

Insight magazine

October / November 2025



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**Warrington
Chamber Plus**



Connect, Collaborate & Grow



AlphaBiolabs wins £2m drug and alcohol testing contract

Warrington-based AlphaBiolabs has been awarded the contract to provide drug and alcohol testing services for six local authorities in the Liverpool City Region.

Under the four-year contract – worth approximately £2m – AlphaBiolabs will provide all legally-defensible drug and alcohol testing in support of Family Court proceedings across Liverpool City Council, Halton, Knowsley, Sefton, St Helens, and Wirral, including sample collection and back-to-lab analysis.

One of the UK's leading drug, alcohol, DNA and health testing laboratories, AlphaBiolabs

owns and operates purpose-built toxicology and genetics laboratories from its headquarters at Webster Court in Westbrook.

They have extensive experience working with family courts and local authorities across the country, including Warrington Borough Council, and Cheshire West and Chester.

The Warrington lab's proximity to the Liverpool City Region authorities also means samples can be processed quickly, ensuring drug and alcohol test results are delivered even faster – a crucial factor for family court proceedings.

Rachel Davenport, director and co-founder at AlphaBiolabs, said: "Many of our employees live locally and we feel privileged to be able to deliver services that directly support social workers and families within our own communities.

"Our in-depth knowledge of the challenges facing local authorities, particularly when it comes to making time-critical safeguarding decisions, stems from over 20 years' experience working with authorities across the country. We know all too well the sensitivities involved and will work hard to deliver the highest possible standard of service for the

people of Liverpool, Sefton, Wirral, St Helens, Knowsley and Halton, over the next four years."

AlphaBiolabs is one of the UK's leading providers of drug, alcohol and DNA testing services for members of the public, the legal sector, social workers, and the workplace.

It also operates 21 walk-in centres across the UK and Ireland – including a location on Rodney Street in Liverpool City Centre – providing on-site sample collection appointments for drug, alcohol and DNA tests.

Charity in need of help to keep community moving

Over the past eight years, the Burtonwood and Winwick Community Bus has provided a vital lifeline for residents who can't use public transport due to mobility issues, lack of confidence, or other challenges. Their service allows people to go shopping, attend community groups, and stay connected with the community.

The service, which operates two minibuses across Warrington, has had a difficult year. A necessary and unexpected replacement of one of their vehicles has created a significant funding gap, along with running costs of around £1,000 per month. While applications for funding and potential new contracts are in the pipeline,

these take time to be assessed and finalised. Without immediate support, the charity anticipates it might have to park up in October, a devastating outcome for many of its users who would be left isolated and unable to get out.

The team at BW Bus is reaching out to local businesses to help bridge this gap and keep their wheels turning. Support from local businesses could make a direct and immediate difference, ensuring that vulnerable members of our community can continue to live independent and connected lives.

If your business is in a position to help, please get in touch with the Burtonwood and Winwick Community Bus via their website at bwbus.org or call 01925 357720



From the Chief Executive

Stephen Fitzsimons



I'm delighted to announce that Warrington Chamber and the Business Exchange have formally come together to form Warrington Chamber Plus.

The new website is currently under development, with events continuing to be listed at www.wbex.co.uk until the task is complete. The merger doubles the size of the organisation, adding to the 35% growth that we were already enjoying at the Chamber.

This is really positive news, especially given that Greater Manchester Chamber had to dissolve and re-form, minus their expensive city centre office. By contrast, Warrington Chamber has plenty of money in the bank from selling our own business

centres and we are very much on the expansion trail!

The new brand received a soft launch at the Warrington Business Conference in September. Over 300 delegates booked to attend and hear innovative stories from ABB, Sellafield and United Utilities.

We also received a world exclusive from Platform, sponsors of the event and the new owners of the former Unilever site at Bank Quay. They will be regenerating the land and installing data centres. This is not just a great example of local innovation - it will also improve the gateway experience of potential investors when they arrive by train.

Thank you to all who attended the

conference and the feedback was excellent so well worth the effort it takes to prepare and deliver. We'll start planning the 27th Warrington Property Review next month.

We were very relieved when all three Cheshire councils agreed to proceed with devolution and an elected mayor. This will provide £21m of annual government funding from 2026 for the next 30 years, whilst ensuring that Cheshire & Warrington has a strong voice to drive the economy further forward.

The alternative was for government to force the system upon us, without a clear timescale and with no money in sight. Given that Metro Mayors such as Steve Rotherham and Andy Burnham

are selling their areas overseas to inward investment, we would further miss out on opportunities to attract the best jobs to the county.

As the dark nights creep in, there's always a warm and bright welcome at Warrington Chamber Plus so look forward to seeing you at our events.

Take care,
Stephen

State-of-the-art Data Centre earmarked for former Unilever site

A state-of-the-art AI data centre is set to be created on the former Unilever site, it was revealed at the annual Warrington Business Conference.

The announcement was a highlight of the conference, which focused on the theme "Innovate Warrington".

Georgi Dimitrov, CEO of Fantasy AI, welcomed the development, saying: "This kind of investment in AI infrastructure is exactly what fuels digital transformation—not just for large tech firms, but for entire communities. It enables innovation at every level: local businesses, educators, and startups all benefit from faster, smarter technology access."

The conference, held for the sixth time at Cineworld in Time Square, brought together over 300 delegates from across the borough and featured a lineup of prominent speakers.

The news of the data centre, announced by Platform DC, comes alongside wider reports of major investment in the UK's tech sector and is being hailed as a significant step for Warrington's economy.

The development is expected to transform the redundant Unilever

site, which has been empty since production ceased in 2020.

In addition to the data centre news, the conference also showcased other significant developments, including a new brand for Warrington Chamber of Commerce, which has merged with the Warrington Business Exchange, to create the largest business group in the area - Warrington Chamber Plus.

Before the conference, it was announced that Cheshire and Warrington are poised to unlock billions in investment and thousands of new jobs through the green revolution.

The event was delivered by a partnership including Warrington & Co, the Business Exchange, and the Warrington Chamber of Commerce, underscoring the strong collaboration between the public and private sectors in the town.

Dante Group Director Carl Oates, part of the new Platform DC project, said: "If ever there was an event to demonstrate the positive way that public, private and academic worlds can collaborate to engineer optimism, innovation and growth,

it was the annual Warrington Business Conference. Myself, my business partners and colleagues feel ready for the next 12 months and we know Warrington is rooting for us!"

Warrington Chamber Plus CEO Stephen Fitzsimons said: "Warrington is home to an impressive array of global innovators, so it was great to get them together at one event to help inspire the next generation of creative thinking."

Warrington Borough Council's Interim Chief Executive Steve Park added: "Once again, Warrington has shown itself to

be at the forefront of innovation with fantastic examples of how Artificial Intelligence is being used to improve productivity and support growth in the local economy."



Warrington Chamber Plus



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Stephen Fitzsimons, Chief Executive

Major plan for redevelopment of Eddie Stobart site

Major proposals for the redevelopment of the Eddie Stobart site in Hawleys Lane, Warrington, have been submitted to borough council planners.

The scheme, put forward by ARES 2 (Logistics IV) Ltd is for the redevelopment of the existing employment development site for a new employment development.

Four new warehouse units would replace the existing warehouse and office buildings on the site. There would be a reduction in floorspace, with the new development providing 27,370 sq. m. The four new buildings would be in a linear form along the western side of the site.

The reduction in floorspace would present opportunities to enhance landscaping and permeable areas and provide for enhanced facilities for employees. New landscaped areas would be created and as much as possible of existing landscaping would be retained.

Nearby residents in Marshall Avenue and Mullen Close have been consulted. The proposals incorporate a range of sustainable to maximise the integration of renewable and low-carbon energy technologies such as air-source heat pumps and solar panels.

The project makes use of non-fossil fuel energy systems, with site layout and building services designed to minimise carbon emissions. Planning officers are currently studying the proposals.



Raising the bar: How Bars & Beyond is redefining the mobile bar experience

From intimate garden parties to large-scale festivals, the way people enjoy a drink is changing – and one Warrington-based company is leading the charge.

Bars & Beyond Ltd, founded by local entrepreneur John Houghton, is quickly becoming the name to know in the mobile bar industry.

Drawing on his proven track record

in business with the success of Hydaheat Ltd, John saw an opportunity to bring the same professionalism, innovation, and local-first ethos into events. The result? A mobile bar company that delivers not just drinks, but an experience.

Bars & Beyond isn't your average pop-up bar. With a fleet of stylish setups – from rustic wood finishes to sleek, modern designs – the company can tailor its look and feel to match any occasion, whether it's a garden party for 30 guests, an office celebration, or a festival with 6,000 attendees. In 2024, they planned and executed a festival in Chester, serving thousands of festival goers across a 12-meter bar with efficiency, quality, and a smile. (plus, a great team).

To complement its mobile bars, Bars & Beyond has expanded into glass hire, offering everything from elegant stemware to high-volume festival stock. The company also provides trained mixologists and flair bartenders, turning any bar into a performance and adding theatre to the drinks service.

What really makes Bars & Beyond stand out, however, is its commitment to community and sustainability. Wherever they go, John and his team seek out artisan brewers, distillers, and suppliers,

keeping the bar offering fresh, exciting, and locally rooted. They also recruit and train staff from the local area, blending local talent with the company's experienced core team – a model that not only boosts the local economy but ensures guests receive a warm, authentic service.

The company is also branching into bespoke branded bar experiences, including a collaboration with AU Vodka to create a festival-ready Vodka Bar, proving that Bars & Beyond has the versatility to work with major brands as well as grassroots producers.

"We don't just pour pints – we create an atmosphere," John explains. "Every event is different, and we take pride in offering bars that feel like a natural part of the celebration, while giving back to the communities we work in."

With a strong first year under its belt, Bars & Beyond is now gearing up for even bigger opportunities at some of the UK's leading festivals and food events. For organisers seeking a reliable, stylish, and community-driven bar partner, Bars & Beyond is proving to be a game-changer.

For more information, visit www.barsandbeyond.co.uk



£312k Bathgate deal helps new owner realise vision for Chester restaurant

A £312,000 deal funded by Warrington Chamber member Bathgate Business Finance, has helped a new business owner realise his vision for The Bird in Hand restaurant in Guilden Sutton, Chester.

When looking to sell the venue ahead of retirement, previous owner, Richard Bowyer, was approached by The Bird In Hand's manager, Stavros Nicolaides, who had successfully managed the popular local restaurant for four years, using his 10 years' experience in the hospitality sector.

The £500k purchase was part-funded through Stavros' own personal savings, but an additional £312k was needed to complete the deal. With confidence in hospitality low amongst many high street banks, despite positive conversations and Stavros' considerable experience, the pair were unable to secure finance from their banks but were introduced to Bathgate by Richard's bank, Handelsbanken.

Bathgate BDM's Ian Adams and Chris McLoughlin visited the restaurant to meet Stavros and Richard to understand the business and learn more about first-time owner Stavros' vision for its future. Immediately seeing the potential, they worked with NatWest to secure a £312k commercial mortgage for the business.

Stavros said: "I had worked for Richard at The Bird in Hand for four years before he put the business up for sale. I saw the opportunity immediately and had a very simple vision; to make it a lovely place for people and families to come and visit, with delicious food, great drinks and wine, and really friendly service that everyone can enjoy.

"Initially being unable to secure

finance was disheartening, but as soon as we met Bathgate, they reassured us that there were other ways. They immediately demonstrated understanding of our circumstance and the people involved, rather than just numbers on paper. They were really supportive and wanted to see our vision realised as we did and showed that they had faith in us.

"Not only did they manage to find a commercial lender, but they were also there to support throughout the 12-month purchasing process. Taking the leap to become a first-time business owner is a scary plunge into the unknown, but Bathgate shared their extensive connections to also help us navigate other non-finance matters related to the business, saving me so much time and effort to find the right people to help me with my business needs. Their knowledge, kindness and expertise will not be forgotten."

Chris McLoughlin, from Bathgate Business Finance, said: "We were immediately impressed by Stavros' plans for the restaurant and extensive experience in the hospitality sector. He started work in a local restaurant at 15 and had two years' experience as an accounts operator. He has also previously worked with Richard at other establishments managing the Bird In Hand over the last four, and had extensive understanding of the local area, the business, its staff and clientele, which we believed was a recipe for success.

"Right now, securing traditional finance for hospitality is challenging, but it can be done when working with a broker with the right knowledge and network who can advocate for a venture. Working with NatWest we ensured that Richard could hand over his

business to a trusted pair of hands, that Stavros had the opportunity to become a business owner and realise his vision, and that Guilden Sutton had a fantastic, family-run business at the heart of its community. We wish Richard a happy retirement and we are excited to see what Stavros, his fiancée Isabelle and the team achieve."

Now one of the top five restaurants in Chester, The Bird in Hand takes reservations from Wednesday to Sunday, serving outstanding home cooked food made with locally sourced produce. Stavros has a host of exciting future plans, including further internal and external building renovations, introducing lunchtime and breakfast menus at the weekend and organising small events such as live music and wine tasting.

Stavros added: "I knew it was going to be extremely hard work transitioning into ownership, and putting in 70 hours a week consistently for the last few months has been a challenge. My fiancée Isabelle's love, support and hard work has been instrumental through it all, and as we grow and continue to succeed then it will all be worth it.

"We are extremely lucky to have such wonderful guests, whether they are first time visitors or those that come in regularly, and I also know I can go to Bathgate for advice and support with our future plans. We're excited for the future and all that will come with it so watch this space!"

For more information about Bathgate Business Finance visit bathgatebf.co.uk



Education caterer signs up 102 new schools

Family run, independent education caterer Dolce Schools Catering – based in Warrington – will begin working with 102 new schools from the start of the new academic year, following a highly successful tendering period.

The new contracts bring Dolce's total daily meal provision to over 130,000 pupils nationwide, with the business now catering for 1 in 20 schools across England, and continuing to see strong growth in Wales.

The summer will be a busy period for the business, with major dining area redesigns underway at a number of high schools. These large-scale transformations will include full fit-outs of school dining halls and the creation of exciting new food courts, designed to appeal to students with global flavours and modern trend-led menus.

Each food concept has its own identity, branding and dedicated

menu, offering pupils choice, variety and dishes tailored to a wide range of tastes. Concepts include:

- The Street Kitchen: Street food style favourites from around the world
- Casa Brasilia: Afro-Portuguese inspired dishes
- BOXT: Pan Asian cuisine
- Italian Kitchen: Classic and contemporary Italian comfort food
- The Toast Office: Creative hot sandwich and toastie offerings

Scott Curtis, managing director and son of Dolce founder Dan Curtis, said: "Winning 102 new contracts is a fantastic achievement, and a reflection of the commitment, creativity and skill of our team. We're proud to support new schools and we remain focused on delivering fresh, exciting food that pupils genuinely enjoy. From our catering service to our design and fit-outs, we want school dining to be an experience – not just a meal."

This expansion comes on the back of a storming few months for the caterer. Earlier this year Dolce scooped a major industry win when it was named 'Contract Caterer of the Year' at the 2025 Public Sector Catering Awards and

was awarded the number one spot in the first ever School Contract Caterer Ranking, from non-profit organisation ProVeg UK.

To find out more please visit www.dolce.co.uk



Walton Hall to host next year's Visit Cheshire Tourism Awards

Warrington's iconic Walton Hall and Gardens will host next year's Visit Cheshire Tourism Awards.

The venue was announced as tourist attractions, hotels, pubs and restaurants were urged to get their entries in for the 2026 Visit Cheshire Tourism Awards.

Run by Marketing Cheshire – and until last year called the Marketing Cheshire Tourism Awards – the awards honour excellence across the entire visitor economy from standout attractions and stylish stays to unforgettable events and first-class hospitality.

With the deadline for entries fast approaching, it was confirmed the glittering event on Thursday, March 5, 2026, will take place at the stunning Walton Hall.

The awards feature 17 hotly contested categories, including the Best Event or Festival Award, introduced last year and won by Deva Fest at Cholmondeley Castle. And for winners, the recognition does not stop here – qualifying entrants go on to represent Cheshire at the national Visit England Awards for Excellence.

Judges will soon start sifting through nominations from across Cheshire East, Warrington and Cheshire West and Chester.

Nestled in acres of serene parkland, Walton Hall and Gardens and its

historic estate – once home to Lord and Lady Daresbury – is a jewel in Warrington's crown.

It was named Best Wedding Venue in the 2024 Awards, and its converted old riding school is set to offer the perfect backdrop for this year's celebrations.

Cllr Tony Higgins, Warrington Borough Council cabinet member with responsibility for Walton Hall, said he was delighted the venue could add the Visit Cheshire Awards to its packed calendar of events.

He said: "We're looking forward to

hosting the Visit Cheshire Tourism Awards 2026. This event gives us the chance to celebrate the best of the best across the visitor economy, and it's a true honour for Walton Hall to be providing the backdrop for what will undoubtedly be an unforgettable evening."

Tourism is a powerhouse for Cheshire and Warrington, generating £3.9 billion a year for the local economy, supporting 38,000 jobs, and welcoming over 56 million visitors. The Visit Cheshire Tourism Awards are designed to spotlight the inspiring people and businesses behind that success.

Cllr Jean Flaherty, deputy leader of Warrington Borough Council and a Marketing Cheshire board member said hosting the event will be a feather in the cap for the town and urged Cheshire and Warrington's "amazing" tourism gems to get their entries in.

She said: "We're really thrilled to have the chance to welcome businesses from across Cheshire and Warrington to Walton Hall for the Visit Cheshire Tourism Awards. This is a fantastic opportunity to recognise the hard work that makes our visitor economy shine.



Lewis Brothers treat Base tenants with ice cream

Tenants at the Base on Dallam Lane were treated to free ice cream at their recent Summer Social.

Established by the Manfredi family in 1886, Lewis Bros, as they later became, sold ice cream across Lancashire and Cheshire before setting down roots on Bewsey Road in 1967. Their ice cream mix is sold all over the country, with customers

all the way up in Cumbria and down to Cornwall. Their fleet of vans can also be seen across the north west and at local events such as Walking Day, Disability Awareness Day and the Classic Car Show.

Base tenants were especially keen on the Biscoff cone, although a cheeky Fab lolly was also spotted in

the crowd. Current family member Stef Manfredi commented "We are really proud of our local heritage and know that Warringtonians love the unique taste of our ice cream. However, we're keen to extend our reach to the corporate market so wanted to welcome Chamber members with a treat on us".

The Base Business Development

Manager Ali Handley added "We have a fantastic community here at the Base so it was great for everyone to come together for a bit of fun, food and ice cream".

Lewis Brothers ice cream vans can be booked for private functions, corporate events and other celebrations. Visit www.lewisbros.co.uk/



New Chief at Kleen-Tex to lead global operations and drive growth

Warrington-based international rug and mat manufacturing giant, Kleen-Tex, has appointed Lee Fox as its new Chief Operating Officer.

Lee has been an integral part of Kleen-Tex's journey for over 25 years, having built a wealth of product and technical knowledge, deep industry expertise, exceptional leadership, and unwavering commitment to drive high performance within the firm's global teams.

In his previous role as Global Director of Business Development, Lee led key business initiatives aligned to the firm's vision, mission and development of its goals, which have and will significantly advance Kleen-Tex's strategic approach.

In this new role, Lee will be responsible for all Operations and Commercial aspects of the business, continuing to drive innovation and impact across the company.

Speaking on his new role, Lee said: "At Kleen-Tex, we're building something lasting – a business that's collaborative, customer-focused, and fit for the future.

"With over 25 years here, I've seen firsthand how quality, customer experience, innovation and people power our global success.

"Now, I want to create a culture where our regions learn from each other, share best practices, become the best they can and move forward to achieve our

ambitious goals."

Lee's appointment comes as Kleen-Tex's impressive growth continues – and follows the recent appointment of Jane Wright, who joined the firm as UK Sales Manager (North and Midlands), earlier this year.

Kleen-Tex, which also sells its popular Turtle Mat product in the UK, recently announced the launch of its flagship wash+dry brand in the UK. The firm is well established in the US, South America, Asia and across Europe, and is now focused on further growing its UK footprint.



Greenvolt Next to invest £50 million in clean commercial energy

Warrington-based Greenvolt Next UK – part of the global Greenvolt Group – is to invest £50 million in distributed generation aiming to achieve 500mw of commercial and industrial clean energy capacity by 2028.

The investment is part of a £320 million investment in the UK to achieve 1GW renewable capacity by the same year.

Most of Greenvolt's installations will be solar, supporting the UK Government's ambitions to triple solar PV capacity to 45–47 GW by 2030, as outlined in its Solar Roadmap. A key focus of the roadmap is rooftop solar, particularly on commercial buildings such as warehouses, with an identified potential of up to 15 GW. This emphasis highlights the strategic importance of decentralised solar generation in achieving the UK's renewable energy targets.

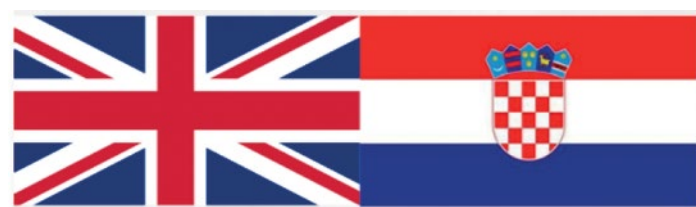
Greenvolt Next UK is currently managing a range of sales pipeline amounting to 150 MW and including a PV solar installation at the Birchwood Shopping Centre in Warrington.

João Manso Neto, chief executive officer of the Greenvolt Group, said: "Our €320 million commitment to the UK over the next three years reflects both the opportunity we see in the market and Greenvolt's determination to lead in clean energy solutions across distributed generation, utility-scale and sustainable biomass – where we operate a strategic cluster in the southern region near London with two plants. There is vast opportunity in the UK for the adoption of solar in particular, and we are pleased to support the UK's ambitious goals."

Greenvolt Next UK is a recent addition to the Group's distributed energy footprint. The €50 million investment will support the development of a portfolio of commercial and industrial projects with a target capacity of 500MW by the end of 2028. Greenvolt Next UK aims to help large UK businesses to produce, consume and manage their own green electricity, such as through rooftop solar installations on warehouses and industrial buildings, contributing to lower electricity expenditure, reduce dependency on the grid and meet decarbonisation goals.



UK-Croatia Business Forum



UK businesses are invited to a free business forum in Zagreb, Croatia on November 11, 2025, aimed at forging partnerships for investment, innovation and industry.

The event, hosted by the Croatian Chamber of Commerce, is designed to help UK companies explore expansion opportunities into the EU by leveraging Croatia's fast-growing economy.

Croatia presents a compelling case for UK businesses looking to expand within the EU. It is one of the fastest-growing economies in the bloc and a member of the Euro

currency and Schengen zone. The country boasts a central location with developed transport hubs and modern infrastructure.

Additionally, Croatia offers a highly skilled, English-speaking workforce, an advanced manufacturing and tech sector, and a dynamic start-up environment.

The UK-Croatia Business Forum is powered by the British Embassy Zagreb, the Croatian Chamber of Commerce, and the British Business Chamber Croatia.

For more information, inquiries can be directed to diana.nimac@fcdo.gov.uk or by calling 07954 425 515.

New leadership aims to transform hygiene firm into regional powerhouse

Neil Mathieson, who recently joined Concept Hygiene, is leading the business during what he describes as a "really exciting period." His appointment marks his first venture into the private-ownership commercial world, following a nearly three-decade career with major corporations.

Neil's background includes two decades at American giant General Electric and seven years with leading UK healthcare software provider EMIS Health Group. He was brought in by the Keygreen Group, a Dublin-based company that recently acquired Concept Hygiene, to lead the business into a new phase of growth.

The newly joined Chamber member, based in Kirkby, has long been a solid and efficient operation, known for providing reliable hygiene and safety managed services primarily across the North-West of England. The company has seen modest but consistent growth over the past five to six years under its previous owner.

Now, under new ownership, Neil is focused on building a team to drive

further commercial success. His goal is to transform the company into a regional powerhouse within the washroom and hygiene industry.

Reflecting on his time at the helm, he stated, "The business has enjoyed a long period of commercial and operational stability, the major result of which has been a really well served regional customer base that can't speak highly enough of the staff, the service and the overall package that Concept Hygiene provides."

"Across our three primary product ranges of Washroom, Logo-Mat and Defibrillator Managed Services, we are ready to continue to progress and grow sales across the region. I'm really looking forward to continuing to work with our local team, our owners and of course our loyal customer base, as well as getting more involved with colleagues and members from Warrington Chamber."

For more information or to enquire, visit the website www.concept-hygiene.co.uk



Miller Homes welcomes new North West Marketing Manager

Miller Homes has appointed Amy Brennan-Stephenson as Marketing Manager for its North West region.

Amy joins Miller Homes with a strong background in digital and multi-channel marketing, having held senior roles at Supply Well and David M Robinson, where she was Head of Marketing and Head of Digital Marketing respectively. She brings a breadth of experience from both agency and client-side roles across a range of sectors.

After completing a degree in French and a Master's in Translation at the University of the West of England, Amy transitioned into the marketing world, beginning with PPC before progressing into

broader strategic roles across various sectors. Her appointment marks her first venture into the housebuilding and construction industry.

Commenting on her new role, Amy said: "Joining Miller Homes is an exciting step, and I'm looking forward to immersing myself in the homebuilding sector. I'm eager to contribute to the growth and continued success of the brand and to new developments across the North West."

The appointment supports Miller Homes' continued investment across the region, following a number of recent land acquisitions and development launches in

Coppull, Greater Manchester and Saint Helens.

Clare Noakes, Sales Director for Miller Homes North West, added: "Amy brings a wealth of experience in digital and multi-channel marketing. Her energy and creative approach will be a great asset to the team as we continue to grow our presence across the North West."

Amy will lead on all regional

marketing activity, including new development launches, campaign planning, and strategic brand delivery, while working closely with agencies and internal teams to ensure alignment with Miller Homes' values and long-term objectives.

To find out more about Miller Homes' developments and activity across the North West, visit www.millerhomes.co.uk



Trustee vacancy at Walton Lea Partnership

The Walton Lea Partnership is currently undergoing an exciting and significant change management process, to include a facilities improvement project in the region of £1.5-2m.

With this in mind, the Board of Trustees are seeking to widen and strengthen the skill set of its membership and have identified a need for the following skill sets:

- HR
- Finance
- Legal
- IT

- Media/PR
- Neurodiversity
- Principles and processes in equity, diversity and inclusion (EID)

As with all new Board Members, there will be a mentor/buddying up period with an experienced board member to work with and provide support to the successful candidate(s).

If you feel you would like to be part of this exciting stage in the charity and can help, please call Mike Cozens on 07770 815178 for an informal chat.

Protect Your Business

Exclusive offers available for Warrington Chamber members



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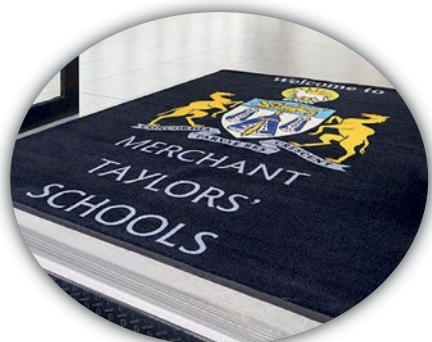
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Healthwatch Warrington launches 'About Me' awareness card to support inclusive healthcare

Healthwatch Warrington has launched a special "About Me" awareness card, a pioneering initiative designed to empower patients and improve communication with healthcare professionals.

This card helps individuals disclose personal triggers and request reasonable adjustments in a simple, non-verbal format, enhancing patient experience and promoting person-centred care.

Online applications for the 'About Me' card have opened via www.healthwatchwarrington.co.uk/about-me. Eligible applicants must be over 18, live in Warrington, and require reasonable adjustments during medical or therapeutic appointments.

The card has been developed by Healthwatch Warrington, in collaboration with the Patient Experience and Inclusion Team at Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and is currently recognised at Warrington Hospital.

"The About Me card began as a trauma awareness card developed by Healthwatch Essex," said Crissi Morad, Project Lead at Healthwatch Warrington. "We've adapted it to reflect the needs of Warrington residents, using feedback from focus groups to shape its design and purpose. This is an exciting project and the support from the Patient Experience and Inclusion Team

has been invaluable. I'm really looking forward to continuing this work with the hospital."

The pilot of the card will run until February 2026, and participant feedback will be vital in shaping the future of the initiative.

Lydia Hughes, Chief Executive of Healthwatch Warrington and Chair for Healthwatch Halton said: "After the 6-month pilot we will evaluate the feedback and look to obtain further funding so we will be able to roll this out to other partners and members of the public in Warrington. Please follow our social media and our website to keep up to date with our progress."

Ali Kennah, Chief Nurse at Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals, said: "I am delighted to see this new initiative being piloted at our Trust. We are committed to meeting the needs of our patients and recognising where reasonable adjustments may be needed to provide the best patient care. The pilot of this card will help us to support any patient that may have been affected by trauma and help us ensure that everyone has a positive healthcare experience."

Sponsored by Warrington Worldwide, the project reflects a commitment to inclusive, compassionate healthcare for all.

For more information or to apply, visit: www.healthwatchwarrington.co.uk/about-me



■ CEO Lydia Hughes with the Healthwatch team and Gary Skentelbery from Warrington Worldwide.

New digital skills bootcamps launch to support self-employed growth



Self-employed business owners and micro-SMEs can now access government funded training to streamline operations, unlock growth, and harness digital tools and AI – thanks to two new Skills Bootcamps delivered by Enterprise4All (E4All).

E4All, a purpose-led skills provider, has been awarded the contract to deliver two fully funded Skills Bootcamps designed specifically for sole traders, freelancers, and micro business owners:

Both skills programmes are part of the Department for Education's Skills for Life initiative and focus on practical, real-world skills that business owners can apply immediately to reduce admin, build new digital tools, and increase revenue.

The 8-week programmes began in September, offering a group cohort and 100% online learning experience, combining live expert-led sessions, ready-to-use tools, templates, and guided project work.

Participants in the Digital Growth Accelerator will learn how to use tools like Microsoft 365, Google Workspace, and automation

software to reclaim time and reduce operational stress – walking away with a clear, personalised digital growth roadmap.

Meanwhile, the AI Product App Bootcamp equips non-technical founders with the skills to design and launch custom AI-powered tools using platforms like ChatGPT, Supabase, and n8n – without writing a single line of code.

Malin Patel, CEO of Enterprise4All, said: "We're thrilled to expand our Skills Programmes into Cheshire & Warrington. These programmes are built specifically for real business owners who are spinning plates, not sitting in classrooms. Our goal is to take the stress out of digital and AI adoption and give founders the confidence to grow their businesses using tools that actually make a difference."

Each programme is worth over £4,000 but fully funded by the UK Government, with no cost to eligible learners. Participants must be 19+, self-employed, and actively trading.

With limited places available, early application is advised.

To learn more and apply, visit: www.enterprise4all.co.uk/courses

B-engineering becomes official stadium sponsor: A family's rugby history comes full circle

A lifelong passion for rugby and a deep-rooted family legacy come full circle as B-engineering Group proudly becomes the official sponsor of the Warrington Wolves' West Stand. This partnership celebrates a shared love of rugby, a family tradition rooted in the East Stand, and a deep respect for Warrington's rich sporting culture.

Rob, Ditchfield, Managing director said: "As a lifelong Wolves fan, sponsoring the same stands my father and I once cheered from is an incredible honour. Seeing that initial display at the stadium is a proud moment for both of us. He introduced me to Rugby League, and the company he founded, B-engineering, still proudly carries the 'B' in his name..

The same passion and values instilled by the sport; resilience, respect, and teamwork make up the core principles of the company and many of our employees have similar stories because they grew up in the rugby culture and played themselves.

Rob stated: "Playing the game myself from nine into my mid-20s taught me much about respect, discipline, teamwork, and strong ethics. These values have guided me throughout my career, and to now be in a position to give something back to the club and the sport that shaped me is a real honour."

Karl Fitzpatrick, CEO of Warrington Wolves, said:

"We're excited to welcome B-Engineering Group as our West Stand sponsor. It's a relationship built on mutual respect and

shared goals. Their backing is a great addition to the club, and we're looking forward to growing this partnership over the coming seasons."

Rob remains committed to nurturing the spirit of rugby and strengthening the close-knit community that defines Warrington, ensuring future

generations grow up with the same values that shaped his journey.

To learn more about B-engineering, visit: www.b-enggroup.co.uk



Chase International celebrates MD's three decades of leadership

Chase International, the Lymm-based family-owned British procurement partner trusted by engineering and maintenance teams worldwide, is celebrating Managing Director Brian Woolley's 30th year leading the company.

Brian first joined CHASE 38 years ago, and for the past three decades, he has been at the helm, overseeing its growth from a specialist UK supplier into a global procurement partner supporting industries worldwide.

Founded 43 years ago, CHASE International has grown from a specialist UK supplier into a global procurement partner supporting industries worldwide. Brian, who joined the company in its early years and has now been at the helm for three decades, has overseen its continued growth while maintaining the company's personal, relationship-driven ethos.

"It's been an incredible journey," said Brian Woolley, Managing

Director. "We've built a company that still values every relationship and every customer, even as we've expanded globally. Leading CHASE for the last 30 years has been the greatest privilege of my professional life."

To mark this milestone, CHASE International has launched a new website that reflects the company's global reach and sector-specific expertise. The new platform makes it easier for customers to access information, explore industry solutions and connect with CHASE's procurement experts.

"The new website is a fitting way to celebrate Dad's 30 years at the helm," said Amanda Woolley, Business Development Manager. "It's clear, accessible and reflects the values that have always set CHASE apart: expertise, agility and a personal service that customers can rely on."

Explore the new website at: www.chaseint.co.uk





United Utilities launches 2026 graduate and internship programme

Warrington-based water and wastewater company United Utilities has opened applications for its 2026 graduate and intern programme.

There are 47 graduate roles and 10 internship opportunities available across several business areas including roles in rainwater management, process engineering, water resources planning, commercial, civil engineering, as well as data and analytics.

Graduates who join the three-year scheme receive career

development and support, along with an understanding of their chosen business area.

Salaries start at £31,250, and each new graduate joiner receives a £2,000 welcome bonus.

As part of the scheme, graduates achieve accreditation, qualifications or chartered status and work towards recognised professional standards in their respective disciplines.

Interns at United Utilities will be given the chance to experience on-the-job training and hands-

on work experience as part of their undergraduate studies with the opportunity to fast-track into graduate roles in the following year.

Details on available roles and career opportunities at United Utilities can be found at www.unitedutilities.com/corporate/careers/.

Laura Spyrou, Head of Talent Acquisition at United Utilities, said: "We are now on with delivering the largest investment programme in a century and it's vital that the

business has a pipeline of talented people from across the region.

"Our schemes offer a fantastic opportunity for graduates and interns to learn about the business across key business areas from engineering schemes to bio, waste, and water.

"We continue to invest in our people offering learning and development opportunities for all."

The company will launch its apprenticeship scheme in January 2026.

Amentum to create 3,000 new jobs following boost in nuclear power and defence spending

With nuclear laboratories and engineering test facilities in Warrington, Amentum, a global leader in advanced engineering and innovative technology solutions, has announced plans to create 3,000 new jobs over the next four years.

The announcement comes on the back of growth in nuclear power and defence in the UK.

Amentum Chief Executive Officer John Heller, who met U.S. President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer at Chequers earlier today, said: "The U.S. State visit reflects the unique strength of the UK-U.S. partnership and our shared determination to drive economic growth and prosperity.

"The energy resilience and national security of both nations depend on continued leadership and advances in energy and technology – the focus of this visit. Commitments by both governments to back and invest in these industries help drive Amentum's continued growth and investment in innovation, jobs and skills on both sides of the Atlantic."

Amentum is a lead delivery partner for the UK's new nuclear power stations at Hinkley Point C and Sizewell C and provides key technical and project solutions for small modular reactors and fusion research.

Stronger coordination between the UK and U.S. nuclear industries will help to deliver the step change in capacity and skills required to deliver on President Trump's executive orders calling for a quadrupling of nuclear generating capacity by 2050.

"We are stepping up collaboration between our people on both sides of the Atlantic to ensure that we seize opportunities which are

tailor-made for our company," said Mark Whitney, president of Amentum Energy & Environment. "Based on current demand projections, we expect to increase our UK headcount by 50% over the next four years. And we are also investing in digital engineering, AI, and automation to improve the delivery of critical infrastructure and government programmes in the UK and the U.S."

Amentum also plays a critical role in the UK's national defence, providing safety and technology services for the Royal Navy's nuclear submarines, managing and maintaining the UK Armed Forces training estate for the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, and delivering programme management and engineering support for the Atomic Weapons Establishment.



Cheshire & Warrington Local Skills Improvement Plan 2025:

Progress, Priorities & The Power of Business Voice

As the Cheshire & Warrington Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) completes another year, the 2025 Progress Report showcases a region-wide effort to reshape education and training around the real needs of local business

Approved by the Secretary of State for Education in August 2023, the LSIP is a three-year initiative led by South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce, designed to place businesses at the heart of the skills system.

What Is the Cheshire & Warrington LSIP?

The LSIP focuses on five key themes: Technical Skills, Accessibility, Employability Competencies, Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG), and Educational Professionals, with a focus on transitioning industry professionals into teaching.

It aims to bridge the gap between business and post-16 education providers, ensuring that training provision aligns with current and future workforce demands.

Progress Highlights (July 2024 – June 2025)

- **Technical Skills:** Over 4,200 learners have accessed new facilities funded by the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF), including immersive learning environments and green technology hubs. 38 Skills Bootcamps (funded training) are planned for 2025–26.
- **Accessibility:** More than 55 employers have received support navigating training and funding, including apprenticeship levy transfers. Inclusive initiatives such as SEND-specific careers fairs and youth task forces are helping disadvantaged groups access opportunities.

- **Employability Competencies:** Programmes like “Core Skills for 2030” and mock assessment centres have reached over 930 students, embedding essential skills like communication, resilience, and digital literacy into the curriculum.

- **CEIAG:** Over 6,000 students attended careers fairs, and new work experience models are being trialled in Net Zero, Life Sciences, and Advanced Manufacturing sectors.

- **Educational Professionals:** Initiatives like the Industry Associate Pilot are helping professionals transition into teaching roles, while Continued Professional Development and careers awareness training have reached over 60 educators.

What Still Needs to Be Done

Despite strong progress, several challenges remain:

- Increasing capacity within the education system to meet demand for technical course delivery.
- Improving employer understanding of training offers and funding mechanisms.
- Mapping gaps in employability skills provision and ensuring consistent reporting across partners.

- Strengthening engagement with disadvantaged groups and promoting inclusive recruitment.

The SCCCI team are actively working with partners to address these issues, with full delivery targeted by August 2026.

Your Voice Matters – October Relaunch

This October, will see the relaunch of the engagement activities - and the SCCCI need your voice!

Without input from businesses, they cannot make real change. Your feedback shapes the future of training and skills provision in Cheshire & Warrington, ensuring it reflects the realities of your workforce and industry.

Whether you're facing recruitment challenges, skills shortages, or planning for future growth, your insights are vital. Join them in shaping a resilient, responsive, and inclusive skills system.

The full LSIP Progress Report is available at: cheshireandwarringtonlsip.co.uk

If your business needs help to navigate the skills system, get in touch: LSIP@sccci.co.uk



■ Sarah Emes-Young
Project Manager



■ Julie Shawcross
Skills Consultant



■ Maria Davison
Skills Consultant



CHESHIRE & WARRINGTON LOCAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

**£37.7
billion**

Total economy of
Cheshire & Warrington

**1 million
people**

live in Cheshire &
Warrington

Bents recognised as one of the UK's best workplaces

The 2025 UK's Best Workplaces in Retail, Hospitality & Leisure™ list has been launched by Great Place To Work® UK, and recognises Bents Garden & Home among the organisations in the 'Large & Super Large' category.

This fantastic recognition follows the recent news that the family-owned and run destination centre was Certified™ as a Great Place to Work for the second consecutive year; an achievement which is the result of outstanding feedback from Bents' colleagues and gathered through the Great Place to Work's independent and confidential Trust Index™ survey.

The survey asked employees to

comment on how their company supports their work-life balance, sense of fulfilment, job satisfaction, psychological safety and financial security. Evaluations also included an assessment of how well the organisation was able to deliver consistency of their employee experience across all departments and seniority levels.

Great Place To Work® UK administered their research-backed Trust Index© employee survey and analysed the responses of UK-based retail, hospitality and leisure employees to determine the Best Workplaces in Retail, Hospitality & Leisure™ list.

Analysis of the sector employee

survey responses found: 75% of employees at the UK's Best Workplaces for Retail, Hospitality & Leisure™ say "I want to work here for a long time" compared to 56% at a typical company in this sector.

Matthew Bent, Managing Director at Bents Garden & Home said: "To be listed as one of the UK's Best Workplaces in Retail, Hospitality & Leisure is an incredible recognition and one that we are extremely proud of. It's a true reflection of the positive culture we have built together at Bents and, most importantly, the dedication and enthusiasm of our colleagues. Their feedback has been invaluable in shaping our workplace, and this latest achievement really belongs to them."

stand out by fostering regular, meaningful communication from leadership. Employees have told us they feel supported, heard, and want to stay at their employer as a result of working for a truly great workplace. Congratulations to Bents for earning recognition as a UK's Best Workplace in Retail, Hospitality & Leisure™."

Bents' inclusion on the 2025 list highlights its ongoing commitment to building a workplace where people feel supported, valued and able to thrive – a culture that continues to underpin the company's success as one of the UK's leading garden and home destination centres.

Matthew adds: "Being included in the UK's Best Workplaces in Retail, Hospitality & Leisure list is not only a celebration of where we are today, but also a motivator for where we want to go. We will continue to listen, evolve and invest in our people so that Bents remains a great place to work for years to come."

Benedict Gautrey, Managing Director of Great Place To Work® UK said: "In retail, hospitality, and leisure, where work is fast-paced and teams are often dispersed, staying connected can be tough. The top-performing organisations in this sector



Export Documentation Services

As you develop your international trade activity the Warrington Chamber of Commerce can assist you with all the documentation you need to export your goods and services easily. All our staff have passed the required training to become British Chambers approved documentation officers and are able to provide the following services:

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November 19th 2025

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

info@warrington-chamber.co.uk

X-Press Legal Services champion girls rugby team

X-Press Legal Services in Warrington is championing girls' participation in rugby – by sponsoring a girls rugby team.

They are kitting out the Thatto Heath Crusaders U15 girls team. The Crusaders have long been champions of inclusivity in sport. Their thriving girls' section continues to give young players the chance to build confidence, resilience and teamwork through Rugby League.

The team trains twice a week as well as competing in the Yorkshire Premier League. Such is its success that players including Lucy Sorby have recently been offered a pathway to a performance contract with Wigan Warriors Women.

As a family-run business with a strong community ethos, X-Press Legal Services is committed to supporting initiatives that make a real difference, especially in areas where young women are still underrepresented.

Lynne Lister, managing director of X-Press Legal Services, said: "We're delighted to sponsor the Thatto Heath Crusaders girls

team. We're passionate about giving back to the communities we serve. Grassroots sport plays a vital role in developing confidence, teamwork and resilience in young people skills that are not only essential on the pitch but also highly valuable as they progress into the workplace.

"It's especially important to support initiatives where girls are underrepresented and rugby is one of those areas. We hope our support helps the team to thrive both on and off the pitch."

X-Press Legal Services is a leading independent provider of conveyancing data in England and Wales. With 27 locally owned offices, it offers regulated property searches and reports, quotation management tools, compliance and insurance products, plus other essential services that streamline the conveyancing process from start to finish.

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Lucy Sorby.

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