester, Cheshire and

London.

Managing Partner, Adam Kerr, said: “Adding experts like David and Danielle to our team is a significant signal of intent on our part as we set out to deliver on our growth plans for the coming financial year.

“Their appointments are only the beginning of a significant ramping-up of our existing employment offering. This expansion is in-keeping with the firm's continued progression and both David and Danielle's wealth of experience in their respective areas are very welcome additions to the Primas Law team.”



■ Employment Partner, Catherine Kerr with David Walton and Danielle Ayres.

Warrington CMO leads rebrand to bring Part-Time Directors to local SME's

WARRINGTON based CMO Chris Perkins has been brought on to lead a rebrand of 'part-time director' supplier, The Leadership Group, to reflect its expansion of core services to SMEs.

The new business has evolved from IT management consultancy business, Bailey and Associates, and represents the growth of the company over the last four years since launching in 2018.

Bailey and Associates came to market providing an alternative to standard IT consultancy services by instead offering IT Directors, CTOs and CIOs on a part-time basis. The key difference being that these IT leaders would not only provide external advice and direction, but join the company's senior leadership team to lead and deliver IT strategies from within.

Over the last two years, with demand for other part-time services growing – especially among businesses who lack the valuable leadership and direction internal senior-level executives can provide – they have decided to expand their services to include part-time Directors across Finance, Marketing, Operations and Data, with the view to introducing more

functions over the coming months.

Chris has been brought on to lead this brand transformation and will work closely with David Bailey, founder and CEO of The Leadership Group, as they launch the new brand and continue to grow the business.

Chris is based in Warrington and set up his own marketing consultancy business in 2019. He has been working as a 'part-time marketing director' for a number of clients and recognises the value a part-time director can offer.

David Bailey, founder and CEO of The Leadership Group, said: “This rebrand follows a successful two years where we have both expanded our network of part-time leaders and seen an increase in demand for their services across key areas such as Marketing and Finance. It's more than just a name change: it signals that we are ready to provide transformative business leadership and accountability to growing organisations that lack internal senior-level executives.”

Speaking of his role, Chris Perkins said: “I am delighted to be working with The Leadership Group and helping them reposition in

the market around providing transformative leadership, accountability and innovation to growing businesses who lack internal senior-level executives.

“Directors provide so much more than just the functional management; they provide leadership to the business and are a listening ear for busy CEO's and senior management teams. It is an incredibly cost-efficient way of getting experience into a business.

One of the biggest reasons for this rebrand was understanding that the most important asset to this business was the Directors themselves – and so we wanted to reflect that in the name.”

Over the next few months, Chris and David will be investing heavily to increase awareness of The Leadership Group through various channels including social media, paid media, and PR.

Headquartered in Chester, The Leadership Group has over 60 independent, part-time Directors working with them and supporting businesses across the UK.

Working exclusively on a part-

time basis, it means companies who are not ready or can't afford a full-time Director can leverage the knowledge and experience of a successful Director at a fraction of the cost of a full-time hire.

There are no recruitment fees, no long-term contracts, and it gives business owners the flexibility to scale up and down as needed.

If you're an SME looking to hire a part-time Director but you're not sure where to start, please contact Chris at chris.perkins@theleadershipgroup.uk



Company bidding to double in size invests in new Warrington space as business gears for growth

LEADING European provider of automotive and mobility services, Opteven UK, has officially opened its new national headquarters at Birchwood in Warrington as it bids to double in size.

The new headquarters marks a significant six-figure investment in one of the most successful business areas in the Northern Powerhouse.

The Mayor of Warrington, Councillor Maureen Creaghan, attended Opteven's launch event to cut the ribbon to officially open the new head office on Birchwood Boulevard.

The move celebrates a significant milestone for the business, which began operating in the UK in 2015. Having previously co-shared an office, this new 2,000 square foot office space demonstrates Opteven's confidence in the automotive market and the future growth potential.

Embarking on ambitious plans to double the size of its business by 2025, as part of its Highway 25 strategy, the new office allows Opteven to recruit and train more employees and further invest in the UK business. It currently employs over 100 people in the UK, across its Birchwood and Thame offices.

Commenting on the official opening ceremony, Councillor Maureen Creaghan, Mayor of Warrington, says: "I was delighted to join Opteven UK to officially open its new office in Birchwood and learn more about its business both here and globally. I'm thrilled they have chosen Warrington as their base for UK operations and see the value in the local economy and community here in the North-West.

"The values of the company are displayed for all to see, and I was

so impressed by the way Opteven are looking after their staff and that it is one of their main aims. I look forward to seeing the business grow and follow its contributions to the local economy."

Martin Quail, International CEO at Opteven, said: "We are delighted to have moved into our new office in Birchwood, which provides a brand-new home for Opteven UK. Since launching our UK business we have shared offices with other local companies and following strong and encouraging 2021 financial results, together with a recent organisational restructure, we felt now was the right time to move into an office of our own to better suit our evolving needs. This provides the business ample space to accommodate our ambitious growth plans, including taking on new contracts and employees. Our North and Midlands based field sales teams will use this office as a hub for business meetings and co-working.

"With another office in Thame,

Oxfordshire, we wanted our new space to be in the North-West of England and to be a part of the impressive Northern Powerhouse. Warrington is an extremely well-connected location – benefitting from significant investment in road and rail infrastructure, as well as a thriving residential area. Birchwood Boulevard also boasts an abundance of cafes and landscaped outdoor spaces which gives our team the opportunity to get out of the office at lunch for some all-important fresh air and sense of well-being.

"We're extremely grateful to Mayor Maureen Creaghan for joining us to officially open our new office and for having the opportunity to show her our business and share our future growth plans."

Reflecting its desire for growth, Opteven UK has also bolstered the team with a number of key senior appointments. Craig Grant has taken on the role as Managing Director, Neil Monks is now

Retail Sales & Customer Services Director and Martin Quail has joined as International CEO. A new Operations Director, Madjid Hadj-Amar will also be relocating from Opteven Group, joining the UK team this summer.

Opteven UK's business encompasses WMS Group, which offers a range of specialist vehicle warranty services to the motor industry, as well as a range of asset protection products. The team in Warrington manage the business' contracts with Volkswagen Financial Services for maintenance and warranty, and the RAC breakdown service.

With its global headquarters based in Lyon (France), Opteven also has international offices located in Thame, Warrington (United Kingdom), Milan (Italy), Madrid (Spain) and Berlin (Germany). For more information on Opteven, visit www.opteven.co.uk

For further information on WMS Group, visit www.wmsgroup.co.uk



University provides support to boost digital skills of SMEs in Warrington

EXPERTS at Manchester Metropolitan University are to support small and medium-sized businesses in Cheshire and Warrington to upskill and boost their digital products.

The Centre for Enterprise has refocused its current SMART Cheshire Innovation Programme to help tackle the digital skills gap and give SMEs the tools they need to grow their business.

The new SMART Cheshire Digital programme aims to boost more than 90 businesses in the Cheshire and Warrington area and support them in developing new digital products, processes or services or upgrade and digitalise existing ones.

It is thought that the developments could create more than 35 new jobs.

Mandy Parkinson, Faculty Head of Business Engagement and Enterprise at Manchester Metropolitan University, said: "Digital skills are becoming more and more crucial to the success of any business, and it is important that small businesses can use the latest technology to grow their company.

"Many SMEs are behind in the adoption of digital assets but digitalisation is an important driver of productivity growth. Developing new tools or digitalising existing ones can bring many significant benefits to SMEs such as cutting

costs, saving time and improve opportunities for innovation."

The programme will act as a catalyst to support innovation and will offer technical support and one-to-one mentoring. SMEs will finish the programme with new tools and techniques that they can replicate across the business, new digital skills and insights and the launch of a new product or service.

The original SMART Cheshire Innovation Programme has already helped more than 50 businesses in the area.

In September, the programme supported Julie Voce from Warrington-based 'Then & Now', a shop that specialises in home décor.

Due to a decline in football in her shop, Julie was looking to develop a strategy to grow her business online, develop social media skills and explore new opportunities to increase sales.

With help from the programme, Julie learnt how to gain feedback from her customers through her website and social media, allowing her to tailor her products, and has now designed special Facebook Live shopping events, which has improved her sales.

To find out more about the SMART Cheshire Digital programme, visit the website www.mmu.ac.uk/business-school/business/sme-support/smart-cheshire-innovation-programme/

PAM Group launches DNA tests to help tackle diabetes and cancer

PREVENTATIVE healthcare specialist PAM Group is launching a series of DNA and epigenetic tests aimed at helping tackle diabetes and cancer to accelerate growth for its ToHealth division.

The tests will show whether a person is prone to developing a host of health conditions including diabetes and cancer, and how they can tailor their lifestyle to lower their risk.

They are the latest addition to Warrington-headquartered PAM Group's offering and follow the backing it received from private equity firm LDC last year to support its expansion and the launch of new products and services.

ToHealth's DNA and Epigenetic tests analyse 1,000 types of DNA from one saliva sample.

An individual's DNA holds the essential information to their development, function and growth and cannot be changed. Epigenetics adds another layer of information, enabling a person to identify how their lifestyle and environment impacts the way their genes work, which can raise the risk of illness.

Each test result comes with a personalised insight into an individual's state of health and can reveal a wide range of potential risk areas. These include immunity risk, response to stress, biological age and the risk of developing hidden conditions such as diabetes, cancer, stroke, hypertension and coronary heart disease.

The genetic information and insights are accessible via an app which aims to help individuals tailor their lifestyle to improve their wellbeing and stave off the threat of disease, helping to reduce workplace absenteeism.

The new service for ToHealth's corporate clients forms part of its employee wellbeing offering and will be a key driver for expansion as it targets revenues of £9m this year, up from £5m in 2021.

ToHealth managing director Kerry-Dene Ihlenfeldt said: "As a business, we don't stand still. We continuously seek innovative solutions to positively impact

the health and wellbeing of our clients' employees.

"Epigenetics strengthens our position at the forefront of proactive and preventative health screening, and our investment in these new tests provides us with a significant opportunity to further accelerate our growth.

"They complement our existing offering and enable individuals to take control of their health and lifestyle through a hyper-personalised analysis of the test results."

She added: "We know that a large proportion of workplace absenteeism is caused by stress, anxiety or depression, and that most cases involve lifestyle issues such as inactivity, a poor diet or being overweight. The underlying issues are often the same as those for cardiac problems, diabetes and cancer.

"The pandemic has thrust employee health and wellbeing into the spotlight. Our recent research shows that most employees feel that support in this area from their employer would make them less likely to want to move jobs, but that employers are missing valuable opportunities to stop their people getting sick in the first place.

"We have also found that 40 per cent of people value wellbeing advice based on personalised data and are more confident in digital health solutions.

"Taking these factors into consideration, we believe that there is significant demand for our new tests."

Kerry added: "Employers will benefit from the test outcomes, as reduced absenteeism will boost efficiency, productivity and employee satisfaction, leading to an improved business performance.

"We will through extensive investment in our data strategy provide clients with access to real-time employee health insights, enabling them to gain a holistic view of the health and wellbeing of their workforce and to effectively respond to changes by making data-driven business decisions."

ToHealth is partnering with testing

company Muhdo for the new offering.

PAM Group is one of the largest occupational health, employee assistance and wellbeing providers in the UK. It offers a range of integrated services to public and private sector clients, supporting

more than a million employees at over 1,000 businesses and organisations.

The group is looking to double turnover to £80m over the next few years through continued organic growth and acquisitions.



■ ToHealth managing director Kerry-Dene Ihlenfeldt.

Howley Trade Park warehouse sold to truck dealership for £4.6m



A refurbished warehouse on Warrington's Howley Trade Park has been acquired by Ireland's largest Renault truck dealership in a £4.6m deal.

The 45,000 sq ft property, which consists of four separate units, will be Diamond Trucks' first location in England and is part of its plans to expand its business in mainland UK. B8 Real Estate and CBRE were joint agents for the vendor, Vengrove Real Estate Management.

Work is now underway to remodel and fit-out three of the units to create new dealership premises which are due to open in August this year. The remaining unit will be let out by B8 Real Estate on behalf of Diamond Trucks.

The company's expansion follows seven years of continued growth in Northern Ireland, where it has helped to increase Renault Trucks' market share from two to 10 percent.

Howley Trade Park is located within three miles of the M62 motorway, with excellent access to the M56 and M6 and onward routes across the UK and to

Ireland.

Harry Nash, Director, Diamond Trucks, says: "Since 2015, Diamond Trucks Northern Ireland has gone from strength to strength, building a reputation for outstanding service support. The acquisition of our new site in Warrington is a good strategic fit for us, extending our influence to support Renault Trucks operators on both sides of the water, and opening up opportunities for new business in the area. We continue to see great value in the Renault Trucks brand and its product range that is growing in both market share and confidence, and look forward to welcoming customers to Diamond Trucks UK in the coming months."

Thomas Marriott of B8 Real Estate added: "The sale represents one of the best prices achieved to date for a refurbished second-hand unit of its size in the region and reflects the strong demand. Howley Trade Park is an ideal location for Diamond Trucks' first UK base – close to the motorway network and with easy access to the ports of Liverpool, Holyhead and Heysham."



Rapid response command post showcased to NATO set to create 50 jobs in Warrington

A RAPID response command post that has been showcased to NATO, to transform battlefields of the future, is set to create 50 jobs in Warrington.

Verde Spaces, a Warrington-based defence industry start-up recently demonstrated its' product, having been invited by HQ Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) – part of NATO – to showcase its rapidly-deployable command post.

The unit, launched by Verde Spaces, who are based at the town's engineering technology hub, The Base on Dallam Lane, was showcased at the ARRC's Innovation Day. More than 65 members of NATO were shown the revolutionary product, which is capable of replacing multiple disparate systems and can be deployed in the battlefield inside fifteen minutes.

The system will significantly transform how NATO deploy and operate on the battlefield of the future. The first unit is now operational and is being tested by potential end users, having been produced in Appleton, Warrington.

Verde Spaces managing director Neil Rustage said: "Our team has demonstrated that UK sovereign capability exists and, along with vastly experienced

industry experts, it is possible to engineer and manufacture an incredibly complex systems platform incorporating different technologies from multiple disciplines. We are launching a product that reduces the need for multiple, non-compatible systems for the end-user.

"We are delighted to have been part of the innovation being undertaken at ARRC NATO and look forward to working further with them as well as our many other clients and partners across the industry. I'm particularly proud that we will be doing so from our base in Warrington."

Mr Rustage says fifty new positions will be created by the company over the next five years to meet demand. Working capital is being provided by the firm's shareholders.

Steve Park, Director of Growth at Warrington Borough Council commented: "Warrington's economic success is built on a strong legacy of manufacturing, especially in steel fabrication and specifically wire. It is encouraging to see that Verde Spaces are continuing this heritage, utilising world class engineering skills to launch a unique solution that can be sold overseas.

Warrington Borough Council

is delighted to be supporting Verde Spaces with its exciting expansion programme, helping to identify the best location and an experienced skill base. We look forward to working with the team for many years to come."

Stephen Fitzsimons, Chief Executive of Warrington Chamber of Commerce added: "Warrington is a high value, high wage economy with a specialist manufacturing sector that exports around the world. Verde Spaces are a welcome addition to this success and the Chamber will be supporting them to ship their products to North America and beyond. It's always exciting to discover business activity that is unique and attention-grabbing which helps sell the Warrington proposition to potential investors.

Verde Spaces' future is very bright and the Chamber will be helping them achieve their ambitious objectives."

Andy Carter, MP for Warrington South added: "I want to congratulate Verde Spaces on the successful launch of their innovative products as they reach a new chapter in the company's history, taking their brand global. Warrington has a rich seam of manufacturing, and I'm always pleased to see businesses continuing that legacy, pushing forward sustainable and unique solutions to everyday issues. Having met with the team I'm sure they will go from strength to strength, being able to attract skills locally and hopefully investment from right across the country."



Market leader in training to offer courses to businesses across Warrington

PARETO, the UK market leader in growth and transformation training and recruitment, is joining forces with the University of Chester to offer sales training to businesses across Warrington and Cheshire.

The company, based in Wilmslow, has been awarded funding from the University of Chester via the European Social Fund (ESF) to provide courses on essential selling skills, telesales training, resilient sales planning in a digital world and advanced selling skills.

As part of the University's Accelerate Cheshire and Warrington programme, the courses are exclusively for businesses with a Cheshire or Warrington postcode, to help upskill or reskill their current workforce. The course will also be available for employees who live in a Cheshire or Warrington postcode area.

It is important to highlight that these courses are not solely for sales-based businesses, the courses from Pareto will provide valuable transferrable skills, from improving effective communication to confidence in the workplace. Learning new

sales skills could be beneficial for boosting business growth too.

2019 data from the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership reported a 22% density of skill-shortage vacancies in sales, in contrast to the rest of England at 14%. In its 2021/2022 report, the partnership explained that employers in Cheshire and Warrington are more likely to have these skill shortage vacancies in high skills roles, which could have an impact on the bottom line for a business. This leads into the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership forming a refreshed plan to support the upskilling of current workforces, which could in turn, fill the high skill roles.

Pareto is providing 1 day zoom courses, with 40% of the course cost funded by the European Social Fund in partnership with the University of Chester.

Ashley Brennan, marketing manager at Pareto said: "Thanks to funding from the European Social Fund in partnership with the University of Chester, we're bringing our sales training to businesses across Cheshire and Warrington – contributing to the

upskilling of employees in the local area.

"From essential selling skills to sales in a digital world, the course itinerary is ideal for businesses who are looking to invest in the skills of their workforce. There's an opportunity to learn transferrable skills too and help improve general skills needed in the workplace."

Maud Duthie – van der Venne, Accelerate Project Lead at the University of Chester added: "Pareto is providing an opportunity for Cheshire and

Warrington businesses to upskill and reskill their workforce. The courses will be invaluable and align perfectly with our Accelerate programme.

"Whether you're a local business or employee, these courses are a great way to develop your professional skills."

For more information on the courses and to find out how to enrol, visit: www.pareto.co.uk/upskill-in-salesor call 0330 433 2931



TEDx Warrington presents positive opportunities for the town

THE countdown is well and truly on to the inaugural TEDx Warrington event which will take place at the Pyramid Parr Hall on Thursday 23 June.

Saturday 23 April marks 60 days until the big night, where a panel of 10 speakers will have a chance to share their ideas with the people of Warrington.

TED began in 1984 as a conference where Technology, Entertainment and Design converged. It covers almost all topics, from science to business to global issues, in more than 100 languages. TEDx Warrington will be no different, with applications received across 10 different category themes, ranging from environmental issues to diversity and inclusion.

Organiser Kirsty James said: "TEDx is a chance to bring the renowned TED brand into our community and put Warrington on a global stage. TEDx Warrington brings an abundance of exciting, positive opportunities for our town, our speakers, volunteers, sponsors and attendees. The organising team are working

hard to create a momentous and unforgettable event for our town with talks that could offer lasting local impact."

Let's take a closer look at those opportunities.

A speaker selection panel shortlisted 12 people from 119 applicants. Up to 10 will go forward to the final line-up. Names and topics will be released nearer the event.

For these speakers, TEDx is their chance to share their big idea with the local community and eventually, the world! Every talk will be recorded and TED-approved talks will be uploaded to the TEDx Youtube channel, which has 34.5m subscribers (as at 8 April 2022).

To date, more than 13,000 TEDx events have been held in 150 countries. For our volunteers it's not just a labour of love, it's a chance to be involved in, and learn about, a global phenomenon.

The organising team are currently reviewing applications from local organisations to sponsor

the event, with up to 6 sponsor opportunities available. For sponsors it's a chance to support a milestone community event and those stepping up to share their big ideas.

For those lucky enough to get their hands on a ticket, you're guaranteed to be wowed by the speakers and their ideas.

Attendees will leave the event with at least one gem of an idea worth sharing with your friends, family and colleagues. Due to TED licensing restrictions, just 100 tickets will be made available for the event. Selling arrangements will be released on the TEDx Warrington social media channels and website www.tedxwarrington.com



Ground-breaking ceremony marks start of 500-homes development

A GROUND-breaking ceremony marked the start of work on the 37.8-acre Rivers Edge housing development at Warrington.

The 500-home mixed-tenure scheme is being carried out by Countryside, working with Sigma Capital Group – a leading provider of build-to-rent housing and Torus, the largest provider of affordable housing in the North West.

All three organisations were joined at the ceremony in Centre Park by representatives of Warrington Borough Council.

The project is set to transform the brownfield site adjoining the River Mersey and the wider area.

Jo Jamieson, chief executive,

Partnership North, Countryside, said "I was delighted to welcome Warrington Borough Council to the site and showcase what is a flagship development for the Merseyside and Cheshire West team. It is fantastic to be working with such great partners in Torus and Sigma on this project, to ensure we are delivering homes that cater for everybody's needs.

"This development is yet another example of Countryside regenerating underused land and transforming it into a community where people will love to live. The fact that the homes are built in our Warrington factory not far from the site, utilising the local workforce, makes the development even more special."

Warrington Borough Council's cabinet member for housing, Cllr Hitesh Patel, said: "It's great news that work on the

River's Edge development is now under way. This scheme will provide local people with much-needed homes for sale and rent, with a great mix of affordability, accessibility and sustainability.

"Just as importantly, River's Edge will bring new investment into the area, delivering wider benefits to the local community and the environment. We want to ensure all of our residents have access to a good choice of quality housing – within strong communities – which fully meets their needs. This fantastic scheme supports these aims."

Countryside will be delivering more than 500 homes on the site, 258 of which will be for open sale, 150 for rent, managed by Sigma Capital, and 105 affordable homes, which will be managed by Torus. All the homes will be closed panel homes built off-site in Countryside's modular factory in Warrington.

The company will also be investing £400,000 into the local community. As well as investing in local health and education provision, this will be used to further improve the local transport network – Sluthers Lane, being part of the Centre Park Link scheme.

Steve Coffey, chief executive, Torus, said: "Every new scheme

Torus develops is designed to provide quality housing solutions – homes that cater for current and emerging demand, and support stronger communities.

"We are delighted to be a part of this multi-tenure partnership scheme. Our £15 million investment will create 105 family homes in Warrington, a Torus heartland, and ensure local residents have access to excellent affordable homes close to the town centre."

Jason Berry, regional managing director, Sigma Capital Group, said: "After 15 years of collaborating with Countryside, we are thrilled to be working on this new mixed-tenure site to deliver a range of homes to Warrington.

"With a strong background in urban regeneration, we have a lasting commitment to make a real difference within the UK by bringing well-managed and high-quality homes to individuals and families within local communities. By providing the opportunity for a good lifestyle for our residents, as well as benefiting the wider neighbourhood, our homes are all pet friendly and built within close range to schools, shopping centres and good travel routes.

"We have witnessed a growing demand for quality rental homes in the North West region so we look forward to launching our Rivers Edge houses and apartments later this year."



■ Rivers Edge Warrington ground breaking ceremony. Picture: Lee Boswell Photography

Motorcycle racers aim to move up a gear thanks to sponsorship deal

WARRINGTON based J & K Ross has announced sponsorship of two up and coming local motorcycle racers, Adam Perks and Ben Dale.

Chairman Chris Ross said: "I'm a massive fan of all classes of two wheeled motorsport from grass roots right up to MotoGP, both short circuit and road racing' so it is a great pleasure to be able to support these two guys in this our first season of sponsorship."

Adam Perks, Electrical Engineer, aged 31, rides a Triumph Daytona 675. He got his first motorbike, a PW50 for Christmas when he was nine-years-old and remembers jumping on it straight away and taking off, using that for a couple of years, riding where he could whenever he could!

On turning 11 he started racing minimotos and as soon as he could get a full unrestricted motorcycle licence he did and started doing track days on a GSXR600, which he later turned into a race bike and raced 4 rounds at Darley Moor in 2021.

His results got better and better in 2021 so he bought a Triumph Daytona 675 for the 2022 season.

Thanks to Chris and the team at J & K Ross for the sponsorship, it means he has been able to enter both the Darley Moor championship and the Thundersport championships in 2022!

In the future - he would like to try some road racing as well as short circuits.

Meanwhile Ben Dale, a brick layer, aged 33 from Warrington passed his bike test at age 21 and spent a few years stunt riding hence the name "EndoBen "

He passed his ACU in August 2020 and chose Darley moor for three rounds that year as one of the cheaper places to ride. Coming away with 3 top 5 finishes. This made his decision to do a full season there 2021 an easy one.

He ran in the pre-Electronic 600 class aboard a CBR 600 FX 1999. Scoring full points at every round and breaking the overall race

record based on an 8-lap race by 4.5 seconds.

Always wanting to push a little further, he chose to run Formula 600 for 2022 aboard a triumph 675. Once again due to the rising costs of life in general, he'll be sticking with Darley Moor as the prize for winning the previous

championship is free entries the following year.

For the future, more rounds at various clubs and tracks would be nice. Ben believes that he and his team, Neil Percival and Brian Crank, could do well at most circuits when more funds are available.



Jacobs recruits 600 people to support UK and Ireland climate response

TECHNOLOGICAL innovator Jacobs, which has a headquarters in Warrington, is recruiting 600 people to respond to the U.K. and Ireland's ambitious climate response goals for energy transition and decarbonisation.

The new jobs will supercharge the drive to reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels including: furthering renewable energy solutions, such as pioneering the use of hydrogen, where Jacobs is assisting renewable energy company RWE with a feasibility study into green hydrogen production; supporting existing nuclear power stations, as well as the Hinkley Point C new build, small modular and advanced modular reactors, and fusion power; developing long-, medium- and short-duration energy storage solutions to balance the increased renewables on the system; continuing to augment the electricity and gas transmission and distribution networks, integrating multi-regional electrical interconnectors; and developing the networks for the future.

There are full and part-time vacancies throughout the U.K. and Ireland, with most of the roles also suitable for flexible and hybrid working.

Qualified people are sought across strategic consulting, all engineering disciplines and project delivery and programme management, including environmental, consenting, carbon management, sustainability, robotics, materials science, chemistry, physics, cyber security, data and secure information

systems. Details of the vacancies are here.

Jacobs recently elevated Climate Response within its 2022 to 2024 company strategy – placing greater significance on delivery of integrated solutions for energy transition, decarbonisation, adaptation and resilience and natural resource stewardship. The company also released its updated Climate Action Plan, outlining how to address climate change by working with clients, communities and partners for a brighter tomorrow.

"We're recruiting from within the energy industry and also people with backgrounds in critical national infrastructure, aerospace, transportation, water, environmental, information technology and manufacturing," said Jacobs Energy, Security & Technology Senior Vice President Karen Wiemelt. "Climate response and energy security is a key national priority for the UK and we have many fantastic opportunities for people to join us and help create a smarter, more connected and more sustainable world."

Named among the Times Top 50 Employers for Women 2021, Jacobs has an inclusive and diverse culture and is the only company from its sector in the top 10 of Stonewall's ranking of the best employers for LGBTQIA+ people.

The company also has successful programmes in place to support people returning to work after a career break, including Bridge the Gap for parent returners, or joining from a career in the armed services.



Priestley celebrate year of sporting success

PRIESTLEY College has celebrated the achievements of its sports stars after an unprecedented year of success.

One of the highlights of 2022 was Priestley's Rugby Development Academy winning the National Colleges' Cup in a final played at Headingly.

The academy – formed just four years ago – defeated Leeds Rhinos' development squad 44-26 to collect the trophy.

Head of Sport Nigel Howells said: "It has been an exceptional year for our sports stars and the rugby players bringing home a national cup was the greatest achievement of all."

Not to be outdone, Priestley's footballers scored a hat trick of trophies.

The boys won both the first and second division of the North West Colleges League (Western Conference) and the girls also took home the first division title ahead of Aquinas and Winstanley.

Highlights among the boys' football was Priestley's fastest ever hat trick scored in 14 minutes by former St Gregory's Catholic High School pupil Kalipa Nyumbu. There was also a record for ex Bridgewater High pupil Freddy Garbutt who scored the most goals by a Priestley student with 36 in league and cup games.

It was a solo competitor rather than team player who won Priestley's Sports Performer of the Year Award, which was voted for by the students during the celebration.

Sculler Iffy Marinos was honoured for her achievements on the water, which have included top performances in several regattas. She is currently looking to achieve early qualification for the Henley Royal Regatta and will also be racing in a double at the British Rowing Junior Championships.

The former Sir Thomas Boteler pupil has been scouted by the rowing recruitment team at University of Tulsa in Oklahoma and awarded a full scholarship

worth approximately \$240,000 over four years.

"I'm looking forward to becoming a better athlete and being challenged with the training which will help me to reach my goals," she said.

Former Priestley students and rugby internationals Joe Philbin, of Warrington Wolves, and Jodie Cunningham, who plays for St Helens, presented the trophies at the college's sport awards.

During the ceremony there was also recognition for the college's basketball and netball players as well as nods for those who have excelled academically over the past year.

In a final message to them all, Nigel Howells said: "Thanks for everything you have achieved on the field this year, now please put as much effort into your exams and you will all have a successful future ahead of you."



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Iffy Marinos was named Priestley's Sports Performer of the Year.



Rugby Academy Captain Charlie Groarke with the National Colleges' Cup and international stars Joe Philbin and Jodie Cunningham.



Award winners Charlotte Ball, Ella Clifton-Stringer, Freddie Garbutt, Kalipa Nyumbu and Adam Dickens.

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Sunbelt Rentals team up with Warrington Wolves

THE UK's largest equipment rental company Sunbelt Rentals has teamed up with Warrington Wolves as an official partner for the 2022 season.

As the rugby league club's new official East Stand partner, Sunbelt Rentals, part of FTSE 100 Company, Ashtead Group plc, will promote their brand on the East Stand of The Halliwell Jones Stadium.

In addition to this agreed sponsorship deal, Sunbelt Rentals will also become one of the kit partners for the Warrington Wolves Women's Team.

Birchwood Park-based Sunbelt Rentals UK CEO Andy Wright, said: "It's an absolute privilege to be sponsoring the mighty Warrington Wolves for this, their 2022 season."

"It was an easy decision to make, our head office is in Warrington and we employ many people from the town and surrounding communities, with many being Wolves fans."

"When I met with Karl it was obvious that we each shared a passion for social inclusion and improving the opportunities and wellbeing of the local community. As a business we are keen to play our part in this activity, to support and help that process".

Warrington Wolves Chief Executive Karl Fitzpatrick said: We're delighted to welcome Sunbelt Rentals to our family of partners. They are a huge organisation and are the UK's largest

rental equipment provider.

"We have consistently demonstrated fantastic exposure and brand awareness for many of our partners; working closely with Sunbelt Rentals, I'm confident this success will be replicated. We look forward to working with Andy and his team to help them achieve their marketing aims."

"Listening to Andy's vision, I'm sure this is just the start of a long and successful partnership between both organisations".

Andy continued "We recognise that

in order for our business to perform well and thrive, then we must reflect the businesses and communities that we work in too."

"From myself and all the team

at Sunbelt Rentals we wish the Warrington Wolves all the best for the season. We look forward to working with them on further projects throughout the year".



■ Andy Wright (right) CEO of Sunbelt Rentals with Number 4 Toby King.

Wolves announce the capture of three big front-rowers

WARRINGTON Wolves have signed three big front-rowers, Thomas Mikaele, Sam Kasiano and Gil Dudson.

Mikaele is an explosive ball carrier who joins from Wests Tigers on a two-and-a-half-year deal with immediate effect.

The 24-year-old New Zealand-born prop will add size to the pack at 6ft 4in and 17st 2lbs and has made 66 NRL appearances. Kasiano and Dudson join from Catalans Dragons on two-year deals for the 2023-2024 seasons.

The duo bring a wealth of experience in the middle and have been instrumental in the Dragons' recent on-field success in Super League.

At 19st 12lb and 6ft 5in New Zealand and Samoa international Kasiano is a colossus figure through the middle and was named in the Super League Dream Team following a standout season in 2021.

Wales international Dudson is

another big unit at 6ft 2in and 17st 11lb and is a Grand Final and Challenge Cup Final winner.

Meanwhile, the Wolves have also announced that they will not be retaining the services of winger Josh Charnley when his contract expires at the end of the season.



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