



Insight

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COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

in association with
VALE ROYAL
The heart of Cheshire

Students set sights on UK's top universities

STUDENTS are still aiming high despite uncertainty surrounding university and the impact of the pandemic.

By the deadline for early applications, 25 students at Priestley College had applied for places at Oxford, Cambridge and degrees in Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science.

Tutor Ian Hughes, who supports Priestley's university hopefuls, said the figures were encouraging and reassuring.

"With so much uncertainty at the moment it is great to see so many young people with big plans for their futures," he said.

"We have students applying for universities all over the country and they are vying for some of the most competitive places, which shows their focus and determination to succeed."

As well as applications for Oxbridge, students' other first choice next destinations include Edinburgh, Bristol, Imperial College, London, as well as other Russell Group universities.

They are looking to study degrees as varied as French & Arabic, Law, Experimental Psychology, History and Natural Sciences.

Applications for these universities and courses have to be submitted early because the competition for places is so fierce.

Daniella Glenn, who hopes to study Law at Cambridge, said submitting applications during uncertain times had been difficult.

"To even consider aiming high and applying for university when we barely know what tomorrow holds has been tough, but it is important to still focus on working towards our goals" said the former Culcheth High pupil.

"I have had a lot of support from everyone at college in person, email or video chat. Although it has been harder, we have found

ways to overcome the difficulties and still meet the deadlines."

Priestley has a team dedicated to helping raise aspirations of young people so they know the country's finest universities are within their reach.

It works in partnership with OxNet – an outreach programme run by the University of Oxford – to ensure Year 12s can make competitive applications.

"We still have students coming to Priestley who believe the doors to

certain universities are closed to them, but that is simply not the case," said Ian Hughes.

"Our message is loud and clear: If you have the talent and the aptitude, then nothing is beyond your reach."



Ian Hughes discussing future options with Daniella Glenn who is aiming to study at Cambridge.

Work set to start on £6.5 million Youth Zone

FOUNDRY Street, Warrington is to be closed to traffic for 18 months from November 23 – paving the way for work to start on the construction of the town's £6.5 million OnSide Youth Zone.

The borough council intends to make an order closing the entire length of the road within the next week to allow work to start on the project. The order will be effective when work commences on site.

A joint venture between national young people's charity OnSide and Warrington Borough Council, the project will see a purpose-built facility which will raise aspirations, enhance prospects and improve health and wellbeing for young

people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds in Warrington.

It will offer affordable activities in sports, arts, music, employability and mentoring to young people aged from eight to 19, or up to 25 for those with a disability, every day of the week.

When completed, the building, next to the University Technical College, will also become home to Warrington Youth Club.

The £6.5 million capital cost is being funded by the borough council and a number of additional generous funders who are keen to see Warrington benefit from an OnSide Youth Zone.



From the Chief Executive

Stephen Fitzsimons



WHEN the next Insight magazine is published, the UK will have left the regulations of the European Union. However, as I write this column we still do not know on what terms this will be, and for those who export, this is unacceptable.

I spoke with a very concerned Managing Director this week who will see a 6.5% tariff added to his imports of French porcelain if the UK enters World Trade Organisation (WTO) terms. Whilst I anticipate a deal will be achieved by the end of the year, it is already too late for many companies who have had to invest time and money in something that may or may not happen. The British International Freight Association reports that additional supply chain costs could cost an extra £15bn a year. A deal would at least ensure that companies know what they are

dealing with, come the 1st January.

Brexit will nevertheless create opportunities and I recently attended a discussion with Make UK, the trade body for manufacturing, the UK's representative at the WTO and private companies including Rockwell. They highlighted how UK manufacturing can gain an advantage in emerging technologies and big data. We know much of this will come through green energy, as outlined in the Prime Minister's 10 point "Green Industrial Revolution". Whilst the plan to phase out petrol and diesel engines by 2030 is welcome for the environment, the UK is well behind Europe in electric car technology so significant investment must be provided for the gap to be narrowed.

Locally, it's been another challenging month for our members as the national lock down

began in November. The night time economy reported lost revenue of up to 90% and the financial support from government needs to continue if Warrington remains in Tier 3 for December. On a more positive note, the Council confirmed that it was successful in its £22.1m Town Deal. This will fund several exciting regeneration projects in the next few years and we look forward to seeing how members can benefit.

Thank you to everyone who responded to the member survey. As expected, Brexit and Covid were the main concerns, although winning new business never goes out of fashion! We have some really useful ideas to take on board and you will start seeing some changes throughout 2021. This has already started with the Chamber now working closely with the Business Exchange, reinstating a calendar of events for members to attend.

If you are members of both organisations, you will only need to pay one subscription on renewal.

Finally, I'm absolutely thrilled and honoured to be taking over permanently as Chief Executive. The shoes that Colin Daniels left are big ones to fill, however I'm confident that Warrington can return to being the largest Chamber in the area. I can't do this without you our members, so please get in touch for a meeting, unless we reach you first.

Take care and continue to stay safe.

MP raises a glass to award winning gin producer

QUINTESSENTIAL Brands – owners of Warrington-based G&J Distillers – have won the gin producer of the year award for the third year in a row.

Among the first to send congratulations was Warrington North MP Charlotte Nichols.

It's the fifth time in six years that G&J Distillers have won the award – "something we can all be proud of"

says the MP.

G&J Distillers were established in Warrington in 1761 and is a major employer in the town, with 160 people at its distillery and neighbouring offices.

Ms Nichols said: "I am delighted that G&J Distillers have been recognised for their superb work. With one fifth of the world's gin manufactured here in Warrington North.

"As your MP I will continue to champion local gin manufacturers, toasting them in my Maiden Speech in Parliament and supporting them in work on the BEIS Select Committee and the Shadow International Trade team.

"I am incredibly proud of this astonishing achievement and look forward to raising a glass of G&T in their honour later!"



United Utilities aims to become carbon neutral by 2030

WARRINGTON based United Utilities has joined forces with the rest of the water industry to set out plans to go carbon neutral by the end of this decade.

Tree-planting, green vehicles and home-grown renewable power are all included in the ambitious plans for the North West.

Water UK's Net Zero 2030 Routemap is 20 years ahead of the Government's own legally binding target of 2050 and forms the world's first detailed plan to get an entire industry sector to net zero.

For North West England the first milestone along the Routemap is 2021 when the water and wastewater service provision for all seven million United Utilities customers will be powered by green energy.

Already up to 30% of the electricity used by Warrington-based United Utilities is generated on its own sites through renewable schemes such as solar farms, wind turbines and the production of biomethane from sewage treatment.

The company has been at the forefront of new technologies, such

as the floating solar arrays installed at Godley and Lancaster. From 2021 the rest of the company's electricity will be bought from only renewable energy suppliers.

And by 2030 the company has pledged to improve its land holdings by planting more than one million new trees and restoring 1,000 hectares of internationally-important peat bog.

The UK's peat bogs are often compared by ecologists to equatorial rainforests in terms of their importance in capturing carbon.

United Utilities began to re-wet and restore peat bogs some 15 years ago in the Trough of Bowland and the techniques are now in use across the company's lands from Haweswater in the Lake District to Dove Stone in the South Pennines.

The group will continue to work alongside its partners, such as Moors for the Future, to keep up the momentum.

By 2028 all United Utilities' 1,600 vehicles will run on electricity or alternative fuels such as hydrogen or biodiesel.

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Stephen Fitzsimons, Chief Executive

Chamber of Commerce appoint new Chief Executive

WARRINGTON & Vale Royal Chamber of Commerce has appointed Stephen Fitzsimons as its new Chief Executive.

Following the recent death of the former Chief Executive, Colin Daniels, Stephen joins the Chamber on secondment from Warrington & Co – the growth and regeneration arm of Warrington Borough Council. He has worked in the town for nearly two decades in a variety of different sectors, including heading up membership and external affairs in the North West for Make UK, the national trade body for manufacturing.

Commenting on his appointment Stephen said: "It's a huge honour to be taking over from Colin, during what will be a challenging period for businesses approaching 2021 – in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic and outside of the EU.

"There are lots of exciting initiatives we will be introducing and I look forward to supporting businesses in one of the strongest economies in the North."

The Chamber's President, Nigel

Schofield, said: "We are excited with Stephen's appointment to Chief Executive as he shares the board's passion for helping local businesses to prosper.

"We're certain that Stephen will bring a lot to the role, greatly supporting Warrington and Vale Royal's businesses. We look forward to seeing the Chamber continue to grow in the future."

Warrington Borough Council's Chief Executive, and Chamber Board member, Professor Steven Broomhead MBE, added: "It's really important for the public and private sectors to be working together to drive Warrington forward, so we were delighted to enable this appointment to support local businesses."

"We wish Stephen great success in his seconded role and know he will be of great support to the Chamber."

The Warrington Chamber of Commerce and Industry was established in 1876 and has been serving local businesses for 130 years. It is a local, independent, non-profit making and non-party

political organisation that supports and represents local businesses, funded by membership subscriptions.

The Warrington Chamber of Commerce supports local exporters, primarily in Warrington and Vale Royal by producing

internationally accredited certificates and authentication documents.

More information about Warrington Chamber of Commerce can be found at warrington-chamber.co.uk



Future is bright for T-Level students

ONE of the country's newest qualifications has proved a huge draw with young people in Warrington who are aiming for careers in social work, teaching and childcare.

Priestley College was chosen by the Government to be one of the first establishments in the country to offer T-Levels.

Enrolment for Education & Childcare was so high an extra class was added and now 38 students are taking the qualification.

Adam Bird, who oversees T-Levels at Priestley, said: "T-Levels were designed with employers to ensure they gave students the knowledge and skills that are required in the workplace.

"We think this is one of the key reasons why so many students opted for this course given the uncertainty around jobs across all sectors at the moment."

Among the T-Level students at Priestley is Theo Yates who hopes to have a career working with children and families. The former Lymm High pupil said he was enjoying studying a Level 3 course.

"It's a new challenge because the course is worth three A-Levels which I didn't think I'd ever be able to do, but I am ready for it," he said.

"I like all my teachers and developed an immediate connection to them. I am enjoying looking at childcare from a different perspective and want to

go into a job where I help children become the best versions of themselves."

Former Helsby High pupil Isabel Carberry has several career paths in mind and said her studies were helping keep her options open.

"I'm thinking of going to university to study psychology as this will help me to become an educational psychologist," she said.

T-Levels were developed with employers and businesses so the content meets industry and prepares students for work, further training or study.

They offer a mixture of classroom learning and 'on-the-job' experience during an industry placement of around 45 days.

The launch of T-Levels has been so successful that Priestley College will be offering two more

(in Science and Health) next September.

Ruth Saastamoinen, who is the T-Level lead for Childcare and Education at Priestley, said the courses were creating opportunities for young people.

"This is a new route in further education that really works for the student and for their prospective future employer," she said.



Isabel Carberry and Theo Yates who some of the first students in the country to study a T-Level in Education & Childcare.



European Metal Recycling help lead the way in automotive green recovery

CHAMBER members European Metal Recycling is one of 49 innovative projects to secure £92m government funding which places the UK automotive industry at the centre of green recovery.

Warrington based European Metal Recycling's project will see the introduction of a new UK-based circular supply chain for electric vehicle batteries by developing the infrastructure to collect and recycle electric vehicles.

The UK currently lacks the foundations to recycle the batteries and recover their materials meaning manufacturers are paying to ship the battery packs abroad for treatment, which is not only unsustainable but exports valuable metals that are vital to the future of transportation.

The investment co-ordinated by the Advanced Propulsion Centre (APC), is across three streams which include vital support for the continuation of industry research and development during the COVID-19 pandemic, funding for next-generation low-carbon technology, and a forward-thinking approach for the industrialisation of a zero-emission future.

Through the Automotive Transformation Fund (ATF), 31 projects are set to benefit from £17 million of investment in feasibility studies to support the future of green manufacturing and economic recovery for the UK. The money will support commercially led research and development of manufacturing and product scale-up for a future automotive supply chain.

Successful projects demonstrated how their study could de-risk scaling up innovative technologies across the supply chain; remove the technical or commercial challenges with electric manufacturing in the UK and support the overall aim of the ATF.

Of the 31 winners under the ATF, 14 will look at the viability of scaling-up product manufacturing, nine will assess the economic feasibility of large-scale manufacturing facilities in the UK and eight will look at advanced manufacturing processes for electric vehicle technologies.

Meanwhile, £59 million will be committed to six automotive projects

through the APC16 competition, including battery development, recycling and technology for cars, motorcycles, buses and commercial vehicles. The combined award with funding from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and matched by the industry partners, is aimed at providing support for technological growth, and will secure almost 3,000 jobs in the UK across research and manufacturing.

A further 12 projects have been selected as part of the government's £16.5 million Advanced Route to Market Demonstrator (ARMD) competition, to support UK industry continuation with R&D after the COVID-19 pandemic and further accelerate the transition to zero emission vehicles. These small-scale collaborative projects are being led by a range of OEMs and SMEs, focusing on products and processes across energy storage & management, power electronics, electric machines, lightweighting and hydrogen.

Launched in June this year, the programme was conceived and launched within just two months, and the outputs will be displayed at the Cenex Low Carbon Vehicle Show in September 2021. Once successfully concluded, the 12-month projects will be used to seed future development programmes nationwide as well as overseas investment into the UK.

Ian Constance, Chief Executive at the APC said: 'The investment in 49 innovative projects announced today demonstrates the real and ongoing commitment of government and industry working together to advance the UK's vibrant automotive technology development sector towards a net zero future.'

'The creativity and engineering excellence in organisations receiving the latest matched funding stretches across the automotive landscape including buses, cars, motorcycles, commercial vehicles and components.'

'Since 2013, the APC has coordinated programmes to develop the latest zero carbon technologies and manufacturing processes which have secured over

40,000 jobs and are projected to save over 228 million tonnes of CO2 emissions.

'The APC continues to provide the forum and resources for stakeholders to access global opportunities such as the UK's potential £24 billion share of the global passenger car electrification market.'

Projects to receive funding from the Automotive Transition Fund (ATF) include:

TALGA – Ramping up the electric vehicle market relies heavily on improving the driving range of EVs which is ultimately defined by the energy density of the battery. Talga has developed a promising commercial route to produce a Silicon-Carbon composite anode product which offers significant improvements to range.

THURSO+ – Noting a surge of demand from customers for battery cells for electric vehicles, AMTE Power Ltd is scaling up its battery cell production facility in Scotland, identifying opportunities to boost manufacturing productivity and supply cells to specialist vehicle manufacturers – learnings that could be applied to the future development and roll-out of a significant new UK facility.

Other Winners from the APC16 competition alongside European Metal Recycling include:

Axial Flux Traction – Saietta has engineered a breakthrough in electric propulsion motors for all vehicles from scooters to buses. Saietta's unique Axial Flux Traction (AFT) technology delivers class-leading performance at price points required for mass market adoption. The APC16 grant will fast-track the first stage of production process

planning, which will create capability to manufacture up to 150,000 units per annum and trigger the hiring of 250 highly skilled engineers in the first round of recruitment.

Winning demonstrators under Advanced Route to Market Demonstrator (ARMD) competition include:

Nissan – NABCO Nissan is the largest manufacturer of electric vehicles in the UK. In collaboration with Newcastle University this project will develop an automated process of battery charging in the factory, boosting efficiency on the production line and driving out the cost of manufacturing.

Bamford Bus Company Ltd – This project will deliver a zero-emission electric single-deck bus that can either be powered by electric batteries or a hydrogen fuel-cell. The vehicle will test new technologies and help bus operators decide what blend of electric and fuel-cell buses are required in the zero-emission fleets of the future.

Over an initial 10-year lifespan, the APC has a goal to save 50 million tonnes of CO2 emissions from the automotive industry, supporting the UK government's net-zero plans. This commitment is reflected in its ongoing investment in technologies that help lower emissions and protect the environment. The APC enables the relationship between the UK government and the companies leading UK-based projects aimed at advancing low-carbon automotive technology.

Further information about the 49 projects which will be funded through this round of investment can be found here <https://www.apcuk.co.uk/news/apc-funding-announcement-Nov20>



£22m Town Deal funding provides major boost

WARRINGTON has received a major boost after being revealed as one of the first areas to receive Town Deal funding worth more than £22m to help to utilise vacant spaces and restore a vibrant town centre.

The plans will include launching an advanced construction training centre and a health and social care academy as well as a health and well-being hub in the town centre and an active travel programme.

The Town Deal for Warrington announced by the Government will support Warrington Borough Council's ambitions to improve the town, make the area more attractive for residents, businesses and visitors and have a positive impact on the local economy through skills and employment.

The plans include helping to revitalise unloved and underused buildings, such as those that are vacant, by transforming them into new office space and community hubs. This would include locations where residents would have the opportunity to learn new skill, gain health and wellbeing advice.

The council and local businesses will use some of the funding to invest in more environmentally friendly public transport, such as an all-electric bus fleet depot

as well as updates to pedestrian areas and green spaces.

Welcoming the news Warrington South MP Andy Carter said: "The bid submitted by the Town Deal Board was really excellent, it ticked so many boxes and having spent the last few weeks pushing Ministers hard to support Warrington, this is fantastic news. This funding will help us boost footfall in the town centre, giving local businesses such as retail and hospitality the chance to grow and thrive – creating new jobs for people who live locally.

The Council and local stakeholders will now have the opportunity to implement innovative and forward-thinking proposals submitted to the Government's £3.6 billion Towns Fund, designed to tap into the economic potential of 101 shortlisted towns and drive future growth and prosperity across the country.

This latest funding builds on the Government's wider package of unprecedented measures to help protect and support communities, business and jobs through the coronavirus pandemic, to ensure that nobody is left without hope or opportunity.

Leader of the Council, Cllr Russ Bowden, added: "I am delighted

to see that we have been successful in securing this level of funding for our town centre, which will help us to deliver a string of truly transformative projects.

"Whilst the sum awarded is a

little less than the £26 million we initially bid for, we are happy with this funding award, especially in the current climate. It's great news for Warrington and will give our economy a real shot in the arm at a crucial time.



Council announce latest plans for £212m Western Link road

THE latest plans for the controversial Western Link road have been revealed by Warrington Borough Council as a period of public consultation gets underway.

The project will see investment of around £212 million in the Borough, improving the local road network and creating jobs, while providing a major economic boost.

A public engagement period is now underway to allow local residents, businesses and other stakeholders to view the proposals and make their views known to the Council. This follows a comprehensive consultation exercise in 2017, in which local communities were asked to give their views on six possible routes and the Red Route was selected.

Plans have now been developed for the preferred route and residents have an opportunity to comment on the proposals.

The new Western Link road will tackle congestion, improve traffic flow, unlock key development land, and improve the quality of life for residents within the borough, which can be delivered through significant funding from Government.

The project will see significant investment in Warrington, improving journeys for those using cars, reducing the amount of congestion on the roads and making it easier to get from A to B,

and it goes much further than this. The route will see new, on-road cycle lanes and pedestrian walkways and provide links to off-road paths and cycleways. It is about building on existing infrastructure, improving connectivity within the borough, and investing in the future.

Warrington Borough Council wants to hear what local people have to say and, in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and current social distancing guidelines, has launched a fully-interactive digital engagement platform for local residents to view the proposals, interact with the wider project team and provide feedback.

The Council will also be hosting an interactive session over video and text chat to give the opportunity for local people to put their questions to the team. The dates for these will be announced on the project website.

You can get involved in the following ways:

- Visit the project website at warringtonwesternlink.co.uk
- Email feedback and questions to warringtonwesternlink@havingyoursay.co.uk
- Call a dedicated Community Information Line on 0333 358 0502 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5.30pm). Local residents can also request hard copies of the materials on display online by getting in touch

via one of the channels outlined.

Warrington Borough Council's Cabinet Member for highways and transportation, Cllr Hans Mundry, said: "Bringing forward the latest proposals for the Warrington Western Link is a key milestone in this significant investment in our future. A new road is necessary to ease congestion and improve journey times, but this project is about so much more than that.

"Investment in key infrastructure

brings with it new jobs and new opportunities, opening up previously locked sites for development, creating an even bigger benefit for our local economy.

"This engagement period gives us the chance to talk to local people about the proposals and we are looking forward to hearing what they have to say. This is a tremendous opportunity for Warrington, and we are excited about delivering for the future."



University appoints academic second in command

A prime mover in determining the future direction of higher education and medical education nationally and globally has been appointed as the University of Chester's new Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

Professor Helen O'Sullivan will be central to ensuring that the University grows into and progresses the new strategy being introduced by Vice-Chancellor, Professor Eunice Simmons, and will have responsibility for overseeing the institution's academic work.

She currently sits alongside Professor Simmons as one of 13 Board members of Advance HE, whose priorities for the university sector include transformative leadership and management; teaching and learning; equality, diversity and inclusion; and effective governance.

Also at a national level, Professor O'Sullivan is the Chair of the Board of Trustees for the Association of Learning Technology (ALT) and a member of both Universities UK International's Transnational Education Advisory Board, and the Horizon Group for Jisc, which provides technological solutions for UK education and research. She established the UK Council for Teachers of Professionalism and her research focuses on the role of emotional intelligence in developing professionalism and leadership in doctors. She also has a particular interest in how innovations in digital education can support social learning.

Professor Simmons said: "I am thrilled to have someone of Professor O'Sullivan's vision, intellect and standing to join our Strategic Executive Team, which is guiding the University of Chester into the next stage of its development."

Canon Dr Jeff Turnbull, President of the University Council, added: "On behalf of the University's governors, I am delighted to welcome Helen as our new Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor. With her gifts and experience she will bring great strength to our Strategic Executive Team and be an excellent Deputy to our Vice-Chancellor."

After graduating in Molecular Biology at the University of Liverpool, Professor O'Sullivan gained a PhD in Bacterial Genetics, followed by a postdoctoral fellowship there, then moved to a lectureship in Biological Sciences at what is now Liverpool Hope University. Hope, like Chester, is a member of the Cathedrals Group of church-founded institutions, committed to widening access to higher education. She became interested in the psychology of learning and undertook a range of leadership roles including Dean of Sciences and Social Sciences.

In 2006, Professor O'Sullivan returned to the University of Liverpool to lead the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, whose work helped to shape how medical professionalism is taught across medical schools in the UK and internationally. She was promoted to Professor of Medical Education in 2013 and was Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor for Online Learning at the University of Liverpool.

Currently Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education at Keele University, Professor O'Sullivan has strategic leadership for all aspects of learning, including flexible, online and transnational delivery.

Wirral-based Professor O'Sullivan said: "I have already picked up the importance of the strong

community at the University of Chester and a sense of excitement about the future, so I am really looking forward to channelling the energy which will see the new strategy coming to fruition.

"The thread running through my career is innovation in the design and delivery of education that develops students as individuals, as well as preparing them for life after university. The new strategy really aligns with my personal beliefs in the purpose of university education, giving opportunities to those who might not have been

able to benefit otherwise.

"I am excited about all aspects of the curriculum at Chester, particularly, given my background, the prospects for the new Medical School and for developing the Science and Engineering offer.

"Having lived and worked in the area for many years, I'm familiar with the University's history and foundation and already have connections with the city through regularly rowing on the River Dee as a member of the Rex Boat Club."



Professor Helen O'Sullivan, incoming Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Chester.

United Utilities ranked "good" on environmental performance

WARRINGTON-based United Utilities were ranked "good" in the annual report on the environmental performance of England's water and sewerage companies.

The report, issued by the Environment Agency, showed that four out of nine companies are falling short of expected standards.

United Utilities (UU) were awarded three out of a possible four stars and were said to be the only company not to have a serious pollution incident in two years.

UU also achieved the best performance in the sector by self-reporting 90 per cent of their incidents to the Environment Agency.

However last year, UU paid £564,760 in Enforcement Undertakings (EU) for two offences

which took place in 2017 and 2018. An EU is a voluntary agreement offered by those who have committed a less serious offence that becomes legally binding once accepted. It funds local environmental improvements but also requires that steps are taken to put right what went wrong and to prevent it happening again.

An Environment Agency spokesperson said: "Across the North West, United Utilities have made significant investment in improving our rivers, lakes and coastal waters though more remains to be done.

"The Environment Agency will continue to ensure that the improvements identified in this year's Environmental Performance Report are addressed quickly, and where they have performed well we will seek commitment that they will continue to be the best in the sector."

Only one company – Severn Trent and Wessex Water – received four stars.

Environment Agency chairman Emma Howard Boyd said: "We cannot transform water quality in the way we all want if water companies' environmental performance continues to

backslide. Severn Trent and Wessex Water show high performance is possible, and United Utilities were the best performing company for serious pollution incidents for the second year in a row, but the evidence suggests that the rest of the sector isn't listening."



Public backs Warrington's green vision with £1m investment

WARRINGTON Council's local government green bond to help fund an innovative new solar farm has closed after reaching its £1 million target.

The Community Municipal Investment (CMI) attracted more than 500 investors from across the UK, with an average investment of almost £2,000 each.

The innovative CMI structure was developed by ethical investment platform Abundance to offer an accessible, low-risk way for people to back councils in the UK leading the fight against climate change.

The CMI will help fund a multi-million pound innovative solar and battery storage project near Cirencester. The electricity and revenues generated by the solar panels will be used to accelerate other green projects on behalf of Warrington's community as part of its Green Energy Strategy. These include reducing fuel poverty and energy self-sufficiency, helping save taxpayers' money

and supporting the council with delivering front-line services.

Warrington is leading other local authorities in taking climate action and aims to become the UK's first carbon-neutral town, with a Net Zero target of 2030. It has already reduced its carbon footprint by 50% since 2009.

Cllr Russ Bowden, Leader of Warrington Borough Council, said: "I'm absolutely delighted that our first-ever Community Municipal Investment has been such a success, generating a huge amount of interest and attracting hundreds of investors from Warrington and across the country.

"Reaching our £1m investment target is a fantastic achievement, particularly in such challenging times. It shows that tackling the climate emergency is something that people really care about.

"It's so important that the public is engaged in our carbon-neutral ambitions and this project is an

important part of that work. Its success bodes really well for our green future."

Bruce Davis, co-founder and Managing Director, Abundance Investment, said: "Warrington was particularly hard hit by Covid during this investment offer, so the success of its green bond is a testament to the town's green vision which has inspired investors across the UK. This is clear proof that ordinary people want the

recovery from the pandemic to be led by the green economy, and they are prepared to put their money where their mouth is."

The success of Warrington's CMI follows hard on the heels of West Berkshire District Council, which also raised £1 million through the UK's first-ever CMI which closed last month. Abundance has a number of other CMIs from other local authorities in the pipeline expected to launch in 2021.



Aspiring actress offered place at RADA

A WORLD-LEADING school of acting has awarded a former Priestley College drama student the chance to learn from the best.

The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) has offered Libby Cooper a place on their Foundation course, which lasts for one term and promises to provide an insight into life at a conservatoire drama school.

The former Priestley College student will work on her acting techniques, movement and voice at the world-renowned centre of excellence.

"I put off applying for ages because I thought I'd be wasting their time. I didn't tell anyone that I had applied," she said.

RADA alumni include everyone from Avengers' star Tom Hiddleston to Fleabag creator Phoebe Waller-Bridge.

During her course Libby, who is from Stockton Heath, will take specialist classes in screen acting, an introduction to playwriting and various masterclasses.

The former Bridgewater High School pupil said it had been a surprise to make the cut.

"I knew I was being considered for a recall, but there's always someone better than you so I assumed nothing would come from it," she said.

"I'm just looking forward to acting with other people again because it has been seven months since I was able to do that. There's only a certain amount of monologues you can get through."

Libby was originally studying English, French and History elsewhere before she decided to pursue acting.

She chose Priestley College because of its reputation for sending performers to the best theatre schools in the country and studied A-Level Drama and BTEC

Performing Arts.

After she completes her foundation course at RADA she hopes to commit to a three-year BA at drama school.

Then, like most actors, simply hopes to make a living from doing the thing she loves.

"Coming into Priestley I probably would have said I would prefer to be on screen, but there's a different kind of freedom with theatre and I think we all miss live audiences," she said.

"I'd love to be one of those actors who dips in and out of both."





Charity hit hard by COVID-19 launches appeal for support in its 30th anniversary year

INTERNATIONALLY acclaimed, Warrington Disability Partnership (WDP) is appealing to businesses, organisations and individuals, to support their 30th anniversary in 2021.

WDP has continued to deliver vital support services throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic, has been hit hard during the past eight months.

Chief Executive and co-founder Dave Thompson explained that the charity's income has been badly affected, such as their accessible caravans in North Wales and Wizard narrowboat. Dave explained that mooring and site fees, and insurances still have to be paid which has resulted in huge losses.

He added: "We attend or hold

over 150 community engagement and fundraising events, but due to the lockdowns and social distancing regulations, the programme has been decimated. WDP's annual Charity Dinner has already been cancelled, and it is likely their Santa's Grotto will also be cancelled for the first time in 16 years."

In true WDP problem-solving tradition, this year they took their flagship event, Disability Awareness Day, virtual and against the odds, together with design partners, 4WardFutures, they delivered an amazing web-based version that has led the country in terms of mobility and independent living events.

Dave added, disabled people and

their families need information, advice and guidance, more than ever before, which is why they needed to find a way to hold our 29th annual event.

Dave shared a few mind-blowing facts about the impact of WDP's services:

- over 1.5million calls have been taken on their 240064 telephone number, many of the enquiries are from disabled people, desperate for support.
- over 20,000 people have enjoyed a day-out on WDP's Wizard narrowboat.
- nearly 1,000 families have enjoyed accessible and affordable holidays in WDP's caravans in North Wales.

- over 400 local disabled people have been supported by WDP's Employment Team into sustainable employment and hundreds more into volunteering opportunities since it was launched 15 years ago.

- over 600,000 people have attended DAD events, and local charities have not only raised awareness about what they do, but over £1million for their organisations.

WDP aim to relaunch its Legacy Appeal, aimed at supporting jobs for young disabled people. If you or your organisation can help, please contact Dave on 01925 240064 or email davethompson@disabilitypartnership.org.uk

Triumph for Thalia as she secures scholarship

A GAME design student has been awarded a scholarship as she pursues her dream of breaking into the multi-billion pound industry.

Thalia Thompson studied Computer Games Design at Priestley College before going on to Edge Hill University where she has received the 'High Achievers Scholarship'.

The award will help fund her studies over the next three years after which she dreams of one day working for Nintendo or Studio Ghibli in Japan.

"It means they have recognised how well I did with my final college results so thankfully my hard work paid off," said Thalia, who collected a triple distinction* in her BTEC.

"I chose CGD as I love anything to do with computing, especially games design. I know it isn't a typical course for girls to pick but that makes me more determined to succeed. I picked Priestley because they seemed to offer more than other colleges."

Priestley was one of the first colleges in the country to run a

computer games design course. Its students progress onto bespoke university places and internships with companies such as TT Games, which is a part of Warner Brothers.

During her time at Priestley Thalia got to grips with industry software such as digital sculpting tool ZBrush and created a game that was published on Itch.io, a site that allows anyone to download the end product.

Thalia finished her course in summer and is now at Edge Hill studying Computing Games Programming, which also covers web development, forensics and robotics.

The former Sandmoor School pupil said the highlight so far had been meeting like-minded people.

"I have watched a lot about games design on YouTube and always liked the idea of designing my own," said Thalia.

"Most of the games in general are fighting or shooting related and I want to create a different genre of games suitable for all types of people."



Scholarship offers for Priestley students

TEN Priestley College students have been awarded a scholarship by England's oldest professional body for banking and financial services.

The London Institute of Banking & Finance made the offers of £500 for each student after they achieved A grades in their Finance Diploma.

Will Fox was among those to receive an offer. He combined Finance with A-Levels in Business and Economics while at college.

"It was a great feeling to get the scholarship as I knew I'd worked hard to for it spending hours going through the LIBF textbooks," said the former St Gregory's RC High pupil.

After completing his studies at Priestley, Will secured an apprenticeship with Warrington Mortgage Centre and is aiming to become a financial adviser.

To receive the scholarship the students had to apply their knowledge of banking and finance to real-life case studies across four, 30-question online tests and four written papers.

Chanel Thomas was another to receive the scholarship and is currently studying business management at the University of Liverpool.

The former Sir Thomas Boteler pupil said: "I was in shock when I heard about the offer because I hadn't received anything like it before."

The London Institute of Banking & Finance is the oldest training and professional body of its kind in England and Wales.

It is seen as one of the best places to train for anyone who is interested in pursuing a career in finance.

Past students have progressed onto careers in organisations such as Barclays, HSBC, Deloitte, Thomas Reuters and Goldman Sachs.

James Gresty, Principal at Priestley College, said: "This is a great achievement for these young people who clearly have a future in finance or business should they

look to pursue it.

"Giving our students the skills and knowledge they need to create these kinds of opportunities is what Priestley is all about."



Will Fox was one of 10 Priestley College students to receive a scholarship offer from London Institute of Banking & Finance.

100 percent lease renewals at The Base

ALL tenants with lease renewals at The Base in Warrington have re-committed to the covid-secure building, in spite of the economic pressures brought about by the pandemic and the government's fluid workplace advice.

Five lease renewals, totalling 13 percent of the grade A building's office space, have been completed during the continued restrictions brought about by the pandemic.

Building manager Langtree, which operates The Base on behalf of owner Warrington & Co say the deals show that offices retain their appeal as key assets for delivering business services.

Building Manager Stacey March said: "Teamwork remains vital to business performance and there's no-where quite like an office environment for cultivating that. We've been operating safely as a covid-secure building for many

months now and tenants are pleased with the adjustments we've made."

The five tenants employ 62 staff across a range of digital and engineering roles and, says Mrs Marsh, the renewals point as much to the tenants' strengths as to the appeal of The Base as a workspace.

"Our tenants are all at the cutting edge of their industries and are highly creative and entrepreneurial in outlook," she explained. "Their cultures are around sharing ideas and collaboration and our workspace was designed specifically to facilitate that. There's nothing else like it in Warrington and I'm delighted but not surprised that they have renewed."

Andy Horrocks, managing director of Swan Solutions, a leading IT support business and one of the five companies recently to renew

his lease, said: "There's a really hands-on approach from the management team at The Base which makes it a great place to be. The high-quality space and the range of networking events here all help in terms of attracting and retaining the right calibre of staff and it's a great address for our business."

The Base was developed as

a home for start-up and high-growth businesses in the digital, technology and engineering spaces and provides 50,000 square feet of grade A space. The building is currently more than 70 percent occupied. The companies renewing their leases are Simple Solutions, Meritec, Swan Solutions, NSAN and Chatbot Labs.



Senior appointment champions student experience

With a 20-year commitment to higher education in a variety of senior roles and a passion for enabling students from all backgrounds to reach their goals, Dr Helen Galbraith will join the University early next year as Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience).

Nationally, she is a member of the Executive Board for the Association of Heads of University Administration (AHUA) and its blog Editor-in-Chief.

She is an active member of other professional organisations in higher education, including the student services organisation AMOSSHE, the Academic Registrars' Council (ARC) and the Higher Education Strategic Planners Association (HESPA).

Her new role at the University will encompass all aspects of student support and wellbeing; responding to student and graduate needs; developing innovation in teaching and learning; improving student employability and enterprise; managing student behaviour and bringing higher education opportunities to a diverse range of students.

Professor Eunice Simmons, the University's Vice-Chancellor, said: "We have a new strategy, which sets out our expectation for a 'premium, personalised, purposeful student experience.' Dr Galbraith is just the person to champion this and with her support we will progress at pace to ensure Chester students get the very best preparation for their life and careers.

Canon Dr Jeff Turnbull, President of the University Council, said: "On behalf of the governors on the University Council, I welcome Dr Galbraith to the Strategic Executive Team, in what for us is a key area. We are very privileged to

have someone of her experience and expertise and I know she will further enhance the strong team of leaders at the University."

Eleanor Lewis, President of Chester Students' Union, added: "Dr Galbraith's appointment is fantastic news for students – from persuading talented people to come to university in the first place to ensuring they gain the qualifications and future they deserve, thanks to the enriching time they have spent with us. We can't wait to start working with her as a Students' Union."

A University of Bristol Music graduate, Dr Galbraith gained a PhD in Russian Music and Poetry through part-time study. Also at Bristol, she worked in a number of professional areas, including research, education and governance, progressing to the post of Director of Strategic Planning and Projects.

Since 2016, she has been Academic Registrar and Secretary at Keele University, overseeing student welfare and support services; planning and registry services; and corporate and academic governance.

Dr Galbraith said: "Chester is clearly a university with exciting ambitions for its future, and a longstanding commitment to supporting students and helping them fulfil their potential.

"I love working with and for students. I am really delighted to be joining the University of Chester community, and I'm grateful to the colleagues who have already been so welcoming.

"I am looking forward to working with Professor Simmons, the Student Futures team, Chester Students' Union and with staff and students across the University to help deliver the new 'Citizen Student' strategy."



Dr Helen Galbraith, incoming Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) at the University of Chester.

Industrial and warehousing plan gets the go-ahead

A JOINT venture between industrial developer and asset manager Chancerygate and Hines, the international real estate firm, has secured planning to speculatively build 119,675 sq ft of industrial and warehousing space at Warrington.

The scheme will be situated on the final five-acre plot of Warrington's Gemini 8 business park and will comprise 18 units ranging from 3,900 sq ft to 16,500 sq ft.

Gemini 8 is strategically located adjacent to junction 8 of the M62 motorway and approximately four miles from the M6. Occupiers surrounding the business park include Athelis Club and Spa, Ikea, Starbucks, Travelodge and Marks and Spencer.

Chancerygate development manager Chris Brown, said:

"There is a real shortage of modern high quality industrial and warehousing space at the smaller end of the market in Warrington, so we're delighted to have secured planning to build our 18-unit development at Gemini 8.

"It will be the first multi-unit scheme in the area for more than a decade and is in an unrivalled location in one of the North West's prime commercial markets.

"Not only is Gemini 8 situated just off a motorway junction, it also offers fantastic amenities and retail on its doorstep. We are confident occupiers will be keen to locate here over other less well positioned multi-unit estates and are already in discussions with a wide range of businesses based both in and around Warrington and across the North West."

Greg Cooper, Hines UK director of industrial and logistics, added: "This is an important next step in continuing to grow our portfolio with Chancerygate and deliver high-quality industrial schemes across the UK. The partnership to date has been highly successful at identifying modern industrial

and logistics space in strategic locations across the UK and we welcome the momentum behind these quick transactions that allow us to deliver schemes at pace."

Construction work is anticipated to start in the first quarter of next year.



St Rocco's supporter completes Everest and Hadrian's Wall challenges during lockdown!

DURING this year and through both lockdowns, St. Rocco's Hospice has been overwhelmed by the support they have received from the Warrington community, which has helped them to continue providing care to those most in need.

One such supporter, Stacey Higgins-Martin, has used both lockdowns as a way of raising money toward patient care at the hospice.

In April, during the first lockdown, Stacey climbed the equivalent of

Mount Everest using just her stairs and managed to raise an amazing £4500. This time, she set herself the challenge to walk the equivalent of Hadrian's Wall-

a massive 140km- over the space of five days. She wasn't alone this time though, and a team of nine friends and colleagues took on the challenge too and each of them covered the distance at all hours of the day!

The team have raised an astounding £7300 as of 23rd November!

"St. Rocco's has been such a big part of mine and my family's lives over the years, so I'm always looking for a chance to give back and challenge myself, especially anything that gets me out and about!" said Stacey.

"This challenge has been tough but I'm so thankful I haven't done it alone and we've been one team with a big goal in mind."

"All nine of this wonderful team- Stacey, Cerys, Andy, Hetty, Annie, Alysia, Katie, Gaynor and Mia- have done so well. We cannot even begin

to express how grateful we are to them all for pushing themselves to do this. 140km each is not

easy but they've absolutely smashed it and the money raised will go so far in helping us provide our care," said Billy Welsby, Digital and Creative Editor at St. Rocco's.

If you want to start a fundraiser for St. Rocco's, there are some hints and tips on how to get started on their website at

www.stroccos.org.uk/Get-Involved/Fundraise/Fundraise-My-Own-Way

Are you making the most of our advice and support?

The Department for International Trade North West supports companies of any size and at all stages of their export journey to trade internationally. Here's a refresher of our services:

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Professional export advisory service by ITAs with Institute of Export CPD accreditation. Diagnostic, regularly reviewed action plans, mentoring and contact.

Market-specific events and briefings

Designed to explain how to enter and grow in specific markets; led by market experts from the commercial and public sectors.

Export growth programmes

Formal diagnostic process followed by creation of a detailed report and action plan. Criteria vary according to the programme but are typically geared to high growth or small to medium-sized businesses.

Fully funded training in export-specific skills and knowledge

Masterclasses - workshops, including: Introduction to Export; Exhibition Skills; Intellectual Property; Researching Markets; Digital Marketing; Language & Culture etc.

Sector-specific advice and support

One-to-one advice from specialist ITAs or sector staff from DIT centrally; sector events including virtual webinars, briefings and round tables; virtual and physical tradeshow.

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Introduction to suitable mentors (SME leaders) who share experience of their own export journeys and can inspire and encourage; delivered via the Northern Powerhouse Export Champions scheme.

Assistance with applying for grants

For new business development, virtual and physical conferences, overseas market visits or export-related consultancy (research, translation, legal). Grants are subject to criteria and vary from programme to programme.

This is not an exhaustive list and may be subject to change.

Tricia Francis, your local International Trade Adviser says "If you haven't been in touch with your International Trade adviser for a while then please reach out and make contact. If you are not working with us and are interested in having a chat then please contact me and I will be more than happy to talk you through our support and services."

About your local ITA:-

Tricia is an International Trade Adviser for the Cheshire & Merseyside area and works closely with businesses throughout the region. She has over 25 years' experience in exporting and working with businesses to expand their international trade worldwide in various sectors.

For more information please contact her on tricia.d.francis@tradenw.org or call 07966 560644. See www.great.gov.uk for more details.



Stacey and Cerys present Billy Welsby, Digital and Creative Editor at St. Rocco's with a donation.



The Hadrian's Wall Challenge Team: (From left) Stacey Higgins-Martin, Annie Mulholland, Katie Yeoman, Hetty Roach, Alysia Wright, Andy Oakes, Gaynor Hancock, Mia Shaw and Cerys Savage



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Jack Hughes lifting the Challenge Cup with joint captain Chris Hill – Picture Eddie Whitham



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Chris Hill granted testimonial at Warrington Wolves

WARRINGTON Wolves co-captain Chris Hill has been granted a 12-month testimonial by the Rugby Football League.

The 33-year-old joined the Wolves back in 2012 from Leigh, going on to make 258 appearances for the club.

Hill played 160 games for Leigh between 2005-11, and has earned 32 caps for Great Britain and England to date.

The prop, who helped Warrington win two Challenge Cups in 2012 and 2019, is set to have a testimonial match ahead of next season.



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info@warrington-chamber.co.uk

Sporting honours for students

COLLEGE sportsmen and women have been awarded for their commitment and passion to their sport of choice.

Among the winners at Priestley College's annual awards were the Sports Personalities of the Year, Mo Essa and Natasha Ryder.

Footballer Mo was outstanding on the pitch, captained Priestley's undefeated second team and completed his BTEC Extended Diploma in Football with high grades showing as much focus on his studies as his sport.

Natasha impressed in playing for Warrington Wolves' under 19s squad, completed her gold Duke of Edinburgh Award and achieved a triple distinction*.

"Both displayed the qualities you would hope to see in any top-class sportsperson," said Nigel Howells, Priestley's head of sport.

"They play with passion, but also with great fairness and also know how to inspire those around them."

Honours also went to Shannon Potter, Molly Boniface-Ashton, Abraham Dannan and Kenny Bernal for their achievements on the international stage.

Kenny played for England U18s

Schoolboys earlier this year. He chose to study at Priestley after moving to England from Spain where he trained with Atletico Madrid before moving to Cheshire.

Awards were also given out to the players' players in basketball, rugby league and netball.

"Sport, like everything else this year, has been severely affected by the pandemic, which made it even more important for us to celebrate the achievements of these students," said Nigel.



Abraham Dannan and Kenny Bernal received awards for their international performances in Jiu Jitsu and football.



Some of the winners from Sport Priestley's annual awards.

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