



Insight

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Local engineer scoops graduate accolade

A Warrington-based engineer is celebrating after being recognised at a prestigious ceremony to honour the very best of engineering construction talent.

Toby Highstead, who is a mechanical engineer at Amentum, was named Graduate of the Year at the 12th annual ECI Training and Development Awards.

The event, organised by the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB), brought together industry leaders, as well as the rising stars of tomorrow, for a celebration of excellence in training and development.

Held at One Marylebone, an iconic Grade I listed building in the heart of the capital, the event was hosted by Chair of the ECITB Innov8 Group Chinwe Odili, a STEM champion and award-winning structural engineer from Kent plc.

Toby came out on top after being shortlisted in the final three for the award, which recognises the achievements of individuals actively pursuing or having successfully completed a graduate programme within their organisations in the past 12 months.

The 24-year-old joined Jacobs in September 2022 and spent two years as a graduate mechanical engineer working in the north of Scotland on Dounreay in the nuclear decommissioning sector, engaging in project planning, design and implementation. Jacobs merged with Amentum in September this year and he is now

based in Warrington.

Toby, who graduated with a Master's in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Leicester, was recognised by the judges for his technical prowess, innovative problem-solving, leadership, dedication to community and environmental stewardship.

The award submission highlighted how his innovative contributions and ability to leverage technology have strengthened client relations and enhanced project efficiency and accuracy significantly, exemplified by his use of AI and creation of a custom code using ChatGPT.

Reacting to the award, Toby said: "I was told when I was younger that I would never become an engineer, so I am over the moon to have been recognised for what I have achieved.

"I always enjoyed STEM subjects when I was at school, I was into science and maths. I remember my year four teacher pulling my parents to one side at a parents evening and saying I had a talent. I hope he would be proud of me now.

"This is only the start of my career. I can only see it going further from here. Winning means a lot to me. It shows the passion I have for this industry."

The ceremony recognised standout individuals, companies and training providers as awards were presented to winners across nine categories at what is now an established highlight

in the engineering construction industry's (ECI) calendar.

The judging panel for the awards was made up of Mark Fotheringham from Infinity Engineering, Tracey Shelley from BCECA and John Webster from Applus UK, who picked the overall winners based on the significant contributions they have made both to the ECI and their own organisations.

The theme of the awards was change and, in opening the event, ECITB Chief Executive Andrew Hockey spoke of the new Government's commitment to skills and how the industry is changing as it plays its part in realising the country's net zero goals.

He said: "The ECITB, as the industry's employer-led training board, stands at the heart of these changes to support the skills needs of the workforce.

"With our collective desire, endeavour and expertise, exemplified by the exceptional talent gathered at the awards, we can tackle the challenges ahead and seize the opportunities to ensure our industry is well-placed for the future.

"The standard of nominees this year was again incredibly high, showcasing the great things happening in training and development across the industry.

"I would like to thank our judges and congratulate all the winners and finalists who are great examples of excellence in our industry."

Lynda Armstrong, OBE, Chair of the ECITB Board, added: "I would like to congratulate everyone honoured and thank our generous sponsors who made the evening possible.

"The event is an opportunity to celebrate the best of the best within our industry. The individuals and organisations nominated exemplify the talent, innovation and endeavour that our industry needs.

"They remind us to continuously strive to raise the bar for excellence in training and development. And in this ever-evolving world, the importance of their contributions is clearer than ever."

As well as each category being sponsored, the drinks and entertainment were sponsored by Bechtel and Kingsfield Academy respectively, while the dinner was sponsored by Hinkley Point C.

Philippa Burt, HR Director at Hinkley Point C, said: "Hinkley Point C is a catalyst for long-term growth in the engineering construction industry and will leave a legacy of a more skilled and productive workforce that gives the region, and the wider UK, a competitive edge as it delivers the UK's ambitions for energy security and net zero.

"The huge team involved in building the power station understand the critical importance of training and development and we are delighted to play a small part in shining a spotlight on the outstanding work taking place in the sector by attendees at the awards."

From the Chief Executive

Stephen Fitzsimons



When the Chancellor stood up in the Commons for her first budget at the end of October, Chamber members were already nervous.

Increases to National Insurance and the National Minimum Wage had been mooted in advance, however UK businesses weren't expecting to be the main contributors towards repairing the government's finances. Inheritance tax for farmers is an emotive issue and although the Treasury estimates less than 500 farms each year might be affected, it's no solace if you are one of them. That said, I wouldn't recommend having a famous TV personality for support if he's previously said that he purchased a farm so he could avoid inheritance tax ..

The ambition is for economic growth to future fund the government's plans to fix public services and create the next

generation of jobs. However, the Office of Budget Responsibility were quick to downplay the already underwhelming projections of 1 to 2% growth. With the British Retail Consortium estimating an extra £7 billion in costs for its members, it's difficult to envisage how businesses can invest after paying out so much. I do agree that the country is in desperate need of repair after 14 years of austerity, however there must be a solution that is less stifling towards growth. This may be further damaged by a Donald Trump presidency, with the National Institute of Economic & Social Research estimating just 0.4% GDP growth if the UK is hit by import tariffs.

On a more positive note, thank you to all our members who contributed towards the 5th Warrington Business Conference. "Brand "Warrington" showcased several organisations that have a significant presence in the town.

Hoover provided an exclusive preview of their new logo, now sitting proudly on the front of the new Warrington Wolves shirt. Spire Healthcare explained how they have managed their transition from the BUPA brand that everyone trusts, whilst Eddie Stobart combined heritage within the present day Culina Group. Just for good measure, Greenall's added their "drop of greatness" with a sample bottle in the delegate goodie bag. With nearly 250 delegates in attendance, the conference really is the most important date in the business calendar.

Finally, we are really sad to see Jackie Emson retire after 7 years with the Business Conference, the Chamber's partner in delivering events across Warrington. Jackie has been there from the launch in 2018 and has been supporting businesses during good times and the not so great. Her and I

managed the PPE supplies for the Council during the early days of the pandemic and helped distribute the Covid support grants for desperate businesses. They were dark times, however Jackie kept the Business Exchange going throughout the months of isolation and her weekly video calls were a welcome tonic for many members. Thank you Jackie, and your contribution to Warrington's success is immensely appreciated!

Have a great Christmas everyone and I'll see you on the other side.

Stephen

BiSN reaches 500 commercial deployment milestone

Warrington-based BiSN, the global provider of innovative wel-lok™ sealing solutions, has achieved a significant milestone by reaching 500 commercial deployments of its bismuth-based sealing technology.

Demand from operators continues to grow in 2024 with another record setting year in terms of deployments and global growth. It took more than a decade for the first 100 deployments but less than a year for the last 100. BiSN's wel-lok technology has now been deployed into all major energy-producing regions, including sites in North America, South America, UK & Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Australia.

"With another record year, major operators around the globe are realising how effective our wel-lok technology is for applications throughout the life cycle of a well, in addition to new industries," said Paul Carragher, Founder and CEO of BiSN. "This year we have seen the first deployments

in gas storage and carbon capture projects signalling new areas of growth and interest in our technology."

A major component of BiSN's commercial success is its focus on global expansion. In the past 12 months, BiSN has opened new facilities in Perth, Australia and Macaé, Brazil, alongside a new research centre in Stavanger, Norway and an operations base in Aberdeen, Scotland.

"It is critical for BiSN to be where our clients are," added Arild Stein, Senior Vice President of Research and Development. "The expansion strategy allows for the development of successful and lasting partnerships with operators, and to expand into new industries where our engineered sealing technology can be transformative."

BiSN continues to refine and develop wel-lok technology for well intervention, completion, and plug and abandonment applications alongside new

applications, such as gas storage, hydrogen and carbon capture. BiSN is committed to developing these applications further in partnership with operators and providers to prioritize permanent sealing and lower emissions through operational efficiency.

"Bismuth as a sealing material is

particularly suited for the highly corrosive environment in CCS and gas storage projects," added Stein "Bismuth alloy is impermeable and non-corrosive. We are very excited for this new growth area for BiSN and how it will enable the success of large-scale storage projects."



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Stephen Fitzsimons, Chief Executive

Army veteran marches on in career as an engineer

A woman who served in the British Army for 18 years is advancing in her career as a specialist engineer and is urging others to follow her example.

Sarah Luscombe, 36, joined Warrington based building services company B-engineering Group for work experience after returning to Civvy Street and impressed her bosses so much they offered her a permanent role.

She qualified as an air-conditioning engineer and now undertakes installations, servicing, maintenance and fault-finding for the company's clients across the north west and beyond, at locations including hospitals, schools, offices, factories, industrial buildings, police and ambulance stations.

Sarah joined the army after leaving school at the age of 16. She was a combat medical technician in the Royal Army Medical Corps and rose to become an operations manager, holding the rank of warrant officer.

During her army career, Sarah served in countries including Ukraine, Sierra Leone, Germany, Canada and Kenya, as well as in Afghanistan and Iraq. Her tours also included undertaking assignments while attached to the Royal Engineers, such as helping to build schools in Kenya.

Her passion for engineering led her to win a placement with B-engineering Group's air-conditioning division after she finished her military service in May 2023.

The family-owned company has a track record of supporting and employing ex-forces personnel, and managing director Rob Ditchfield quickly offered Sarah the chance to retrain and join on a permanent basis in a new role as the business expanded.

Sarah said: "I've always been interested in engineering, and wanted to stay field-based when I began a new career after the army. Working at B-engineering Group has been a great learning experience, and it's been a super-smooth transition.

"The company loves people who've served in the armed forces – they get good workers, who arrive on time, in the right place and with the right kit.

"It's a really good working environment and everyone has been tremendously supportive. I also love the company's ethos. It does a lot of things that are close to my heart, such as helping charities.

"I was buzzing when Rob offered me a full-time job. The transition from the army and going out and trying to find a job can be a stressful time, and I realise I've been very fortunate.

"Although I was new to the profession, my transition was eased by learning on the job with

senior engineers, which was a massive help.

"My army experience has also helped a lot, because values and standards are drummed into you from day one, as is the need to be resilient and open to change. Customer relations and high standards are second nature."

Sarah added: "I've not had any issues at all with going into a traditionally male-oriented profession, and I would urge others who are considering a similar move to just do it. I've learned heaps since I joined the company and have gained lots of confidence. I love the banter too, it's just like we had in the army."

B-engineering Group was founded in 1990 by Rob's father Bernard and currently employs more than 50 staff.

The company designs, installs and maintains heating, ventilation, air-conditioning, electrical and energy systems and solar PV panels in premises across sectors ranging from education, healthcare, leisure and hospitality to manufacturing, retailing, construction and nuclear. It is a specialist in decarbonising commercial properties and estates.

Its support for the Armed Forces has seen it supply equipment to former soldier Andy Reid's Standing Tall Foundation charity for the conversion of a four-bedroomed terraced property in St Helens into a house of multiple occupation for armed forces

veterans in need.

Standing Tall is one of B-engineering Group's charities of the year and the company has signed up to be an affiliate partner.

The company is a signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant and recently gained a bronze award under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, which recognises employers which support those who serve or have served, and their families.

Rob said: "We've hired a number of ex-forces personnel who have impressed us with their strong work ethic and attitude aligned to the values of how we operate as a business, including a passion for health and safety and quality and the ability to integrate really well into a team and accept instructions.

"We were actively looking to employ more of them and, when Sarah approached us, we were delighted to give her the opportunity to join our air conditioning division on a placement. She was as good as we expected and we offered her a permanent role, in which she continues to excel each working day.

"Alongside our ethical policies and drive to become a more diverse workplace, we feel ex-forces personnel have a really big role to play in shaping our future workforce.

"Our air-conditioning division is one of the fastest-growing areas

of the business and we are still recruiting specialist engineers.

"With the electrification of the heating network and the high capital costs of heat pump systems to replace boilers, we are finding more and more clients are selecting air-conditioning as a great value alternative to heat pumps which offer greater efficiencies.

"Once installed, all systems need to be maintained, hence our requirement for air conditioning maintenance is increasing. Air-conditioning is also a great solution for decarbonising commercial premises."



St. Rocco's Hospice celebrates 40 years in 2025

St. Rocco's are celebrating their 40th Anniversary in 2025.

For the past 4 decades, the hospice has been supporting the Warrington community, providing care for those with a diagnosis of any non-curable, life-limiting illness.

St. Rocco's focuses on enhancing quality of life - providing comfort, pain management and emotional and spiritual support so that patients can live their remaining days with dignity, alongside their loved ones, and have their choices at the centre of their care.

Designed to be accessible to all patients, regardless of their financial situation, care services are delivered free of charge at their dedicated facility in Bewsey, which houses a 10 bed in-patient unit, outpatient clinics, therapy facilities and wellbeing 'Vitality Centre'. St. Rocco's Hospice at Home service ensures care can also be delivered to those who prefer to be cared for at home.

It costs over £5 million a year to offer this care and support to those in the community who need it the most. To ensure this care continues, free of charge, St. Rocco's rely heavily on the generosity of donations, fundraising and volunteering from the Warrington community.

In May 2025, the hospice celebrates 40 years of caring for Warrington, and they are taking the opportunity to invite the business community in the town to collaborate and look ahead to the next 40 years of care in Warrington.

Corporate Partnerships Manager, Liam Durkan said: "Our business partnerships play a vital role in supporting patients and sharing information about the services St. Rocco's offer, and we couldn't be more grateful for our supporters over the last 39 years. We're incredibly excited to be turning 40 in 2025 and we're looking forward to celebrating with our Warrington business community with a huge range of fundraising and volunteering activities across the year and beyond."

Throughout 2025, the hospice will be working with several businesses who will be taking on a whole host of challenge events, fundraising activities and volunteering opportunities all in aid of St. Rocco's Hospice. If you'd like to support your local hospice, work with us to meet your CSR goals, and make every day count for those affected with a life limiting illness, get in touch with Liam – liamdurkan@strococos.org.uk



Local restaurants Pendergast's and Vandal awarded silver and bronze at Taste Cheshire Awards

Two of Warrington's town centre restaurants, Pendergast's Steakhouse and Vandal, have recently been awarded silver and bronze at the Taste Cheshire Awards.

Pendergast's Steakhouse, located at 15 Cairo Street, won a silver award for the Best Large Restaurant and were also finalists for Best Newcomer. Vandal, located at Palmyra Square, received a Silver award for Best Bar and a bronze for Best Small Restaurant.

Both restaurateurs from Pendergast's Steakhouse and Vandal, Laura Harvey and Jenny Carey, have come together to encourage everyone to dine out more and enjoy the incredible food right here in the local community. They say, "by doing so, you're helping to keep our local businesses open, supporting jobs, and contributing to the growth of our local economy."

"We're fortunate to have so many wonderful dining options right here in Warrington" says Laura Harvey. "When people dine local, it's more than just a meal—it's a way to strengthen our community and keep our local businesses thriving. Dining at Pendergast's doesn't have to be expensive or only for special occasions; we run two courses for £15.99 all day on Wednesday and Thursday, which includes our signature steak sandwich. We

also offer bottomless brunch for £35pp every Saturday and live entertainment every Saturday evening. We were delighted to win an award alongside Vandal. Warrington has an up-and-coming dining scene, and we are honoured to have this recognition after twelve months of trading and are so proud of our team for their achievements and hard work".

Jen Carey said, "We are so delighted to have received these awards; our team work tirelessly to ensure we are providing the best food, drinks and hospitality, so it feels great to be recognised. We are so proud of the whole team. These awards have always been very Chester heavy and it's absolutely brilliant to see a number of Warrington businesses being nominated this year. It's so important to support the businesses in our own Town especially at the moment where the industry is struggling across the board".

Owner and Head Chef at Vandal, Matthew Carey, is driven by an insatiable passion for flavour and creativity with a devotion to the art of small plates and cooked to perfection steaks and the bar offers the most fabulous selection of wines and cocktails. Their bartenders, and owners, have a deep knowledge and expertise and an unwavering enthusiasm for creating perfectly balanced ancestrals, classics and funky twists on tasty tipples.





M Group Services completes deal to acquire BGEN

M Group Services has completed the acquisition of Warrington-headquartered BGEN Ltd and its subsidiaries ("BGEN"), one of the UK's largest independent technical engineering solutions businesses.

BGEN is a leading technical engineering solutions provider offering specialist Mechanical, Electrical, Instrumentation, Control, and Automation (MEICA) capabilities. These capabilities support clients in building new assets and to optimise existing

assets, which play a crucial role in reducing carbon footprints to meet net-zero targets.

This latest acquisition will enable M Group Services to rapidly advance its highly sought-after technical engineering solutions offering in its existing core markets in the energy, water, telecom and transport sectors, as well as expanding into new markets served by BGEN and further enhances M Group Services' comprehensive platform of value-added infrastructure services expertise.

Through its nationwide network of offices and almost 1,500 employees, BGEN provides its multidisciplinary offering to a range of clients including National Grid, Thames Water, Scottish Water, and Anglian Water, which also have long-term partnerships with M Group Services.

M Group Services is committed to investing in BGEN, focusing on the growth and development of its workforce, training programs, and skill enhancement to further expand its platform capabilities.

Andrew Findlay, M Group Services' Chief Executive, said: "BGEN is a business with a long trading heritage and an excellent reputation and culture that aligns with our own.

"In line with our strategy, the acquisition of BGEN significantly enhances the technical engineering capability of M Group Services, significantly deepening our ability to provide expert solutions for our existing clients and broad range of new clients, for today and in the future.

"Together we are even better placed to support the energy transition to net zero, leading the way in maintaining and enhancing essential infrastructure that is continually adapting to a rapidly changing world.

"I am very pleased to welcome the BGEN team to the M Group Services family."

Robin Whitehead, Chief Executive of BGEN, said: "Joining M Group Services represents the most significant step in our trading history to date and an exciting opportunity for our people, clients and partners alike.

"Our focus remains on bringing excellence to engineering, helping to keep businesses, industries and economies moving forward with a safety-first approach.

"Our joint expertise will provide a wealth of specialist engineering services across multiple sectors, help us to deliver even more effectively for our clients and achieve our own growth ambitions."

Dominic Murphy, Managing Partner and Co-Head of the UK team at CVC, private equity owners of M Group Services, said: "We are delighted the M Group Services team has secured this transformational deal with BGEN as part of its ambitious growth strategy. It is the first since CVC completed the transaction to buy M Group Services, earlier this year."

BGEN is the second acquisition made by M Group Services this year.

High Sheriff's Awards for Enterprise

High Sheriff's Awards for 'Wellness at Work' 2024/25 – Applications now open

Are you a business who is committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of your workforce?

This Award seeks to recognise and champion the incredible steps taken by businesses that are creating an environment for their employees to succeed.

Judges will be looking for businesses who can evidence examples of how current workplace culture and practices support employee health and wellbeing and have led to employee satisfaction, retention, and increased productivity, creating a healthier and happier workforce! Examples may include health and wellbeing within relevant policies, strategies and management processes,

employee health champions and promoting and supporting both employee physical and mental health.

The Awards are open to businesses and charities of any size that are based in Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East, Halton and Warrington.

The Awards are a wonderful way to celebrate your achievements and are now an important date in Cheshire's annual calendar, so we hope to see you there!

For further information and to apply, visit: www.chester.ac.uk/about/high-sheriffs-awards-for-enterprise/

Deadline for entries is Thursday 16 January 2025 at 23.59pm.

Brand Warrington Business Conference hailed "best yet"

THE fifth Warrington Business Conference which attracted an audience of around 300 local businesses has been hailed the "best yet."

The event, hosted by Chris Maguire and involving two panels, including the town's two MPs, Charlotte Nichols and Sarah Hall, took place at Cineworld in Time Square. The theme was "Brand Warrington."

Reflecting on the event last Friday, Warrington Chamber of Commerce Chief Executive Stephen Fitzsimons said: "I felt that the 5th Warrington Business Conference was the best so far. Over 250 delegates contributed to the theme of "Brand Warrington", highlighting several companies that have a significant presence in the town. One of these is Hoover-Candy who have their UK headquarters at Birchwood Park and are the main shirt sponsor for Warrington Wolves. The audience received an exclusive unveiling of the new Hoover brand logo. Greenall's have been distilling gin since 1761, however, some local

residents are unaware that they continue to do so, having moved to Risley from Wilderspool Causeway in 2007. "A drop of Greatness" was offered in the shape of a free sample for delegate goodie bags.

"Place branding can be challenging so it was really useful to hear how the town's MPs sell Warrington to government and potential investors. Similarly for the Council – Growth Director, Steve Park, felt that despite the many different facets of the local proposition, "success" is the overarching message. Warrington has a strong reputation for public and private partnership with the conference a tangible example of this, being jointly delivered by Warrington & Co, the Business Exchange and the Chamber of Commerce.

He added: "The feedback has been really positive and it is highly satisfying to see so many business people from a variety of different sectors get together to celebrate the success of one of the strongest economies in the North of England."



Nuclear industry fuels North West's future with a boost in Warrington jobs

The Northern Nuclear Alliance (NNA) has said that Warrington has reinforced its status as a nuclear industry powerhouse, with jobs in the region surging to over 6,700 – the highest level in recent years.

The latest figures from the 2024 NIA job map, reveal substantial growth in nuclear sector employment across the Cheshire and Warrington area, with total jobs increasing from 5,838 in 2023 to 6,771 in 2024, marking an impressive 16% growth.

Offering a range of pathways and apprenticeships available across a wide variety of job functions, UK nuclear is set for unprecedented levels of growth, with The Nuclear Skills Delivery Group (NSDG) forecasting a 49% growth in the nuclear sector, (across both civil and defence) by 2030.

Home to world class nuclear hub, Birchwood Park, and arguably one

of the birthplaces of the global nuclear sector, the Warrington region specifically has seen a significant boost, with nuclear jobs rising from 4,728 to 5,411, a 14% increase from 2023.

With over 40 businesses in the nuclear sector, Birchwood Park forms the foundation of the region's nuclear industry. With global leaders such as Amentum, Rolls-Royce, Cavendish Nuclear, NNL and Nuvia paving the way in all areas of nuclear innovation and their work spanning across nuclear new build, decommissioning, and advanced nuclear technologies, including small modular reactor (SMR) development.

Rachel O'Donnell, Chair of the NNA, commented: "The significant growth we're seeing in the Warrington area is a reflection of the North West's progress within the nuclear industry. We're seeing that the region's expertise and infrastructure, particularly

at Birchwood Park, continues to attract investment, whilst creating in-demand jobs in this exciting sector."

Martin O'Rourke, Commercial Director of Birchwood Park explained: "We're delighted to see that Birchwood Park's success as a world-class nuclear hub is reflected in these impressive job figures. The growth in nuclear jobs, particularly in Warrington, where we're located, solidifies the role Birchwood Park plays

in driving the nuclear industry forward.

"As we continue to invest in our state-of-the-art facilities, we're committed to further strengthening Warrington's position as a nuclear powerhouse, whilst contributing to the UK's nuclear generation targets"

To find out more about the work of the Northern Nuclear Alliance, please visit: www.nuclearalliance.uk



Orbit Developments welcomes Lovell Homes and Time Finance to Birchwood

Orbit Developments, known for their commercial property portfolio across the Northwest, are celebrating two significant lettings in Birchwood.

Lovell Homes have taken 8,450 sq. ft of office space at Innovation House, Daten Park, while Time Finance PLC have secured 4,799 sq. ft at 1 The Square.

Orbit Developments supplies nearly 400,000 sq. ft of office space in Birchwood, contributing to the area's total office supply of approximately 2.6 million sq. ft.

Joint Letting agent Simon Roddam of BE Group commented, "BE Group have worked closely with these occupiers to find the right property solution. Both occupiers

have prioritised having good transport links to service both their regional territories, and equally provide their staff an attractive and accessible office to commute to and from".

Tyler Costello, Senior Portfolio Surveyor at Orbit Developments commented, "We are pleased to secure such great companies within our Warrington office portfolio. Aside from their locational considerations, Lovell Homes and Time Finance also had a strong focus on ESG. Through our joined-up approach we have undertaken many enhancements to their new office spaces to help them achieve their environmental goals. This includes expanding the electric vehicle charge point

provision and facilitating a comprehensive refurbishment of the building to include new energy efficient services throughout. It will be great to see them thriving in their new space".

These lettings show Warrington's growth as a hub of innovation and economic performance, recognised by the Centre for Cities as one of the UK's top performers. In 2023 alone, the town attracted £97 million in investment across the office, industrial, and retail sectors. Projects like the re-development of the Birchwood Community Hub, the opening of the Living Well Hub, and the launch of 105 all-electric buses this year show Warrington's commitment to well-

being and sustainability. It's clear why companies like Lovell Homes and Time Finance see the town as a prime location for their future growth.

Lovell Homes has signed a 10-year lease and was represented by Sixteen Real Estate, while Time Finance committed to a 5-year lease, with representation by Landwood Group. Joint agents at Daten Park include BE Group and Cushman & Wakefield, while The Square's agents are BE Group and Savills.

As Warrington continues to evolve, these new office lettings reflect the town's status as a magnet for growth, innovation, and sustainability.

Local contractor builds community spirit with volunteer programme

A team of volunteers from Caddick Construction's Warrington office recently donated tools to support local charity, Community Integrated Care, as part of the business' Communities Week volunteer programme.

The project has seen a team of volunteers from Caddick take time out of their day jobs to join the charity in gardening the communal areas of Bewsey House, a supported living service in Warrington.

The volunteer initiative formed part of Caddick's annual Communities Week programme, which launched last year as part of its wider Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) strategy, Places for Life.

Building on the business' continued efforts to support the communities local to its projects, the second Communities Week

saw staff donate over 400 hours to good causes across Yorkshire, the North East, North West and Midlands.

Volunteers chose the Warrington initiative as part of Caddick's work to deliver a new industrial development, Trident Business Park, on behalf of Indurent in Warrington.

Dave Saville, Regional Managing Director for Caddick Construction North West, commented: "Before a spade even hits the ground on every development that we build, the question of how it will improve and contribute to the community it surrounds is really important. In our second Communities Week, the team here at Caddick has contributed personally to good causes local to their projects, and I'm proud of what they have achieved at Bewsey House. We hope the work is well received by the local residents."



■ Janine Bush, Client Liaison Executive, (far left) and Tyler Costello, Senior Portfolio Surveyor (Far right) from Orbit Developments and Kate Manning, Operations Manager, Asset Finance (2nd from left) and Paige Alcock, Sales Support Executive (3rd from left) from Time Finance.

New chapter begins as Betfred completes a multimillion-pound refurbishment of headquarters

Betfred, one of the UK's leading bookmakers, has officially reopened its Head Office in Warrington after a multimillion-pound investment.

The plaque was officially unveiled by Betfred boss Fred Done, and the Speaker of the House of Commons the Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle. Sir Lindsay Hoyle is also the President of the Rugby Football League. Betfred is the sport's biggest supporter and the headline sponsor of the Betfred Super League and the Challenge Cup for the men's, women's, and wheelchair game.

Betfred first moved into the Spectrum arena from their Salford base in 2004 and decided to embark on this hugely ambitious refurbishment project in September 2021.

The revamped 50,000-square-foot Spectrum building now stands as a vibrant workspace for over 450 Betfred employees. This modern transformation marks a departure from its roots as a former arena that famously hosted concerts by the likes of Status Quo, New Order and Atomic Kitten, and also hosted major snooker tournaments.

Fred Done remarked, "Reopening our Spectrum HQ is a very proud moment for me and my family. We've come a long way since having one shop in Salford in 1967 and I'm delighted that because of our close association with Rugby League that Sir Lindsay Hoyle has kindly agreed to officially open the building."

Betfred CEO Joanne Whitaker added, "The reopening of the Spectrum marks a fresh chapter for us. This redesign is more than just a new look—it's about building an inspiring, collaborative environment that reflects our bold ambitions. We've created a dynamic space where ideas can flourish, and our teams can come together. We're excited about the possibilities this new headquarters will open up and are looking forward to the journey ahead. Although we are an international company, it was very important to us we remained in the Northwest and close to our roots."

A highlight of the newly revamped headquarters is the state-of-the-art "Nifty 50" studio, the new home of Betfred's own numbers game offering a top prize of £5 million, hosted live by two brand new presenters.

Another standout feature of the refurbishment is the "Immersion Tunnel," a stadium-inspired space that is bold, high-tech, and designed to connect employees across the building. Spanning the tunnel is a striking, larger-than-life display showcasing Betfred's sporting heritage and milestone moments. The tunnel delivers a powerful experience, bringing Betfred's legacy very much to life.

This ambitious refurbishment was project managed internally by Betfred's Head of Asset Management Peter Buckles and Betfred's Senior Project Manager Helen Haworth.

Peter Buckles added, "The key

to the project was understanding Betfred's business requirements and that helped guide the delivery including elements which are unique to a betting business. With the support of the IT team, we also kept the data centre for over 1400 shops and our website still running during this major refurbishment. We are all very proud of what we have delivered for our colleagues."

The construction side of the redevelopment was supported by Domis Construction and their Managing Director Kingsley Thornton said, "It was fantastic to work on such a unique project and completely modernise and redevelop the Spectrum Arena to make an exciting headquarters for Betfred."

The interior design was completed

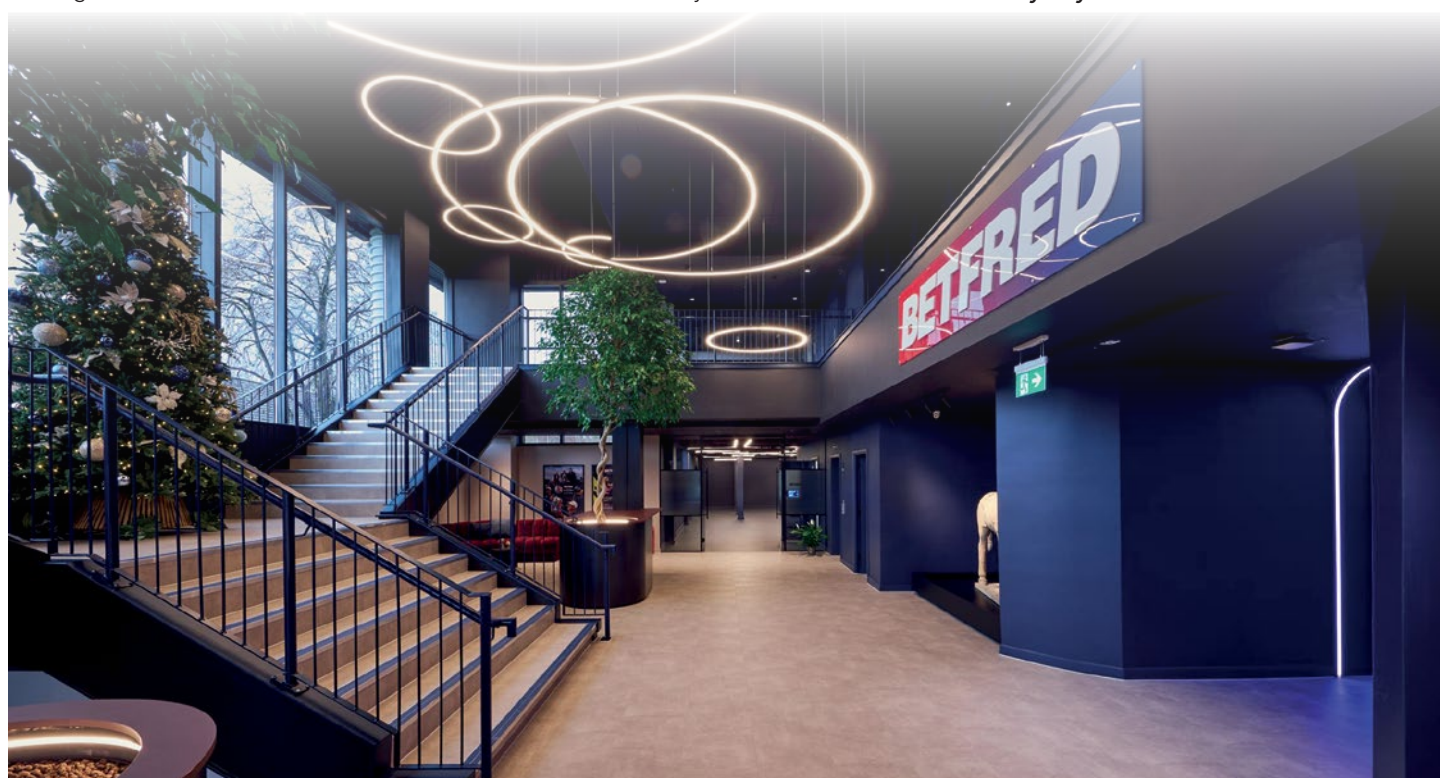
by Jackson Downes, with their founder previously working with top brands such as JD Sports, Muse Developments and Accor Hotels.

Kate Jackson, founder and director of Jackson Downes, said, "Spectrum has always been a special building, so when tasked with redesigning this space for Betfred, we made it our mission to honour its rich history in the design. We've crafted a bespoke environment that not only meets Betfred's unique needs but also motivates and supports the next generation of growth."

Satellite offices around the world will compliment Betfred's central hub, including bases in Manchester's city centre, Media City in Salford, Gibraltar, the United States and South Africa.



■ Fred Done with Sir Lindsay Hoyle.





Warrington recruiter triumphs at British Recruitment Awards

One of the UK's leading HR and recruitment specialists, Gi Group, which has a branch in Warrington on Dallam Lane, has won two honours at the British Recruitment Awards.

Recognised for the development of its 'This is Me' Neuro Guide, an initiative designed to foster understanding and collaboration between neurotypical and neurodivergent colleagues, the business has walked away with Innovation of the Year and Diversity & Inclusion Initiative of the Year crowns, showcasing its commitment to neurodiversity.

Launched earlier this year, the group's Neuro Guide addresses common misconceptions around neurodiversity, advocating for an inclusive culture that values diverse perspectives. Developed with input from Gi Group's EDI team and Neuro 'Real' Models, the comprehensive

guide is packed with insights on neurodivergent experiences, from practical advice on language and communication to guidance on workplace adaptations that enable neurodivergent employees to thrive. With sections covering different types of neurodivergence, tips for creating supportive environments, and real-life testimonies from neurodivergent individuals, the guide has quickly become a core part of Gi Group's diversity initiatives.

Emma-Louise Taylor, Gi Group's Head of Learning and Development, said, "It's incredibly rewarding to see our latest initiative honoured at this level. This award is a testament to the passion and effort poured into creating a guide that opens doors for genuine understanding and inclusivity. We're thrilled to see the positive impact it's making for our clients and colleagues alike. This

recognition reinforces our belief that when everyone feels valued, both people and organisations thrive."

Alongside the guide, Gi Group actively participates in broader neurodiversity initiatives. As a member of the Neurodiversity in Business pledge, the company is committed to creating meaningful opportunities for neurodivergent individuals across its operations, which span 26 branches across the UK. This commitment has seen Gi Group integrate neurodiversity considerations into its hiring practices, employee training, and internal policies, ensuring an inclusive environment where neurodivergent employees feel supported and empowered.

Reflecting on the achievement, Pete Taylor, Gi Group's Managing Director, commented: "Winning these awards is a huge endorsement of our commitment

to fostering an inclusive workplace. 'This is Me' reflects our dedication to celebrating the strengths of neurodiversity, and I couldn't be prouder of our team's pioneering work. By embracing neurodiversity, we are not just supporting individuals; we're enhancing our business with fresh perspectives that drive innovation."

Gi Group's achievements set a new standard for neurodiversity in recruitment, highlighting the value of inclusive policies that empower all employees to succeed. As they continue to drive positive change, Gi Group remains a trailblazer in building workplaces that genuinely reflect the diverse strengths of the UK's workforce.

The British Recruitment Awards celebrate the very best recruitment organisations that inspire the rest of the industry through exceptional work.

Housebuilder shares donation with Walton Lea Partnership

Walton Lea Partnership which supports young people and adults with learning disabilities in Warrington has received funding to support craft sessions.

It received a share of Redrow's £6,000 community fund, linked to Daresbury Garden Village, to purchase craft items and materials that will be used during their sessions held at Walton Hall.

The charity creates learning opportunities for young people and adults that help the development of life skills, the understanding of complex information and interaction with their peers, volunteers and visitors.

Walton Lea Partnership offer their learners a range of horticultural, upcycling and recycling projects, as well as retail and leisure activities, woodwork and crafting

activities. The donation from Redrow will help them to further broaden the opportunities for their learners, enabling them to continue to thrive and enhance their self-esteem. The craft items were identified by learners as items that will enhance their experience.

Redrow's area sales manager Chris Edwards said: "The Walton Lea Partnership is a much-loved local community asset which serves the whole of Warrington and our community funds are in place to help groups such as this one. The sessions we've helped fund widen learning opportunities for the young people and adults who take part and will empower them to make informed life choices."

To find out more about Walton Lea Partnership visit: www.waltonlea.org.uk



Thousands more North West manufacturers to benefit from Made Smarter after Budget commitment

Made Smarter Adoption, the UK Government's programme helping North West SME manufacturers adopt technology and digital skills, is to continue next year as part of a national roll out.

The Government has announced in the Autumn Budget on Wednesday, October 30th that it will spend £16m expanding the programme to all nine English regions in 2025-26.

The decision means hundreds of thousands more SME manufacturers will get access to technology advice, leadership, and skills training, as well as grant funding for digital internships and technology projects. These interventions will boost productivity, growth, create new high value jobs and decarbonise SME manufacturers across the country.

Launched in the North West in 2019, the Made Smarter has engaged with 2,500 manufacturers and funded 379 technology projects, which are forecast to create over 1,700 new jobs and upskill 3,200 existing roles. What is more, the investments in technology and people are set to grow the economy by £267m over the next three years.

Since 2022 a central government funded Adoption programme has been running in the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber, the West Midlands and East Midlands, along with a locally funded programme in the West of England.

Donna Edwards, Director of Made Smarter's North West adoption programme, said: "Over the last five years Made Smarter has transformed countless SME manufacturers, introducing them to new technologies and new digital skills. The programme has proven that by offering businesses specialist advice to help them select the right approach, level of investment and tools for their business, they can grow and build resilience.

"I am delighted that the Government recognised the impact that Made Smarter is having on the digital transformation of such a vital sector of the economy.

"While we await further details on the funding package, the commitment to a national roll-out is a major positive to emerge from a Budget which promises to rebuild Britain and puts UK Industry at the heart of that change."

The Budget also set out plans for a modern Industrial Strategy, extend the Made Smarter Innovation programme with up to £37 million funding in 2025-26, and committed long-term funding for growth-driving sectors, including £975 million for aerospace, over

£2 billion for automotive sector, and up to £520 million for a new Life Sciences Innovative Manufacturing Fund.

Brian Holliday, Co-Chair of the Made Smarter Commission and MD of Siemens Digital Industries, said: "Yesterday's budget announcements on the Made Smarter Adoption and Innovation programmes are a tremendously positive acknowledgement of the impact that Made Smarter is having on UK manufacturing.

"I am particularly pleased the

programme has been supported by successive governments, helping to stimulate longer-term thinking and long-term growth - now backed up by an emerging Industrial Strategy.

"Manufacturing leaders need Made smarter, which has become the best-known start-point and signposting service for the sector in support of productivity, competitiveness and sustainability improvement at scale."

To learn more visit madesmarter.uk



■ Brian Holliday.



■ Donna Edwards.

MagnifyB helping more small companies in Warrington

Local Tech company MagnifyB is receiving strategic support from Warrington Chamber of Commerce & Industry, to find investment and partnerships from both local professional services businesses and local individual investors.

The plan is to help fund further development of their unique SaaS-based, AI-driven platform, to help more small businesses in the Warrington area survive and thrive.

Find out more about MagnifyB at <https://magnifyb.com/>



Pupils encouraged to dream big by Redwood Bank volunteers

Pupils at Dallam Primary School in Warrington have been encouraged to dream big thanks to a National Literacy Trust flagship programme and volunteers from Redwood Bank.

The trust's Words for Work: Dream Big Programme has been created to give children aged from five to seven from disadvantaged areas the literacy skills they need to succeed in life and achieve their aspirations.

To support the programme, nearly 30 Redwood employees have visited schools, including Dallam Primary School, this month to take part in a Q&A workshop and book sharing activity led by the trust.

ESG Manager at Redwood Bank Alex John said: "The National Literacy Trust is dedicated to improving the reading, writing,

speaking and listening skills of those who need it most and we are proud to be supporting it as our chosen charity this year.

"One aspect of literacy that is often overlooked is how crucial it is for understanding finances, whether that's income, tax, budgeting, debt, credit, money mindset or money safety.

"So, as well as our financial commitment to the trust over the next 12 months, several members of our team have also donated their time and volunteered at primary schools as part of the Words for Work: Dream Big Programme.

"We're thrilled to support this flagship programme which works with primary schools to develop literacy skills and challenge stereotypes with children aged from

five to seven."

The Redwood team members were able to support the Words for Work: Dream Big Programme because the bank gives all its staff a day of paid volunteering.

Redwood donated £10,000 to

the National Literacy Trust earlier this year and is supporting the organisation during 2024 and 2025.

To learn more about the Words for Work: Dream Big Programme, visit <https://literacytrust.org.uk/programmes/words-for-work/words-work-dream-big/>



■ Michelle Monck, Alex John, Sarah Johnson, Tracey Lester, Joanne McGillicuddy, Nerisa Ramzan, Lee Carthew, James Egerton.

Hydaheat's underfloor heating: a warm welcome to sustainability

Hydaheat Ltd.'s Northwest underfloor heating division has experienced remarkable growth this year, cementing its position as a leader in the transition toward sustainable and energy-efficient building solutions.

The rising demand for innovative, low-energy heating systems is a testament to the evolving priorities of residential and commercial construction projects. With an increasing emphasis on reducing energy consumption and meeting stringent environmental standards, underfloor heating has emerged as a preferred solution for providing consistent and efficient warmth across diverse spaces.

The shift toward sustainable living has placed energy-efficient heating systems at the forefront of modern construction and renovation projects. Underfloor heating systems are no longer considered a luxury but a practical solution to meet today's energy efficiency requirements. Unlike traditional radiators, underfloor heating provides even heat distribution throughout a room, reducing the energy required to maintain comfortable temperatures. Additionally, its compatibility with renewable energy sources, such as heat pumps, makes it an ideal solution for projects aimed at minimizing carbon footprints.

According to John Houghton, Hydaheat Operations Director, this year has been a pivotal one for the company's underfloor heating division. "Hydaheat expertise in this area has positioned our company as a key player in supporting local architects and builders aiming to meet energy efficiency standards in construction. This year, we have expanded our operations to address rising demand in both new builds and renovation projects, offering underfloor

heating systems compatible with a range of flooring materials and building types."

This year's growth has also allowed Hydaheat to deepen its engagement with policymakers and sustainability advocates. By staying at the forefront of energy regulations and technological advancements, the company continues to provide innovative solutions that meet and exceed compliance standards. This initiative-taking approach has earned Hydaheat a reputation as a dependable partner in creating environmentally responsible heating systems.

One of the keys to Hydaheat success lies in its ability to cater to a wide range of building projects. From large-scale commercial developments to single-family homes, the company's underfloor heating systems are designed to meet the unique requirements of various spaces. These systems are compatible with a wide array of flooring materials, including tile, wood, laminate, and even carpet, ensuring flexibility for designers and homeowners alike.

In renovation projects, where existing infrastructure can present challenges, Hydaheat offers tailored solutions that integrate seamlessly with the current building layout. This adaptability has made underfloor heating an increasingly popular choice for retrofitting older buildings, allowing them to meet modern energy efficiency standards without compromising on design or functionality.

Builders and developers are increasingly turning to underfloor heating as a way to achieve compliance with energy efficiency standards and enhance the marketability of their projects. For homeowners and business owners, the appeal lies in the promise of reduced energy costs

and a more comfortable indoor environment.

Hydaheat Ltd.'s underfloor heating division is poised for continued growth as demand for sustainable heating solutions shows no signs of slowing down. The company's commitment to excellence, innovation, and

collaboration positions it as a leader in this rapidly evolving market. By focusing on meeting the needs of architects, builders, and end-users, Hydaheat not only supports the construction of energy-efficient buildings but also contributes to a more sustainable future.



■ John Houghton, Operations Director.



Warrington interior design business scoops 'Employer of the Year' award

Birchwood-based interior design and fit-out business Claremont has scooped Employer of the Year at the British Council of Offices (BCO) national Next Gen Awards 2024.

The annual awards ceremony, which takes place in November each year, recognises the outstanding accomplishments of young professionals in the office sector.

The Employer of the Year category celebrates organisations with an inspiring and supportive work environment, and a commitment to nurturing the next generation

of talent.

Tim Frankland is the Managing Director of Claremont, which has delivered destination offices for big brand businesses including Paddy Power Betfair, the Professional Footballers Association and Admiral. He said: "This is fantastic, it's great for the Claremont team to win yet another award—this one really highlighting our culture as an employee-owned business and how successfully we work together and support each other, which makes it a win for the whole team.

"We really focus on developing

talent from within, and nurturing growth and opportunity, valuing diversity, and ensuring the wellbeing of our young professionals. It's fantastic to have our efforts recognised on a national scale and by such a respected organisation."

The BCO Next Gen Award Employer of the Year award is the latest in a raft of wins for Claremont, which has secured seven other industry accolades in 2024.

These include Inclusive Design Initiative of the Year at the annual Institute of Workplace and Facilities Management (IWFM)

Awards, the Fit Out Awards UK's 'Fit Out Project of the Year' (Large Office over £7.5 million) for AQA's new Manchester office and the Insider North West Property Awards 'Fit-out of the Year' for Firesprite's statement HQ in Liverpool. Plus, interior designer Alicia Scally secured her place in the much sought-after '30 under 30' with Mix Interiors.

Claremont has been delivering office interior design and fit-out projects from its Birchwood in Warrington and Bristol offices for more than 48 years. It was the first of its industry peers to assume the EOT ownership model in 2020.

Luxury care home developer New Care acquired by Lovett Care

Luxury care home developer and operator, New Care, which includes Grappenhall Manor and Statham Manor in Warrington, has been acquired by Lovett Care, for an undisclosed sum.

Cheshire-based New Care was established 15 years ago and has built a highly successful business, designing and delivering outstanding purpose built new generation care facilities in desirable village and town locations. Covering Cheshire, Merseyside, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire, New Care has a portfolio of 15 facilities (1,057 care beds), and has established a strong reputation for delivering high quality care in modern, purpose built settings.

Newcastle-under-Lyme-based

Lovett Care is a leading provider of elderly care homes across England and Wales. Established in 2009, Lovett has grown to a portfolio of 16 homes (1,091 care beds) and is committed to becoming the 'best-in-class' provider in the elderly care sector, though continued investment in its facilities, systems, and people.

Following the transaction, the combined group will have a portfolio of 31 homes (2,148 care beds) with a strong regional presence in the North West and Midlands as well as a growing position across attractive markets throughout England and Wales. The combination will also bring together two award-winning operational teams with a strong track record of building, filling and operating high-quality future proof care homes.

Lovett Care CEO, Keith Crockett, said: "We are delighted to welcome the residents and our new colleagues at New Care to the Lovett Care family and are looking forward to working and growing together. This is a key milestone in our long-term strategy and consistent with our commitment to deliver the best quality care in attractive market locations."

Chris McGoff, CEO at New Care, comments: "We are delighted that New Care is now in the reliable hands of Lovett Care who share our values, high standards, and above all our care for the residents for whom New Care is home. We are confident the homes will continue to thrive and be a success with Lovett Care."



MP hugely impressed with scale of operation at Thomas Hardy Bottling Group

WARRINGTON North MP Charlotte Nichols recently visited the Burtonwood-based Thomas Hardy Bottling Group to discuss Extended Producer responsibility (EPR) and the Deposit Return Scheme.

She met with company Director Chris Ward to learn more about their operations which has undergone £34m investment in recent years and to discuss Government policy.

Thomas Hardy Bottling Group is a drinks manufacturing business based in Burtonwood, bottling famous household beers, alcopops and soft drinks. The

British soft drink, brewing and pub industries generate £35 billion of economic value and support over 1 million jobs across the country.

Charlotte Nichols MP said: "It was fascinating to visit Thomas Hardy Bottling Group in Burtonwood to better understand their operation, hear about their plans for growth, and to discuss the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) policies and the impacts on the business.

It was hugely impressive seeing the scale and technology of the operation, and how many of our best known beverage brands are

packaged here, like my very own episode of Inside The Factory!

Around £34m has been invested into the site in recent years, including bringing canning operations to the facility, which now give the site capacity to produce over 300 million bottles and 200 million cans every year.

The company is now looking at building extended storage on the site and making plans to ensure the site is carbon neutral by 2050. I look forward to seeing these plans come to fruition in the coming years.

On Government policy, Director Chris Ward informed me he is supportive of a producer lead DRS but has some concerns about the EPR. These concerns include lack of clarity on EPR fees and the commercial impact on beverages produced in glass bottles given they will be subject to an EPR

levy from October 2025, whereas the implementation of DRS, for other beverage containers, won't commence until October 2027. I am planning on raising these concerns with ministers in the coming weeks".

Charlotte and the Labour Government supports a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS), which will mean drinks containers will be collected to be reused or recycled. In countries where this scheme has been implemented we see a rise in recycling rates of up to 90% and a significant drop in littering. The scheme is due to be launched in the next few years.

The Government is also planning on implementing the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging which is about incentivising packaging producers to take financial responsibility for the end recycling of their products.



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Bilfinger UK strengthening community ties with Warrington Town FC partnership

BILFINGER UK has announced a new partnership with Warrington Town Football Club, further strengthening its commitment to community engagement and support for local initiatives.

This collaboration sees Bilfinger becoming the official stand sponsor of the newly inaugurated stand at Cantilever Park – now named 'The Bilfinger Stand' – and the official partner of the Warrington Town women's team.

As a leading engineering and maintenance provider, Bilfinger is strategically placed throughout the whole of the UK with the headquarters located in Warrington – making this partnership a perfect match!

Sandy Bonner, President of Bilfinger Engineering and Maintenance UK, commented on the partnership: "We are thrilled to support Warrington Town FC men and women's team. This partnership reflects our commitment to community engagement and excellence, values that are at the core of Bilfinger's mission."

"We look forward to a successful collaboration and to supporting the teams in their upcoming season."

James Gordon, Media and Commercial Manager at

Warrington Town FC, added: "We are delighted to welcome Bilfinger as a key partner of Warrington Town FC. The support for both our new stand and the women's team is a testament to Bilfinger's commitment to community engagement and the development

of local sports.

"To support the continued growth of the club, on and off the pitch, engagement with locally based businesses like Bilfinger is crucial, and we are grateful that they have chosen to be part of our journey."

"This partnership will not only enhance the experience for our fans but also provide significant support to our players and staff. We look forward to a successful collaboration and an exciting season ahead."



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