



Plea to employers: Join us and be part of the solution

Safety chief calls on firms to back campaign to end violence against women

Employers are being urged to join a campaign encouraging early intervention and prevention of violence against women and girls.

Safety education charity The Safety Centre, based at Kiln Farm, has secured funding from Milton Keynes Community Foundation to lead the programme and is calling on businesses to spread the programme, Violence Against Women and Girls, VAWG, in schools across Milton Keynes and more widely across the region.

Every three days a woman dies at the hands of a man in the UK. The new VAWG programme will ensure that children, young people, their parents, teachers and employers recognise the importance of equity, respect and personal safety, said The Safety Centre's chief executive Maya Joseph-Hussain.

"It is alarming that this issue and risk exists in our communities for our daughters, sisters, mothers, colleagues, friends and employees," Ms Joseph-Hussain added. "We must all make

a commitment to ensuring we create safe and flourishing communities that our businesses can operate in and our employees can live in safely without risk.

"I am personally calling on all business leaders to come forward and be part of the solution with The Safety Centre. We have a collective responsibility to ensure that we reduce the risk of anyone becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence today and in the future."

The VAWG programme aims to create a culture of positive behaviours among young people, encouraging students to discuss what is acceptable and how to react if they see something they know is not right.

The Safety Centre is accredited by the White Ribbon charity, which works with men and boys to end violence against women and girls. The Safety Centre is committed to supporting and empowering young people across MK and the country to understand the risks around VAWG, for victims and perpetrators," Ms Joseph-Hussain said.

She appealed to employers across the region to contact her to discuss how to be involved.

"I encourage business leaders to reach out to me to discuss what we can do collectively."

■ Employers interested in finding out more can contact Ms Joseph-Hussain on 01908 714353 or email maya@safetycentre.co.uk



■ IT solutions expert Lionel Naidoo, of Dragon IS, explains how Artificial Intelligence is helping businesses towards greater efficiency and productivity and is proving invaluable in expansion plans. He spoke at the Accelerating AI in your Business forum in Milton Keynes. Exclusive report: Pages 12-13.



Neves
SOLICITORS

We're more than just legal experts.
We're trusted advisers who take the time to really understand your issues.

☎ 0330 0945 500
✉ info@nevesllp.co.uk
🌐 www.nevesllp.co.uk

Business MK

Distributed by Royal Mail to more than 5,000
key executives and decision makers every month.



Editor
Andrew Gibbs
news@pulsegroupmedia.co.uk



Publisher
Kerry Lewis-Stevenson
kerry@pulsegroupmedia.co.uk



Sales Director
Martin Lewis-Stevenson
martin@pulsegroupmedia.co.uk



Marketing & BDM
Devon Luffrum
devon@pulsegroupmedia.co.uk



Advertising Sales
Jan Lewis
jan@pulsegroupmedia.co.uk



Advertising Sales
Sharon Maplethorpe
sharon@pulsegroupmedia.co.uk

Feature Writers: Annie Roberts, Sammy Jones
Graphic Design: Simon Goodger
Photography: Steve Brill

The deadline for advertising in the next edition
of Business MK and Business2Business is
FRIDAY 15 MARCH

To book space in a future edition or talk to us
about your advertising plans call **01908 465488**
or email **news@pulsegroupmedia.co.uk**

Read the latest news and previous editions
online at **www.businessmk.co.uk**

**TARGET
KEY
DECISION
MAKERS**

**MORE THAN
5,000
DELIVERED
EVERY
MONTH**



Connect with us on social media and join the conversation
[f/BusinessMK1999](#)
[@BusinessMK](#) [in Business-MK](#)
17 Stilebrook Road, Olney, Bucks MK46 5EA

Changed address or moving
on? Scan the code to update
your subscription details >>



Disclaimer
Lunar Publishing Limited cannot take responsibility for the content of the
advertisements, editorial or the services provided by the advertisers. Adver-
tisements are accepted on the understanding that descriptions of goods and
services are accurate. All artwork is accepted on condition that permission
has been given for use in Business Times. Reproduction, in whole or in part, is
strictly prohibited. ©Lunar Publishing Limited



Station House developer secures £35m investment loan

Real estate specialist Gold Wynn Group has secured a £35 million residential investment loan for its new 200-home development of Station House at Milton Keynes Central rail station. The building has been converted from disused offices to 200 apartments on four floors. Gold Wynn Group, based in New York and The Bahamas, has agreed the refinancing deal with Secure Trust Bank Real Estate Finance. The Station House scheme is one of several new developments in Milton Keynes intended to provide housing in an area that topped the UK

Competitive Index last year and is predicted to enjoy one of the highest long-term growth rates among UK cities. Ben Friedland, president of Gold Wynn's US & UK real estate divisions, said: "We are delighted to have now opened the doors to Station House's 200 stylish apartments. Milton Keynes is a thriving area on the rise and Station House is proof of this. "As experts in property finance, the tailored approach provided by STB ensured that we were able to seal the deal against the clock, proving it to be one of the quickest refinances we have been involved in."

The deal for the three-year residential investment loan, agreed at 59 per cent loan to value, was led by STB Real Estate Finance's relationship director Mike Feasey and head of origination Matthew-Blaine Young. BBS Capital advised on and secured the facility for Gold Wynn. The bank's long-standing relationship with BBS Capital enabled the deal to be completed in six weeks of an allocated three-month timeframe. BBS Capital director Mark Geraghty said: "This was a notable transaction in the office-to-residential conversion

space, demonstrating good liquidity in the marketplace for quality assets with robust business plans and credible sponsorship. The structured finance was arranged and executed over a short timeframe despite current market conditions, which is testament to all parties involved." Mr Young added: "This deal is the latest of several success stories we have achieved together. As a result, BBS Capital was confident of our ability to provide the necessary property investment finance and deliver on a significant deal associated with unique challenges."

Foundation awards real estate management contract

Commercial property consultancy Kirkby Diamond is to manage the portfolio of premises and land owned by Milton Keynes Community Foundation, MKCF. The grant-making charity owns around 230,000 sq ft of real estate including offices, industrial, retail and leisure sites. It also has several developed and undeveloped land sites. The foundation instructed Kirkby Diamond, which has offices in Milton Keynes, Bedford and Luton, after a competitive tender process. MKCF chief executive Ian Revell (*inset*) said: "We were

impressed with Kirkby Diamond's presentation and look forward to working closely to develop more opportunities and support for the voluntary and community sector of Milton Keynes." MKCF was endowed plots of land by the Milton Keynes Development Corporation in the 1990s to be used for community purposes in Milton Keynes. These plots have been used by a variety of local charities. Senior surveyor Ally Phillips will be the day-to-day point of contact at Kirkby Diamond. She has experience of working with charitable

foundations having worked at The Parks Trust, another charitable foundation in Milton Keynes. Kirkby Diamond property management director Lisa Stutely said: "We are thrilled to have been instructed by the Milton Keynes Community Foundation to manage its extensive portfolio of commercial property and land. "MKCF is a very important organisation for the people of the area, delivering wonderful support right across the community for all sorts of causes. We are looking forward to working closely with MKCF to ensure we deliver an outstanding property management service across its entire portfolio."



Casino firm moves to new HQ

Gaming company MERKUR Casino has moved its national headquarters to new offices in Central Milton Keynes. The company has moved from its previous base at Knowlhill after signing a ten-year lease on 12,541 sq ft of offices at Matrix House in North Fourth Street. Chief operating officer Mark Schertle said: "This

move is a major milestone in our business expansion plans. We have enjoyed ten years at our old office but as our business and team continues to expand, we need a new headquarters." The move is part of MERKUR's £5 million investment programme in the UK, opening new venues and creating new jobs, Mr Schertle added.



Mark Schertle (right) with MERKUR's chief finance officer Egemen Coskun

Research in to value of ethnic businesses to city

Report aims to highlight contribution to economy

The contributions of the ethnic business community to the Milton Keynes economy is to be quantified in a ground-breaking new report.

Milton Keynes Ethnic Business Community, MKEBC, has joined forces with city-based consultancy group Whitecap Consulting to launch the Milton Keynes Ethnic Business Impact Report.

The analysis aims to clarify and quantify the influence of the ethnic business community on the Milton Keynes economy. Whitecap will carry out extensive research to estimate the economic contributions and implement a broader analysis



MKEBC committee members (from left) Ranjit Singh, Jason Sinclair, chair Precious Lwanga, Yvonne Owuor and Gamiel Yafai

using company information, innovation insights and interviews with ethnic business leaders.

MKEBC is a business networking group working to raise visibility, connect and provide a platform for ethnically diverse business owners and professionals. It holds quarterly networking events and has a membership base of around 370.

Co-founder Ranjit Singh, who is also philanthropy director at Milton Keynes Community Foundation, said: "In a world where data is king, it is important now more than ever to research and present this report to Milton Keynes. We do not know how much we contribute to the wider economy of MK and this report will not only give us the facts but will also drive further discussion and projects to develop the economy."

Around 38 per cent of the Milton Keynes population

come from an ethnically diverse group but there is little data on the contributions that ethnically diverse businesses make to the local economy.

Whitecap Consulting director Lal Tawney (inset) said: "We are very excited about working with MKEBC on this landmark project. For the first time, we will have a clear picture of the immense value ethnic businesses bring to our economy. But this report will not be just about numbers - it is about celebrating the stories of the individuals behind these businesses, the hard work they put in and the positive impact they have on our city."

The project will create a comprehensive report that will play a pivotal role in shedding light on the barriers ethnic businesses face and offer strategies to foster a more inclusive, supportive



business environment.

Organisations across Milton Keynes are invited to be a part of the initiative. MKEBC is looking for organisations to financially sponsor the project. For more details, email info@mkebc.co.uk or visit www.mkebc.co.uk

Mr Singh said: "MK is proudly an ethnically diverse city. We all play a part in its growth and we would like to know how much of that is due to ethnic communities. I look forward to working with the sector to realise this ambition and the vision of making MK the most inclusive city in the UK in which to do business."

Mr Tawney added: "The findings will provide valuable insights for policymakers, businesses and the wider community and promises to be a powerful catalyst for fostering a more inclusive and prosperous Milton Keynes for all."

Professor joins accountants as economics advisor

Respected international economist Professor Joe Nellis is working with accounting and advisory firm MHA as its in-house economic advisor.

Professor Nellis who is one of the country's best-known economists, is Professor of Global Economy at Cranfield School of Management and received a CBE in the King's 2024 New Year's Honours list.

He has four decades of experience commenting on UK, European and global macro-economic trends.

MHA partner Atul Kariya said: "Joe has been a friend of the firm for a long time. His insights and extensive knowledge on current trends, predictions and the economic landscape for both the UK and global economy have been of real benefit and value to our clients. We are delighted to welcome Joe to the MHA team".

Professor Nellis said: "I have worked



Professor Joe Nellis

closely with MHA for many years and watched it grow from strength to strength at impressive speed. I very much admire their ethos and enthusiasm, so I am delighted to become part of the MHA team in this way and add my voice to theirs."

He also issued a grim warning ahead of the Spring Budget statement by Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt, due on March 6. "The UK economy is flatlining and is ten per cent smaller than it should be," Professor Nellis said.

"The country needs a Budget for growth not for votes. It will not get it."

Read Professor Nellis's pre-Budget views in full at businessmk.co.uk

Tax partner returns to boost corporate department

Chartered accountants Mercer & Hole has strengthened its corporate and business tax team with the appointment of partner Balbor Sundar.

She rejoined the firm, which has an office in Milton Keynes, last month from RSM UK where she was a tax director.

Ms Sundar (inset) has advised businesses for more than 30 years and specialises in tax issues around group restructurings, international issues including certificates of residence and the application of double



tax treaties.

"I am thrilled to be returning to Mercer & Hole," she said. "The firm is highly regarded and has a first-class client base. I look forward to helping clients and the firm grow."

Managing partner Paul Mabeley added: "We are delighted to welcome back Balbor and look forward to the contributions she will bring. Mercer & Hole has a strong employer brand in the accountancy profession and those who have previously worked with us often find their way back home."

Professional services specialist welcomes new practice head

Business and financial adviser Grant Thornton UK has appointed Charlotte Anderson as its new practice lead for Milton Keynes, Cambridge and Chelmsford.

She will be responsible for directing and growing Grant Thornton's regional team of almost 650 people across the three offices. She has more than 20 years of experience working with international and private equity-backed companies.

Ms Anderson, who joined Grant Thornton as an audit partner in 2021, said: "It is a proud moment for me



Charlotte Anderson

and a career milestone that reflects how much I have enjoyed becoming part of Grant Thornton's dynamic but collaborative culture.

"Over the past two years I have had the opportunity to work with a variety of inspiring businesses and I am excited about where

we go next as a team. The capability, insight and experience within our individual practice areas are making a positive impact to companies and organisations."

James Brown and Tim Taylor, who previously fulfilled the leadership role, are moving to other responsibilities within Grant Thornton's UK regional business.

"Like many others, I see great potential across the regional business community and feel we are well placed to help accelerate progress," Ms Anderson said.

Net zero pro' plugs into energy consultancy

Sustainability professional Natalia Block has joined Milton Keynes-based TEAM Energy to bolster delivery of its carbon management and

consultancy services. Ms Block is working at the office on Knowlhill as an analytics consultant, working with TEAM's clients on delivering energy and net zero strategies.

THE OLD COURT HOUSE

Character Business Centre
Offices available + parking
300 sq ft to 1,000 sq ft
Easy in, easy out

COMMERCIAL LYNX
(01908) 37 37 88

info@commercial-lynx.co.uk
www.commercial-lynx.co.uk

Manufacturer hails success of investment in monitoring tech

Implementing improved machine monitoring technology is set to save a machine tool manufacturing company a five-figure sum every year.

Hydrafeed, which makes automation equipment for Computer Numerical Control applications and is a sub-contract supplier to the aerospace industry, has installed state-of-the-art technology to meet growing production demand with its existing workforce and make energy savings that could top £17,000 a year.

Hydrafeed operates 19 milling and turning machines at its factory on Mount Farm to produce Barfeed and advanced robotic automation products for CNC machine users and several leading original equipment manufacturers.

It installed a plug-and-play platform devised by University of Sheffield spin-out company FourJaw Manufacturing Analytics on 14 of its machines in September last year. The software has produced valuable data on each machine's productivity and reasons for downtime, is generating a digital work schedule to drive operations and is improving communication with machine operators.

Operations director Paul Gilligan said the response has been positive. "We had a strong business before FourJaw

'Everyone has clarity of what needs achieving'

but limited visibility of shop floor operations. Everyone has clarity of what needs achieving and has bought into our plans to improve productivity and profitability."

The platform has enabled Hydrafeed to establish a production efficiency benchmark and a detailed account of energy use. This has already improved the day-to-day management



of manufacturing operations and highlighted areas of potential productivity and sustainability gains, the company said.

Using the technology in the first five weeks enabled Hydrafeed to deliver the same output in its milling cell with four fewer machines, allowing the reallocation of machine operators to its turning cell, which boosted its use by 30 per cent.

FourJaw's chief executive Chris Iveson said: "Manufacturers who are proactively using FourJaw's technology can typically achieve productivity gains of anywhere between 10pc and 20pc which can increase output capacity by as much as 30pc so we are excited to see what more Hydrafeed will achieve with FourJaw."

Hydrafeed has identified further opportunities to reduce energy usage through more efficient machine operation.

"We have already reduced energy consumption and identified further opportunities for improvement," Mr Gilligan said. "We know precisely what machines are running and when, what they are working on, how much energy they use, how long each job takes and where time is being lost and why."



Management system aims to enhance warehouse efficiency

Nutrition expert Huel has invested in a new warehouse management system as it prepares for its move into its new headquarters factory at Milton Keynes.

The company, which produces nutritionally complete meals, has partnered with supply chain technology provider Balloon to deliver and implement its new Körber warehouse management system at its warehouse facility on MK Business Park at the southern end of the A5 near Fenny Stratford.

The new system will enhance quality control

and managing the testing of raw materials on site. It will further protect Huel's customers from food safety risks and safeguard the integrity of the brand, the company said. It also means better stock level control and will reduce Huel's transport costs through a shift to in-house warehousing and manufacturing.

Founded in 2015, Huel has previously worked with co-manufacturers to produce its raw ingredients and has outsourced the storage and distribution of these and the finished products to third-party logistics companies. "We aim to uphold stringent

Promote your business at Your Business Expo Milton Keynes

Reach, engage and connect with the local business community

YOUR Business Expo 2024 | 10AM-3PM
5 JUN

>> THE RIDGEWAY CENTRE, MILTON KEYNES MK12 5TH

Powered by **Business MK**

For a breakfast networking ticket visit: <https://bit.ly/48o9xYF>

- ▶ Generate **quality sales leads**
- ▶ Connect with **key decision makers**
- ▶ Increase **brand awareness**
- ▶ Meet vendors to help **grow your business**
- ▶ Attend workshops led by **industry experts**

Scan the code to enquire about a stand



SCAN ME

- GENERATE LEADS
- STRENGTHEN RELATIONS
- RAISE YOUR PROFILE
- NETWORK AND MEET



Scan the code to register for a free ticket



For more information visit yourbusinessexpo.co.uk

Headline sponsors:

Business MK **qoob**
Incorporating Business2Business

quality control standards, preserve the affordability of our products and reduce the environmental footprint of our manufacturing processes,” said systems and projects director Liam Nicholson.

“With these objectives in mind, we have embarked on a strategy that will gradually lead to the internal production of certain finished goods.”

Huel plans to begin by warehousing its raw materials at the 70,865 sq ft warehouse in Milton Keynes.

Balloon’s sales and marketing director Ed Napier-Fenning said: “We are excited that Huel has chosen Balloon as its supply chain technology partner. It is an innovative and strategically impressive brand.”

Huel is a £185 million business selling its range of meals, powders, snack bars and ready-made drinks in more than 100 countries. It operates from three offices in the UK, one in the USA and one in Germany.

Mr Nicholson said: “Implementing a warehouse management system will enable us to have full control of our real-time traceability, quality control and stock management processes.”

‘A key driver of economic prosperity’

Businesses relish town’s opportunities to be created by East West Rail

Better access to jobs, education and essential public services are three key benefits of the East West Rail line connecting Oxford and Cambridge, said a poll of 1,000 people in Bedford.

Three-quarters of those surveyed support a new east-west rail service. And the line has the strong support of business organisations the Confederation of British Industry, the Federation of Small Businesses and Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce.

The survey, commissioned by East Rail, found that:

- 80 per cent believe it will improve access to jobs;
- 75pc say it will boost access to education;
- 78pc believe it will improve access to essential public services like hospitals;
- 83pc say it will improve how people can travel around the area;
- 58pc believe it will make it easier to visit family and friends.

Beth West, chief executive of the EWR Company, said: “It is important that a major transport project like ours has support from people who live and work in the town. We always thought this to be the case and now have strong evidence to back this up. We will continue to work hard with local businesses and communities.”

East West Rail will provide significant benefits for Bedford, business leaders say. These include improvements to Bedford Midland station, which will drive regeneration of the area around the station and the town centre, and relocating.

The new survey follows a rallying call in December by Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce which urged government to accelerate full delivery of East West Rail. The Chamber said EWR is vital to revitalise the town centre as a dynamic hub with better connectivity which will create jobs, boost inward investment and create a more attractive shopping, leisure and hospitality destination.

Richard Tunnicliffe, regional director of employers’ organisation the CBI, said: “New infrastructure can bring major benefits to businesses and help fuel local economies so it is vital that towns like Bedford and the businesses there get the transport connections they need so they can prosper.”

“East West Rail will be a key driver of economic prosperity in Bedford, providing businesses with the confidence to invest in the area. This project can only be a good thing for Bedford and we look forward to its many benefits becoming a reality.”

The FSB’s development manager in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and



Justin Richardson

Bedfordshire Chamber chief executive Justin Richardson said: “The investment under way in Bletchley helps to demonstrate how the social and economic potential for Bedford can also be unlocked, particularly by the new and refurbished stations which will support the wider generation of the town centre. The new railway line will open up exciting opportunities that I know businesses in Bedford are really looking forward to.”

Bedford Borough Council continues to have its say as EWR deliberates over the preferred route of the line between Bedford and Cambridge. It has commissioned reports on the eight route options, which were discussed by councillors and stakeholders at a meeting last month. Mayor Tom Wootton said: “While there is no definitive winner among the proposed routes, the economic potential of the project for Bedford is significant.”

Ms West said: “East West Rail has been designed to improve quality of life for everyone across the region. What this poll shows is that Bedford residents agree that EWR will do that by improving people’s access to quality jobs, educational opportunities and public services.”

“We believe the route we have chosen, which connects the town centre and Bedford Hospital, is the one that will deliver the most benefits for Bedford. It is clear from this survey that people do recognise the opportunities our line will bring.”



Nick Hwer is pictured with Franklins partner Andrea Smith and managing partner Simon Long

The Apprentice star backs law firm’s £50 charity challenge

Former star of the BBC series The Apprentice and Countdown presenter Nick Hwer has shown his support for the Franklins £50 Challenge in a social media video.

Lord Sugar’s former right-hand man gave his backing to the Apprentice-style fundraising challenge, organised by regional law firm Franklins Solicitors.

Each team taking part receives £50 and has three months to turn the seed funding into more however they choose, from cake sales to car washes, sponsored walks to black tie events.

The 2024 challenge began last month and runs until May 21. Since it began in 2018, the Franklins £50

Challenge has raised more than £100,000 for charities in Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire.

Mr Hwer said: “The Franklins £50 Challenge is a brilliant initiative to test your entrepreneurial skills and see how you could grow £50 seed funding into substantial funds.”

Eight charities have been selected to benefit this year: Willen Hospice, MK Act, Harry’s Rainbow and YMCA in Milton Keynes, alongside Cynthia Spencer Hospice, Northampton Hope Centre, The Lewis Foundation and Northamptonshire Community Foundation. Find out the latest at www.franklins50.co.uk.

“We are so grateful to Nick for lending his support to the challenge,” said Franklins partner Andrea Smith.

BOOK YOUR STAND

AT THE REGION'S BIGGEST CAREERS EVENT



IMK JOB SHOW
centre:mk
MILTON KEYNES
22 & 23 MARCH 2024

Reserve
Your Stand
Today



WWW.MKJOBSHOW.CO.UK

Insolvencies grow as confidence dips and challenges increase, said survey

Insolvency rates are accelerating as high interest rates and inflation, weak consumer confidence and rising unpredictable costs are adding to the financial pressure facing UK businesses, new data reveals. Hundreds of Milton Keynes companies are now classed as being in “significant” economic distress, according to the latest figures from business recovery specialist Begbies Traynor’s Red Flag Alert, which monitors the financial health of UK companies.

The figures show that 366 companies - led by those in the telecoms, IT and professional services sectors - are at risk of failure. The numbers are 2.2 per cent up on the previous quarter and a 6.4pc rise on the figure 12 months ago. Companies are facing a range of macro-economic pressures, said Julie Palmer, partner at Begbies Traynor in Milton Keynes. However, the rate of inflation appears to be slowing which in turn could lead to interest rates being cut. “Later this year, we could see some respite for companies,” Ms Palmer said. “That said, there are no signs of an easy fix and, with geo-political uncertainty continuing to rise and a hike in the national wage around the corner, the backdrop is not improving.” Nationally, the levels of ‘critical’ financial distress also rose in Q4 2023, by 25.9pc on the previous quarter and leaving more than 47,000 businesses near collapse. “For many businesses, I fear soldiering on in this environment will prove to be one step too far,” said Ms Palmer.

How to increase your business’s efficiency, productivity and profitability very easily

One of the major costs in a business is salaries writes *Tony Byrne, managing director of Wealth & Tax Management*. Equally, your most important asset is your staff. Your staff are literally your business. Offer superlative levels of customer service and your business will really thrive.

So, in order to increase your business’s efficiency, productivity and profitability, you need to invest in your staff heavily by paying them well, giving them lots of benefits and plenty of training both initially and ongoing.

You will need to provide them with the most effective tools for the job which means investing in excellent technology, including Artificial Intelligence. By training your staff in the use of AI, you should increase


their productivity hugely. This will in turn free up their time to focus on looking after your customers even more. It almost certainly will reduce your payroll costs significantly as well.

Another popular productivity tool is the hiring of virtual assistants, VAs. This can be an excellent way to increase your productivity, reduce your staff costs and improve customer service, especially if your VAs engage directly with your customers over the phone or by video call.

If you hire a VA from a country such as the Philippines, you can engage a young tech-savvy graduate on a self-employed basis for a relatively low hourly rate of, say, £5-£6 an hour and outsource time-consuming tasks, thus freeing up your staff’s time to

focus on customer service.

Just think about it... no sick pay, no holiday pay, no maternity/paternity leave, no employer’s NIC, no workplace pensions etc, etc. This is because such VAs are usually recruited from lower-income countries. Once you add in all of these costs, if you were to employ someone in the UK - even on the minimum wage - your cost would be equivalent to at least £25-£30 an hour. That works out at five times more expensive.



Tony Byrne

It is a great deal for the VA too because the pay rate is more than they could typically earn in their home country, they can work from home and they have flexible hours. A true win:win. You know it makes sense.

If you are interested in ways to increase profits, take advantage of a one-hour Discovery Meeting either at our offices or via a video conference call at our expense worth £270 to each of the first three readers who contact us before March 31 2024. You know it makes sense. We offer a great cup of coffee too.

Ring us on 01908 523740 or for free on 0800 980 4516 or email wealth@wealthandtax.co.uk and quote MARCH 2024 OFFER to book your free discovery meeting.

RISK WARNING The information contained within this article is for guidance only and does not constitute advice which should be sought before taking any action or inaction. All information is based on our current understanding of taxation, legislation, regulations and case law in the current tax year. Any levels and bases of relief from taxation are subject to change. Tax treatment is based on individual circumstances and may be subject to change in the future. This article is based on my own observations and opinions.



Upskill your team and enhance their wellbeing

You may already be aware that **Works For Us** and **Citizens Advice MK** merged in 2022. Works for Us are pleased to share the exclusive training courses delivered in Milton Keynes, not only to the end user but also to businesses.

Our **In-Work Support** courses empower teams of employees to upskill and get confident online. The course supports their personal wellbeing and helps people to communicate more collaboratively with our range of digital training, well-being and confidence-building courses.

Works For Us has been supporting the community of Milton Keynes for the last 40 years through upskilling and personal development training.

Our focus has worked around building confidence, motivation and self-care practices to help people sustain and grow in their roles within the workplace. This could be part of your CPD within your business.

HOW WE DO IT

- ✓ We have several professional coaches and facilitators matched to each course;
- ✓ We work with small groups of delegates offering personalised and tailored coach-led sessions;
- ✓ Our team are passionate about helping people grow and be their best self;
- ✓ We have a welcoming and central training room and IT suites for a range of small and large training groups, or we can come to your offices;
- ✓ As a not-for-profit, all funds will go directly back into supporting your local community.

WHAT DELEGATES SAY ABOUT WORKS FOR US...

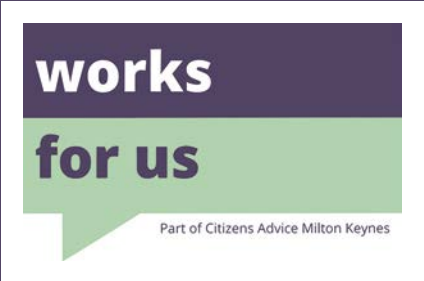
“The digital skills course made me more confident to be able to use computers in my new role. Felt like I have been woken up a bit.”

“Works for us has been so supportive and it has given me hope to learn different skills with confidence and trying the digital course has helped me at work.”

“I really enjoyed the ‘Interpersonal Skills and Stress Management Course’. Jade was an excellent, knowledgeable tutor, explaining theory clearly. Thank you - it was invaluable.”

“Annette has an amazing ability to find the positive in anyone - I would highly recommend this course to everyone.”

These are just some of the courses we are delivering. Find out about other training courses on our website <https://www.worksforus.org.uk/workshops-and-courses.html> email info@worksforus.org.uk or call 07852 963744.



Colleagues embrace wellbeing initiative

Staff at professional services firm MHA are taking advantage of a new firm-wide initiative to encourage them to open conversations and talk about their wellbeing. Colleagues at MHA's office in Milton Keynes are pictured enjoying a time-out from their work at a relaxed coffee morning, part of Time to Talk Day. The initiative, organised by Rethink Mental Illness and Mind, inspired staff to talk openly, developing connections and camaraderie that MHA sees as essential contributions to mental health and wellbeing. MHA team members also enjoyed

a walk, engaging in conversations which the company believes help to make talking about mental health feel less awkward. "As an organisation, we believe in the power of positive conversation to break down barriers and foster a workplace culture that prioritises mental health and wellbeing," said partner Robert Butler. "Our participation in Time to Talk Day is just one step in our continuous commitment to challenging norms and dismantling the stigma surrounding mental health. We encourage everyone to take part in this initiative."



Apprenticeships: The key to solving skills crisis

Building sector steps up call for young blood

More than 100 outstanding apprentices have been hailed as the future of UK housebuilding at a ceremony in Milton Keynes. Charlie Collison, YouTube sensation and recognised as the UK's fastest bricklayer after winning the Super Trowels bricklaying competition, said that apprentices are the key to the industry's future and called on more people to consider a career in the sector. He was the keynote speaker at a graduation ceremony held at warranty and insurance provider NHBC's headquarters in Milton Keynes. "What NHBC and its national network of bricklaying hubs is achieving is vital if we are going to close the skills gap and housing shortage we are facing," Mr Collison said.



Charlie Collison, (centre) with Jack Hart, NHBC Bricklaying Apprentice of the Year and Stephanie Black, NHBC Construction Site Supervisor Apprentice of the Year

NHBC has a network of training hubs around the UK at which around 100 apprentices are trained by experienced tutors each year. Research shows that the UK will need 225,000 more construction workers by 2027, Mr Collison said. "When this is considered alongside recent reports that builders are struggling to recruit bricklayers, it becomes clear just how important it is for the house-building industry to attract more people from all backgrounds to bricklaying. It also highlights

how significant it is to have so many accomplished bricklayers here with us today." Since becoming a registered apprenticeship provider in 2020, around 450 people have progressed through NHBC's Bricklaying Training Hubs. Also recognised at the ceremony were students studying with NHBC for apprenticeships in Construction Site Supervision and other housebuilding roles. Traditionally, housebuilding has been seen as a male-dominated career path

with an ageing workforce. "In recent years, house builders have found it more challenging to recruit people for a range of reasons," said Darryl Stewart, who is responsible for apprentice training and training hubs at NHBC. "We must continue to find ways to encourage people

from all walks of life to join the sector as it offers a fantastic range of careers and an apprenticeship in the house-building industry is a pathway into a rewarding and well-paid career that can make a real difference." NHBC's apprenticeship programme is also attracting

women, career changers, diverse cultures and school leavers wanting to work in house building. "It is encouraging to see people entering a career in housebuilding but there is still more to do," Mr Stewart said. "It is never too late to learn a new skill."

Accelerating AI in your Business:
Special exclusive report - pages 12-13 >>

Aiming to improve your marketing through AI?

Speak to the team at qoob!

Here at Qoob, we embrace the best technology, and we are investing in using AI to improve results for our clients.

03303 801 651
qoob.agency
enquiries@qoob.agency

qoob

Tech giants address the myths and mystery of AI

Understanding Artificial Intelligence and exactly the benefits it can bring to a business is the theme of a conference at Milton Keynes College. Keynote speakers, panel discussions and networking opportunities are all part of the agenda that aims to explain the current level and future potential of AI and the ethical and social implications of its development and use. The Demystifying AI conference takes place at the South Central Institute of Technology, at the college's Bletchley campus on March 7, 1.30pm-4.30pm. Among organisations speaking

are representatives from Microsoft, KPMG and The Open University. Caroline Indge, head of partnerships and innovation at Milton Keynes College Group, said, "AI offers many opportunities for growth and efficiency and has the potential to transform and streamline businesses but we still see organisations facing issues embracing AI." The conference will explain the AI tools available to them and how they help businesses to be more efficient, competitive and prepared for the technology of the

future, she added. The free session is being put on in conjunction with MKAI, Morality and Knowledge in Artificial Intelligence. Its executive chair Richard Foster-Fletcher (inset) said: "At MKAI, we are committed to cultivating authentic and forthright conversations about the ethical and safety implications of artificial intelligence. "We believe that all voices and perspectives are essential in this collective effort to ensure that AI is developed and used ethically, safely, and beneficially for all."



The conference is open to any businesses from the Milton Keynes area. Attendance is free. Book at www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/demystifying-artificial-intelligence-conference-mk-tickets-759557365527

University embarks on new growth phase

Collaboration will continue between Cranfield University and Milton Keynes City Council as the new university for Milton Keynes, MK:U, enters a new phase.

The formal partnership that set up the university has come to an end after two years and the university is preparing to deliver the next phase of its new model of higher education and innovation hub.

MK:U will continue to work with businesses based locally and the council and Cranfield University have agreed to continue their work supporting the institution as it grows.

MK:U chief executive Professor Lynette Ryals, who is also Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Cranfield University, said: "I would like to recognise MKCC's

vision in proposing the project and thank the council for its backing in getting MK:U to its current position.

"MK:U is now moving into its next phase of development. We are continuing to work closely with local businesses to develop the critical skills they need and the entrepreneurs and innovators to support their growth. MK:U has become a



Professor Lynette Ryals

key part of the city's educational and tech ecosystem, helping to develop Milton Keynes as an important national centre in technical and digital innovation."

Working with Milton Keynes City Council, MK:U has established itself as a provider of relevant education to build skills that employers in the region need. It is on track to have more than 400 students taught from city centre locations by mid-2024.

MK:U continues to build its course offerings, recently announcing £100,000 of funding from the Office for Students to develop a new supply chain Degree Apprenticeship. It also operates the MK:U Innovation Hub, providing meeting space for business leaders, entrepreneurs, students and academics.



Fitness firm celebrates supply contract to Unity Place

Fitness equipment specialist Dyaco UK has agreed a partnership with Unity Place to provide equipment to the Central Milton Keynes workplace hub's new Wellbeing Suite.

The company, based at Wolverton Mill, is providing cardio and strength equipment including treadmills, spin bikes, stair climbers and weight training stations.

The equipment will be used by city centre employees. The Wellbeing Suite also includes an outdoor terrace with a walking wellness track.

The suite's manager Daniel Ward said: "The Wellbeing Suite has been a great project to get up and running. The Suite adds another great facility within the Unity Place building and we are very excited to release memberships to the Unity Place patrons."

The installation of the equipment took place in January. "The speed of service and consultative approach was why we partnered with Dyaco UK and having a local supplier to the building was also a huge plus," Mr Ward said.

The installation marks Dyaco UK's commitment to invest in Milton Keynes and the region, said the company's chief executive officer Europe Dean Jackson. "We are excited to continue working with the Unity Place team," he added.



Taxi firm agrees 600-vehicle fleet deal with Volkswagen

London's largest private hire and taxi firm Addison Lee has added 600 new Volkswagen Multivan hybrid vehicles to its fleet.

The vehicles will replace the company's current diesel people carriers and join to an already 1,000-strong fleet of all-electric Volkswagen ID.4 vehicles, and 400 Audi A6 low-emission vehicles.

The move is part of Addison Lee's plan for its entire standard fleet to be zero emission capable by the spring of this year.

Its chief executive Liam Griffin said: "Our investment in the Multivans not only provides our passengers with a sustainable version of the iconic vehicles we have always been known for, but reflects our commitment to electrification."

Craig Cavanagh, national fleet manager at Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles' head office in Milton Keynes, said: "The Volkswagen Multivan is one of the few vehicles on the market that combines true space for up to six passengers with premium, durable quality.

"Hybrid powertrains ensure the vehicles can be used in low-emission areas, without hitting the bottom line of a company's tax liability."

PulseGroupMedia

Engage your audience through trusted, informative media

MKPulse magazine

Business MK
your city Business2Business

YOUR Business Expo.co.uk

YOUR Business Community

YOUR Business Networking

NNPulse magazine

Business Times

Get your business noticed by the right people, in the right place, at the right time.

68,500
Copies printed and delivered every month...

...across Northamptonshire, Milton Keynes, North Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire

Online and in print our monthly reach is more than

250,000*

More than 1,500 decision makers visit our business expos every year



Reach, engage and connect with our audience online, in print and face to face

www.pulsegrouppedia.co.uk

June 2023 statistics across all platforms*



THE POWER *of Three*

The Power of 3 runs through the core of OCM as we have three professional disciplines brought together allowing us to deliver such a powerful client focused proposition.

As an Independent **Chartered Financial Planning** Firm, a **Discretionary Asset Manager** and **Tax planning specialist**, we utilise the power of 3, to ensure we deliver a seamless and first class, cost and time efficient service to clients. This is because at OCM we truly believe Our Clients Matter.



CHARTERED
Financial Planners



TAXATION
& Accounting



DISCRETIONARY
Asset Managers

ocmwealthmanagement.co.uk



The Financial Conduct Authority does not regulate the activities of tax planning, estate planning or IHT planning. OCM Wealth Management Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (www.fsa.gov.uk/register/home.do). FCA Registration No: 418826. OCM Asset Management is a trading name of OCM Wealth Management.



Theo Chalmers

Theo Chalmers is director of Verve Public Relations and chairman of Urban Eden.

www.urbaneden.org

www.vervepr.co.uk

e: t.chalmers@vervepr.co.uk 01908 275271

Bowl plans move forward... Come on, you Dons!

Everyone in MK knows - and most love - the National Bowl. Since Desmond Decker and the Aces and Geno Washington's Ram Jam band were the first acts on stage there on Saturday September 8 1979, it has hosted so many major stars including David Bowie, Queen, Michael Jackson, The Prodigy, Status Quo, Foo Fighters, Marillion, Bon Jovi, Eminem, Green Day, Linkin Park, Oasis, Take That, Foo Fighters, Swedish House Mafia and Robbie Williams.

That is a truly incredible history for the former brick clay pit and one in which our city might be justifiably proud.

However, for at least seven years it was effectively closed

and most facilities allowed to deteriorate and rot away until Muse reopened it with a concert in summer 2023. Until then, it had mostly only been used for and by the Milton Keynes Cycling Association, Learn To Ride motorcycle training and the weekly Sunday Market and Boot Fair.

Who brought it back to life? MK Dons FC under chairman Pete Winkelman (*inset*), of course. Perhaps it is time to acknowledge the incredible changes that both he and the Dons have already brought to our city.

Whatever one may think of the

Dons - and the insults have been plentiful since the club moved from Crystal Palace's Selhurst Park as a Wimbledon FC on the brink of bankruptcy in 2003 - they are already a cultural icon in a city otherwise only blessed with a few, such as the MK Gallery and MK Theatre.

In their brief time here, they have had their ups and downs. While currently being in EFL League 2 might be seen as a down, the club

is acknowledged as financially stable, has hosted or developed many great players and managers - many of whom have gone on to success elsewhere -

and has by far the best stadium in League 2; one which has hosted international games with world greats. Even Brazil's Neymar Júnior has graced Stadium MK's pitch for several whole minutes...

But back to our story about the Bowl. In September 2019 MK Dons announced that Milton Keynes Development Partnership and Milton Keynes Council had reached an agreement that would allow the football club to develop a new state-of-the-art training facility at the National Bowl. It would replace its use of a public site at Woughton on the Green. Other venues had been considered over the years, including land at Cosgrove - discussed in another of my columns for Business MK - the car park at Stadium MK and land at Tickford Fields near Newport Pagnell which is now part of the MK East development.

The announcement on MK Dons using the Bowl was more than four years ago and it seems that not very much has happened since.

OK, there have been concerts at the Bowl, including Muse and Reggae Land most recently, and more to come this summer. Stadium MK and Marshall Arena have hosted events including My Chemical Romance and Sir Rod Stewart in the stadium

and international snooker and major darts events at the Arena. Take That are due to perform at Stadium MK this summer too.

But where, oh where, are the proposed 12 football pitches? The community hub with changing, fitness and medical facilities? The classrooms and administration as well as food and beverage provisions? There was, at the time, also talk of a new hotel on the site but that appears to have evaporated.

At the time of the original announcement in 2019, MK Dons had expected to make the planning application for the 49-acre site early in 2020 including plans that would see the Bowl used 365 days a year by the club's first team, Academy players and the community in general.

However, MK Dons only legally acquired the site on January 1 2021. Why did it take a year and three months to sign over the site, let alone approve plans? Is the future of sport and music events in MK so unimportant to MKDP and the city council that they can simply drag their heels on this for so long?

So we jump forward to February 1 last year when it was announced that MK Dons might finally be preparing for a new training ground by the end of the year after the

club was granted planning permission to begin work on the National Bowl. A club statement at the time said: "While there is [still some additional legal work to complete], this is great news for MK Dons and means we are on track to be on site by the end of 2023. This is the first phase of the club's relocation of the training ground to the National Bowl, which will see us install two full-sized grass football pitches and four training grids on the plateau (as the floor of the Bowl is known) of the Bowl."

Now it is March 2024 and I am very happy to confirm that finally, finally, finally in a very small way something is happening. After the current football season ends in May and after the summer concerts planned and mostly not yet announced for the Bowl have taken place, work will finally start on Phase 1 to level the plateau, install two world-class pitches and four training grids for the Dons first team.

Existing plans will also guarantee that the National Bowl will continue to be available as a hub for the MK Cycling Association and as a music venue for artists from around the world after each football season is over.

I, for one, cannot wait. Dare I write COYD? Yes, I dare... COYD! Cheerio.



Connecting corporate & community with great conversations, meaningful networking, and inspiring updates.

City Breakfast Club Milton Keynes is the longest-running, premier networking event connecting you with the city's top business leaders. The event takes place on the first Wednesday of each month*.

To book your place, visit citybreakfastclub.co.uk

"I am looking forward to ensuring we continue to deliver an informal, informative and interactive networking experience for our guests"

Steve Freeman
Chairman



YMCA, 1 North Sixth Street, Milton Keynes MK9 2NR

7:30 - 9:00

*No events in January and August

London rating boosts upcycling pioneer

Refuse collection trucks upcycled to electric power at the Silverstone headquarters of technology pioneer Lunaz have achieved a landmark rating that means they can be used by borough councils in London and other major metropolitan areas.

The Upcycled Electric Vehicles have received five-star rating Direct Vision Standard, the highest rating for driver visibility. The rating is significant because, under Transport for London rules, HGV operators can apply for a permit without needing to provide additional evidence.

From October this year, HGVs rated zero to two stars will need to be retro-



fitted with a Progressive Safe System. However, the five-star rating clears the way for Lunaz UEVs to enter service in London. "Having our UEVs fully prepared for operation in the capital is an important step towards widespread adoption," said Lunaz's founder and chief executive David Lorenz.

The DVS has been developed by the freight industry, HGV

manufacturers researchers, academics, and regulatory bodies. Vehicles are rated from zero (poor) up to five stars (excellent).

The green light for service in London is another major step towards the wider adoption of Lunaz UEVs by local authorities as replacements for their end-of-life diesel refuse trucks, the company said.

Lunaz has pioneered commercial vehicle upcycling and electrification, a sector predicted to grow tenfold over the next five years. The company expects to employ 350 staff by the end of this year and is on course to hit production of 1,100 vehicles a year at its Silverstone factory.

Law firm celebrates B Corp status

Law firm Freeths, which has an office in Milton Keynes at Knowlhill, has become a certified B Corporation in recognition of its commitment to sustainability and its wider ESG strategy.

Certification is awarded to businesses that meet B Corp's high standards of environmental and social impact and governance, measured on performance, accountability and transparency in areas including employee benefits, charitable work, and supply chain practices.

Chris Freeston, head of Freeths' Banking & Finance practice, said: "As a responsible business, it is testament to the hard work of our people and it highlights these important issues and embraces the values that are integral to our firm, our people, clients, and our communities."

The firm is working with environmental company Planet Mark on a net-zero plan and to establish interim and long-term Science Based net-zero targets.

Merger deal accelerates growth plans



EMW's managing partner James Geary (centre) with SP Law founders Sundip Patel (left) and Hassan Shah

Combined practice looks forward to 'exciting new chapter'

Expanding law firm EMW has completed its merger with Northampton-based practice SP Law.

The deal is part of EMW's growth plans and means a return to Northampton for the practice, which was founded in the town in 1992.

SP Law advises commercial and private clients on legal services ranging from family law and personal injury to employment law and commercial litigation. The firm, which merged with Martin Adams & McColl in 2012, was founded by Hassan Shah and Sundip Patel.

Managing partner James Geary said: "We are pleased to be able to announce the merger with SP Law, which will see the firm's return to Northampton, where it launched back in 1992.

"The deal will allow us to accelerate growth, build market share and ensure we are investing in innovation and attracting the very best talent. Hassan and Sundip have built a well-established and highly respected firm with the same values and ethos as ours and we look forward to working together to deliver on our shared ambitions."

Mr Shah said: "EMW is a fantastic business with an excellent reputation in the market. We look forward to this exciting new chapter for both firms, working together to broaden and expand our offering and influence both in Northampton and beyond."

EMW, whose headquarters is in Milton Keynes, also has offices in London, Gatwick and Brighton. It recently secured B Corp certification, awarded to companies that place social good and environmental stewardship at the heart of their business.

Accelerating AI in your Business: Special exclusive report on a thought-provoking forum - pages 12-13 >>

Work smarter using AI & Automation for your business.

AI & Automation For Your Business

AI Development

Apply AI use cases tailored to address specific business needs using Generative AI, NLP, and Machine Learning.

Process Automation

Automate manual tasks with tools in Microsoft, Google, or Zapier to reduce errors and allocate resources efficiently.

Systems Integration

Improve business efficiency and productivity by integrating disconnected tools and systems via APIs.

Intelligent Chatbots

Set up chatbots for round-the-clock customer service to enhance information retrieval & aid customers efficiently.

FLIWEEL.TECH

For more information contact

andy@fliweel.tech

www.fliweel.tech

Let's chat

Prepare your organisation's IT environment for AI

Work with Dragon Information Systems to bring generative AI to your Microsoft 365 productivity suite.

Accelerate productivity across the company while keeping data safe and sound.

Enable your AI transformation by embedding Microsoft Copilot for Microsoft 365 into the productivity apps your employees use daily. By combining the power of Large Language Models (LLMs) with your data stored in Microsoft Graph and Microsoft 365 apps, employees can use natural language to turn their words into the most powerful productivity tool on the planet.

Dragon Information Systems works with organisations to ready their environments for AI adoption. Assess your company's AI readiness and configure data privacy and governance policies in your Microsoft 365 tenant to optimise your security posture as you undergo this journey.

Get your organisation AI-ready today with Copilot for Microsoft 365 services from Dragon Information Systems.

Scan the code to find out more.

Accelerating AI in your Business was the theme of an insightful forum in Milton Keynes. Editor **Andrew Gibbs** reports on the takeaways for organisations of all sizes.

AI: Embrace it... don't think of it as 'The Terminator'

Introducing Artificial Intelligence is set to transform the way business works. It has the potential to transform efficiency and productivity, helping employees to do their job better and boosting an organisation's bottom line.

It is being hailed as the 'next Industrial Revolution'. Yet remove the human aspect of working with AI, relying on the technology to solve business problems and generate solutions and business risks travelling a dangerous path.

AI experts and business leaders are eagerly exploring the benefits that the tech can bring to their business. But a forum in Milton Keynes has heard that caution should be the watchword as organisations begin in earnest to develop the use of AI in their day-to-day operations.

Think AI and most people think of ChatGPT. It is a natural language processing tool driven by AI technology that enables human-like conversations and much more with the chatbot. It can answer questions and assist with tasks, such as composing emails, essays, blogs and code.

Take-up of ChatGPT is a true phenomenon, AI expert Andy Paul, founder and chief executive of AI specialist company Fliweel.tech told the forum. Presenting on how value-driven AI can be implemented in a business, he revealed data that the technology reached one million users in five days of its launch. By comparison, Facebook took 400 days, AirBnB 800 and Netflix 1,400.

Its development is moving apace. AI is being implemented and bringing benefit to the sales, IT, marketing, HR and finance operations of organisations. The IMF estimates that AI will affect around 40 per cent of jobs worldwide, a figure rising to 60pc in developed countries.

Its potential is vast, Mr Paul told his audience at the forum, hosted by software specialist Aiimi at its head office in Central Milton Keynes. But he and fellow speakers warned against overreliance on the technology.

"The human in the loop remains really important," Mr Paul said. "AI is there to enhance your job, not replace it. There should always be a human involvement to review and approve the process."

"It refines in a way that may appear to be right but its output needs to be fact-checked. We need to monitor the output and we need to be mindful of the data we are passing into the Chatbot. Controls are essential to ensure we are not feeding sensitive data."

Begin small and scale. Trial AI in certain functions to establish how it works for a business, Mr Paul said. Implementing AI in any business should be on the basis of the desired business outcome rather than relying on the data and be open-minded on its input. AI is more accessible than many think.

"Start small and then scale," Mr Paul said. "The worst thing you can do is to spend thousands or millions of pounds on a large deployment of AI. Create a testing ground first."

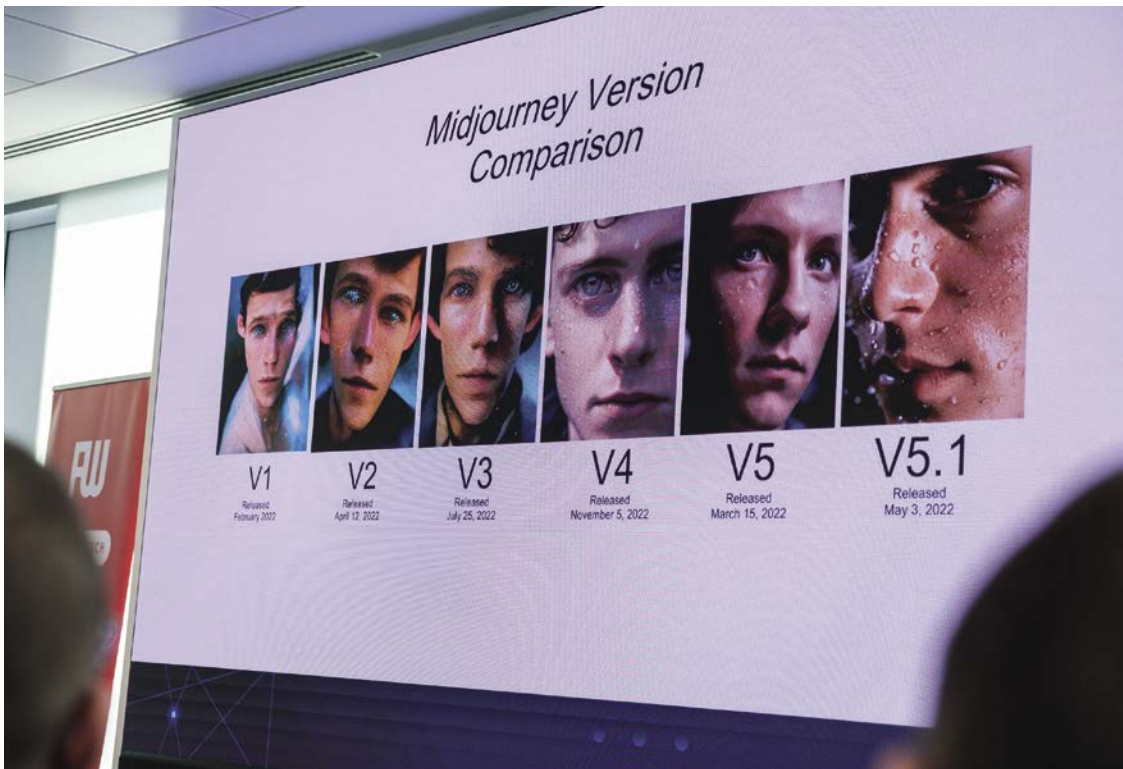
AI is there to enhance your job, not replace it



Matt Eustace, head of solution engineering at Aiimi



Andy Paul, founder and chief executive of AI specialist Fliweel



An illustration of the speed of evolution of the capabilities of Artificial Intelligence, digital marketing specialist Matthew Rigby-White told the forum

Use of AI should come down to the problem a business is looking to solve. "Do not just throw AI or money at the problem," Mr Paul said. "AI will touch many roles and it is going to affect every industry in a positive way if we embrace it and not think of it as 'the Terminator'."

"It is down to open minds in organisations to embrace the technology. The reality is that if you do not embrace AI, you will be at the back of the line and your workforce will not be as productive as your competitors."

AI currently takes three forms: extractive - answering questions and delivering updates; generative, which creates new text from a specific model; open- and closed-

book, which answers questions based on a specific model or finds data from the wider internet to enhance the answer.

Matt Eustace, head of solution engineering at Aiimi, stressed the importance of fact-checking before transmitting AI's data.

"You need to know what you are doing so you need to fact-check before the information is sent out," he said. "Understanding the answers produced is probably the biggest piece of work to be done."

Mr Paul added: "Cleansing the data is really important. Put rubbish data into a model and you will get rubbish results - it is so important to know what data you are feeding in before you input it."

"However, there are some roles where AI cannot help. Sometimes AI is not the solution."

Again he urged caution in the implementation of AI.

"There is a mindset that people have to change in order to embrace AI. Showing value through a pilot project is the quickest, easiest and cheapest way to do it. AI is the cheapest it has ever been and it is only going to get cheaper. The chances are that there is a solution out there that will do the bulk of the work and it does not have to be expensive."

"But transparency is going to be a big topic. Always have people in the loop to review the data and to know where the data is being processed."

‘It has the potential to transform the way we work’

Marketing is an area that is ready to reap significant benefits from the development, evolution and implementation of Artificial Intelligence. Digital marketing specialist Matthew Rigby-White describes the meteoric rise of the technology as the new Industrial Revolution.

“It is almost as if warp speed has been engaged in marketing terms,” he said.

First there was Web 1: the internet. Then came Web 2: social media. Now AI is Web 3. “AI has the potential to transform how we work,” said Mr Rigby-White, chief executive of digital marketing agency qoob. “But it is all about understanding what the problem is that we are trying to solve.”

AI has risen in the business consciousness and awareness only in the past two years. 2022 and 2023 were years of discovery, advancing AI, developing large language models and improving virtual and augmented reality. Businesses, particularly SMEs, were discovering new technology but were unsure how to react to it, leading to clumsy implementation, trial and error.

“Cool stuff with little practical application,” Mr Rigby-White said.

This year is set to be the ‘year of Smart Implementation’, he added. There is a movement towards the practical implementation of AI and an increased use of

Augmented Reality in marketing. Businesses are focusing on AI implementation, considering serious investment and reworking their digital marketing strategies. Some large businesses are appointing ‘Chief AI Officers’.

“Businesses are now getting it and wondering how they can use it, what problems it will solve. There is more focus on implementing AI in business and the big firms are making some serious investment.

“Businesses need to start moving and they need to understand that it is not just about making a decision for the organisation. It is the people and the culture within the business that will determine whether you use it.”

The rate of change is accelerating and the next couple of years will be very much a case of ‘wait and see’. “We can make guesses but I want people to focus on the ‘now’ for the adoption of AI,” Mr Rigby-White said.

Trust, privacy and authenticity are becoming more important to people as technology progresses. “We need to be aware. It is really exciting but we can do harm to our reputations with consumers if we are not careful.”

He also stressed the importance of authenticity.

“If ChatGPT is going to the majority of the work, remember that you have to be authentic as a brand - be careful that your message does not lose meaning.”

Businesses are wondering what problems it will solve



Matthew Rigby-White



The forum also heard a presentation from Lionel Naidoo, director and co-founder of Newport Pagnell-based IT managed services business Dragon IS. He spoke about the new Microsoft support package CoPilot and the benefits it is bringing to Microsoft 365 users since its launch. Such has been the take-up that it has already reached 100 million users around the world, he said.



Photography: Steve Brill



COACHING SOLUTIONS UNDER ONE ROOF...

EXECUTIVE | LEADERSHIP | CAREER

hausofcoaching.com | email hello@hausofcoaching.com to book a free discovery call

Delivered by **Haus of HR**, the home of HR consulting and coaching services.



Business networking and development meetings.

AYLESBURY

2nd Tuesday 12 noon-2pm: Online.

MILTON KEYNES

2nd Thursday 12 noon-2pm: Online.

BUCKINGHAM

3rd Tuesday 12 noon-2pm: Online.

CAPPUCCINO CONNECTIONS

4th Thursday 10am-11.30am: Online.

Contact: Anna Atkins-Carter, regional director North Bucks / West Chilterns. 07540 097776, email anna.atkinscarter@theathenanetwork.com or visit www.theathenanetwork.com.

BEDFORD

2nd Wednesday 12 noon-2pm: Online.

SOUTH BEDFORDSHIRE

4th Tuesday 12 noon-2pm: Online.

WOBURN

3rd Thursday 12 noon-2pm: Online.

Contact: Kate Cherry, regional director Bedfordshire & St Albans. 07909 675333 email kate.cherry@theathenanetwork.com or visit www.theathenanetwork.com



March 20 7.45am-9.15am:

The Bedfordshire Golf Club, Stagsden

Sponsors: Ginger Cow Marketing; Mazars; Metro Bank; Woodfines Solicitors

Speaker tbc. Price: £20. Contact: Kerry Ransby email kransby@woodfines.co.uk or visit www.bedfordbreakfastclub.co.uk



CONNECT OVER COFFEE

March 14 9.30am-11am:

Cranfield University Technology Park, University Way

Informal networking. Free event for Chamber members.

LUNCH & LEARN

CYBERSAFE - FUTUREPROOF YOUR BUSINESS

March 26 12 noon-2pm

Forest Centre, Forest of Marston Vale, Marston Moretaine

Presented by Richard Latimer of Chamber member JamCrackers, the workshop explores the role of Managed Service Providers in bolstering business defences against evolving cyber threats.

Free event for Chamber members.

Book on to Chamber of Commerce events via events.chamber-business.com.



If you are serious about growing your business, BNI works. Last year BNI members in the UK generated more than £482 million worth of business for each other.

To find out how, visit a local chapter meeting and see for yourself. Each chapter has a personality of its own and finding where you fit best helps you get connected.

ACHIEVERS

Wednesday 9.30am:

Brewpoint, Cut Throat Lane, Bedford.

APOLLO

Wednesday 10am:

Abbey Hill Golf Centre, Two Mile Ash, Milton Keynes.

FUSION

Thursday 6.45am:

Abbey Hill Golf Centre, Two Mile Ash, Milton Keynes.

ENCORE

Friday 6.45am: Holiday Inn London Luton

BLAZE

Thursday 6.45am:

Mount Pleasant Golf Club, Lower Stondon nr Henlow.

More information: www.bni.co.uk



March 5, 19 6.45am-8.45am:

Villiers Hotel, Buckingham

Breakfast meeting + speaker.

March 5 Speaker: Major David Shouesmith from the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.

Visitors: £10.

More details: www.bucks-fizz.biz or contact David Babister 07796 136688.



Regional sponsor: **Business MK** and **Business2Business**

No fuss, no membership, pay as you go... The Business Buzz format is relaxed, informal, conversational B2B networking.

Town focused events meet face-to-face, allowing visitors to build better, more robust relationships. These are complemented by regional virtual events.

All Business Buzz events run 10am-noon. Price: £10 + VAT.

BEDFORD

1st Wednesday: George & Dragon, Mill Street.

BIGGLESWADE

4th Tuesday: Miss Vietnam, Market Square.

BRACKLEY

1st Thursday: Paisley Pear, Northampton Road.

DUNSTABLE

4th Friday: Sugar Lounge at The Old Sugar Loaf, High Street North.

LUTON

2nd Tuesday: The Garden Cafe, Stockwood Discovery Centre, London Road.

MILTON KEYNES

3rd Friday: Pop World MK, Lower 12th Street, Central Milton Keynes.

TOWCESTER

4th Thursday: The Saracen's Head, Watling Street.

All meetings payable in advance on the Business Buzz Booking App <https://app.business-buzz.org/app> or at the event.



Business networking and referral group. Price: £6.

MILTON KEYNES

4th Thursday, 7.30am-9.30am:

Windmill Hill Golf Centre, Bletchley.

Meeting fee: £16 (first meeting free).

VIRTUAL MEETINGS

Meeting fee: £6 (first meeting free).

Wednesday Breakfast

4th Wednesday, 7.30am-9am.

Thursday Breakfast

3rd Thursday, 7.30am-9am.

Friday Breakfast

2nd Friday, 7.30am-9am.

THE ACCOUNTABILITY CIRCLE

Monday 10am-11am: Online

Helping small businesses get tasks from 'to do' to 'done'. Advice and tips on time management and productivity.

Price: £6 per session or £12 per month.

More information: www.buscomm.co.uk.



BusinessGrowthClub
Relaxed about Meetings - Serious about Business

March 1, 15 7am:

Windmill Hill Golf Centre, Bletchley

Networking breakfast with speaker. Price: £15.

Contact: www.businessgrowthclub.co.uk or Mark Orr 07903 655169.



BEDFORD

March 14 9.30am-11.30am

Brewpoint, Cut Throat Lane, Bedford

Host: Aruno Rao.

Brunchtime networking. Price: £26.

MILTON KEYNES

March 6 9.30am-11.30am

The Anchor, The Square, Aspley Guise

Host: Heide Swift.

Brunchtime networking. Price: £26.

TOWCESTER

March 20 9.30am-11.30am

The Navigation Inn, Thrupp Wharf Marina, Cosgrove

Host: Kirsty Parris.

Brunchtime networking. Price: £26.

Contact: www.busy networking.net/meetings.



Networking for businesswomen aiming to grow their business in a professional manner while getting to know each other better and having some fun along the way.

AMPTHILL

March 14 11.45am-2pm

The Knife & Cleaver, Houghton Conquest

Host: Chandra Gardner.

Networking with lunch. Price: £28.

BEDFORD

March 28 11.45am-2pm

The Woodland Manor Hotel, Green Lane, Clapham

Host: Aruno Rao.

Networking with lunch. Price: £28.

BUCKINGHAM

March 18 11.45am-2pm

The Grand Junction, High Street, Buckingham

Host: Heide Swift.

Networking with lunch. Price: £28.

CHICHELEY

March 11 11.45am-2pm

Chicheley Hall

Host: Aruno Rao.

Networking with lunch. Price: £28.

MILTON KEYNES

March 7 11.45am-2pm

The George Inn, Watling Street, Little Brickhill

Host: Aruno Rao.

Networking with lunch. Price: £28.

TOWCESTER

March 27 11.45am-2pm

The Navigation Inn, Thrupp Wharf Marina, Cosgrove

Host: Aruno Rao.

Networking with lunch. Price: £28.

Contact: www.busywomen.net or 07957 284851.



NETWORKING BREAKFAST

3rd Friday, 7am-9am

Astral Park, Leighton Buzzard

Breakfast networking with speaker.

Price: £13.

Contact: info@buzzardnetworking.co.uk or visit www.buzzardnetworking.co.uk



March 6, 7.30am-9am:

YMCA, North Sixth Street, Central Milton Keynes

Networking breakfast event hosted by the longest-established breakfast networking club in Milton Keynes.

Speakers: Matt Howarth and Emma Jolly, of Brain Tumour Research; Freddie Guilmar, of The Red Thread Partnership.

Book at www.citybreakfastclub.co.uk



March 21 12.30pm-2.30pm

Maaya Restaurant,

The Hub, Central Milton Keynes

Sponsors: Freeths; Pinders.

Networking lunch. Price: £33.

Book at thecurryclubs.co.uk/event/milton-keynes-curry-club-24/.



MILTON KEYNES VIRTUAL NETWORKING

March 8 10am-11am: Online.

Networking + an update on the benefits of FSB membership. Hosted by Stuart Holcroft, of coaching consultancy Fearless Putting. Free event for members and non-members.

To book on to FSB events, visit www.fsb.org.uk

LUTON COFFEE CLUB

1st Tuesday 8am-10am

Mano Coffee, George Street

Informal networking. Free event.

To find out more, email organiser Stephen Wood at s.w@srwood.co.uk or call 01582 401221.



SUSTAINABILITY & NETWORKING EVENT

March 20 8.30am-10.30m

IKEA Milton Keynes, Bletcham Way, Bletchley

Networking event sponsored by IKEA Milton Keynes. Free event, Chamber members only.

To book on to Chamber events, visit www.chambermk.co.uk/events.

Stability is key, SMEs reveal in landmark survey

- Recession and the cost of living are main challenges for firms.
- Employers focus on efficiency and cost reduction.
- Recruitment and staff retention take on extra importance.

Workforce stability is the main focus for SMEs in 2024, despite ongoing economic pressures and an uncertain climate, according to the latest barometer from people experts HR Solutions.

The results of the fourth annual SME Business Survey from the HR specialists were announced at a seminar during the Your Business Expo Northamptonshire business exhibition run by Business MK's publisher Pulse Group Media last month.

More than half of respondents (54 per cent) said their biggest business issue this year is recession and cost of living, with 47pc citing recruitment as a problem and 39pc worried about bringing in new business.

Yet less than a quarter of those surveyed plan to make any redundancies, instead putting an emphasis on efficient resource management.

And with half troubled by maintaining profitability and 56pc are concerned about controlling costs, there is little surprise that 53pc plan to focus on cost reduction in order to maintain workforce stability and make better use of resources.

Recruitment and employee retention were also revealed to be pressing issues, driven by competitive job markets and the expansion of the talent pool due to remote working. A worried 45pc of SMEs are concerned about the need

for wage adjustments in line with inflation, 52pc believe employee retention is a key issue and 38pc are concerned about talent attraction.

In response, SMEs are rightly prioritising employee engagement and HR Solutions recommends that business owners focus on creating an attractive workplace culture that values diversity, encourages open communication, and promotes work-life balance.

end of 2023. The company surveyed SME businesses that fall into the SME bracket across industries including manufacturing, aerospace and defence, agriculture, construction and engineering, education, electronics, healthcare, retail, professional services, hospitality, finance, energy, insurance, property, and pharmaceuticals.

Your Business Expo, which attracted around 100 exhibitors and hundreds of visitors to Sywell Aerodrome, hosted a seminar to digest and discuss the SME Business Survey results at a panel forum led by HR Solutions chief executive Greg Guilford, Pulse Group Media director

Martin Lewis-Stevenson and Matthew Rigby-White, Qoob's managing director.

Also on the panel was Jennie Jahina, employment law partner at Wilson Browne Solicitors, and HR Solutions knowledge manager Victoria Templeton.

"HR Solutions has already programmed a schedule of webinars to address the issues raised," Mr Guilford said. "With our survey now in its fourth year, we can see a clear shift in the mindset of SMEs."

"Financial performance and securing new business will naturally remain at the forefront of owner-directors' minds but, as we know with the cost of living crisis and fears of a recession, finances continue to be a top priority."



We can see a clear shift in the mindset of SMEs

A strong company culture not only supports employee retention but also makes the organisation more attractive to potential employees.

The fieldwork for the survey, which HR Solutions carried out with Your Business Expo organiser Pulse Group Media - publisher of Business MK - Northamptonshire law firm Wilson Browne Solicitors and digital marketing agency Qoob took place at the

- Read the SME Business Survey findings in full at <https://www.hrsolutions-uk.com/sme-business-survey/>



Pictured (from left) Jennie Jahina, Matthew Rigby-White, Martin Lewis-Stevenson, Greg Guilford, panel forum chair John Griff and Victoria Templeton



New sponsors: (from left) Ashley Adam, business development manager at iNREACH; Thanbi Haque, local director at Metro Bank; Andrew Chubb, commercial banking manager at Metro Bank; Liz Newell, partner at MHA; Andrew Macintyre, regional sales manager at iNREACH; Steve Freeman, partner at MHA

Breakfast club welcomes new sponsors

Networking group the City Breakfast Club has welcomed two new sponsors for 2024. Metro Bank and IT, telecoms and managed print specialist iNREACH Group attended their first meeting in their new role last month.

The club is one of Milton Keynes' longest-established networking groups and meets ten times a year for breakfast networking and the chance to hear from guest speakers on issues affecting the city.

This month's meeting will hear from Matt Howarth, corporate development manager and Emma Jolly, community fundraiser at Milton Keynes-based charity Brain Tumour Research. March is Brain Tumour Awareness Month.

The meeting will also hear from Freddie Guilford, managing director of leadership consultancy The Red Thread Partnership, who will discuss cultivating strong team dynamics and their impact on business and the wider community.

Last month's meeting welcomed Women Leaders UK chair Dr Julie Mills and trustee Zoe Raven to present the Women Leaders UK Awards 2024 and heard from Andrea Smith, partner at City Breakfast Club sponsor Franklins Solicitors, on the law firm's annual £50 Challenge charity fundraising initiative.

The club is hosted by professional services firm MHA. Partner Liz Newell said: "We are delighted to return for another year of the City Breakfast Club. Beyond fostering meaningful networking opportunities, our event embodies a commitment to championing charitable initiatives and supporting our community."

The City Breakfast Club is also sponsored by long-standing partners Business MK, Yellowyoyo, Eden Financial & Wealth Management, Franklins Solicitors, Concept Onyx Recruitment, and Willen Hospice.

- Find out more and book your place(s) for future meetings at www.citybreakfastclub.co.uk.



12 noon-2pm, networking lunch.

Bedford & Ampthill

1st Tuesday: The Swan Hotel, The Embankment, Bedford / Online.

Leighton Buzzard

3rd Wednesday: The Dukes, Heath & Reach / Online.

Luton

2nd Monday: South Beds Golf Club/ Online.

Sandy & Biggleswade

1st Wednesday: Stratton House Hotel, Biggleswade.

Contact: Louise Yexley on 07989 020647, email louise.yexley@wibn.co.uk or visit www.wibn.co.uk.

Milton Keynes

1st Tuesday: The Brasserie at Milton Keynes College, Sherwood Drive, Bletchley.

Contact: Edith Samambwa on 07802 581838, email edith.samambwa@wibn.co.uk or visit www.wibn.co.uk.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

March 8 9.30am-12 noon

The Ridgeway Centre, Featherstone Road, Wolverton Mill

Women in Enterprise and MK Community Foundation in collaboration with NatWest to support MKCF Women's Fund and Inspire Inclusion.

Networking, a keynote speaker, panel discussion and conversation with a gold medal Olympian with Team GB. Free event.

NETWORKING LUNCH

March 27 12 noon-2pm

Ole Tapas, Wolverton Park Road, Wolverton

Price: £28 WiE members; non-members £32.

Book at www.womeninenterprise.co.uk.



Check out the latest business events online. Scan the QR code... >>

Law firm wins place on E.ON energy panel

Law firm Shakespeare Martineau, which has an office in Milton Keynes, has been appointed to energy provider E.ON's legal panel. The practice is one of three firms collaborating under a five-year agreement to deliver a full range of specialist legal services.

Shakespeare Martineau joins fellow newcomer DLA Piper and Pinsent Masons, which has been E.ON's principal legal adviser since 2013.

E.ON UK's general counsel Kirin Kalsi said: "We have ambitious growth plans in line with our purpose of supporting the energy transition and having three strong firms supporting us in doing so will ensure we are able to deliver solutions in our customers' best interests."

Andrew Whitehead, partner and head of energy at Shakespeare Martineau, added: "With our headquarters in Birmingham, and E.ON up the road in Coventry, we have had a strategic ambition for some time now to work with E.ON as one of the country's leading energy companies on our doorstep."

LEAFLET DELIVERY

direct to homes across

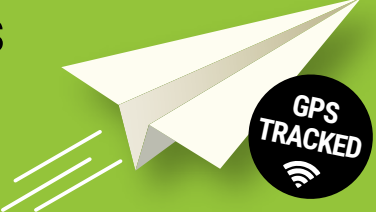
Milton Keynes

(including villages)

FROM £40 PER 1,000*

Call 01908 465488

www.pulsegroupmedia.co.uk



GPS TRACKED

*£40 per 1,000 for orders over 10,001 leaflets.
£45 per 1,000 for 10,000 leaflets or less.

90% of people

remember a brand after receiving its advertising through their letterboxes* ...



Our magazines and newspapers are delivered direct to homes and businesses. Call us today to discuss your advertising options 01908 465488.

www.pulsegroupmedia.co.uk

MKPulse
magazine
The magazine for Milton Keynes

NNPulse
magazine
The magazine for Northamptonshire

Business Times
Northamptonshire's Business Newspaper

Business MK
Incorporating Business2Business
Milton Keynes & Beds Business Newspaper

*2020 Research on Direct Advertising and Leaflet Distribution developed by Geobuzón and Kantar, from Kantar's 2019 IOPE Tracking.

ASKtheEXPERT

PROPERTY AGREEMENTS



We invite readers to submit questions on a burning issue they face in their business. We then turn to an expert in the field for the answer. This month **Jay Gorasia**, associate in the **Commercial Property team** at **Neves Solicitors** assesses an issue that arises for both landlord and prospective tenant:

Forms of tenancy on commercial property.

Choose your agreement in line with your objectives

The Question

I want to move my business into commercial premises under a rent agreement. Can you clarify my options?

The Answer

Given the complexity and the legal terminology, understanding the nuances between a lease, a licence, and a tenancy at will is key and can be vital in maintaining the rights and responsibilities of both property owners and those occupying a commercial property.

What is a lease?

A lease is a formal agreement which provides the tenant with the right of occupation and control of a specific property to the exclusion of all others, subject to the rights reserved to the landlord under the lease, for a fixed term.

This arrangement grants tenants substantial rights, ensuring stability and predictability in their occupancy, while preserving certain rights of the landlord and giving the landlord the security of knowing that the property can bring in a constant income.

A lease creates a legal interest in the land in favour of the tenant and any subsequent sale of the property would be taken subject to the lease. It would create a separate legal title in a property which is then capable of being transferred, charged and out of which a sub-lease can be created, depending on what rights are granted by the landlord under the heads of terms.

Leases typically outline specific terms, such as rent amounts, responsibilities for repairs, and the duration of the tenancy. The idea is that a lease provides a framework governing how matters that can crop up during the term of occupation can be dealt with.

Leases can also offer protection to a tenant, enabling them to remain in occupation of a premises and demand a renewal of the lease at the end of the original lease term, subject to the application of certain conditions.

What is a licence?

A licence is a more flexible arrangement that grants permission to use a property without providing the licensee with exclusive possession of the property.

A licence can be for a rolling term or for a fixed term and can often be granted for a

period of time while a formal lease is being drafted or in order to allow a tenant access to a property (though not exclusively) for a fee payable to the licensor.

Often this scenario is beneficial to both licensor and licensee as it allows the licensee to gain access to a property while the licensor is usually afforded the ability to end the licence with a relatively short notice period needing to be given.

A licence will not create a legal title in the property and is a personal arrangement between a licensor and licensee.

A licence does not give the licensee the right of occupation and control of a specific property to the exclusion of all others and allows the licensor to relocate the licensee or grant other shared rights over the same property.

A specialist commercial property solicitor should be consulted as an error in drafting or an incorrectly drafted licence could be construed as a lease and as such could confer certain rights to a licensee, which could be problematic to a licensor.

What is a Tenancy at Will?

A tenancy at will is a more transient and informal agreement that allows the tenant to occupy the premises at the will of the landlord. However, it is often granted for a very short amount of time.

A determining factor of a tenancy at will is that it can be terminated by either party at any time. While it offers flexibility, it also lacks the security and structure inherent in leases, making it a less common choice for longer term tenancy arrangements.

A tenancy at will should only be used in circumstances where:

- The tenant is still in occupation on the expiry of an existing lease, whilst the parties are negotiating the terms of a renewal, and;
- To allow the tenant to take occupation while a formal lease is yet to be finalised with the landlord.

Although some use a tenancy at will to otherwise document a short-term letting arrangement, this is not advisable because if occupation continues beyond six months, then this can inadvertently create a periodic tenancy and give the tenant statutory rights to remain in occupation of the property for a longer term.

JAY GORASIA Said:

Understanding the distinctions between these property agreements is crucial, as each option carries its own set of implications for both landlords and tenants and it should be carefully considered as to what each party requires before committing to a form of tenancy/occupation.

Before entering into any agreement, it is imperative to seek legal advice to ensure that the chosen arrangement aligns with your needs and objectives. Whether you are a landlord or tenant, our commercial property specialists at Neves Solicitors can advise on the best option for you.



Contact the team on 0330 0945 500, at info@nevesllp.co.uk or visit www.nevesllp.co.uk



Medequip's new warehouse on Bedford's Elms Farm industrial estate

Winning a major contract to supply health equipment for patients living independently at home after being discharged from hospital has led to specialist logistics company Medequip leasing a large warehouse unit in Bedford.

The company has won the contract for the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Community Equipment Service and will provide equipment for patients to live independently at home.

The service is commissioned by a consortium of Bedford Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council, Luton Borough Council, Milton Keynes City Council and NHS Bedfordshire,

New contract, new warehouse... just what the doctor ordered

Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board. Medequip will handle the community equipment needs including sourcing, delivering, maintaining, collecting, cleaning, reusing and recycling equipment.

The contract is due to begin on April 1. Medequip will use the warehouse on the Elms Farm industrial estate to store, issue and recycle equipment.

Managing director David Griffiths said: "Our new service centre will facilitate

storage, issue and recycling of equipment after a fit-out of the building to our specifications, which includes customer service offices, facilities for visitors of all abilities, and our latest cleaning and servicing capability."

Medequip has leased the 41,228 sq ft warehouse in Hammond Road from logistics real estate specialist Mileway, which acquired the unit in 2022 and carried out refurbishment work on the property. Commercial

property consultancy Kirkby Diamond, who were joint agents with Adroit Real Estate Advisors, acted on Mileway's behalf in the lease negotiations.

Paul Quy, industrial and logistics associate at Kirkby Diamond, said: "This letting to Medequip is a great result for the company and for our client. The location of Elms Farm Industrial Estate is perfect for Medequip. We wish the company huge success at its new hub."

Medequip is one of the longest-serving providers of contracted-out Community Equipment Services, which it designs and produces with commissioners, professional prescribers, community support organisations and the families, carers and those people who use its services.

University event rises to the export challenge

Businesses eyeing overseas expansion were at the University of Bedfordshire to find out more about international trade.

The *Beyond Borders: Accelerating Business Growth on a Global Scale* event discussed topics including how to overcome challenges such as required documentation, how to grow sales opportunities and more information about potential funding available for businesses to grow beyond our borders.

The event was hosted at its Bedford campus by the University's Research & Innovation Service which provides support to businesses through initiatives including expert consultancy, work placements and targeted training opportunities.

Keynote speakers from regional and national organisations included:

■ Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce chief executive Justin Richardson.

■ Paul Bowman, Vertical Head of International, Specialist Client Solutions at Barclays.

■ Rob Lewtas, strategic partner manager at the government's Department for Business and Trade.

■ Jo Archer, export finance manager for Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire at UK Export Finance

■ Reuben Isbitsky, senior innovation and growth specialist at Innovate UK Edge

■ Dr Markus Haag, senior lecturer in management at the University of

Bedfordshire's Business School.

Delegates also heard from Cranfield-based marketing agency Acuigen, which reflected on its experiences when expanding its cloud-based client feedback technology into the USA.

The university, Bedfordshire Chamber and Central Bedfordshire Council are collaborating to deliver a new export support project funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to help businesses based in Central Bedfordshire.

Chamber chief executive Justin Richardson (*inset*) said: "Exporting presents a wealth of opportunities for our local businesses and, through the UKSPF support programme, we aim to equip them with the knowledge and tools needed to thrive in the global marketplace. Collaboration between Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce, University of Bedfordshire, and other partners, especially through initiatives like the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, is pivotal for fostering innovation and economic growth."

Nathan March, senior business partnerships manager at the RIS, said: "As a university, our dedication to fostering innovation and economic prosperity within our region's business community remains unwavering. Facilitating international trade for businesses is of paramount importance and we are committed to continuing our support through similar events and tailored initiatives in the future."



Councils prepare to take over SEMLEP services

Final preparations are being made for the transfer of the functions of the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership into the hands of the sub-region's local authorities.

Businesses can expect a seamless transition when SEMLEP's work is transferred to host authority West Northamptonshire Council on April 1. The move follows the government's decision last year to end core funding for Local Enterprise Partnerships from March 31, to allow for continuing services to be run through local authorities. This includes:

■ Strategic regional economic

New board chair pledges a smooth transition for businesses

planning;

■ The Growth Hub business support service which provides free one-to-one advice, guidance and resources to support businesses in realising growth ambitions and overcome constraints;

■ The Careers Hub, which connects local employers to schools, colleges and training providers in order to coordinate careers education to the needs of the region's economy.

From next month, these come under the auspices of the six local authorities in the South East



West Northamptonshire Council leader Cllr Jonathan Nunn chairs the new Central Area Growth Board

Midlands: Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Luton, Milton Keynes

City, North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire Councils.

A Central Area Growth Board made up of the leaders of each local authority will provide the initial governance structure until a joint committee is set up. The board will be supported by a Business Board of representatives from the business community across the area.

The Business Board will play a critical role in ensuring businesses across the South East Midlands have a hand in shaping the economy, and a voice on issues that affect them.

Central Area Growth Board co-chair Cllr Jonathan Nunn, leader of West Northamptonshire Council, said: "We are committed to ensuring the businesses and individuals who have been so brilliantly supported by SEMLEP will experience a smooth transition. In the coming months and years, we will also dedicate our efforts across the South East Midlands to building on the great work that has been done by everyone so far."

West Northamptonshire Council will also take over the agreed budget for management of the former LEP functions and staff transferring, he added.

There is nothing more exciting than inspiring a new generation

Nissan throws open the doors to its R&D centre at Cranfield to highlight the appeal and rewards of a career in the automotive sector.

More than 100 students gain a rare glimpse behind the scenes at vehicle manufacturer Nissan's research and development facilities in Bedfordshire.

The Driving Innovation workshop, hosted at Nissan's Technical Centre Europe in Cranfield, took place during National Apprenticeship Week last month and was a showcase for the range of STEM sector careers with a focus on science and technology.

Around 150 students from Bedfordshire, Milton Keynes and Cambridgeshire took part in workshops after hearing from Nissan's R&D and Total Customer Satisfaction teams about the marque's latest European models the Qashqai, JUKE and LEAF, all of which were engineered in Cranfield.

They then tackled hands-on, experiential workshops led by Nissan experts which included:

- Using chocolate for welding and construction to showcase material strength and structural integrity;

- Demonstrating vehicle safety in collisions by simulating body structure through crashing eggs;

- Using Air Zookas, an air cannon that delivers a soft ball of air, to showcase airflow and aerodynamics;

- 3D printing gearboxes and strategically arranging powertrains to showcase their role in optimising vehicle performance and fuel efficiency.

The afternoon

session was led by David Moss (*inset*), senior vice president, research and development, Nissan Africa, Middle East, India, Europe, Oceania.

"It was fantastic to meet so many future innovators," Mr Moss said. "Throughout my 35-year career at Nissan, our teams have always dared to do what others do not and that is what makes us different. As the automotive industry goes through a monumental shift, our R&D expertise is only as strong as the calibre of engineers we bring on board and there is nothing more exciting than inspiring the next generation."

Nissan hosted the event in partnership with the organisation Proactive Young People which supports school students in making positive links with business.

The students also had an opportunity to learn about Nissan's efforts in motorsport with a Nissan Formula E car on display. They then heard about careers at Nissan, and the Nissan Possibilities Project, which was created to leverage Nissan's technologies, resources and expertise to provide opportunities for individuals from underrepresented communities.

Proactive Young People's director Samantha Fitzgerald said: "Inspiring students through real-world experiences and hands-on workshops is crucial for career planning.

It is fantastic to be working with such a large local employer like Nissan to offer students



MD: Apprenticeship start made me what I am today

An apprenticeship can set you up for a lifelong path of learning, development and progression. Defence giant Lockheed Martin UK has operated in the UK for nearly 80 years. It has a number of sites across the country, including at Amptill, where it employs over 500 people.

Its facility in Bedfordshire is an engineering centre of excellence, with more than 20,000 sq ft of advanced manufacturing space. The company's innovations and technologically advanced solutions help the UK to overcome its most complex challenges and stay ahead of emerging threats, contributing to the UK's defence, security and prosperity.

As part of its Corporate Social Responsibility, Lockheed Martin is committed to giving back to the local community through STEM outreach, working with local schools to inspire the next generation workforce to consider STEM-related careers and the importance of STEM subjects.

The Amptill plant partners with nearby Bedford College to deliver the vocational learning and academic qualifications for some of its apprentices.

"Providing an expertly trained workforce is crucial to the success of the region, government, regional partnerships, local authorities, employers, and businesses," said Debbie Houghton The Bedford College Group's executive director of apprenticeships,

business development and commercial. "Working with employers in the area, including Lockheed Martin, allows us to offer even more opportunities for school leavers seeking T levels, Apprenticeships or higher-level qualifications such as Higher Technical Qualifications, Higher and Degree Apprenticeships."

Lee Fellows, vice president and managing director of Lockheed Martin UK's Amptill business, started his career as an apprentice. Having climbed the career ladder to the boardroom, he remains a massive advocate.

"My apprenticeship cemented my early career. It grounded me and prepared me for future growth, enabling me to not only develop skills in engineering but also in wider business practice," he said. "I absolutely believe that I would not be vice president and managing director of a business with over 500 people without an apprenticeship start in my working life."

An apprenticeship is more than



Lee Fellows

skills development. "From a personal perspective, it helped me figure out what I wanted to do. The variety of roles I was able to undertake during my apprenticeship gave me a breadth of experience which I just would not have experienced otherwise. It also helped me to respect and appreciate the diversity of thought and approach. In my view, at Lockheed Martin we offer one of the best Early Careers Programmes in the industry. We tailor the support that will help develop our young talent, upskill them and provide them with a personalised career."

Lisa Jiggins is early careers lead at Lockheed Martin UK and is responsible for growing and promoting the company's Early Careers programme, which includes graduates, placement students and apprentices. She is passionate about supporting the young cohort from both a personal and professional development perspective.

"Lockheed Martin has long fostered a positive, diverse, and inclusive culture," Ms Jiggins said. "We have a top-down approach when it comes to workplace culture and employee well-being. We care about how our people feel when they are at work. Employees are encouraged to have a voice and help to shape an environment where every single individual feels they can bring their whole selves to work."

"Apprenticeships are really important to our organisation. They help to develop our future workforce and talent across the business and they are a great route to ensuring we continue to build and develop the skills to support our customers' needs today and in the future."

Our R&D expertise is only as strong as the calibre of engineers we bring on board

ample opportunities to explore careers in science and technology.

"I am confident that this partnership will play a vital role in inspiring the next generation of engineers in this area."

The Driving Innovation was opened by Yuri Rodrigues, regional vice president, Total Customer Satisfaction, Nissan AMIEO.

"What better place to see

top-class engineering first-hand, than at the heart of our technical centre here in Cranfield," Mr Rodrigues said.

"Recognising that diversity in STEM contributes to a more innovative and inclusive future, it was a pleasure to open our doors to young minds, providing them with a hands-on experience to spark curiosity for the automotive world."



Printer tests herald a manufacturing breakthrough in space

Scientists at Cranfield University have played a key role in developing a custom-designed 3D metal printer powered by lasers on the International Space Station. They believe that in the future, the ability to print 3D metal parts using Additive Manufacturing on board the ISS would enable speedy replacement of components or manufacturing of new ones, avoiding the costly and time-consuming current approach of transporting physical parts to space.

3D metal printers fuelled by high-powered lasers have never been tested in a space environment and scientists will be examining data from this test to understand how the process and the metal is affected by the microgravity environment.

The 3D printer is now aboard the ISS after arriving on the Cygnus NG-20 mission from Cape Canaveral in the USA. Resembling a metal box and weighing 300kg, it was transported in parts and reassembled on board by astronauts.

Academics at Cranfield worked on the design of the printer's melting process and hardware, its laser source, delivery optics, feedstock storage and feeding system.

Dr Wojciech Suder, senior lecturer in laser processing and Additive Manufacturing at Cranfield, said: "We have measured the effect of gravity on liquids in space before but we have not done this when printing components from liquid metal form because of the high temperatures involved.

"Our task was to design a printer which can be thermally neutral and also cannot emit heat or radiation on to the ISS. This meant it had to meet lots of requirements, in addition to being fully autonomous. Now it is a case of waiting for the samples to return and examining them.

"The purpose is to see the effect of microgravity on 3D metal printing. If we can understand this more, we can find out how to best use this technology in space in the future."

The Metal3D five-year project was led by Airbus Defence and Space, working in partnership with Cranfield University, as well as AddUp and Highftech, and was commissioned by the European Space Agency

The funding for ESA comes through investment from the UK Space Agency.

"Developing efficient technologies that reduce our reliance on the costly and time-consuming transfer of materials from Earth is crucial to allow us to travel further into space for longer," said Andrew Kuh, UKSA's exploration technology manager.

"Metal printing in space is notoriously challenging, owing to the energy and materials required, but this innovative concept could make a huge difference to our ability to maintain spacecraft. Cranfield's contribution demonstrates how important UK skills and expertise are to global space exploration."



MP welcomes reopening of rail line

Months of lobbying at Westminster have paid off for Milton Keynes MP Iain Stewart as he stands on the platform at Bletchley.

Mr Stewart, MP for Milton Keynes South, was there to greet passengers as they arrived on the first train from Bedford after the Marston Vale line connecting the two towns resumed a full timetable. He is pictured with representatives of London Northwestern Railway, which runs the service, Friends of Bletchley Station and the Marston Vale Line Community Rail Partnership.

Mr Stewart has lobbied ministers on behalf of residents and community groups to have the line reopened. "I am delighted because of its importance to the local community," he said.

The service has resumed after being suspended in December 2022 when the company looking after the maintenance of its trains went into administration.



Across the country, thousands of businesses are members of a Chamber of Commerce. Why? Because the Chamber is renowned the world over for helping foster connections and enabling local businesses to thrive and grow.



Here at the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce, we are passionate about working at a local, national and international level to support businesses of all sizes and across all sectors.

Being a member of the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce:

- Connects you with a large network of businesses.
- Provides you with unrivalled access to help, support, and advice to grow your business.
- Opens new business opportunities for you in local, national and international markets.
- Ensures your views are heard within Government and other policy makers.

Our role is to ensure that, working together, we create connections within our ever-growing network and become an enabler for business growth – after all, business is done better together.

"The Chamber is not only there to give support of local connections and guidance on export and trade, but go above and beyond to help us nurture business collaborations that results in business growth."



Become a member today:

Visit www.chamber-business.com
Email membership@chamber-business.com
Call 01582 522448

Follow us on social media





Lee (front) and Lorraine Lewis with the SME Business Awards team

Awards support hits the jackpot for cancer charity

The SME Business Awards in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire have helped to raise a total of more than £21,000 for Northampton-based cancer charity the Lewis Foundation.

The three ceremonies were among a series of gala events last year, with many supporting the foundation as their charity partner.

The Lewis Foundation donates more than 2,500 gifts in free gift packs each month to adult cancer patients receiving treatment in 17 hospitals in the Midlands.

The charity was founded by husband and wife Lee and Lorraine Lewis in 2016 after Lee's mother was

diagnosed with the disease. Mrs Lewis, the charity's chief executive, said: "We cannot thank SME Awards enough. They have enabled us to have a platform in a room filled with businesses where we can share about the importance of our work."

Attendees of the award finals came together to raise £21,270.74 for the charity, with donations coming from finalists, judges, and partners of the awards.

"We are delighted to have supported The Lewis Foundation as a charity partner throughout 2023," said SME Business Awards director Damian Cummins. "The incredible work they do would not be possible without donations and we are proud to be able to provide a platform for their cause."

... while shopping centre team scale the fundraising heights

The Mall Luton is celebrating raising over £2,000 for The Lewis Foundation from their walk over the O2 Arena in London for World Cancer Day last month.

The shopping centre is donating part of its £2,022 monthly Community Chest fund to the charity as part of its 50th birthday celebrations in 2022.

"We had a wonderful day climbing the O2 Arena, which served as a poignant moment of reflection for those fighting their difficult battles on World Cancer

Day," said The Mall's marketing manager Lavinia Douglass.

"We hope that the gift packages we have sponsored will bring a little light and happiness to those in our local community."

Lorraine Lewis, co-founder of The Lewis Foundation, added: "We see first hand the impact that gift donations can have on people going through cancer treatment - it shows people that they are not alone. The money will have a huge impact on so many lives."



Use knockbacks to make you better, cricketer tells youth forum

Former professional cricketer James Hildreth has shared his experiences of teamwork, leadership and resilience to an audience of students at the Big Challenge Lunch organised by Milton Keynes-based charity Action4Youth.

The day was a blend of healthy competition, enthusiasm and community spirit as four Milton Keynes and four Buckinghamshire Schools competed in eight challenges with the goal of a £1,000 prize for the winning school.

The theme throughout the day, staged at The Ridgeway Centre in Wolverton Mill, was employability and the future workforce, which aimed to highlight the importance of young people being



Some great advice... you can only control the controllables

confident and work-ready when they leave school.

Mr Hildreth told the audience: "My advice to young people is to stay curious - you can be knocked back but sometimes you need to go backwards to go forwards. As a batter, you fail more than you succeed. Some great advice that stuck with me is, you can only control the controllables."

"Life is a rollercoaster but use the knockbacks to review and reflect and get to where you want to be."

Sir Thomas Fremantle School in Winslow gained the highest score and won the Ultimate Challenge Cup and £1,000 for their school. Sophie Bannerman, from Aylesbury Vale Academy, received the Outstanding Achievement Award and a £100 prize.

The Ultimate Challenge Cup - Council, presented by Nathan Kennard, centre experience manager at Santander's

Foundation backs youth programmes

Construction company Careys has named Milton Keynes-based Action4Youth as its Charity of the Year for 2024.

Staff at the firm, which has been based at Bleak Hall since 1983, will support the charity's work with children and young people via fundraising events throughout the year. The Careys Foundation has pledged to match all funds raised to further help Action4Youth's work and staff will also volunteer at the charity's outdoor education project The Caldecotte Xperience.

The partnership will ensure

new UK head office Unity Place in Central Milton Keynes, went to Buckinghamshire Council.

"We are thrilled by the success of The Big Challenge Lunch, where our community came together for a day of fun, competition, and inspiration," said Action4Youth's chief executive Jenifer Cameron. "It truly highlights the power of collaboration and the spirit of our local councils."

Milton Keynes City Council finished second in the councils competition. Its leader Cllr Pete Marland told guests: "You are from a fantastic area, and you can be everything you want to be."

Action4Youth can reach even more young people and support local communities by enabling them to deliver further programmes, the charity said. It already delivers The Inspiration Programme, which supports young people into the world of work, and The Breakout Programme which guides young people away from crime and mentors them to find a new focus and a brighter future.

A Careys spokesman described Action4Youth as 'a fantastic charity doing great things for the next generation'.



James Hildreth (left) on stage at the Action4Youth Big Lunch

Tech firm: We are determined to make a positive impact

Technology company Pragmatiq has chosen the children's charity Ride High as its Charity of the Year.

The charity, based at Loughton Manor in Milton Keynes, works with disadvantaged children teaching them to ride and care for horses.

It was the winner in a vote among Pragmatiq staff. Managing director Stuart Goldwater said: "We have been familiar with Ride High for some time and we are thrilled to be able to support the brilliant work they are doing in our local community. Corporate Social Responsibility is not just a checkbox; it is a fundamental part of our

culture and our partnership with Ride High demonstrates our determination to make a positive impact."

The company, based in Central Milton Keynes, has supported several charities since it was founded in 2017 but this year is its first dedicated Charity of the Year choice. Ride High's chief executive Olivia Sugden said: "We are absolutely thrilled. We love Pragmatiq's culture of collaboration, drive and innovation and cannot wait to harness their energy to make a real difference to the many vulnerable children in our local communities so desperately needing our help."

"We are very proud of their decision and cannot wait to work with them."



Pragmatiq Solutions managing director Stuart Goldwater with Olivia Sugden, chief executive of Ride High



MK Food Bank operations manager Louise Hobbs (right) and fundraising and communications manager Poppy Cheetham show off their Food Bank logo creation.

Below: Staff at wholesaler M&M Supplies in Bletchley have already put their MK Can Logo Challenge entry together

Join the Logo Challenge ...Oh yes you MK Can

It is time to get creative and help the great work of MK Food Bank. The charity is calling on community groups and businesses across Milton Keynes to take part in the Food Bank's new campaign... to create a mural of

your organisation's name or logo out of essential food items. Take a photo or make a video to promote your organisation and the Food Bank collects the cans of food to add to its stock for families in need across the



city. It is a win-win, the charity said. The MK Can Logo Challenge takes place from March 25 until April 5. "It can be as big and imaginative as you like," said MK Food Bank's fundraising and communications coordinator Poppy Cheetham.

"Don't worry if you don't have a logo - you can write your name or create a picture relevant to you."

Find out more about what is involved at https://mkfoodbank.org.uk/latest_appeals/logo-challenge/

The MK Can Logo Challenge is looking to collect more than 100,000 food items from the Logo Challenge, which follows the charity's successful bid in October to set a new world record for the longest line of food cans. It amassed a total of 102,447 cans of food in a line stretching more than 7km around Campbell Park.

The world record attempt collected more than half of the canned food MK Food Bank needs for an entire year, supporting thousands of families over the winter.

"Due to a very busy winter, most of the cans from the MK Can event have already been distributed," said Ms Cheetham. "To restock our shelves, we're hoping to collect another 102,000 food items from the Logo Challenge."

During the first half of 2023, demand for the Food Bank's service increased by almost 40 per cent on the same period as last year and the number of households receiving support doubled.

The Food Bank needs a minimum of 4,500 food items, £530 and 55 volunteer hours each day just to maintain its work.



Hatters legend Mick Harford (centre) with his interview panel of Fleur O'Brien, Amia Clarke and Rob Clark and senior lecturer Jon Boyle (left)

Stay strong, be yourself and go for it, said Big Mick

Luton Town FC legend Mick Harford was guest of honour at the latest 'An Evening With...' event hosted by the University of Bedfordshire. Mr Harford, former Hatters player, coach, manager and the club's current head of recruitment, reflected on his career on the pitch and in management as well as being diagnosed in 2020 with prostate cancer and his campaign to raise awareness of the importance of getting tested.

He was quizzed by a panel consisting of media, marketing and PR student Fleur O'Brien, journalism student Amia Clarke, radio and audio alumnus Rob Clark and Jon Boyle, senior lecturer in communications. "My career and what I did in football is no different to

what you do or what we are all trying to achieve," Mr Harford told his audience. "We all have our goals, something to aim for, and that is no different for a footballer."

"Whatever business you are in, whatever you do in your life, my message is this: stay strong, be yourself and go for it."

After the event, he joined attendees posing for selfies and signing autographs.

The University of Bedfordshire is the Hatters' Official Education Partner, a collaboration delivering a range of student career development opportunities.

Last November, students from the School of Arts & Creative Industries were given the chance to report live from the press box at Luton Town's Kenilworth Road stadium.

THE OFFICIAL

2024

MILTON KEYNES

DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL

IN AID OF BRAIN TUMOUR RESEARCH

SATURDAY 6TH JULY

WILLEN LAKE, MILTON KEYNES

INTERESTED IN ENTERING A TEAM?

DRAGONBOATEVENTS.CO.UK

01536 674 748

To feature or comment email: news@businessmk.co.uk

Business MK | March 2024 21

Tourism boost beckons after F1's Silverstone decision

The British Grand Prix is to be raced at Silverstone for a further ten years under a new agreement between the venue at Formula 1.

The Formula 1 Qatar Airways British Grand Prix 2024 will take place over the July 4-7 weekend.

Silverstone Circuit's chief executive Stuart Pringle said: "This long-term commitment reflects the importance of the British Grand Prix to Formula 1 and their acknowledgement of our ability to deliver a world-class experience for the British fans who are among the most enthusiastic and knowledgeable in the world."

"The cheers of support for the home teams, and particularly for the British drivers on the grid, makes the Silverstone atmosphere unique and I am looking forward to harnessing this passion for our sport and taking the event to the next level in the coming decade."

The British Grand Prix has become one of the largest attended events on the F1 calendar. Last year's event attracted some of the biggest names



in sport, music and culture as the race drew in a record crowd of 480,000 across the weekend with over 60,000 fans camping in the local area.

This year, fans will enjoy a weekend filled with great racing as well as off-track entertainment including concerts every evening on Silverstone's main stage headlined by music's biggest artists, including Stormzy and Kings of Leon.

Peter Digby, chairman of the British Racing Drivers' Club, said: "I am delighted we have secured a ten-year extension to host the Formula 1 British Grand Prix at Silverstone. This contractual

security will provide a solid base for the further development of the venue as we continue to improve and transform the circuit into a year-round international motorsport and leisure destination."

The announcement has been welcomed by West Northamptonshire Council, whose Economic Growth & Inward Investment team works closely with Silverstone. "The event hugely benefits our tourism and visitor economy while showcasing West Northants to a global audience," said Cllr Daniel Lister, cabinet member for economic development, town centre regeneration and growth.



Students aim high in career aspirations

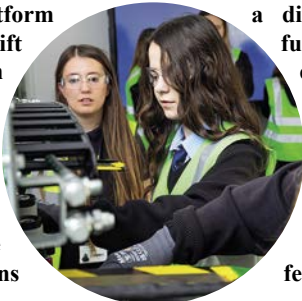
Factory tours, hands-on production assembly and demonstrations of control and hydraulic systems have given a real-world insight into a career in engineering for students from 17 schools and academies across Milton Keynes.

More than 240 visited high access platform manufacturer Niftylift for its annual Women in Engineering event at its headquarters in Shenley Wood.

The two-day event aims to demonstrate the practical applications

in manufacturing of the STEM subjects of science, technology, engineering and maths to the next generation of female engineers.

"Niftylift's Women in Engineering event is more than just a showcase," said marketing manager Simon Maher. "It is a crucial step in encouraging a diverse and inclusive future for the engineering industry. By highlighting the discipline's creative and innovative aspects, Niftylift aims to inspire a new generation of female engineers."





Here for young people
Here for communities
Here for you



ROOMSPONSOR



No one would choose to spend their winter here.

"We are concerned by recent comments that have been made suggesting that homelessness is a lifestyle choice. Such comments fail to recognise the severity of the crisis and, as the largest voluntary sector provider of supported housing in the country, we can say that, whilst there are many complex circumstances that can lead to a person becoming homeless, lifestyle choice does not feature highly among them.

"The current crisis is the result of a series of public policy failures in recent decades that has greatly exacerbated the issue of homelessness. The lack of affordable housing options, insufficient mental health resources, and a limited safety net for those facing financial hardship have all played a significant role in the alarming rise in homelessness and the risk of homelessness. Reducing it to a matter of restricting the use of tents is irrelevant and does nothing to address these wider complex causes.

"As we continue to provide shelter and support in times of crisis, we implore the government to reconsider its stance and work alongside organisations like ours to address the root causes of homelessness. By addressing the systemic issues and not placing blame on the marginalised, we can build a more equitable and empathetic society for all."

DENISE HATTON

Chief Executive, YMCA England & Wales
November 6, 2023

165 young people are at risk of homelessness every day across England and Wales. They could be experiencing abuse, family breakdown or loved ones may not be able to afford to accommodate them any more. They become homeless, not through choice or any fault of their own.

With the donations of generous RoomSponsors at YMCA, we're able to give over 10,600 young people a safe place to stay. With your help, they can access mental health support, careers advice and many other vital opportunities to build bright futures.

For as little as £12 a month you could support one of these young people staying at your local YMCA. Please be as generous as you can, it could make such a huge difference to someone's life, not just throughout the winter months but all year round.

And help us spread the word. For the thousands of young people at risk of homelessness every week, this is not a lifestyle choice.

Become a RoomSponsor. Visit ymca.org.uk/ymca-roomsponsor

READ BY...

Business Times
Business **MK**
Business**2**Business

BUSINESS OWNERS,
Across Northamptonshire, **MANAGERS,**
Milton Keynes, **LEADERS,**
ENTREPRENEURS,
DIRECTORS, *Bedfordshire,*
C-SUITE EXECUTIVES,
& DECISION MAKERS.
& Buckinghamshire.

The region's premier business to business titles, highlighting the brilliant people, companies, talent and opportunities in Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire.

Find out more at www.pulsegroupmedia.co.uk or call 01604 259900 or 01908 465488.

Join our community and
sign up to receive your
free copy every month





MK & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
Business Awards
2024



**WILL
2024
BE
YOUR
YEAR?**

www.mkbucksawards.co.uk
ENTER TODAY!



MEDIA PARTNER

MKPulse
magazine
The magazine for Milton Keynes

Business MK

For more information contact one of our team on **01908 542720**