



Insight

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The Journal of the

WARRINGTON CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

in association with
VALE ROYAL
The heart of Cheshire



■ Richard Smith of Kinaxia, Simon Hawthorne of ArrowXL, and Adrian Boardman, senior operations manager at Mark Thompson Transport.

Warrington haulage firm signs five-year contract with home delivery specialist

WARRINGTON-based Mark Thompson Transport, part of Kinaxia Logistics, has agreed a five-year contract to provide all domestic linehaul and trunking services for two-person home delivery specialist ArrowXL.

ArrowXL, which has its headquarters in Wigan and further sites at Worcester, Airdrie, Carrickfergus and Enfield, delivers more than two million customer orders a year for retailers, ecommerce companies and manufacturers. These include domestic appliances, furniture, sofas, beds and mattresses and garden items.

Mark Thompson Transport has been providing a large proportion of ArrowXL's trailer-based client collections, returns and carousel movements since 2019.

Now the arrangement is being expanded and will see the firm assume responsibility for all

domestic linehaul and trunking services.

Mark Thompson Transport already has operating centres and dedicated drivers based at ArrowXL's hubs in Wigan and Worcester, and will open new ones in Enfield and Airdrie, as well as providing all units and trailers required to fulfil the contract.

Following the deal, 14 drivers employed by ArrowXL will transfer to Mark Thompson Transport under TUPE regulations and more drivers will be recruited in line with the expansion resulting from the deal.

Richard Smith, managing director of Kinaxia's primary sector business, said: "We are excited to be extending our relationship with ArrowXL and welcoming new drivers into the Kinaxia family.

"This five-year contract is the result of a lot of hard work by the

ArrowXL and Mark Thompson Transport teams and is a reflection of the service that we have been providing over the last four years.

"We are now able to build on this joint success and further cement our partnership.

"At the same time, the arrangement reinforces our nationwide capabilities in the primary sector and creates growth opportunities across a wide area of the UK as well as enabling us to offer more flexibility to our existing customers."

Charlie Shiels, CEO of ArrowXL, said: "This decision is a natural extension of our current arrangements. We both work really well together, and this change will help us to create more and better opportunities for our many clients. This could be in improved first mile capability or higher levels of service excellence.

"ArrowXL and Mark Thompson Transport are a good cultural fit and both put customer service at the heart of their operational capabilities.

"We look forward to creating an even more innovative relationship as we get to know even more about each other's strengths and capabilities."

Kinaxia is a top 15 UK logistics group employing more than 1,600 staff nationwide with a fleet of over 850 vehicles which transport goods for the retail, leisure, food and drink and manufacturing sectors.

The group, which has its headquarters in Macclesfield, Cheshire, has 2.7 million sq ft of warehouse facilities nationwide, offering contract packing, e-fulfilment, returns management, storage services and a complete distribution service.

From the Chief Executive

Stephen Fitzsimons

The UK economy received slightly more optimistic news recently. I'll not call it "good", because narrowly avoiding a recession and having prices rise at nearly 9% is not a cause for celebration (Evertonians take note!).

The UK is still suffering from low growth, high costs, skill shortages and trade barriers. However, it is a step in the right direction and the government is right to prioritise reducing inflation because it truly is the enemy of prosperity, making everyone and everything poorer. I recall visiting a speciality chemicals company months before the war in Ukraine and they had already experienced energy costs rise ten-fold so it was really encouraging to

see them again this week and find these costs finally coming down.

A lucky number of thirsty drinkers were treated to a free pint from singer Paul Heaton as he left some money behind the bar at a handful of local pubs. The Weekender boosts the Warrington economy by over £2 million each May and it was great to see plenty of local firms benefit from the opportunity.

Similarly, one Chamber member was supported the filming for the Eurovision song contest so it is really important to welcome events into the town or the wider north west. Warrington may not have been blessed with Roman ruins or a sandy seaside beach, however it has always excelled at

welcoming visitors for a big night out and the economy is stronger for it.

Whilst events provide a regular injection of commercial opportunities, the building of a new hospital would have provided a massive economic boost. Having staff and visitors living, working and playing in the town centre would have elevated football to a level seen within neighbouring cities.

Warrington missing out on the government's "new" building programme is bitterly disappointing and would have been an easy win for its Levelling Up agenda. The timing would have been perfect, with the Business



Improvement District securing another 5 years activity following an 80% positive endorsement.

The sun is shining in my back garden as I write this piece and as Bank of England research suggests the UK economy grows by 0.01% following nice weather, let's hope it continues for the summer!

Take care,
Stephen

Partnerships key to success as Property Review celebrates 25th anniversary

AS it celebrated its 25th anniversary the annual Warrington Property Review heard how despite challenging times, the town continued to attract £200m of investment a year over the past 10 years.

Business leaders from across the town and further afield gathered at the "sell-out" event at the Park Royal Hotel to hear how there had been £2 billion worth of public and private sector investment in Warrington over the past decade.

Warrington Borough Council's Director of Growth Steve Park said partnerships had been one of three key successes in delivering the council's visions.

Speaking at the event he said: "It's been four years since I last spoke at a Property Review, and although today marks the 25th anniversary, unbelievably it marks 10 years since I first stood in front of you and described my thoughts on transforming Warrington and the renewed focus on economic growth and regeneration.

And what a decade it's been. I think we'd all agree it's not been without its economic challenges.

We've had Brexit, a global pandemic, we've had Trump, 5 prime ministers, Trussomics, debt crisis in Greece, and I know that many argue that we never actually recovered from the financial crisis in 2008. We've had a boom in logistics, and a bust in retail.

"These economic shocks have created some significant and ongoing turbulence in the UK, but I'd argue that Warrington has managed to fly above most of it and it's not by chance either."

Meanwhile, John Laverick, Managing Director of Warrington & Co. said: "We have had some successes over the past year with significant developments. But we understand that there is significant pressure on development and ongoing business viability. There has been good progress but the financial headwinds are making this more challenging.

"When this happens it is our role to find ways of continuing to deliver regeneration and this generally means finding additional funding."



■ Steve Park and John Laverick.



■ Full house at the Warrington Property Review.

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Stephen Fitzsimons, Chief Executive

"Topping out" at Warrington's Kingsway House

CELEBRATING "topping out" at its biggest refurbishment project to date, HMS has officially hit new heights at Kingsway House in Warrington.

Signifying a landmark milestone in the redevelopment of the 8-storey apartment block, the team has completely transformed the outdated 1960s building, culminating in the renovation of the roof.

Marking a £5 million investment by Torus in the creation of 53 newly refurbished apartments, HMS is on track to complete the scheme by January, which will see Kingsway welcome back a number of previous residents to a home that features new windows, kitchens, bathrooms, front doors, lifts and balconies, a suite of enhanced safety features as well as improvements to the buildings entrance, communal areas, parking facilities and gardens.

HMS construction director John Barrow, said: "It's fantastic to mark this moment at Kingsway and celebrate the hard work the team have done to get to this point. As

our largest refurbishment project to date, Kingsway is a milestone in itself for HMS and showcases just how far we have come in a relatively short space of time.

"As an organisation, we have only been delivering works of this scale since 2018 so to see how far we have come in terms of what we are now capable of delivering is wonderful and I am looking forward to seeing how much further we can progress, in partnership with Torus, in the next five years."

Torus Group asset director, Margaret Goddard, added: "Torus is committed to futureproofing and increasing the energy efficiency of our existing homes.

"As well as the extensive refurbishment by Torus, Kingsway House is one of the first projects to benefit from funding from the Government's Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF), which will see Torus invest £21.2m in a range of retrofit energy-efficiency improvements for 695 homes, across Torus

communities over the next two years.

"We are looking forward for the completion of the project, and to welcome the residents back so they can start to enjoy their extensively refurbished home, and feel the benefits of the new windows, new doors, and improved insulation, which will improve energy efficiency of

the building and reduce carbon emissions.

"We also want to ensure they benefit as much as possible from the energy efficiency improvement works, which is incredibly important right now, with many tenants experiencing real hardship because of the cost-of-living crisis."



Warrington entrepreneur launches new business to make buying pets online safer

WARRINGTON entrepreneur, Felix Robinson together with her son, Tom have set up a business to make the buying of dogs online safer.

The welfare of the public and animals is not the top priority when it comes to purchasing pets and the need for a solution has now become urgent.

Felix, who has previously worked in the skincare industry and prior to this, was a representative for Snowboarding for England, was inspired to set up her business, Pet Trust UK following the puppy boom which was generated by the Covid pandemic.

During the lockdown periods, the collective mental health of the UK population suffered. Around 3.2 million households felt that adding a puppy to their family would have a positive impact on their lives but this came at a cost. There were an untold number of reports of puppies

being inhumanely bred, breeders being attacked and their beloved dogs being stolen, and families losing their savings to scammers.

Felix explains: "During the lockdown a Manchester breeder was threatened at knifepoint with machetes. Her dogs and puppies were stolen from her home after a meet and greet with an alleged prospective family. Sadly, she wasn't the only one as reports of attacks rose.

"My family and I knew that no platform supported breeders and prospective dog owners to make connections safely.

"Prospective owners are buying dogs online with no way of checking the breeder's credibility, health certificates and breeding practices. They were entrusting their fortunes without knowing if there was even a real puppy waiting for them or they were falling in love and finding their

puppy cruelly ripped from them six months later due to poor breeding and hidden health conditions.

"We therefore decided to set up Pet Trust UK to make buying animals online safer.

Felix believes that the current system for buying and selling dogs online is broken and leaves users vulnerable with the welfare of the public and animals clearly not the top priority. The Pet Trust UK secure platform provides the following benefits:

- Pet Trust UK will include a dog family tree for all breeds so users can research the heredity of the dogs.
- Pet Trust UK will be doing health certificate checks to reduce the incidence of inherited disorders.
- Pet Trust UK will hold breeders accountable, ensuring the Licences are legitimate.
- All images will have a transparent logo and look at ai technology to recognise when a photo has been copied and if so, will be flagged.
- By introducing the UK's 1st Mandatory ID bank clearance checks, this new online platform ensures that the breeder and potential buyer know that the person messaging them is genuine, their details accurate and they are traceable.
- All potential dog owners will complete a questionnaire, which will be forwarded to the breeder on enquiry.
- All unlicensed breeders who do not have a licence are to be vetted by zoom with a preset list of questions to ensure the

user is not a puppy farmer and is breeding responsibly.

"By ensuring that breeding dogs are healthy, we will contribute to the welfare of all dogs. This will create a trustworthy and safe environment for all users," says Felix who is the proud owner of a 5 year old rescue Boxer called Sammi.

As well as providing a safe environment to buy pets, Pet Trust UK also intends to give something back by working with rescue centres and giving a percentage of profits to partner centres. They have already partnered up with DNA Protected, and are working closely with Councils, and The Police to make their platform the most secure place to purchase pets. They also hope to link up with the Kennel Club and Laboratories to validate health results, vets, insurance companies, retailers and pet food manufacturers to give added benefits to customers. The business will be launching an Ecommerce site in September and also intends to provide educational courses and qualifications and resource material on various aspects of pet care.

Felix concludes: "I see Pet Trust UK becoming a one stop shop for dog breeders, breeding equipment and new puppy owners as we aim to offer something special to our customers. Our focus will also be on promoting licenced breeders and showcasing their profiles."

If you are dog breeder and what to register with Pet Trust UK or a potential dog owner who wants to pre register for the service provider database, then visit our web site: www.pettrustuk.com You can email: felixr@pettrustuk.com You can also follow Pet Trust UK on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn



Ansell Lighting achieves first ever King's Award for Enterprise

WARRINGTON-based lighting manufacturer Ansell Lighting has been honoured with the first ever King's Award for Enterprise for Innovation.

Ansell, based on Stonecross Industrial Park in Warrington, is one of 148 organisations nationally to receive with a prestigious King's Award for Enterprise and has been recognised for its excellence in the Innovation category for its patented Panel Pod product.

The Panel Pod was created in response to an identified industry need, and converts an LED panel light into an emergency light in less than sixty seconds, without needing a conversion kit or additional ceiling fixture to install. Emergency lighting is required by British law and workplace health and safety guidance, so if the lights go out in the case of fire or other incident it stays on for up to three hours. *

Since its launch in 2014 almost 400,000 Panel Pods have been sold worldwide.

The King's Awards for Enterprise was previously known as The Queen's Awards for Enterprise, and the new name reflects His Majesty The King's desire to continue the legacy of HM Queen Elizabeth II's, by recognising outstanding UK businesses. The Award programme,

now in its 57th year, is the most prestigious business award in the country, with successful businesses able to use the esteemed King's Awards Emblem for the next five years.

Winners of the award are invited by The King to a reception at Buckingham Palace.

Mark Abbott, Managing Director of Ansell Lighting, said: "Achieving this award, especially in the first year of the King's Awards, is a great honour and testament to the hard work and dedication of our innovation team and everyone involved in the business.

"The design and creation of the Panel Pod was genuinely transformative for our business and continues to contribute significantly to our ongoing success. Its launch paved the way for new relationships with wholesalers and contractors who we had never worked with previously. It is a fantastic example of continuous innovation as, over the last eight years, we have continued to re-evaluated its design, making it lighter and more discreet, upgrading the battery to Lithium and now we are working on a reporting capability for it that will be extremely valuable to the building managers using emergency lighting."



Certas Energy accelerates growth in renewables sector with latest acquisition

WARRINGTON-based fuel and lubricants distributor, Certas Energy, has expanded its presence in the renewable energy sector with the acquisition of Hafod Renewable Energy.

Corporate finance firm Cleveland Scott – another Warrington based firm – advised Hafod Renewable Energy on the sale. Financial details of the transaction have not been disclosed.

Hafod is the second major investment made by Certas Energy in the last six months to grow its renewable solutions offering.

In late 2022, the company acquired Preston-based Freedom Heat Pumps, a distributor of air source and ground source heat pump equipment.

Hafod, which was founded in 2010 by managing director David Jones and his late father Richard, supplies sustainable energy solutions such as air source heat pumps, solar panels, EV chargers and underfloor heating to domestic, commercial and agricultural customers across North Wales, Cheshire, Merseyside and Greater Manchester.

Ryan Niblock, corporate finance director at Cleveland Scott, advised Hafod on its sale to Certas Energy.

He said: "It was a pleasure

advising David on the sale of Hafod Renewable Energy to Certas Energy.

"We received multiple offers for Hafod, but Certas Energy was the standout party from our first interaction with them. The Certas Energy team were great to deal with throughout the process, and they will be the perfect partner for Hafod.

"David has built a fantastic business which has developed an unrivalled reputation in North Wales and north west England. We wish both parties every success in the future.

"There is a great deal of interest in the sector, which still has significant scope for growth as the UK transitions to renewable energy."

David Jones said: "Cleveland Scott worked really hard and efficiently in finding the right buyer, negotiating the structure of the deal and ensuring due diligence progressed smoothly.

"I thoroughly enjoyed working with Ryan, who managed the process so well it meant I could carry on leading the business day-to-day to ensure we were meeting our financial targets for the buyer."

Other advisers acting on behalf of Hafod were Powell Accountants and a team at Napthens Solicitors

which included Kieran Donovan, Victoria Bromiley, Evie Hubble, Suzanne Mainwaring and Stephanie Gray.

Steve Little, managing director at Certas Energy, said: "Transitioning homes and businesses towards cleaner energy options to create a more sustainable future will require a combination of technologies and services.

"We're dedicated to developing and investing in our business model to do exactly that.

"The latest acquisition of Hafod Renewable Energy is testament to our unwavering commitment to powering the energy transition and we are excited for the significant contribution it will make to Certas Energy and our customers.

"By expanding our portfolio, growing our renewables division and harnessing industry-leading expertise, we are confident that we can continue to drive meaningful change."



CreativeHut win company of the year at the BETT Awards 2023

WARRINGTON creative and educational resources provider, CreativeHUT, has won a prestigious BETT award for Company of the Year.

The BETT Awards are recognised as one of the most prestigious awards in the education technology industry. They celebrate the creativity and innovation that is transforming education and are judged by a panel of experts from the education and technology sectors.

The judges commented on the fantastic energy and innovative approach from CreativeHUT, "a small player with a big heart! An ambitious company, using a strong range of partnerships to increase their attractiveness to young people, their reach and their impact."

The award ceremony is part of BETT's international flagship event at the ExCel in London with visitors from more than 120 countries. Thousands of visitors gather to meet with hundreds of EdTech providers, join CPD content sessions and network with their peers. The awards are a celebration of the inspiring creativity and innovation that can be found throughout technology for education. Produced in association with Besa, being a Bett Award Winner is simply the best way to showcase your organisation with a sign of excellence.

"We are thrilled to receive this recognition from the BETT Awards," said the founder of CreativeHUT, Gareth Boldsworth. "This award is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our team, who have worked tirelessly to develop innovative educational technology solutions that truly make a difference in the lives of students and teachers."

CreativeHUT is a full-service STEAM resources provider for the education sector, delivering training, workshops and the provision of state-of-the-art creative learning spaces. Experts in the development of 21st-century skills from early years all the way through to higher and further education. Working with partners including Premier League Football Clubs, Nissan and Google.

Over the last 12 months they have inspired over 15,000 students to build exciting futures through their workshops. They have opened five learning centres providing access for 750+ of the most deprived schools in the UK to the most cutting-edge resources, including LEGO® Education, Makeblock and Sphero. Delivering a 150% increase in web sales year-on-year, a 412% increase in demand for services, and finally working with not one but two England goalkeepers to deliver coding workshops to inner-city schools!



Mayor of Warrington opens second care facility for New Care

IN one of her last engagements before her term of office ends, the Mayor of Warrington, Councillor Jean Flaherty, officially opened Grappenhall Manor, the £11million new state-of-the-art care centre on Stockport Road in Grappenhall.

Late last year Councillor Flaherty was invited to open Statham Manor in Lymm, New Care's first care centre in the borough of Warrington, seeing first hand the exceptional care facilities that the leading care home operator was delivering in the area.

Impressed with the design of the new build home and quality of care, she was delighted to return to meet the new team, enjoy a guided tour of the new Grappenhall facility and cut a red ribbon to declare the home officially open for its first residents.

Grappenhall Manor is the latest care facility to be opened by Altrincham-based care home operator New Care and will provide outstanding residential, 24-hour nursing, dementia and respite care for those in Grappenhall and the surrounding areas.

Working closely with the local authority, Grappenhall Manor has been expertly designed by both architect and clinical lead to ensure it delivers exceptional care from a high quality new build

property that combines style and function to ensure a safe, secure and comfortable home-from-home for residents.

Featuring 70 fully furnished bedrooms, each with a private en suite wet room, plus a selection of communal lounges, reading rooms and dining rooms, spa-assisted bathrooms, a nail bar, hair salon and access to landscaped communal gardens and terraces, Grappenhall Manor provides a stunning living environment for its residents who enjoy person-centred individual care, freshly prepared nutritious meals and a daily programme of wellbeing activities.

Positioned on the site of the former Springbrook pub, on the corner of Stockport Road and Warrington Road, it is located conveniently for easy access from all areas of Warrington and beyond.

Commenting on the opening Cllr Flaherty said: "It was a privilege to be invited to open New Care's second dedicated care facility in Warrington and hear how these two superb centres that will work together to deliver great care for the people in this borough. I'm delighted to have been able to open both properties and meet their wonderful teams and first residents during my time in office."

Commissioning director at New Care, Dawn Collett added: "It has been our pleasure to welcome the Mayor as the guest of honour at both of our openings and we're thrilled that she was able to open Grappenhall Manor for us before ending her current term."

Now officially open and welcoming its first residents, Grappenhall Manor is recruiting locally with approximately 100 jobs expected to be created locally over the next 12 months in multiple roles including nurses, carers, hospitality, housekeeping,

wellbeing and activities, maintenance and catering.

Part of the McGoff Group, New Care is one of the UK's leading care home providers. Its portfolio of purpose-built 'new generation' care centres is fast gaining an enviable reputation for outstanding care that is second to none. For further information on Grappenhall Manor or to book an appointment to view the home, please contact the team on 01925 596828 or email enquiries@newcarehomes.com. Alternatively, visit www.newcarehomes.com



Pam Group launches recruitment drive for 100 new staff to meet growing demand

OCCUPATIONAL health and wellbeing specialist PAM Group has launched a recruitment drive for 100 new staff to meet increasing demand for its services and to facilitate further growth as part of an ambitious expansion strategy.

The roles are being created across the group's operations, including clinicians, managers, client services and sales.

Founder and chief executive James Murphy said PAM is bolstering its workforce as it gears up for a £10m increase in revenues this year following an influx of new business and growing demand from existing clients.

Warrington headquartered PAM, which currently employs 700 people nationwide, posted revenues of £45m for 2022 and is on track to reach £55m this year. PAM is looking to grow turnover to £80m over the next few years through continued organic expansion and acquisitions.

Alongside the new roles, James also announced a raft of new employee benefits and rewards as part of PAM's recruitment and retention strategy.

The improved package includes:

- A new group income protection scheme, funded by the company, under which staff on sick leave will receive 60 per cent of their annual salary for up to two years after 13 weeks' absence on full pay;
- Staff with seven years' service at PAM will receive a gift of £250 every year during the month of their birthday;
- An option to buy or sell up to five days' holiday entitlement each year – up from two days – for staff who are full-time equivalent;
- Those previously on the National Living Wage will be paid the higher Real Living Wage. All others will receive a 4.25 per cent pay rise.

PAM is also introducing a benefits and rewards programme in conjunction with Perkbox, is handing out more individual bonus payments recognising great service to clients and other ways in which staff go above and beyond the call of duty, and is rolling out to all staff and their families the Raiys wellbeing and lifestyle improvement app.

The group is a major provider of occupational health, employee assistance programme, health screening and wellbeing services across 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.

PAM's services include absence management, physiotherapy, employee assistance programmes,

psychological support, corporate health assessments and neurodiversity assessments, mobile health screening and drug and alcohol screening. The group operates a network of 25 clinics across the UK. It also has a retail arm which supplies fitness, exercise and rehabilitation equipment to consumers, sports clubs and sports and physiotherapy professionals.

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

PAM's growth comes as businesses and organisations place more emphasis on the wellbeing of their employees, particularly in the wake of the pandemic and because of a pressing need to retain staff, especially in sectors which are experiencing a shortage of workers.

James said: "There is more focus by UK employers on workplace wellbeing support and occupational health, and this has resulted in an influx of new business for PAM Group. This means our team is set to grow substantially during 2023, to cater for this increase in demand for our services.

"Alongside this, we are mindful that colleagues across the group are being impacted by rising inflation and energy costs. It is

therefore the right time to be making a significant investment to improve the salaries, benefits and rewards for our staff.

"Our team is pivotal to the ongoing success of the business, and we want to encourage and reward people for their efforts in ensuring we continue to deliver great service to our clients. The enhanced package will also be

important in helping us to attract the right people as we expand our team significantly over the coming months."

He added: "While the new package of measures will add well over £1m to our overheads, we don't see it as a cost – it's an investment in our people, and will enable the business to grow further."



■ James Murphy.

Does your company have a flair for innovation? Get the recognition you deserve with The King's Awards for Enterprise

THE King's Awards for Enterprise are the most prestigious awards for businesses, recognising and celebrating business excellence across the UK. The recipients of the awards demonstrate outstanding success in their respective fields of innovation, international trade, sustainable development and promoting opportunity (through social mobility).

His Majesty The King personally approves the Awards and the Department for Business and Trade publicly announce the recipients on 21st April. From 2024, recipients will be announced on 6th May, to mark His Majesty The King's Coronation.

Award recipients often state that their achievement has opened new doors for them in terms of securing new contracts, venturing into new markets, and further developing their business. If successful in receiving a King's Award for Enterprise, the organisation receives a Grant of Appointment, and is able to display the award emblem for up

to 5 years, and access to a thriving alumni network of previous award recipients!

The King's Awards for Enterprise was previously known as The Queen's Awards for Enterprise, and the new name reflects His Majesty The King's desire to continue the legacy of HM Queen Elizabeth II by recognising outstanding UK businesses. The Award programme, now in its 57th year, has awarded over 7,000 companies since its inception in 1965.

The first ever recipients of The King's Awards for Enterprise have been announced today (21 April), celebrating the achievements of UK businesses.

This year, 148 businesses representing every part of the United Kingdom and a diverse range of sectors have been recognised by His Majesty The King as among the best in the country, with one company receiving two awards.

This year's King's Awards for Enterprise are given for outstanding achievement in:

- Innovation (47)
- International trade (78)
- Sustainable development (15)
- Promoting opportunity (through social mobility) (9)

His Majesty's Lord Lieutenants will be presenting the Awards to businesses locally throughout the year.

Applications for the 2024 round open on 6th May and close midday 12th September. Eligible businesses are free to apply for one or more categories. Recipients pass a robust assessment process, judged by experts from industry, academia, the voluntary sector and senior officials in Whitehall.

The Awards are open to all UK based organisations with two or more employees.

Now, more than ever, is a vital time for great UK businesses to be celebrated and recognised.

Read about eligibility and how to apply at www.gov.uk/kings-awards-for-enterprise



Warrington business among those recognised for Made Smarter digital transformation award

WARRINGTON-based IoT Horizon were among two Cheshire businesses to be the first recipients of the Made Smarter Awards, which celebrate excellence in manufacturing.

The scheme has been launched to mark the fourth anniversary of the pioneering Made Smarter adoption programme, a government-funded and industry-led initiative helping SME manufacturers digitalise, decarbonise and drive growth.

158 businesses, representing every part of the North West and a diverse range of sectors, have been recognised for their committed approach to digital transformation.

There are three levels of certification – bronze, silver, and gold – depending on a recipient's engagement and advocacy of the programme.

Among the first 19 'gold' award winners are: Derek Rose, lifestyle textile manufacturer based in Congleton, and IoT Horizon, a manufacturer of Internet of Things solutions, based at Sci-Tech Daresbury in Warrington.

Silver awards have been given to 40 companies, and bronze awards to 158.

Derek Rose transformed its previously manual and time-consuming process of drawing and amending patterns by introducing new software with the support of Made Smarter. It then invested in an automated cutting machine to improve the manufacturing elements and quality of its silk products.

Jason Carroll, Head of Operations, said: "Made Smarter has provided a fantastic level of support through the process of analysing our methods, finding potential solutions and implementing them.

"The support and advice has accelerated our digital transformation and given us the confidence to approach the next step in our journey."

"The award is recognition of the progress we have made with our digital transformation, which has only just begun."

IoT Horizon worked with Made Smarter to develop a sensor that utilises state of the art security protocols to secure sensor data, and a platform to support multiple sensors to manage the energy and environment of buildings. As a result the business has doubled turnover and recruited four new members of staff.

Deyrick Allen, Managing Director, said: "We were one of the first companies to get involved in the North West programme when it was launched four years ago and we continue to be vocal advocates of the multitude of benefits digital transformation offers the manufacturing industry.

"Made Smarter helped our own manufacturing processes which in turn has helped other companies develop their solutions up and down the country. We are absolutely delighted with this award."

To date, the North West programme has provided specialised support to over 2,500 businesses. Its advisors have imparted expert, impartial technology advice and digital transformation workshops to help create a digital roadmap, skills support and leadership training, and grants towards technology projects.

Some businesses have adopted technologies that enable them to integrate systems, capture and analyse data, and even create simulations of their plants and processes. Others have adopted 3D-printing, automation, and robotics to solve business challenges and meet increased demand.

These investments have created 1,300 new manufacturing jobs, upskilled 2,400 existing roles and added over £209M in GVA for the North West economy. Businesses are also benefiting from improved productivity and revenue, increased exports and lower energy bills, and a reduced carbon footprint.

Commenting on the awards, Donna Edwards, director of Made Smarter's North West adoption programme, said: "The Made Smarter adoption programme is a huge success story for UK manufacturing. It has inspired leadership and evoked change in hundreds of businesses through technology and new skills.

"Digital transformation can be hard, particularly in the current climate and given the challenges the sector has faced in recent years, so it is right we recognise the hard work, dedication and forward-thinking nature of these businesses and their employees. They have embraced digitalisation to become a leading example of UK manufacturing excellence.

"We are delighted to launch our first Made Smarter Awards and hope that recipients will wear them like a badge of honour to inspire others around them."

Laboratories in Warrington to have major role in robotics research

LABORATORIES in Warrington will play a major role in research into the future of robotics it has been revealed.

Global nuclear engineering giant Jacobs and the University of Manchester are to create a new international research center to develop robotics and autonomous systems that will play a key role in climate response.

The Centre for Robotic Autonomy in Demanding and Long-lasting Environments (CRADLE) will research new technologies for challenging and heavily regulated industry sectors such as space, nuclear decommissioning, energy generation and urban infrastructure.

The center will be co-funded to a total value of £9 million over five years by Jacobs, the University and the U.K. Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council's (EPSRC) Prosperity Partnerships program, which fosters links between academia and industry.

"Securing this prestigious Prosperity Partnerships grant allows Jacobs and The University of Manchester to research the autonomous systems that industry

needs to solve today's challenges and create a more connected and sustainable world," said Jacobs' energy, security and technology senior vice president Karen Wiemelt.

"Robotics is already a core strength of Jacobs' work in the energy and space sectors and this research collaboration will enable us to develop advanced technologies to help achieve net zero targets, such as autonomous inspection and repair systems to extend the life of water and energy networks, roads, bridges and railways."

Jacobs, which is investing more than £3 million, will have the opportunity to commercialize technologies developed at CRADLE to bring a step-change impact to clients in urban infrastructure, energy generation, nuclear power, decommissioning and space exploration, where robust and reliable autonomous robotics are crucial for efficient asset management and operations.

"CRADLE will allow the university's recently established Manchester Centre for Robotics and AI to

build a relationship with one of the leading organizations involved in applied robotics, helping us to progress our fundamental research in this area and to deliver impact from the robotic and AI systems that we are developing," said centre co-director Professor Barry Lennox.

CRADLE's research remit covers

mechatronics, software and how communities and regulators will engage with future robotic systems. Jacobs staff will support 12 PhD students in conducting research and performing prototype demonstrations at The University of Manchester and at Jacobs' robotics laboratories in Warrington.



Villafont Concierge appoints lifestyle manager at Minerva Place

VILLAFONT Concierge, part of The McGoff Group, has appointed Timperley's Helen Murphy to the role of lifestyle manager at Minerva Place in Lymm.

With the development fully complete, Helen's first task will be helping purchasers settle into their new home, familiarising themselves with their new surroundings; their individual apartments and the wider building and communal areas.

As the community grows, she will continue to be the first point of contact for residents, helping with day-to-day queries and facilitating regular events and activities to increase social interaction.

Prior to joining the McGoff Group, Helen worked in service-oriented roles across the hospitality, retail and education sectors. She brings together many skills from her career, including a commitment to top quality service and an ability to think on her feet.

Delighted with her appointment, Helen said: "This wonderful, independent living development is proving popular with purchasers looking to make the move to a luxurious, new residential community, with the option for extra support when they need it. It will be my role to ensure Minerva Place is maintained to a very high standard, help residents with their individual needs, and organise a variety of events to bring people together, to positively influence wellbeing and create a great sense of community with our approach encouraging independent living

to the full.

"I hope to become that familiar, friendly face who is there for a chat, to answer a question or help with an errand, with the ultimate aim of reducing any stresses for our residents and providing peace of mind for their wider families. From booking a restaurant, or a round of golf, to helping with organising prescriptions and property maintenance, I aim to provide a first-class service to an age group that can often be overlooked in our fast-paced society."

Helen was also attracted to the multi-generational values of the development, which complement her own, and is looking forward to working closely with the Group's sister companies, Statham Manor Care Centre and Back to the Garden Childcare, also based on the development.

Commenting on Helen's appointment, Paul Danks, group sales director at the McGoff Group, said: "With her friendly approach and 'can do' attitude, Helen is the perfect person to take the role of lifestyle manager at Minerva Place forward and I am confident she will be a great asset to our residents and wider team."

Helen is very much a family person, having been married to husband John for 23 years and raising three, now teenage children. When not working, she enjoys Pilates, gardening and spending time with her family, including Coco the cockerpoo.

Residential developer Villafont, and sub-brand Villafont Concierge, is part of The McGoff Group; a £150m collective of like-minded businesses with a seamless ability to acquire, design, build, operate and maintain across targeted healthcare, residential and commercial sectors. Driven by second-generation family

values, innovation, excellence and operational expertise, the McGoff name signifies quality, agility and an unbreakable force that is well equipped to sustain the business for future generations to come. For further information on Minerva Place, please visit www.villafont.com



New milestones for Torus as Repairs and Maintenance contract begins

LEADING North West housing Group, Torus, is launching its new Repairs and Maintenance contract, which will see trusted contractors, HMS and Sovini Property Services help to manage and maintain its 40,000 homes.

Worth £1.2 billion, the contract will see the Group further invest in its existing housing stock and leverage the services of experienced, award-winning local contractors to complete a myriad of reactive and emergency repairs.

Torus is committed to ensuring all its customers live in safe, secure, modern homes. The contract, which is derived from the organisation's new Repairs and Maintenance Framework, will support the Group in responding quickly and appropriately to the needs of its tenants and providing reassurance that all services delivered are of a high standard. Running for four years, with HMS being appointed for three as the First Call Off Contract, works will officially start to be delivered this month.

Following the successful completion of a robust and transparent procurement exercise, HMS were appointed as the Tier 1 contractor and Sovini Property Services as the Tier 2 contractor on the framework.

Utilising a framework approach, Torus can be more agile in how it delivers repairs and maintenance services. Available to other Registered Providers, the framework will help guarantee quality, value for money and ultimately more investment by

Torus in its portfolio of properties and communities.

Discussing the launch, Margaret Goddard, Group Assets Director, Torus, said: "This new framework and renewed partnership with HMS are milestones to be celebrated, having already seen so much progress to date, we are thrilled to begin works with the added support of Sovini Property Services to enable us to provide a long-term, sustained service to our customers.

"We want all our tenants to enjoy their homes and to feel happy and safe in the knowledge that we are putting their health and wellbeing first. As a Group, we have a firm focus on quality, building safety, and community engagement underpins everything we do at Torus.

"The four-year Repairs and Maintenance Framework has been developed to fulfil the current and future expectations of the Group, its tenants, and the Regulator of Social Housing. As a framework it sets the principles for engagement and will be supported by an action plan to ensure delivery and continued progress.

"Both HMS and Sovini Property Services have excellent track records in showing commitment to their customers, communities and ensuring their works are completed to a high standard, which aligns with how Torus operates.

"I am looking forward to seeing both organisations help us to ensure all our tenants receive the support they deserve, providing services without any interruption

or delays and helping us deliver value for money for our tenants, particularly as it is important, they know their rent is being reinvested correctly."

Commenting on its ongoing partnership with Torus, HMS' Managing Director, Paul Worthington, said: "The whole team is thrilled to be continuing our partnership with Torus. Over the past four years, we have learnt several things that have positively informed and guided how we deliver services and this collaboration with Torus and their customers has been incredibly effective in creating a repairs and maintenance service that works well.

"I'm also looking forward to seeing

what the next three years will bring and just how many more repairs we will be able to deliver with the ever-expanding team."

Mike Dale, Head of Property Services and Growth at Sovini Property Services, commented: "Like ourselves, Torus is a customer orientated organisation, committed to investing in the communities they work in. We're committed to delivering an outstanding service to Torus' 40,000 homes, bringing a wealth of experience in repairs and maintenance service delivery.

"We recognise the importance our collaborative partnership is set to achieve in supporting our shared vision of enabling the development of economically vibrant communities".



■ Paul Worthington (HMS Managing Director), Margaret Goddard (Torus Group Housing Director), Paul Warburton (Torus Director of Housing)

United Utilities opens 18 internships in roles from water quality to digital marketing

WARRINGTON-headquartered United Utilities has opened up applications for its 2023 internships, with 18 positions available.

The internships, which include 3-month placements starting in July and 12-month placements starting in September, cover everything from land management and water quality, to engineering and digital marketing.

They are open to students in the second or third year of their degree, and graduates within a year of their graduation, and most are based at the water company's Lingley Mere headquarters in Warrington.

The three-month internships are:

- Strategic Catchment
- Hydrology Analyst
- Regulatory Improvement Analyst
- Fleet Management
- Estates Land Agent (Hybrid role to cover Greater Manchester, Peak District and Cheshire, with office in Denton)

The 12-month internships are:

- Water Resources Hydrology
- Water Quality First
- Dynamic Network Management
- Strategy Development
- Process Safety
- Mechanical Engineer
- Civil Engineer
- Assistant Project Engineering Manager
- Assistant Project Manager
- Quantity Surveying
- Spares and Logistics Analyst
- Town Planner
- Financial Analyst
- Digital Marketing Executive

Julie Newton, Head of People Engagement and Culture at United Utilities, said: "Our internship programme is always really popular as it gives current students and recent graduates a direct insight into a potential career, and backs up their classroom learning with hands-on experience and work-based training.

"We're delighted to have 18 internships available for 2023, covering a wide range of roles across the business, and we look

forward to welcoming our new colleagues in July and September to help us make our region stronger, greener and healthier."

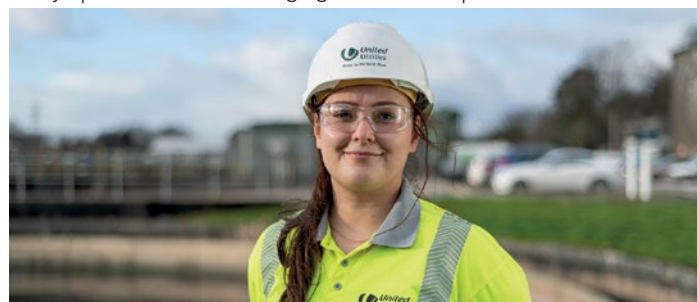
Zainab completed an engineering internship at United Utilities while studying economics at Manchester Metropolitan University. She said: "Although my degree is in economics, my internship has helped me develop lots of specific skills like web skills, report writing and researching, as well as team work and management skills.

"The working environment is always positive and encouraging,

mostly as a result of all my colleagues being really welcoming and sharing a common goal, and my efforts and hard work are always recognised."

Interns at United Utilities receive a salary of £21,030 and 26 days of annual leave (both pro-rated), dedicated training and ongoing support, pension scheme, onsite gym and much more.

Applications close on Sunday 4th June and full details are available at: www.unitedutilities.com/corporate/careers/graduates/internships





■ The Redwood Bank team accept their award from comedian Al Murray.

Warrington bank makes it five out of five at industry awards

A **WARRINGTON** specialist business bank is celebrating after winning a key industry award for the fifth successive year.

Redwood Bank picked up the Business Moneyfacts trophy for Best Business Variable Rate Deposit Account Provider at a glittering London ceremony.

The Bank, which celebrated its fifth anniversary in 2022, has collected the accolade every year since its launch.

Gary Wilkinson, Co-Founder and

CEO, said: "If this was the World Cup, I think they'd have to let us keep it now."

Last year Redwood Bank announced its first profit, for the year-ended 31 December 2021, after continuing to support British businesses throughout the challenges of the pandemic when many high street lenders retrenched.

"We are here to support our customers and do our best to provide the financial help so many businesses need as they continue

to face an onslaught of challenges.

"Redwood Bank prides itself on backing British businesses. So many of our customers are SMEs trying to navigate difficult times, and they need a bank that will work with them, not against them. It's important to provide them with products that support their ambitions."

Representatives from the Bank were in London to share the evening ceremony, where Redwood Bank was also shortlisted for Best Business Fixed

Account Provider, an award it won in 2020, and Best Service from a Commercial Mortgage Provider.

"Our team works incredibly hard on behalf of our customers and it means a lot to our colleagues to be recognised at these prestigious awards."

The Business Moneyfacts Awards attracts entries from across the banking sector, with Redwood Bank joined as winners on the night by high street names including Santander, HSBC, Barclays and NatWest.

Sellafield clean-up team dives into history

A **TEAM** of specialist nuclear divers is carrying out vital clean-up and decommissioning work in the oldest legacy storage pond on the Sellafield site and are applying and learning valuable lessons in the process.

The last time a human entered Sellafield's Pile Fuel Storage Pond (PFSP) was in 1958, when records show a maintenance operator and health physics monitor carried out a dive into the newly constructed pond to repair a broken winch.

At least that was true until December 2022 when Josh Everett, a diver from the specialist U.S. nuclear diving team Underwater Construction Corporation Ltd, became the first person in over 60 years to descend the ladder and set to work in one of the most unique workplaces in the world.

The Pile Fuel Storage Pond is one of the oldest buildings on the Sellafield site and was constructed in the 1940s to support the operation of the Windscale Piles; the first nuclear reactors to be built at Sellafield.

The 100m long outdoor pond was used for the cooling, storage, and de-canning of spent fuel from the reactors as part of the UK's post-war atomic weapons programme. Operations ceased in the 1960s and in the years that followed

sludges formed from the decaying nuclear fuel, algae and other debris.

In the last decade significant progress has been made in retrieving and safely storing fuel, bulk sludges and redundant equipment from the pond, but it remains one of the most complex decommissioning challenges in the world and a priority project for Sellafield Ltd and the NDA.

Divers enter the pond via a specially installed access platform and position themselves on a metal dive stand with a shielded floor. From here they were able to work in shifts of up to 3.5 hours at a time to retrieve sludges and debris from the pond floor, corners and other hard-to-reach areas.

Sending human divers into a contaminated pond may seem to run counter to modern nuclear clean-up and decommissioning techniques that commonly use robots and other tools for this type of work, but these are no ordinary divers. Josh and his team have years of experience in safely diving in radioactive environments around the world, including at Dungeness A and Sizewell A in the UK.

Lessons learned at these Magnox sites have been applied to the team's work at PFSP, which still presents some unique challenges

owing to its age and complexity. In turn the experiences of the team at PFSP will help inform investigations into how divers might contribute to the clean-up and dewatering of other nuclear ponds in the future.

Carl Carruthers, SL head of programme delivery for Legacy Ponds, said:

"The PFSP diver project has been five years in the planning and has been a huge success. The team are used to diving in toxic and hazardous environments all over the world, including inside nuclear reactor vessels, but this is a first for us.

"Safety has been our priority throughout, and the divers are monitored and communicating with the dive supervisor at all times. Their work has helped us make real progress in cleaning up the pond and our site mission to deal with the nuclear legacy and create a clean and safe environment for future generations."

Once all of the waste materials have been removed from the pond the water will be removed, ready for final demolition of the building. Current plans estimate the decommissioning work will cost around £212m and will be completed by 2039, an achievement almost a century in the making.

David Redpath, NDA director of performance improvement – Sellafield, said:

"The success of the PFSP diver project is an important decommissioning milestone for Sellafield and a really positive example of sharing learning to overcome common challenges on sites across the NDA group.

"It's a testament to the skill and expertise of both Sellafield and the diving team and demonstrates how we are utilising innovative techniques to ensure the UK's legacy nuclear waste is dealt with safely and securely."

Alan Wylie, ONR superintending inspector, said:

"Our specialist inspectors assessed Sellafield Ltd's safety submission and were satisfied that it is safe for divers to enter and work in the pond.

"The use of divers has allowed Sellafield Ltd to make progress with retrieving the remaining material from bays 11 and 12, which existing retrieval techniques are no longer able to do. Our inspectors will continue to monitor the retrievals work from this facility as part of our inspection activities on the site."

Jet2 launch flights and holidays from new base at Liverpool John Lennon Airport

Jet2.com and Jet2holidays have announced that Liverpool John Lennon Airport (LJLA) will become their newest base, with flights and holidays departing Liverpool from Summer 2024.

The UK's largest tour operator and third largest airline have today put 20 sunshine destinations on sale for Summer 24 from Liverpool John Lennon Airport, in response to enormous demand from customers and independent travel agents across the region. The programme includes seven destinations that are exclusive to Jet2.com and Jet2holidays from Liverpool. The first Jet2.com flight from the airport will depart on 28th March 2024, perfectly timed for the Easter holidays!

In their first summer of operations from Liverpool, Jet2.com and Jet2holidays will operate up to 54 weekly flights, including 12 flights to both the Canary Islands and the Balearic Islands every week. A fleet of four based aircraft will fly customers to a wide choice of destinations across Mainland Spain, the Canary Islands, the Balearic Islands, Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Portugal, Madeira and Cyprus.

This will be the first time that Jet2.com and Jet2holidays will have operated from Liverpool,

with 565,000 seats on sale. The programme also includes seven exclusive summer routes to Gran Canaria, Menorca, Rhodes, Zante, Madeira, Paphos and Bourgas (Bulgaria).

Jet2.com and Jet2holidays' arrival at Liverpool John Lennon Airport represents significant investment for the region too. More than 200 new jobs will be created initially, with positions available across flight deck, cabin crew, engineering, and ground operations.

Liverpool John Lennon Airport has been commended for its high levels of customer service in recent years with travellers able to take advantage of the Airport's faster, easier and friendlier passenger experience. Passengers flying from Liverpool check-in quickly and pass through the terminal with ease compared to many larger airports, with average security queue times of just 12 minutes last Summer and more on time departures than most other UK airports.

From next Summer, travellers from Liverpool will also be able to enjoy the VIP customer service which has seen Jet2.com and Jet2holidays continually grow its business whilst repeatedly winning high-profile accolades.

John Irving, CEO Liverpool John Lennon Airport commented, "This is a great day for the Airport and for the region's holidaymakers. For the first time travellers from across the Liverpool City Region and beyond will have the opportunity to book package holidays with the UK's leading package holiday provider, direct from Liverpool John Lennon Airport – the Airport of choice for travellers from across the North West and North Wales, bringing together the current Which? Travel Brand of the Year with the current Which? Best UK Airport.

It's also great to have 7 new routes available that we know will be popular with holidaymakers and for our local independent travel agents to be able to sell, with customers taking advantage of all the convenience and hassle free benefits of flying from Liverpool."

Steve Heapy, CEO of Jet2.com and Jet2holidays said, "We are absolutely delighted to be expanding our award-winning flights and holidays to Liverpool John Lennon Airport, which becomes our 11th UK airport base. This announcement further expands our footprint and comes on the back of the enormous demand that we know is out there from customers and independent travel agents across Liverpool,

Merseyside and the wider region.

We have seen that demand really ramp up over the past couple of years, so we know there will be a fantastic response to this launch. We have seen time and time again how popular our product is when we bring it to new customers, and we look forward to showcasing our VIP customer service to holidaymakers from Liverpool John Lennon Airport and delighting them with our product."

He added: "The announcement of our 11th UK airport reflects our long-term strategy to continue growing responsibly to become the UK's leading and best leisure travel business. It also means significant investment in the region, with four based aircraft coming into operation and the creation of over 200 new jobs. Between now and Summer 24, our focus is on ensuring everything is ready to launch operations, so that from day one we can provide customers from Liverpool John Lennon Airport the same award-winning service which has delighted millions of other customers from across the UK for so many years."

Flights and holidays are now on sale at www.jet2.com or www.jet2holidays.com



■ Jet2.com's Ian Doubtfire and Steve Heapy with LJLA's John Irving and Paul Winfield, celebrating the launch of Jet2.com and Jet2holidays at the Airport.

Bents donates over £23k to charity

AS Bents Garden & Home welcomes the Motor Neurone Disease Association as its new charity of the year, it has also announced a fantastic amount raised during 2022 and has presented Manchester Mind with a cheque for £23,500.

Customers and colleagues have once again shown enormous generosity in helping Bents raise an incredible amount for its 2022 Charity of the Year, money which will help this fantastic charity which has been supporting better mental health for all in Manchester for over 30 years.

Joanna Huddart, Fundraising Manager at Manchester Mind, who visited Bents to accept the donation said: "We're humbled by the level of support shown to our local mental health charity, especially during the cost of living crisis, when many more people are experiencing poor mental health and in need of our help. We appreciate the fantastic community spirit of Bents' staff, clients and customers who kindly raised this generous donation. Thank you for making a lasting impact on our local services, ensuring we can continue to be there for 7,000 young people and adults in need this year."

Joanna was also joined for the occasion by representatives from the MND Association; Bents 2023 Charity of the Year.

Matthew Bent, Managing Director at Bents Garden & Home said: "We are absolutely delighted to have

raised so much for Manchester Mind and I would like to say a big thank you to all our customers and colleagues who have helped throughout the year to make the campaign such a success. We are now looking forward to working with the team from the MND Association, another fantastic cause and one which we are keen to do just as well for in 2023."

The MND Association focuses on improving access to care, research and campaigning for those people living with or affected by MND, a condition which affects up to 5,000 adults in the UK at any one time. Bents 2023 fundraising will be going toward supporting the MND Association's care programme including a network of 22 care centres one of which is based here in Manchester, which provides coordinated multi-disciplinary care which has been shown to improve quality of life and life expectancy for those with MND.

Charlotte Taylor, Corporate Development Executive at the MND Association, said: "We are grateful to be chosen as Bents charity partner for 2023. The funds raised by Bents employees and customers will help us fund our network of 22 MND Care centres which provide coordinated multi-disciplinary care and has been shown to improve the quality of life and life expectancy for those with MND. The partnership also offers a great opportunity to raise awareness of MND and help all those living with or affected by MND"



■ Lisa Redmond, CYP* Office Manager; Joanna Huddart, Fundraising Manager and Su Smith CYP Counselling Manager from Manchester Mind with Matthew Bent and Ian Gardner, Head of Development at MNDA and Charlotte Taylor, Corporate Development Executive.

Tilia Homes Northern appoints new technical team lead

WARRINGTON-headquartered Tilia Homes Northern has appointed Chris Whyte to lead its growing technical team.

With more than 15 years' experience in construction and technical engineering, Whyte brings a broad portfolio of skills and expertise to the Warrington-based homebuilder.

Whyte joins from Morris Homes where he was for five years, leaving as Technical Director and Taylor Wimpey before that.

His impressive career has seen him take roles at Councils across the North West, including Manchester City Council, where he and the team were responsible for the cross city infrastructure works, including changes to major road networks and key transport routes in the centre, including the guided bus ways.

Chris comments: "I've been in the construction sector since I was 18 years old and, in that time, I've seen so much change, much for the good. To see both Councils and private homebuilders look to prioritise the design of community infrastructure, building design and, ultimately, the way we utilise open space has been a fascinating journey to be a part of.

"I'm most looking forward to the

new challenge here at Tilia Homes and working with a passionate and talented team to drive technical innovation across the region to create operational efficiencies that benefit the business, but more importantly, our customers and the communities in which we build."

Chris' appointment is the latest in a series of milestone announcements from the business over the past 12 months. The homebuilder was acquired by investment house Terra Firm in

June 2021 before opening a brand-new office in Birchwood Business Park, home to more than 90 people.

Stuart Craig, Regional Managing Director for Tilia Homes Northern, adds: "Tilia Homes Northern will greatly benefit from Chris' unparalleled technical experience both the public sector and private construction.

"We're committed to building quality homes and having the right team and talent in place is fundamental to this. We're thrilled

to welcome Chris on board and look forward to the positive impact he will make to the business."

Tilia Homes is actively seeking new land opportunities for sites of between 75 and 330 units across the M6 and M62 corridors, specifically targeting areas around Preston, Clitheroe, Liverpool and Manchester. Further land opportunities are also being sought in the Yorkshire Area.

For more information on Tilia Homes Northern please visit www.tiliahomes.co.uk



Bank CEO commits to reducing 'stress and anxiety' for SMEs



SPECIALIST business bank is extending its support to businesses looking for longer-term financial stability with the launch of a 'limited edition' five-year fixed rate mortgage.

Redwood Bank is adding the new product to its existing two-and three-year fixed rate mortgages that were introduced last year.

Gary Wilkinson, co-founder and CEO, said: "We pride ourselves on supporting British businesses, and at a time when the Bank of England base rate remains high and inflationary pressures are causing further uncertainty, we want to remove some of the stress and anxiety for our customers."

The five-year product is for residential and commercial investment mortgages, with an LTV up to 75 per cent for secured residential investment and 70 per cent for secured commercial property loans. Five year fixed rates start at 6.99 per cent for residential and 8.75 per cent for commercial.

Customers will be able to choose between capital and interest, up to 30 years for residential and 25 years for commercial properties, or interest only, up to 30 years for residential and up to 10 years for commercial properties.

Gary said: "Businesses have had to deal with so much over the past few years, so they really need a period of stability to be able to regroup. We want to be able to help ease the pressure on them and show our ongoing commitment to British business."

"These new five-year fixed rates will offer certainty on future payments so businesses can plan accordingly. Redwood's bespoke pricing allows a tailored proposition for our customers, which will also provide them with a competitive reversion rate when the fixed rate period ends."

Redwood Bank celebrated its fifth anniversary in 2022, the same year it announced its first profit, for the year-ended 31 December 2021.



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Warrington firm's technology now deployed in 17 countries

WARRINGTON-based BiSN, the global provider of innovative Wel-lok™ sealing solutions, has achieved a significant milestone by reaching 400 commercial deployments of its ground-breaking Wel-lok technology.

Their patented technology is revolutionizing the oil and gas industry by enabling bismuth-based seals that are more reliable, durable, and cost-effective than traditional sealing methods.

Global Demand for Wel-lok™ Technology Rising Significantly Only 13 months ago, BiSN reached its previous milestone of 300 commercial deployments. The demand among operators for Wel-lok technology, for both plug and abandonment and well intervention, has risen exponentially over the past three years. With 2022 being the busiest commercial year for BiSN, Q1 of 2023 has already been record setting.

In addition to the 400 deployments, BiSN has now deployed into major areas such as North America, UK & Europe, Africa, Middle East, Asia, and Australia. Specifically, BiSN has run commercial deployments in 17 countries, the most recent in Mozambique. This year, BiSN plans to continue its global reach while continuing to foster productive and collaborative relations with global operators.

"We are thrilled to have achieved this important milestone of 400 commercial deployments. It is a testament to the value and effectiveness of Wel-lok technology and could not be achieved without the commitment of the full BiSN team," said Paul Carragher, CEO and Founder of BiSN. "As demand continues to rise across all active regions, BiSN is expanding to meet that demand by opening facilities now in Australia and Brazil."

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info@warrington-chamber.co.uk

Warrington Town promotion celebrated with Civic Reception at Town Hall

THE Mayor of Warrington, Cllr Jean Flaherty, welcomed the Warrington Town squad and management team for a Civic Reception at the Town Hall.

Manager Mark Beesley, chairman Toby Macormac and the first team squad, led by skipper Josh Amis, mixed with local dignitaries before an address in the chamber at the historic Grade I listed building.

Photo opportunities then followed on the Town Hall steps and in front of the famous Golden Gates, symbolic to the town and which are celebrated in the club's logo.

In her address, the Mayor said: "I am really pleased to congratulate you all on being promoted to National League North. It's a fantastic success.

"I noted that you are approaching the 75th anniversary of being the home team of football in Warrington and it's great that you've achieved this success ahead of that anniversary, and also great that you've achieved this success on the 58th anniversary of former player Roger Hunt winning the FA Cup with Liverpool.

"You've made Warrington Town a football club with a great, bright future and a football club we can all be proud of as a town, and I am very

proud of you all."

The Civic Reception was kicked off by Steven Broomhead MBE, chief executive of Warrington Borough Council, to mark the club's achievement in earning promotion to National League North, the highest level of football that the town has ever seen.

Isaac Buckley-Ricketts' dramatic late winner earned a 1-0 win in the play-off final against Bamber Bridge following a long season that saw the Yellowb finish second in the Northern Premier League, the club's highest ever finish.

Prof Broomhead added: "Sometimes people think Warrington is about rugby only, but we support every sport in the town. Football is really important to us, and when you play next season there will be some big teams coming to Cantilever Park like Hereford, Scunthorpe United and others, and the town will reap the benefits of that."

The club previously enjoyed a Civic Reception back in July 2016, to celebrate Warrington Town winning the Northern Premier League First Division North and the visit of Northern Irish side Crewe United for the then annual Peace Cup tournament.

Barely two weeks since promotion,



preparations are already well underway for the new campaign in National League North, with the FA confirming earlier this week the 24 clubs that will be participating in the competition next season.

Club chairman Toby Macormac said: "It's been a difficult season operating on low resources and a small squad of players. But it is that camaraderie and the tightness of the group of all the players working so hard for each other, coupled with the relentless hours that all staff put in, that helped get us over the line and give the town a new level of football to enjoy.

"It's that new level of football that will bring many new people to the town, some of those arriving on Friday evenings to spend the weekend with their families, watching their team and therefore having a positive impact on the business community in Warrington.

"On the field, in around six weeks time preparations for a new journey will begin, one of which all the players and staff are looking forward to and will include visits to and from renowned clubs such as Scunthorpe United, Hereford, Chester and Boston United, which hopefully will all be sell out crowds.

"Off the field, preparations have already begun planning how we can make upgrades to our current venue in a timely manner to ensure that we stay in the new competition and give us a platform to push on even further.

"Who knows, maybe next April we'll have the chance to take Warrington Town Football Club even higher.

"In the interim though, we will visit all new grounds, meet all new supporters and with the help of everyone here, deliver a level of football this town deserves."

DISABILITY AWARENESS DAY

DAY

#DAD2023

SUNDAY 16th JULY

10am - 4:30pm

Walton Gardens Warrington WA4 6SN

Promoting Independence Through Life & Work

- 100's Support Groups & Services
- Equipment & Vehicle Suppliers
- Performing & Visual Arts Marquees
- Sports Zone
- Main Arena
- Family Entertainment

Email: lpicken@disabilitypartnership.org.uk Or Call: **01925 240064**

Scan to visit our website

Disability Awareness Day

Principal Sponsors: **United Utilities**, **EXPANSE LEARNING**

Organised by: **Warrington Disability Partnership**, **disability trading company**

Water for the North West

DAD WEEK 2023

Disability Awareness Day

Tuesday 11th July

Disability Confident 10.30am-1pm Walton Gardens
Event for employers. Recruitment & retention, reasonable adjustments & funding. For more info contact J.Balshaw@disabilitypartnership.org.uk or telephone 01925 240064.

One Time Only 7pm-9.30pm: Arts Marquee, Walton Gardens.
Creating Adventures present a variety show with a difference: Live band, Choir, Singing and more. Licensed bar. Tickets £5 available on DAD website.

Wednesday 12th July

Ignite your Life 10.30am-3.30pm: Arts Marquee, Walton Gardens
Merseycare NHS Foundation Trust, mental health and wellbeing event. Workshops, talks, activities, information stands Free refreshment available, including buffet lunch. For more info contact dennis.dewar@merseycare.nhs.uk or telephone 01925 664850.

Ella Summertime Special 7pm-9.30pm: Arts Marquee, Walton Gardens
Top entertainment from the teams at the amazing Ella Performance Group. An evening of dance, singing and much, more. Licensed bar. Tickets £5 available on DAD website.

Thursday 13th July

Customer Vulnerability Summit 10am-3pm: Arts Marquee, Walton Gardens
United Utilities present an event highlighting support services available to vulnerable customers, including Priority Services and much more. Open to staff working in welfare rights, advice services, social prescribing, etc. Contact Amanda.Phillips@uuplc.co.uk.

Carers Wellbeing Festival 10am-2pm: Marquee 8, Walton Gardens
Warrington Carers Hub presents an event to thank carers with health and wellbeing activities including massage, mindfulness, music, crafts, dance and lunch. Contact deborah.fitzsimon@warringtoncarershub.org.uk or telephone 07734 872412.

Party in the Park 6pm-9.30pm: Arts Marquee, Walton Gardens
A collaboration between Warrington Disability Partnership, Warrington Youth Zone, Warrington Wolves Foundation, and Warrington Carers Hub. A fun-filled evening of sports, arts, dance, chat and chill out, crafts, karaoke, music, silent disco and fun areas. Free refreshments and free admission. Contact Kate on 01925 240064.

Friday 14th July

Bjorn to be ABBA 7.30pm-11.30pm: Arts Marquee, Walton Gardens.
Top tribute band perform a range of Abba's most loved hits. Dance the night away to great music! Licensed bar. Tickets £10 available on DAD website or Contact Ellen on 01925 240064.

The big event - Disability Awareness Day
Sunday 16th July @ Walton Gardens - 10am - 4:30pm

FREE PARKING
Available on site at DAD Week events from 11th July - 14th July

www.disabilityawarenessday.org.uk

Scan to visit our website

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