



Insight

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The Journal of the

WARRINGTON CHAMBER of
COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

in association with
VALE ROYAL
The heart of Cheshire



Local junior karting champion seeks support for 2023 and beyond

GREAT Sankey schoolgirl, Daniella Sutton, was crowned UK Total Karting Zero Northern Champion in 2022 aged just 14. This is her first championship win and hopefully the start of many more to come.

Daniella has been racing since she was 6 years old, but the St. Gregory's High School pupil only took the plunge into outdoor racing in 2021. A natural petrol-head who competes in the Daniel Ricciardo Series UK, backed by F1 driver Daniel Ricciardo. Daniella's racing kart reaches speeds of approximately 75mph, and tests her driver's skill, race craft, fitness, nerve and stamina.

Alongside the Daniel Ricciardo series in 2022, Daniella entered the Total Karting Zero championship, a pioneering electric karting series engineered by former F1 engineer, Rob Smedley. Daniella's family were over the moon when she stormed to victory in the championship.

Daniella's racing takes her across the UK to international racing tracks including Paul Fletcher International (PFI) and Fulbeck in Lincolnshire, Larkhall in Scotland, Rowrah in Cumbria, Glan-Y-Gors in Wales, Clay Pigeon in Dorset, and her local track Hooton Park in Ellesmere Port.

Daniella strives to be the best she can be by studying the tracks before races, working

on her fitness, eating a healthy diet, and maintaining her kart by understanding the mechanics and servicing the parts as needed. It is a holistic approach to the sport to ensure both her and her kart are at the optimum come race day.

Sutton is one of the minority of females in this male dominated sport, and revels in the challenge where she can compete alongside males and females on a level playing field. She is a member of the British Women's Racing Drivers Club and is proud to advocate women racing drivers.

Rachel Sutton, Daniella's step-mum said, "We as a family are so proud of Daniella's achievements, and her championship win. She hopes to have a career in motorsport and dreams of F1"

Daniella thanks her family for all their hard work and support, and for her sponsors and partners who are helping to reach her dreams. 2023 looks to be a busy racing season with the full calendar of the Daniel Ricciardo Series, competing in some rounds of the Ultimate Karting Championship and the British Karting championship.

The quest for support and sponsorship continues so if you would like to help, please see Daniella's linktree at https://linktr.ee/daniella.sutton_racing or contact rachelsutton81@outlook.com



From the Chief Executive

Stephen Fitzsimons



I try and buy British whenever I can. My trainers were made in Cumbria by Warrington-headquartered New Balance and my posh Lanx shoes originated from Whalley in Lancashire. I also insist on UK built cars and have driven Rover, Mini, MG and most recently, Land Rover. I want to maintain my 18 year run of "British" cars whilst embracing the all-electric future.

Frustratingly however, the list of options for domestic electric vehicles is poor. I'm a few pounds short (!) of ordering a Range Rover, Bentley, Aston Martin or Lotus. However, I need something a bit bigger than a Nissan Leaf or Suzuki Swace.

As the rest of the world speeds off into the distance, Jaguar Land Rover is two years away from all-electric, UK options (Defender & iPace assembled overseas) and Mini is moving to China. Meanwhile, the Britishvolt project has collapsed in ignominious failure.

This is why the UK needs a comprehensive industrial strategy so we can prepare for the next 50 years, not just the next 5. The Labour Party is calling for one; Liberal Democrat Vince Cable launched his whilst in coalition and Theresa May reignited the initiative when she was in charge. Subsequent Prime Ministers have inexplicably abandoned the idea

and we must hope that Rishi Sunak is educated on the benefits of a strong manufacturing sector.

Technology underpins manufacturing and all economic sectors so it was great to host a "Digital Transformation" event at the Virtual Engineering Centre at Daresbury with Nigel Jones, the former expert at the Department of International Trade. We moved the border to incorporate Daresbury into "Greater Warrington". It already includes 2 international airports, 4 Premier League teams and a port! The next large event will be the Annual Property Review which we organise for Warrington & Co. It will be held on the 28th April at

the Park Royal hotel and is a must attend for agents, developers and construction.

Roll on the Spring – Tesco have been selling eggs since December so Easter will soon be here!

Take care,
Stephen

Made Smarter urges Warrington manufacturers to turn pain into empowerment with digitalisation plan

SME manufacturers in Warrington are being urged to start planning for next Christmas by exploring how technology can help with the seasonal surge.

While production is in full swing to meet demand for the festive season, makers across sectors are facing a multitude of challenges, including rising energy prices, supply chain disruption and labour shortages.

But changing consumer habits towards more sustainable products, online shopping and supporting small businesses instead of huge corporations are also creating opportunities for growth.

Made Smarter, a collaboration between the UK government and industry supporting the adoption of digital technologies, is calling on manufacturers to seize the moment to start planning for the future.

It has produced a free downloadable guide to help demystify digitalisation and drive technology adoption. The document titled 'Is digital

technology the key to success during busy periods such as Christmas?' includes topics such as how digital tools can help: plan production and capacity, oversee and manage the workforce, forecast demand, and inventory needs, manage stock levels and optimise picking, and automate the packaging process.

The guide also has case studies of Made Smarter-supported manufacturers who are reaping the benefits of investing in technology which is helping them cope with increasing demand during busy periods.

Donna Edwards, Programme Director for Made Smarter's North West adoption programme, said: "The festive period is traditionally one of the busiest times of the year for many manufacturers who will also be experiencing tough conditions amid increased energy and materials prices, and supply chain and labour challenges.

"Thankfully, there are numerous technologies you can employ to prepare yourself for the seasonal surge, remain competitive, and set yourself up for success all year

round.

"For manufacturers the Christmas rush will highlight bottlenecks and other issues with their processes. The Made Smarter team can work with them to identify potential solutions to these challenges and support them to develop an implementation plan to ensure success in 2023."

Since it was launched in 2018 the adoption programme in the North West has supported 2,500 manufacturers to start their digital journey by providing them with specialist advice and a digital roadmap to help them select the right approach, level of investment and tools for their business.

More than 275 of them, supported by matched funding, have invested in new technology, ranging from software and sensors to robotics and extended reality, to become more efficient, build resilience, increase their productivity and grow sustainably.

As a result, these manufacturers are set to create 1,250 new jobs, upskill almost 2,300 existing roles, deliver an additional £176 million

in gross value added to the region, and help the UK meet its net zero target by 2050.

For more information and to download the new guide visit www.madesmarter.uk/resources/guide-is-digital-technology-the-key-to-success-during-busy-periods-such-as-christmas



Donna Edwards.

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Stephen Fitzsimons, Chief Executive

Warrington health specialist PAM Group acquires MedProtect

WARRINGTON Occupational health and wellbeing specialist, PAM Group, has acquired a business which provides mobile health screening services to companies across the UK and Ireland.

MedProtect is the latest addition to Warrington-headquartered PAM Group's portfolio as it continues to expand through organic growth and strategic acquisitions.

Founded in 2003 by Ian and Louise Hutchinson, MedProtect also has its headquarters in Warrington. The business employs seven staff and has annual revenues approaching £1m. It will continue to trade under its own brand as part of the PAM Health division of PAM Group. The acquisition

was completed for an undisclosed sum.

James Redshaw, of law firm Hill Dickinson's corporate team in Manchester, advised PAM Group on the transaction.

MedProtect provides occupational health screening to large and small companies across a range of industries, with a strong presence in the automotive sector and those where employees are exposed to hazardous substances such as fume, dust or chemicals, or are operating in noisy environments.

Through its mobile screening units kitted out with the latest specialist equipment, it carries out a range of tests, including ones for lung function, dermatitis,

hearing and Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS). Its operations are overseen by an occupational nurse and physician, who make referrals and recommendations for further action where necessary.

James Murphy, founder and chief executive of PAM Group, said: "Ian and Louise have done a fantastic job building the business. MedProtect has been offering cost-effective, high-quality workplace health screening for 20 years, with services which are tailor-made to suit specific requirements.

"Our mission at PAM Group is to work with clients to make their workplaces healthier and improve employee safety and wellbeing. MedProtect aligns with these goals and is a great fit for us. We are thrilled that its team will be bringing their vast experience and knowledge to the group."

He added: "We see lots of potential for MedProtect to expand, and will be investing to grow it significantly over the next few years. As well as giving us the opportunity to provide the PAM Group customer base with additional services, it also enables us to offer our extensive range of group-wide services to MedProtect's clients.

"Alongside sustained organic expansion, we continue to seek strategic bolt-on acquisitions to further strengthen our offering in line with our growth ambitions."

Ian Hutchinson said: "Everyone at MedProtect is very excited about the opportunities for the business and our clients now that we have joined PAM Group.

"This combination will not only mean the doubling in size of our mobile clinic operations. It will also give us the ability to offer our clients far more services and

support from across the wider group, with additional personnel on the administrative side who are highly motivated and proficient at providing solutions for requirements in occupational health, vaccinations, consumable supplies and laboratory services."

PAM Group, which employs more than 700 people, 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 a 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.

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

PAM is backed by private equity firm LDC to support its growth and the launch of new products and services.

Previous acquisitions include Concept Northern, based in East Kilbride near Glasgow, which is a specialist provider of neurodiversity assessments and assistive technology for people with conditions such as dyslexia, ADHD, Asperger's Syndrome, dyspraxia, autism and Tourette's.

In 2021, PAM Group acquired 66Fit, a consumer-focused retailer of exercise, fitness and rehabilitation equipment, and Physio Supplies, a specialist provider of sports, physiotherapy and rehabilitation equipment to professionals and sports clubs.



■ James Murphy.

S.L. Procurement Solutions providing help towards Chartered Institute of Procurement qualifications

Local training company S.L. Procurement Solutions Limited are running CIPS (Chartered Institute of Procurement) courses in our area in the new year. Working towards examinations in March 2023 the training company have the below sessions taking place for Procurement Professionals who are working towards their CIPS qualifications.

Study CIPS Commercial Contracting L4M3

Classroom or virtual access to course content with slide packs, all materials, practise questions, case study discussions and book included. Taking place on 8th and 15th February 2023
Chamber member discounts available on booking.

Study CIPS Commercial Negotiation L4M5

Classroom or virtual access to course content with slide packs, all materials, practise questions, case study discussions and book included. Taking place on 22nd February 2023 and 1st March 2023
Chamber member discounts available on booking.

Study CIPS Advanced Contract and Financial Management L5M4

Classroom or virtual access to course content with slide packs, all materials, practise questions, case study discussions and book included. Taking place on 11th, 18th, 25th January and 1st February
Chamber member discounts available on booking.

Study CIPS Advanced Negotiation L5M15

Classroom or virtual access to course content with slide packs, all materials, practise questions, case study discussions and book included. Taking place on 11th, 18th, 25th January and 1st February
Chamber member discounts available on booking.

Study CIPS Global Strategic Supply Chain Management L6M3

Classroom or virtual access to course content with slide packs, all materials, practise questions, case study discussions and book included. Taking place on 11th, 18th, 25th January and 1st February
Chamber member discounts available on booking.

Booking is essential.

For enquiries or to book please email: alison@slprocurementsolutions.com



S. L. Procurement Solutions

Creating Value in Supply Chains



Altered Space submits plans for Cockhedge Shopping Centre

URBAN regeneration developer, Altered Space, has submitted a planning application to redevelop Cockhedge shopping centre, Warrington, in line with the Greater Cockhedge Master plan.

The project will downsize the shopping centre to create an improved and rationalised commercial asset. The development proposes the demolition of 16 retail units plus removal of the pedestrian bridge, which extends over Scotland Road.

The application includes plans for

the creation of new and improved external entrances to each end of the mall plus four new external facing units aimed at creating more vibrant spaces, with potential to drive an evening economy. The introduction of quality public realm on each side of the mall is core to the application with both soft and hard landscaping, making it visually attractive to visitors.

This is the initial detailed planning application for the wider Cockhedge estate, forming part of a larger two-phase regeneration scheme by Altered Space.

Michael Brown, director at

Altered Space, said: "Following the approval we received for the Cockhedge Masterplan in August 2022, this detailed application seeks to deliver a downsized, yet enhanced commercial offering breathing new life into an already popular retail destination. Importantly the application will also unlock the Residential Development footprint fronting Scotland Road, capable of delivering 900 new homes for Warrington Town Centre."

Elsewhere in the North West, Altered Space is also leading in the successful urban regeneration

of Stanley Square, Sale. This multiphase redevelopment has seen numerous key retailers and businesses move to Stanley Square over the past 2 years.

The creation of a lively and accessible shopping centre provides the promise that this development by Altered Space will have a positive impact on the town in terms of employment and the local economy.

Altered Space is working with planning consultant Lichfields, as well as Like Architects on this project.



BGEN celebrates record year following rebrand and outlines future plans

WARRINGTON-headquartered BGEN celebrated a record year in 2022, following the company's rebrand and has outlined ambitious targets for the year ahead.

The specialist, multi-discipline engineering solutions business in the last financial year, has increased turnover by more than 50% to £191m and the company has also reported a significant increase in operating profit.

"We've had an excellent year across the board, with significant growth achieved by our specialist pharmaceutical (BES) and food businesses (BFP)," says John Sugden, Executive Chair at BGEN. "Whilst the next 12 months will remain a challenge in terms of the economic climate and industry-wide talent shortage, we're confident we'll deliver against our planned people, performance and planet objectives. We have a strong order book for the year ahead and a great senior management team in place."

In 2022 BGEN secured contracts with several blue-chip organisations in sectors such as clean energy, food, heavy-industry and pharmaceutical, and successfully tendered and won 12 strategic utility agreements, including two new awards for National Grid. The company also expanded its sustainability and net zero service offering and strengthened its technology division through the acquisition of Radway Control Systems.

The year ahead will see BGEN continue a major recruitment drive, looking to expand its workforce from 1,000 to more than 1,300 employees, as the company looks to service its existing client base and expand into new sectors. The company is looking to recruit a range of positions, including mechanical and electrical engineers, as well as several roles to support its fast-growing sustainability practice, with

a number of apprenticeship and graduate opportunities available across the business.

2023 will also see the company focus on delivering against ambitious DEI and net zero targets. For example, this will see the company build on its recent commitment to recruit, retain and support more female employees, and continue its journey to achieving net zero emissions by 2035 at the latest.

"First and foremost, I'd like to thank all employees and clients in helping us to achieve a record year," said Robin Whitehead, chief executive officer at BGEN. "We're making good progress against our mission to be recognised as an independent market leader in the provision of world class multi-disciplinary engineering solutions for UK and international organisations."



■ John Sugden, Executive Chair (left) and Robin Whitehead, CEO at BGEN

Double appointment at Statham Manor

FARAI Hanyane and Hannah Sparks have been appointed registered manager and deputy manager respectively at New Care's latest care centre, Statham Manor in Lymm.

Using their many combined years of experience in health and social care, the duo will take responsibility for the day-to-day running of the new home on Statham Avenue, working together to deliver a high standard of person-centred care for residents.

Prior to joining New Care, Farai worked for a large corporate company for more than 14 years, progressing from nurse to operations manager covering homes across England, Scotland and Wales, and thoroughly enjoying the challenges that came with the role.

Hannah started her career at a nursing home before moving to St Roccas Hospice in Warrington where she focussed on providing specialist palliative care, both holistic symptom management and end-of-life care to patients and support to their loved ones.

Both registered general nurses, the pair have extensive additional professional qualifications but agree that elderly care is most definitely a calling for both of them.

Farai said: "After working in the

corporate world, I was attracted to New Care as it was a smaller and more intimate company that would allow me to be my own person, connect with my team and deliver a wonderful quality of care to the people living in our home. In addition to being beautifully designed inside and out, Statham Manor is a modern, high tech care facility which is every manager's dream allowing us to access all of the detailed information that we need to care for residents quickly and at the push of a button."

Hannah added: "I'm really looking forward to meeting our new residents and the wider team and it's exciting that we are all starting out on this new venture at the same time as a new family. I have loved learning everything I can about care and developing professionally over the years and hope to bring so much of this to my new role."

"We are both looking forward to being part of Lymm's wonderful community, building a team that celebrates the wonders of people and provides a quality of care that is delightful, establishing Statham Manor as the local care home of choice and eventually achieving an Outstanding CQC rating," concluded Farai.

Commissioning director at New

Care, Dawn Collett, said: "I am delighted to welcome Farai and Hannah to Statham Manor and am confident that they will work together to develop and establish the new home, delivering exceptional care for our residents, getting to know their families and the wider local community."

Both Farai and Hannah are incredibly active outside of work. Farai is a fitness fanatic walking for 10k every morning before work and training five times every week after work. She likes taking part in Crossfit competitions and ran three half marathons last year along with six 10k races.

Hannah has five children, a scruffy Jack Russell plus three cats and a horse that keep her busy. In her

spare time, she likes to get out walking, riding the horses, going to the gym or eating great food.

Open now, Statham Manor is an expertly designed, purpose-built 66-bedroom care home featuring fully furnished bedrooms, each with a private en suite wet room, plus a selection of communal lounges and dining rooms. It also has a nail bar, hairdresser, landscaped gardens and outdoor terraces to the first floor.

Part of the McGoff Group, Statham Manor provides exceptional residential, nursing and dementia care services. For further information or to book an appointment to view the new care facility, please email enquiries@newcarehomes.com



Former Purplebricks Sales Director joins Heatable.co.uk

WITH 30 years of leadership experience to draw on, Paul Vickerstaff is excited to be joining the team at Heatable.co.uk, as the family run business continues to go from strength to strength.

As a "Which" accredited business, Heatable are continuing to expand, and with their business driving industry change, Paul was delighted to jump on this opportunity to help grow the National network of engineers and the internal sales team.

Paul will bring with him a successful track record of expansion, having formerly driven the national expansion through the U.K for online estate agents Purplebricks.

Paul commented: "This was an opportunity that I simply couldn't turn down.

The company have very aggressive plans to drive sales volumes, along with growing the engineer coverage nationally.

I am delighted to be involved at this

exciting time for Heatable and I will draw upon my past experiences to support the businesses aggressive growth plans."

The industry numbers present real opportunities for Heatable, and our approach is to be different, in what is normally a very traditional marketplace.

When joining, it was clear to me the passion this business has for service. The consumer is in complete control when ordering and purchasing a new boiler and remains completely in control through this whole process.

With an experienced team of engineers representing Heatable,

we have proudly built an already impressive trading operation, my aim is to help this grow and continue to drive industry standards."

For more information, please visit <https://heatable.co.uk/>, call 0330 113 1333 or email hello@heatable.co.uk



First deal announced at rejuvenated office scheme in Birchwood

BRIDGE Properties has signed up Soletanché Freyssinet IT UK Ltd at Element, a 40,000 sq ft office building in Birchwood, Warrington.

The international soil, structural and nuclear engineering company, has taken a 3,362 sq ft on a 5-year lease in what is the first letting for Element. Redesigned by Incognito, the building, formerly known as Dominion House has received a high 'A' EPC rating and the newly

installed heating and ventilation system has received the accolade of 'Best Commercial Installation of the Year' at the National Energy Savings Awards.

Speaking about the letting, Paul McCann, director at Bridge Properties, commented: "With our 20 years' experience in office development, first class contractors and innovative design team we have created what we

believe is the most exciting office scheme outside Manchester providing exactly what occupiers expect from a workplace."

Mark Canning, director at Canning O'Neill, continued: "Birchwood is a competitive market, but Bridge has taken the blueprint forged at Eden Point in Cheadle and taken it up several notches. The large café lounge and terrace, stunning gym, feature mezzanine space

and roof terrace at the top of the building are all exceptional and have helped to position Element as a premier business address for global companies such as Soletanché Freyssinet IT UK."

Quoting £21.00 per sq ft on the lower floors. £23.00 on the top floor, mezzanine and private roof terrace.

Available in suites from 2,500 sq ft.





Historic Warrington post office transformed to £3.2 million aparthotel

THE transformation of a former post office in Warrington town centre into a luxury aparthotel has been completed with an investment of approximately £2.5million.

The contracting arm of Leeds-based Priestley Group, Priestley Construction, has delivered the project on Palmyra Square through its North West Office for clients Deuce Hotels.

Beginning in June 2021, the upper floors of the Grade II listed building have been transformed into 21 high-specification apartments for short-term rent. The new development has a luxury finish inside, including installation of high-tech entry systems which will enable hotel guests to enter the aparthotel using their smartphones.

Whilst being modernised, the Warrington aparthotel has still retained many original features. The existing flooring has been built up to ensure acoustic separation.

Like any project, there were issues to overcome. Bob Priestley, Head of Construction, explained "The after effects of the pandemic presented inevitable material delays that many have faced. Our delivery had to consider two

existing tenants on the ground floor which were a bar and a restaurant. The team worked efficiently to overcome these hurdles and managed to complete the works in November.

Providing a new hotel facility, this project will help encourage tourism in Warrington town centre by creating attractive places for people to stay. This will also bring more life to the town centre and therefore, a better environment for the community in Warrington.

The Old Post Office Aparthotel is a seven-minute walk away from Warrington Bank Quay train station and is located within Palmyra Square where it benefits from the restaurants, venues and bars on offer, making it an ideal location to stay when visiting the town.

Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) digital switchover

IN 2016, it was announced that the telecommunications industry would replace all analogue lines and upgrade to digital internet-based infrastructure by 2025.

By 2025, analogue telephone services accessed by the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) will be switched off as the UK's telecoms infrastructure is upgraded to digital connectivity. The switchover has implications for the telecare and TEC sector, and the 1.8 million people who rely on those services in the UK.

All traditional devices that connect to the PSTN, such as telephone handsets, ATM machines, traffic light management systems and telecare units, will need reconnecting, with some needing upgrading or replacing irrespective of what plans that telecare providers have to develop their service.

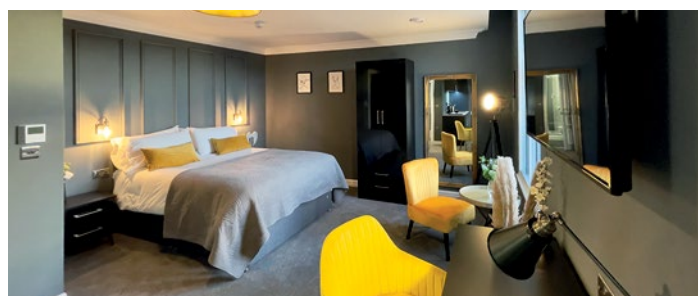
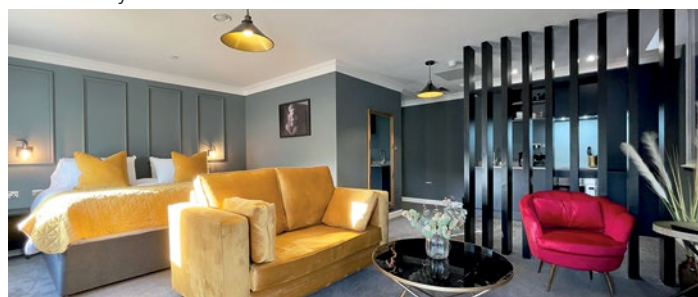
The PSTN is a privately-owned copper wired based telecoms network and the decision to upgrade it has been taken by the telecommunications industry. Fixed-line operators - such as Openreach, BT and Virgin MediaO2 - will replace analogue telephone services with Voice over Internet Protocol

(VoIP) technology, which carries voice calls as data using internet technology. The upgrade will be delivered by the telecoms industry in a phased approach over the next couple of years, with the UK network expected to be fully upgraded to VoIP services in 2025. The switchover will happen on a telephone exchange by exchange basis and not on a regional basis seen in relation to the switchover of analogue television.

While the PSTN upgrade is an industry-led process, the Government, through the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Office of Communications (Ofcom) are working together to ensure consumers and sectors are protected and prepared for the upgrade process, including from a power resilience perspective.

Local government also has a critical role to play in the digital switchover to implement the solutions required to support residents and prevent impact on day-to-day life.

For more information visit www.local.gov.uk/our-support/cyber-digital-and-technology/digital-switchover



Home Instead's Martin Jones made MBE

THE CEO of Warrington-based home care franchise business, Home Instead, Martin Jones, has been awarded an MBE in the 2023 New Year Honours list for services to older people.

During his time working in the care sector, Jones has been a keen advocate of home care and its role within the health and social care ecosystem which allows older people to lead independent lives in their own homes. He has also championed the role of care workers, helping to attract more people to consider a career in care.

Martin has taken on a number of non-exec and Trustee roles which have enabled him to build strong links to the Department of Health and Social Security, Skills for Care and the International Longevity Centre, to name but a few.

He is currently Chair of the Homecare Association; Chair of The Care Workers' Charity; member of the Age UK Board. He is also Chair of Home Instead Charities UK, part of Home Instead's charitable endeavours.

Jones joined Home Instead as Chief Operating Officer in 2011 when the company had 60 franchise offices. He went on to be Managing Director and then CEO of the UK business – overseeing the company's 245 franchise offices, delivering care to over 16,000 clients.

Jones' remit has recently been increased to include responsibility for Home Instead's international division, supporting international franchise partners and their teams to further cement Home Instead as a global leader in home care.

Speaking about the award, Martin said, "I am proud and humbled to

receive this award, particularly as it is for services to older people.

"Home Instead's mission is to expand the world's capacity to care – we want to make the world a better place to age in. For this to become reality, companies like Home Instead, the government and broader

society need to ensure that there is the infrastructure, resource and, importantly, people in place.

"The integration of health and social care is critical, as is a mindset where old age is celebrated and revered."



Redwood Bank aims to make it five wins in a row

A WARRINGTON specialist business bank is aiming to pick up an accolade for the fifth year in a row after being shortlisted in highly respected industry awards.

Redwood Bank, which last year celebrated its fifth anniversary, has again been named among the finalists for the annual Business Moneyfacts Awards.

After scooping the prize for Best Business Variable Rate Deposit Account Provider for the fourth time last year, the Bank will be aiming to go one better in London in April.

Gary Wilkinson, CEO and Co-Founder of Redwood Bank, said: "This award is always that bit special for us after making it our own for the past four years. It would be great to secure a fifth win, but we know the competition is tough."

Redwood Bank has also been shortlisted for Best Business Fixed Account Provider, an award it won in 2020, and Best Service from a Commercial Mortgage Provider.

"It means a lot to our teams to be recognised in these prestigious awards. Everyone works hard to deliver the best outcomes for our customers and it is pleasing that this does not go unnoticed by

others in the industry.

"Considering we have only just celebrated our fifth birthday and we are in line for the same award for a fifth consecutive year, this is testament to our commitment to business savers."

Redwood Bank will be facing big banking names in all three shortlisted categories, including Virgin Money, Nationwide and NatWest.

The awards are decided using a combination of methods. For all product-specific categories, detailed weekly analysis of the data provided to them is studied by its research team. Judges look at the providers who offer competitive products to new savers, but also those providers that are supporting their existing customers as well. In addition, they take into account feedback provided from customers.

For service categories, the broker and business communities are offered the chance to submit testimonials for their preferred providers.

The winners will be announced at the awards night on Thursday, April 20.

For further information, visit www.redwoodbank.co.uk



■ Gary Wilkinson.

Bents' finance director retires after nearly 30 years

LAST year Bents Garden & Home in Warrington, Cheshire celebrated its 85th anniversary; a huge milestone for any business and one which it is extremely proud of. But it is prouder still of its fantastic team of colleagues, one of whom has been critical to its growth and success, and after almost 30 years has now retired from the family owned and run business.

Brian Daniels, Bents' Finance Director joined the team in 1993, when Ron and his wife Wendy were running the business. At this time, the family had lots of ideas and plans, but required help and guidance to make these dreams a reality, whilst at the same time ensuring financial security and future growth.

During his time with Bents, Brian has helped to transform what was an ambitious garden centre business into an award winning Destination Centre encompassing the garden, home, leisure and food, with a choice of dining. He has overseen the financial growth of the family business from sales

of £2m to a turnover of £25m and has helped manage over £29m worth of investment.

Matthew Bent, Managing Director at Bents Garden & Home said: "It really is the end of an era and one which none of us was looking forward to. Brian has been a mainstay and constant part of my working life and I'm not the only one who is going to miss him. He has not only been fundamental to our growth and success, helping to guide us through the ups and downs of the past 30 years, but he is also a true friend and member of our family."

In addition to his commitment to keeping costs under control and keeping the company financially secure for its wider family of colleagues – something which was proven by Bents' performance through the Covid pandemic – Brian has also been a mentor to the wider management team, helping to encourage and guide family members working within the business.

Says Ron Bent, Chairman at Bents: "Brian is a great friend and support

to the family. We are proud of what we have achieved together and I want to join Matthew in saying a huge thank you to him for all his advice, encouragement and input over the years.

"For any great business, along with vision and innovation there must also be shrewdness and

pragmatism to successfully convert ideas into reality and with Brian we had the very best person for the job. We wish him and his wife Eileen all the best for the future, but whilst this may be his retirement from the business it is not from the family and we are looking forward to seeing him soon."



Pre-school looking for businesses to 'adopt' their charity

CHILDREN at local charity-run Jack and Jill Pre-School are looking for businesses who would like to "adopt" a charity for 2023.

The pre-school at Bewsey Barns Community Centre, Old Hall Road, Warrington, was founded 30 years ago – and some of the

staff have worked there since the doors first opened.

They offer high quality, affordable education to children aged 2-4 years – and as a non-profit charity they keep their costs low so they remain affordable to local families.

But they face the challenges of education funding cuts and the rise in the cost of living so they have to rely heavily on fundraising and support from local businesses.

Last year, fundraising efforts focussed on enhancing the outdoor area, which has recently been refurbished with artificial grass. The next mission is to enhance the area further, with new learning experiences for the children.

Affordable education is not easy to find in the local area and two charity nurseries have closed in the past year alone.

Jack and Jill Pre-School, with its 30-year history, is now seeing the children of former pupils attending and acquiring additional funding is essential to maintain the setting's proud history.

So the children are now looking to recruit local businesses who are wanting to adopt a charity for 2023 and join the Jack and Jill mission to ensure all children have a safe and comfortable place where they can learn and grow, play and explore, engage and investigate, get creative, get messy, laugh and be free.

This is what they need to get the best start in early education and become the leaders of tomorrow.

Jack and Jill can be contacted at jackandjillwarrington@outlook.com or by calling 07513 734288.



Raiys expands with swoop for The Healthy Employee

WELLBEING technology business Raiys has completed its first acquisition as part of a strategic growth plan to expand the services it provides to companies and organisations across the UK.

Raiys has snapped up The Healthy Employee, which works with employers to improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing, resilience and performance of their people through targeted programmes, including workshops, webinars and roadshows.

Founded by Anna Mason in 2008, The Healthy Employee is based near Moreton-in-Marsh in the Cotswolds. It employs a network of consultants, dietitians, nutritionists and healthcare specialists to deliver its services, which include health assessments, advice on posture, sleep and stress management, mental health first aid and catering provision in the workplace.

The Healthy Employee has a niche position in the construction and infrastructure sectors, working with companies in those industries to reduce sickness absence and improve staff wellbeing by delivering tailored programmes both onsite and remotely to support, engage, motivate and inspire them to make sustainable lifestyle changes.

Raiys, which is headquartered in Warrington, completed the acquisition for an undisclosed sum. The Healthy Employee brand will be retained, and Anna and her team remain with the business.

Founded in 2018 by James Murphy, Raiys has grown significantly and now provides its health and wellbeing technology to over 750,000 employees in companies and organisations across the UK. The enlarged Raiys business has over 50 staff and has ambitious plans to double in size this year.

Raiys' core platform is a workplace wellbeing app with tools to support mindfulness, fitness and motivation through expert advice, plus courses to boost mental and holistic health. Users can also track their nutrition, mood and daily lifestyle habits through the app.

It also offers one-to-one business coaching via the app to help companies improve employee engagement, development and retention. Coaching focuses on developing skills such as communication, presenting, assertiveness, confidence and motivation, plus tuition for those involved in sales, management, organisational change and scale-up strategies.

In addition, Raiys offers an Employee Assistance Programme which provides a 24/7 counselling hotline and live chat service for legal, debt and life advice.

Raiys chairman James said: "I am delighted that we have brought together Raiys and The Healthy Employee."

"Our mutual cultures of prioritising great customer service and a genuine desire to promote health and wellbeing at work will result in an enhanced offering, through a combination of Raiys' technology and The Healthy Employee's personal approach to people service delivery and its track record of success in delivering interventions with flair and enthusiasm to help people make sustainable lifestyle changes through simple, practical wellbeing information and programmes."

"This deal provides a strong platform to achieve the growth plans for both businesses, enabling each brand to receive support from the other to offer more proactive health and wellbeing services to key workers across the public and private sectors."

He added: "Poor wellbeing programmes underlie so many workplace issues, including morale, safety, productivity and the long-term health of workers."

"Employers are facing record levels of sickness absence, presenteeism, staff turnover and mental health-related illness. Workplaces are key spaces for improving health and wellbeing, and our mission is to help employers create healthy, purposeful workplace cultures across all sectors and job roles."

"We continue to seek acquisitions to support the future growth of the business and to create synergies and further job opportunities."

Anna Mason said: "Since 2008, The Healthy Employee has focused relentlessly on providing a hands-on personalised service to improve the health of people working in the construction and infrastructure sectors."

"I am very pleased that The Healthy Employee has been acquired by Raiys, whose existing products and services alongside our own offering will prove invaluable in responding to clients' evolving needs, enabling greater future engagement and successful health and wellbeing programmes and outcomes."

James Redshaw, of law firm Hill Dickinson's corporate team in Manchester, advised Raiys on the acquisition.



■ Anna Mason.

International finance for new exporters - mitigating risks, getting paid and VAT

This seminar will help you take a closer look at the important issue of getting paid for your exports, including payment options, currency issues, export credit insurance and UK export finance. You will learn about procedures for collecting debts from international clients and how to mitigate risks when trading internationally. We will discuss other economic considerations when moving money over international borders, including the application of VAT in international trade.

You will hear from the UK Export Academy, trade finance specialists from Barclays, UK Export Finance, Restons Solicitors and WR Partners. We have also invited Export Champions to share their experience and insights into the topic.



Department for
International Trade

MADE IN THE UK SOLD TO THE WORLD



Export Academy Masterclass

International finance for new exporters:
mitigating risks, getting paid and VAT

📅 15th February 2023
🕒 09:45 - 14:30
📍 Barclays Technology Centre,
Knutsford, WA16 9EU

ITI to help Cavendish Nuclear decommission Dounreay's Shaft and Silo facility

ITI will provide the safety and control solution, with help from the project management and commercial team at its Birchwood hub, to enable Cavendish Nuclear to advance the decommissioning of the Shaft and Silo facility at Dounreay.

As part of the ongoing clean-up of the site on the north coast of Scotland, Dounreay Site Restoration Limited (DSRL) are commencing work on two new facilities: a Shaft Retrieval and Processing Facility and a Silo Retrieval Facility, which together will remove, process, and encapsulate the Intermediate Level Waste (ILW) contained in the Shaft and Wet Silo, so that they can be decommissioned.

Cavendish are set to construct Drum Handling Systems, to undertake these retrievals in accordance with the site's integrated waste strategy. They have selected ITI to design, build and test the process control, supervisory control and data analysis (SCADA), and waste tracking systems. These systems will be situated within a Central Control Facility, with the PLC process control systems operating the mechanical handling equipment; the dedicated SCADA monitoring and controlling all the

plant associated equipment; and the waste tracking system, which will incorporate nuclear hardened cameras for the purpose of drum barcode reading, allowing operators to coordinate the movement of the drums.

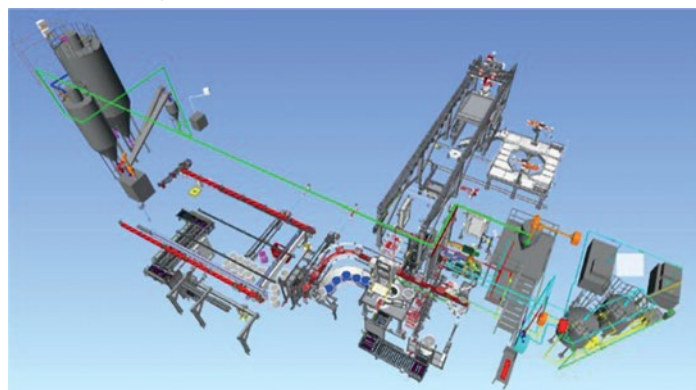
Bryn Thomas, Sales Director at ITI reported: "we are delighted to once again be supporting Cavendish Nuclear on another critical decommissioning project at Dounreay. Our teams have extensive experience in the Nuclear industry with many successful projects delivered across the NDA estate. We are confident that our highly skilled SQEP engineering team, working in close collaboration with the Cavendish Project team will deliver a robust solution to DSRL."

Bringing socio-economic value to Scotland, the project will be delivered by ITI's safety and control experts from its long established Scottish Nuclear Hub in Glasgow, supported by a project management and commercial team from the Birchwood Park Hub, located close to Cavendish's Birchwood Park office.

For more information on the solutions that ITI provide to the nuclear industry, visit the website: www.itigroup.co.uk/sectors/nuclear/



■ The Dounreay site.



■ Layout of the Drum Handling Facility.

Businesses at Warrington enterprise hub 'hold key to town's growth'

COMPANIES at one of Warrington's premier enterprise hubs export more, hold more patents and recruit more trainees and apprentices than the national average.

And 94 per cent of the businesses at The Base on Dallam Lane say they intend to recruit more staff this coming year, despite the economic headwinds.

These are just some of the findings of a survey undertaken by property company Langtree, which manages the building on behalf of owners Warrington & Co.

The annual tenant survey, suspended for two years due to the pandemic, has lifted the lid on the building's ambitious occupiers and shown them to outstrip regional averages on a number of key indicators.

Moreover, says Jayne Furnival, group property director at Langtree, they co-operate and collaborate with each other 'to a high degree.'

"We've put a huge amount of effort into business support for occupiers, and into curating a culture of collaboration and our findings bear out its impact," she said.

The study showed that 44 per cent

of occupiers have other tenants as customers, whilst 11 per cent utilise neighbours as suppliers. A further 22 per cent collaborate on projects together.

"This level of collaboration holds the key to how Warrington can cement long-term growth," says Eleanor Blackburn, head of inclusive growth and partnerships at Warrington Council.

"What's particularly encouraging is the extent of the innovation amongst our clients, whether singularly or via collaboration. 11 per cent have registered patents or some other form of proprietary intellectual property," Eleanor added.

According to latest data from the CBI, this shows firms at The Base to be 10 per cent more likely to have registered IP than the UK SME average. Similarly, the survey found that Base tenants are also 10 per cent more likely to be exporters than average, with 11 per cent exporting their technology and services overseas*.

Other data uncovered by the survey found:

- 44% of companies have increased their number of employees in the past 12 months

- 94% say they are looking to recruit in the next 12 months

- 100% of businesses have employees that live in Warrington

- 22% of businesses employ apprentices or trainees

"The purpose of The Base and the various aspects of support we offer is to provide an environment where SMEs can thrive. These growth figures – and in particular, the emphasis on recruiting and developing our young people – says that Warrington is in good hands," said Eleanor Blackburn.

"We are not complacent, however, as the survey found that our clients still have challenges and it's

reasonable to assume that these are commonplace across the town. We continue to evolve the service offer at The Base and more widely to help support our private sector."

Key issues constraining businesses were identified as recruitment (highlighted by 38 per cent of occupiers) and cashflow (22 per cent).

On a positive note, 50 per cent of tenants had reported growth in sales over the previous twelve months and none reported a decline in sales.

There are 28 companies registered at The Base, employing more than 250 staff.



United Utilities' automated asset inspection unlocks miles of data and speeds up repairs

ARTIFICIAL intelligence is helping to speed up repairs to Warrington-based United Utilities wastewater pipeline network by semi-automating the review of CCTV inspection footage.

Since the use of CCTV for pipeline inspections was first introduced in the 1950s, the process of reviewing footage has remained largely manual – and very time consuming. The increasing volume of work across the water sector has highlighted the need for modernisation.

Now United Utilities has adopted cutting-edge technology to dramatically speed up the process.

Every year the water company for the North West inspects more than 1,000km of pipeline using CCTV cameras – and that generates thousands of hours of footage which has been manually reviewed to check for pipe damage or obstructions which can lead to flooding.

Now the time needed to review footage has been dramatically reduced thanks to a successful partnership forged with VAPAR, an Australian artificial intelligence (AI) company. The partnership was developed through United Utilities' highly regarded Innovation Lab – which is designed to help new ideas get adopted faster.

VAPAR uses AI to speed up pipeline repairs by semi-

automating the fault detection process from inspection footage.

Founded by two female engineers in Australia, VAPAR first began working with United Utilities in the second Innovation Lab held in 2019. Initially the focus was on developing the accuracy of the AI.

With that successfully completed VAPAR was put to the test as part of the United Utilities routine maintenance inspection programme – and the results were impressive with VAPAR reducing survey processing times from 10 days to two days – an 80% improvement.

Katy Bevan, Programme Delivery Manager for United Utilities' Wastewater Network said: "VAPAR has truly transformed the way that we work, it provides us with a consistent method of defect coding that equates to a consistent decision-making process on investment.

"It has also massively reduced timescales of both the time needed to review footage and the turnaround time from footage being recorded on site to decisions about cleaning and remedial activities being made. In addition we are also benefiting from lower costs, and the generation of performance management tools to support our targets."

The complex nature of pipeline inspections makes it impossible for AI to be used as a stand-alone tool and the outputs still

require review. VAPAR uses a 'Collaborative Intelligence' approach which sees AI being used to support human expertise.

VAPAR is now being rolled out more widely across United Utilities for use across the entire inspection program. It is also being integrated with United Utilities' Dynamic Network Monitoring (DNM) platform. The platform contains feeds from thousands of monitors, plus other datasets that allow the business to take a proactive approach on how it manages its network.

Amanda Siqueira, Co-founder and CEO of VAPAR added: "We were new to the UK water industry when we joined the Innovation Lab back in 2019. The highly collaborative approach that the United Utilities team adopted in the innovation process was fundamental to

creating the impactful product and team that we have today.

"Their drive for continual innovation and creating value continues to guide our roadmap for the benefit of all of VAPAR's other customers. We're now looking at other markets, including North America, so that we can help even more water authorities optimise the budgets of their pipe maintenance programs"

Alice Leadbetter, Innovation Coordinator at United Utilities added: "We have been delighted with the speed and agility of VAPAR; in addition to their ground-breaking AI system – we have agreed an innovation development contract with them, so any new ideas we have together can be tested and adopted at speed too."



Jacobs wins new contract to support UK fusion program

JACOBS, with offices in Birchwood, has been awarded a contract to support the UK's fusion energy research program.

The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) has appointed the company on all lots of its new Plant Maintenance and Operational Support Services (PMOSS) framework.

Subject to competition under the framework, Jacobs' project delivery professionals will be embedded in client teams at UKAEA, the U.K.'s national fusion laboratory, to work on some of the world's most advanced research into machine design, robotics, materials science and fusion fuel.

"Assisting UKAEA to realize the enormous potential of fusion for generating safe, sustainable and low-carbon electricity delivers on our commitment to a clean energy future," said Jacobs Energy Security and Technology Senior Vice President Karen Wiemelt. "Fusion power would be a new source of safe, non-carbon emitting and almost limitless energy, which makes this endeavor

one of the keys to creating a more connected, sustainable world."

"Delivering fusion energy is a quest – one of the biggest scientific and engineering challenges of them all, but the rewards will be enormous. Putting fusion electricity on the grid has the potential to provide 'baseload' power, complementing renewable and other low carbon energy sources as a share of many countries' energy portfolios," said UKAEA Chief Technology Officer Tim Bestwick.

The PMOSS framework focuses on key UKAEA-led programs, including the Tritium Advanced Technology (H3AT) facility, which will open at UKAEA next year, aimed at to exploring fuel storage, breeding and recovery techniques for future fusion powerplants. Jacobs' specialists will also be available to support other UKAEA facilities, such as Remote Applications in Challenging Environments (RACE), which tests and designs robotic and remote solutions; the Material Research Facility (MRF), which researches specialist materials that can

withstand extreme conditions; and Fusion Technology Facility (FTF) at Culham and in Rotherham, which will test fusion components in realistic conditions.

Jacobs has been at the forefront of fusion energy for decades, supporting UKAEA-managed Joint European Torus and ITER, the world's largest fusion project based in Provence, France.

Growth in fusion research is creating new opportunities for Jacobs' engineers in a range of disciplines, including electrical, control and instrumentation, process plant, mechanical, chemical and nuclear; and for scientists specializing in chemistry, physics and materials. To find out more about the opportunities on offer, search careers.jacobs.com



Warrington-based Home Instead Charities secures £43,750 grant

THE Access Foundation has awarded a £43,750 grant to Warrington-based Home Instead Charities (Home Instead UK's charity) to open 6 new companionship cafes to help bridge the digital divide for older adults in the UK. The grant will be used for equipment including brand new tablets and internet access.

The cafes will be located in York, Southampton, Lewes, Dudley, Doncaster and East Herts, with more locations planned for 2023. Run by volunteers, members of the public will be offered good company, a hot drink and free help and support with using the internet and online services available to them. To ensure this is an enjoyable experience for all, at many of the cafes, the technology

will be used alongside traditional activities, such as recording and sharing choir performances via email, using the internet to play games and sharing pictures of craft projects on social media.

One of the main objectives of the Access Foundation is to bridge the digital divide by making computer equipment and support readily available to all. Piers McLeish, Trustee of The Access Foundation commented: "Our Foundation is delighted to support the work of Home Instead Charities which makes a real difference to the older generation, many of whom rely on home care services and find themselves vulnerable and isolated from society.

"The cafes will make the online world more accessible and

inclusive for the older generation through technology. Many older adults are unable to afford luxuries such as smart phones and tablets and therefore miss out on being able to do simple tasks such as book GP appointments, online shopping, banking or connecting with friends and family.

"The cafes will provide a welcoming place for older people to learn how to use technology enabling them to become more connected and self-sufficient in their later life."

According to Age UK; 42% of over 75's don't use the internet

because of lack of knowledge and/or mistrust and a lack of access to equipment.

Penny Hamer, Executive Director of Home Instead Charities says: "We are so grateful to the Access Foundation, as this grant will make a huge difference in local communities. These cafes will provide a fantastic source of advice and support and also an opportunity for those seeking companionship to meet up in a warm, friendly environment. We can't wait to promote these cafes and we hope to increase the number of volunteers locally."



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University of Chester launches Gateway Certificate in Professional Education course

DESIGNED with employers to develop and upskill for today's workplace, the Gateway Certificate in Professional Education is a new university-level (Level 4) qualification that has been designed for people who may not have had the opportunity to go to university or would like to return to university-level study after a significant gap.

It is also designed to benefit their businesses too. Through this Certificate, employees can focus on their professional development and upskill to boost their future career potential, while also bringing an immediate positive change to their organisations.

For details and how to apply, visit www1.chester.ac.uk/gateway-certificate-professional-education

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Please email your news stories and pictures to the Editor at our email address:

info@warrington-chamber.co.uk

Countdown to the world's first free to enter, chip timed, road closed run!

THE world's first free, road closed and chip timed run is set to launch at the Warrington Running Festival on Sunday September 24, 2023.

The race will be part funded by RunThrough Events (GW Active) in partnership with LetsDoThis.

In addition, any donations are welcome to be made of any amount and there are opportunities for further partners to get on board.

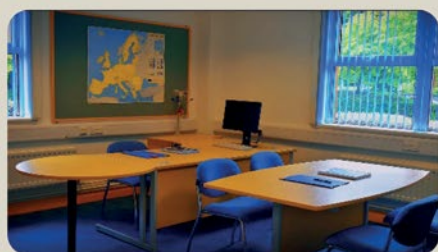
Organisers also invite people to run for the RunThrough foundation and raise money. Any surplus money raised for the event will go

into bringing the same initiative to other towns in an effort to spread the joys of running across the UK!

Hometown of RunThrough events co-founder Ben Green, the Warrington Running Festival is an opportunity to give back to the town that has supported his lifelong

running journey. In partnership with the Warrington Borough Council, the RunThrough Foundation team aims to transform the community's approach to active and healthy living by providing access to all.

To register for the event, visit www.warringtonrunningfestival.com



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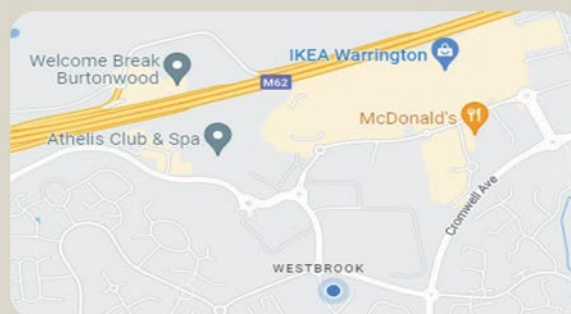
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