

Insight magazine

June / July 2026



Wolves alumni celebrates 50 years of King's Trust at Buckingham Palace

New Warrington Chamber Plus website
www.warringtonchamberplus.com

Three generations come together
Bents plans for its next chapter



B-engineering Group strengthens leadership team to support growth

Technical building services provider B-engineering Group has announced a series of senior appointments and promotions to strengthen its leadership team and support its growth ambitions.

The restructure follows a major investment programme and marks the latest phase in a strategy to scale the company's operations.

Warrington-based B-engineering designs, installs and maintains heating, ventilation, air conditioning, electrical and renewable energy systems in commercial premises.

Clients range from facilities management companies to end users in sectors including pharmaceutical and food production, healthcare, education, retail, sport and leisure, manufacturing, hospitality and warehousing.

The family-owned company now has a head of each of its four divisions - service and maintenance, projects, electrical and air conditioning.

Scott Sharples and Luke O'Keeffe have been promoted to head of projects and head of service and maintenance respectively. James Coote remains head of electrical and Craig McLachlan remains head of air conditioning.

A technical manager has been appointed to support each divisional head through a combination of internal promotions and new hires.

Janusz Heenan has been promoted to technical manager for the service and maintenance division. Jim Doyle, Dave Hayes and Keith Kirk have joined as technical managers in the projects, electrical and air conditioning divisions respectively.

The changes follow a £500,000 investment in new fleet vans, as well as a new head office at Olympic Park, Birchwood, and a 6,000 sq ft fabrication workshop near Warrington town centre.

Managing director Rob Ditchfield said: "The restructure is the latest piece in the jigsaw as we lay the

foundations for significant growth over the next few years.

"I'm a keen advocate of investing in our team, and these changes create real opportunities for staff to progress their careers with us.

"A combination of internal promotions and external recruitment creates a strong blend of talent to help drive the business forward.

"This new structure also enables us to standardise the high level of service our clients expect, no matter what they require from us.

"Our divisional heads are responsible for client relationships, as well as surveying and estimating works. Our technical managers support them by managing our team of engineers and ensuring we continue to deliver the highest standards, whether working with facilities management providers or directly with end users.

"This is about investing in our people, building a structure for future growth, and continuing

to improve the quality and range of services we provide to clients, all underpinned by a focus on performance excellence, sustainability and ESG."

B-engineering Group was founded in 1990 by Rob's father, Bernard. The B Corp-certified company has 55 staff serving clients across the north west, Yorkshire, the north east and the Midlands.

Further recruitment is planned over the coming months, for roles including commercial gas service engineers and pipefitters, as well as apprentices.

Clients include facilities management companies Mitie, Wates FM, Equans, EMCOR UK and Apleona UK. The group's end-user client base includes glassmaker Pilkington, THG, Spire Healthcare and ITV.

Last year, the firm appointed David O'Byrne, an experienced facilities management leader, as a non-executive director to strengthen its board.

Local dealership delivers for Warrington Chamber Plus

Warrington Chamber has taken delivery of a brand new lease car, courtesy of Cheshire and Staffordshire based Acorn Motor Group and their leasing division ABCleasinghub.com

Having operated across the north west for many years, Acorn brought together several dealerships in 2019, with a specific focus on Kia and MG. The Warrington operation on Manchester Road is currently receiving a multimillion pound upgrade and a fresh new customer services team. Customers are attracted by the generous 7 year warranty and positive industry reviews.

Acorn Motor Group Business Manager, Chris Melville commented: "We have been providing quality cars for business

and the public in Warrington for many years so it was fantastic to have the opportunity to support the Chamber in this way".

Chamber Chief Executive, Stephen Fitzsimons, added: "We always look to secure products and services from our local membership base so it was great to work with Chris and his team to secure this exciting new vehicle. I can't wait to take it for a spin!"

The Chamber car was provided on a 3 year business lease at 12,000 miles per year. Contact Acorn Motor Group for all your motoring needs. Buy it, Lease It, Rent it

www.acorn-group.co.uk/news/welcome-to-acorn-kia-warrington

www.abcleasinghub.co.uk



From the Chief Executive

Stephen Fitzsimons



Warrington recently attended UKREiif as part of a Cheshire delegation to attract investment into the county.

UKREiif is the less decadent relation to MIPIM, the real estate conference held in the South of France every year. Whilst it is often challenging to capture the return on investment from these events, it is usually noticed when a location does not attend. UKREiif gave the three Cheshire & Warrington local authorities the opportunity to work with the newly established C&W Combined Authority (CA), under the leadership of Nick Walkley.

The CA will ensure that an elected Cheshire Mayor will have the right tools available for growth after the elections in May 2027. This will also

see the absorption of Enterprise Cheshire & Warrington, formerly known as the Local Enterprise Partnership. Its Chief Executive, Philip Cox, will take a well deserved retirement in July, following 12 years establishing Cheshire as one of the strongest economies in the UK.

Our Enterprise Accelerator will complete this year, utilising the final amount of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). By the end of September, the Chamber's Head of Membership, Aimee Ruddy, will have welcomed 30 start ups onto the scheme, supporting them with £500 grants. Whilst this and the Start & Scale Up Club from the previous year have been useful tools in supporting local growth, until the Mayor is in place next year there is no sign of something

similar on the horizon.

The government is understandably looking to support high growth companies that fit into its eight Industrial Sectors, such as clean energy and life sciences. However, over 95% of the economy is made up of smaller companies so they must consider how to help them grow in the future.

If you search for the Chamber of Commerce or Business Exchange website you should now be redirected to our new location at www.warringtonchamberplus.com MAD Design have done a great job in bringing together two successful business networks, albeit at opposite ends of longevity.

The X from the Exchange has become the + in the Chamber

as we look to add new services when we grow. This commences with our local charities who now have a designated Charity + page, spotlight and annual chosen charity. Future events will be managed through our Evolutive CRM system so if you are looking for us on Eventbrite, we won't be there for much longer!

Enjoy the summer and see you soon.

Stephen

Warrington entrepreneur launches new venture

A former award-winning north west agency owner has launched a new brand communications and experience design business.

Lee Ashton, who previously founded and ran Warrington-based Bugler Smith, is now at the helm of WonderMaker, an agency that unites brand communications and experience design.

Ashton, who moved to the town to attend university and has never left, grew Bugler Smith from a video and live events operation into a multi-discipline agency, working with the likes of Pets at Home, American Golf, Vets for Pets, Booking.com and Just Eat.

The business was based in Lymm, before moving to Warrington, and it's from where WonderMaker is looking to follow a similar growth strategy.

Ashton is drawing on almost 25 years working with corporate and consumer brands to launch WonderMaker, which operates across employee experiences, brand activations, launch events as well as communications strategy, internal comms and campaigns.

The agency, which also has presence in Manchester city centre, is already working with a number of national brands.

Ashton said: "Warrington is my second home and it's a great place to support the emergence and development of businesses, which is why WonderMaker has a home here.

"Most agencies are set up to do one thing well, either they understand how to craft communications that land with an audience, or they know how to create an experience that moves people.

"Very few genuinely understand both, for internal and external audiences. At WonderMaker we do, because our team comes from both worlds.

"That means when a client comes to us, we're not starting from a specialism and working outward, we're starting from what they need to achieve, and we know which combination of communications and experience will actually deliver it.

"The result is work that doesn't just look good or feel good in the room,

it moves people and drives action.

"As time moves on with WonderMaker, I'm hoping that by being part of the Warrington Chamber of Commerce and embedded in the business community, we'll be able to offer opportunity to support and

develop careers for young people from the region."

For further information on how WonderMaker can help your business or brand, please contact Lee at leeashton@wondermaker.co.uk or visit www.wondermaker.co.uk



Warrington Chamber Plus

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WARRINGTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Suite 111, The Base
Dallam Lane, Warrington
WA2 7NG

Tel: 01925 715150

info@warrington-chamber.co.uk
www.warringtonchamberplus.com

President: Paul Taylor
Chief Executive: Stephen Fitzsimons
Finance Manager: Julie Longmore
Business Manager: Sarah Melvin
Head of Membership: Aimee Ruddy
Digital Manager: Carolyne Kasangwa
Editor / Group PR: Gary Skentelbery
Design / Production: James Bryan

Stephen Fitzsimons, Chief Executive

40 Years of Filtration at Croft Filters

Warrington-based SME Croft Filters Ltd are marking 40 years in business, reflecting on four decades of growth, resilience and manufacturing of bespoke filtration solutions for diverse high-spec sectors; including food and drink, power generation, oil and gas, pharmaceuticals, and Formula One.

When brothers Mark and Neil Burns founded the company in 1986—originally established as Croft Engineering Services—they could not have predicted that their filtration business would still be thriving in 2026. Influenced by the town's strong wire-manufacturing heritage, Croft began by supplying products made from metal wire mesh.

Whilst still at school in 1988, Darren Travis joined the team as a part-time Saturday worker—a move that would prove pivotal. Through his unwavering commitment, he rose steadily through the business, eventually becoming a partner, then director.

While the founders were ambitious, establishing the business required vital external support. Neil brought extensive experience in wire mesh, whilst Mark had previously spent nine years as a Jet Engine Fitter in the Royal Air Force.

Through Mark's military service, the Royal British Legion provided an interest-free loan of £2,500—equivalent to approximately £7,500 today—to support former service personnel in establishing their own businesses. In addition, Croft received a £1,000 grant (around £3,000 in today's terms) from The Prince's Trust now known as The King's Trust Enterprise Programme, which supports young entrepreneurs and aims to improve employment prospects. Introduced in 1983, the Nationwide Enterprise Allowance Scheme provided £40 a week—approximately £120.99 today—to the unemployed with entrepreneurial ambitions. In addition to these grants and loans, Croft received an inheritance of £3,500; this support proved vital for the directors during a period of financial constraint, enabling them to purchase essential manufacturing equipment, such as a lathe that is still used to manufacture filters today. Without this initial backing, Croft believe they might not be here today.

Mark, Neil and Darren proved early on that innovation would be the key to the company's success. Over the years, this would take many forms; one key pioneering step was in 1997 when they secured the website domain name www.filters.co.uk at a time when the internet was only just starting to take off.

Throughout the years, Croft have invested heavily in machinery, processes, and equipment despite their SME status, in order to deliver cutting-edge filtration solutions. One milestone demonstrating this was 12 years ago when they purchased their very first metal 3D printing machine, paving the way for enhanced filtration design and development.

From the early days of retailing mesh components in 1986 to pioneering metal 3D printing in filtration Croft's journey has mirrored the evolution of British manufacturing itself.

After 38 years, founder and director Neil Burns retired from the company, leaving an ethos centred on the importance of supplying quality products and investing in the future.

Neil's profound knowledge of wire mesh and his innovative thinking paved the way for Croft's achievements over the years. His pursuit of excellence resulted in groundbreaking product innovations, advanced filtration processes and pioneering methodologies. Through collaborative research projects with academia and industry partners, Neil significantly contributed to global filtration knowledge.

Croft have a dedicated team of staff which is evident in the fact that many remain with the company for a significant portion of their careers. The firm currently have a workforce of 16 who collectively represent over 220 years of service. In the 40 years since they were founded Croft have provided over 650 years of employment with members of the team working for as long as 23 years right up until their retirement.

Croft also maintain a strong focus on the future through their apprenticeship and student programmes. For over 20 years, they have supported successful apprentices in roles ranging from metal fabrication to accounts.



Furthermore, by collaborating with universities and colleges across the UK and abroad, they have welcomed more than 200 students, providing them with essential hands-on industry skills.

As Croft celebrate their 40th anniversary, they are reminiscing about the stories that still make them laugh today. One that comes to mind for many is the day an employee brought a Second World War bomb into the workshop with the intention to saw it in half and see what was inside. Used for many years as a doorstop, the device was actually live. Fortunately, a member of staff discouraged him before he proceeded to saw into it. The bomb disposal team was called, and a controlled explosion was carried out in a field across from Croft.

Since 2024, Croft Filters have been a proud sponsor of Culcheth Eagles Girls RL. The company were drawn to the team's dedication and spirit—qualities Croft admire. This has provided a fantastic opportunity for the business to further support the local community and next generation of local sporting talent.

As a long-standing sponsor of Croft Carnival, Croft take great pride in supporting this annual community event. For a number of years now, they have proudly manufactured bespoke medals

for the day's competition winners—something they hope to continue to do for many years to come.

Mark Burns director and founder of Croft added: "The last 40 years have presented many challenges and achievements. It has been a privilege to work with many different characters over the years. I would like to express our gratitude to those who were there at the start and those who have continued to help along the way. We believed in our vision and the future of the company. Here's to many more years and stories to follow."

As Croft celebrate this milestone, they look forward to another four decades of continued success in the filtration industry, driven by their commitment to supplying quality filtration solutions to a diverse range of global markets, whilst continuing to evolve with the same determination that has defined the business since 1986.



Warrington manufacturers set for £2.5M digital leap forward

Hundreds of manufacturers across Warrington are set to accelerate their digital transformation after the Government confirmed fresh funding for the Made Smarter programme.

The £2.5M investment will unlock a new wave of support for SME manufacturers, giving them access to expert technology advice, leadership training, digital skills development and match-funded grants to boost productivity, drive innovation, create high-value jobs and cut carbon.

The continuation of Made Smarter North West builds on seven years of impact across the region, with the programme already helping manufacturers modernise operations, adopt advanced technologies and build the skills needed to compete in an increasingly digital world.

Since launching in 2019, Made Smarter North West has supported over 2,400 manufacturers, developed 550 digital roadmaps, delivered 250 leadership and digital champions training interventions, and placed 85 digital interns into businesses.

Over that time, manufacturers have secured more than £8.1M in matched funding, unlocking over £28.3M of investment in technologies ranging from AI and ERP systems to robotics, automation and additive manufacturing. Together, these investments are driving the creation of more than 1,900 jobs, upskilling almost 3,500 roles, and contributing £287M to the North West economy.

Donna Edwards, Director of Made Smarter's North West adoption programme, said: "Made Smarter has already helped transform how SME manufacturers across the North West approach technology, skills and growth, showing that with the right advice, tools and confidence, businesses can take practical steps to modernise, improve productivity and build resilience.

"This new funding is a strong vote of confidence in the programme and its impact. It means we can reach even more manufacturers, helping them to plan ahead, invest in the right technologies and develop the skills they need to grow, unlock new opportunities and build long-term, sustainable competitiveness."

Made Smarter offers manufacturers a fast, practical route into digital transformation.

Businesses begin with an expert assessment to identify their technology and skills priorities, followed by a tailored digital roadmap to guide investment and implementation.

Leadership programmes, workforce training and digital internships help companies build the capabilities needed to adopt new technologies and embed change across their organisations.

To support investment, eligible businesses can access grants of up to £20,000 for technology projects.

To learn more and register, visit madesmarter.uk



From small acorns - hypnotherapy business benefits from accelerator grant

One of those to benefit from a Warrington Chamber Plus business accelerator grant is Rachel Kinney, founder of Acorn2Oak Hypnotherapy, where she offers compassionate, solution-focused hypnotherapy to support both adults and children experiencing anxiety, stress, stress related issues, overwhelm, low mood, and other challenges.

Before retraining as a hypnotherapist, Rachel spent 20 years working as a Primary School teacher in Warrington. While she found the role rewarding, a life-changing experience in 2013 had a profound impact on her own health and wellbeing, leaving her struggling with debilitating anxiety that made everyday life feel overwhelming.

Rachel vividly remembers sitting in her doctor's surgery with a strong sense that medication and a brief appointment were not addressing the deeper challenges she was facing. Determined to find a more meaningful and lasting solution, she began exploring complementary therapies and holistic approaches to wellbeing.

Through personal experience, she discovered powerful techniques that helped her regain control, restore balance, and move forward positively with her life.

This journey became the catalyst for significant personal and professional change. Rachel realised that the path she was on no longer aligned with the life she wanted to live. Inspired by her own healing journey, she pursued training in complementary therapies before eventually discovering her true passion Solution Focused Hypnotherapy.

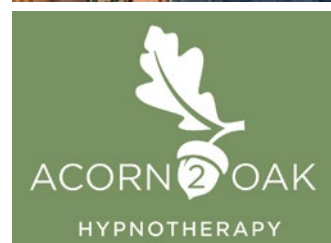
Today, Rachel is passionate about helping others understand the powerful connection between the mind and body and supporting them to create positive, lasting change. At Acorn2Oak Hypnotherapy, she uses a solution-focused approach, which means sessions are centred on moving forward rather than dwelling on the past. Together with her clients, she works to identify unhelpful thought patterns and build practical, positive strategies that support emotional wellbeing and resilience.

Rachel provides a safe, supportive, and non-judgemental environment where clients feel heard, understood, and empowered throughout their therapy journey. She has a particular interest in supporting both children and adults with anxiety, stress, and overwhelm, tailoring each session to meet the individual needs of the client.

Solution-focused hypnotherapy is considered a brief therapy, with most clients typically attending between six and twelve sessions. Alongside one-to-one therapy, Rachel also delivers engaging presentations that help people better understand how the brain works, including the impact of the fight, flight, or freeze response.

Rachel offers a complimentary discovery call and warmly welcomes anyone who is curious to learn more about the positive, transformative benefits of hypnotherapy.

For more details email rachel@acorn2oakhypnotherapy.co.uk





Three generations come together as Bents plans for its next chapter

As it approaches its 90th anniversary next year, Bents Garden & Home is placing a strong focus on its long-term future and is actively progressing plans for how the family owned and run business will continue to operate as it moves into its fourth generation.

As a multi-generational business with deep roots in the garden centre industry, Bents recognises the importance of structured succession planning in maintaining continuity. With this in mind, 22 members of the Bent family and spouses, aged between 12 and 83, attended an away day where the second, third and fourth generations came together to talk about the future of the Bents family business.

Hosted by renowned family business adviser, Juliette Johnson

the event was wide-ranging. Chairman Ron Bent talked about the history of Bents, dating back to 1937 when his parents started to grow roses in their front garden; all members of the family were invited to share their first memories of visiting Bents; and a brainstorming session looked at how the business might look beyond its 90th year.

Matthew Bent, Managing Director and third generation member of the family said: "We were delighted with the success of our recent family away day, which provided a valuable opportunity for everyone to come together, reflect on the business and look ahead to the future.

"As we approach our 90th anniversary, it was particularly important to open up new conversations around planning for the next generation and explore

how our younger family members can become more actively involved in the business, whether they work within it or not. Ensuring we have a clear and inclusive pathway for our future generations is key to maintaining the strength and continuity of Bents as we move into our next chapter."

Juliette Johnson added: "It was a real pleasure to be part of Bents' first family weekend. Seeing all the children engage was a real highlight – their curiosity, confidence and the quality of their questions were genuinely impressive. There was such a great energy throughout the event, thoughtful, informative and a lot of fun too. I have no doubt this is the start of many more brilliant family business weekends for Bents in the future."

As part of its succession planning

process, the family, with help and guidance from Juliette, has now created the Bent Family Constitution; a document which provides a common vision for the business and outlines the principles by which it is owned and operated together as a family. It has also introduced a Next Generation Guide providing information for younger members who are interested in learning more about, or getting involved with, the business.

By taking a proactive and strategic approach, the Bent family is ensuring the business is well positioned to evolve, while continuing to uphold the values, expertise and customer experience that have underpinned its success for nearly nine decades.

Stand Out Socks receives The King's Award for Enterprise

Warrington-based Stand Out Socks, a social enterprise co-founded by Stockton Heath brothers Christian and Ross Laing, has been honored with the King's Award for Enterprise in the Promoting Opportunity category.

The accolade marks a historic milestone for the business as the awards celebrate their 60th anniversary.

Founded in 2021, the business was inspired by Ross, who has Down syndrome and previously faced significant barriers to finding steady work.

Stand Out Socks aims to provide meaningful, paid employment for individuals with learning disabilities, placing them at the heart of operations including product development and

fulfillment.

To date, the company has:

- Provided over 2,000 paid working hours for its team.
- Raised more than £35,000 for local and national charities.
- Sold over 100,000 pairs of socks worldwide.

The company gained widespread national attention after appearing on Dragons' Den in 2024, where they secured investment from Steven Bartlett and Peter Jones. Since then, the brand has expanded significantly, collaborating with major names such as Manchester United and launching its products in over 200 Tesco stores across the UK.

"This award belongs especially to the incredible individuals with learning disabilities who are at the very heart of everything we do," the brothers said in a statement. "They are the reason we exist, and they are the reason we keep

pushing forward".

The King's Award for Enterprise is considered the UK's most prestigious business honor, with only 22 businesses nationwide recognized in the Promoting Opportunity category this year.



Europe's largest specialist varicose vein group expands to Warrington

UK Vein Care has announced the opening of two new specialist varicose vein clinics: one in Warrington and one in Crawley, West Sussex. The openings bring the UK network to 14 clinics and extend same-day, consultant-led vein treatment to patients across the North West and the South East commuter belt.

The two new clinics offer the same clinical programme as the rest of the network, including modern varicose vein treatment using Endovenous Laser Ablation (EVLA), foam sclerotherapy and avulsion phlebectomy, all performed under local anaesthetic with no hospital admission required. Typical waiting times are zero to three weeks, compared with 29 to 48 weeks on the NHS.

UK Vein Care is part of Nordic Health Group, a Copenhagen-headquartered healthcare company that has operated specialist varicose vein clinics since 2016. The group owns and operates 60 clinics across the United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands, and has completed more than 55,000 varicose vein treatments to date. It is the largest specialist varicose vein provider in Europe by clinic count, treatment volume and geographic reach.

One in three adults in the UK will develop varicose veins at some point in their lives. The NHS has significantly curtailed routine varicose vein treatment, restricting funding to cases involving serious complications such as active ulceration or recurrent bleeding. As a result, the majority of patients seeking timely, elective treatment must access private care.

Warrington serves a population of approximately 210,000, with strong catchment access across Cheshire, Merseyside and Greater

Manchester. Patients looking for a varicose vein clinic in Warrington can now access specialist care locally without travelling to Manchester or Liverpool. The new clinic at Old Alder Lane, Burtonwood provides a genuinely accessible alternative for patients in Warrington, St Helens, Widnes, Runcorn, Wigan and Chester.

Thomas Lawaetz, Founder and CEO, Nordic Health Group said: "When we started in Copenhagen in 2016, we had one clinic, one mission and one vision: to help as many people as possible to an improved quality of life without varicose veins, using the best possible treatment protocol. Everything since then has been built on that same principle. The UK is a market where the need is large, NHS waiting lists are long and specialist private provision is still limited. Warrington and Crawley are two communities where patients have told us that access to specialist care is difficult. That is exactly where we want to be."

Gary Maytham, Consultant Vascular Surgeon and CMO at UK Vein Care said: "At UK Vein Care our clients are attended to by experienced Consultant Vascular Surgeons from the first consultation through to completion of treatment. An initial consultation, involving history taking, examination and duplex ultrasound, is undertaken by the surgeon who will treat you. This enables the surgeon to gain a full understanding of the effect that varicose veins are causing as well as of your aims and expectations of treatment. A treatment plan is built on these assessments and is carried out by this same surgeon. This end-to-end clinical ownership, combined with the volume of cases our surgeons handle, produces results that a generalist setting simply cannot replicate."



Thomas Lawaetz.



Digital marketing agency backs local charities following Warrington Business Expo success

Following the long-awaited return of the Warrington Business Expo to the Village Hotel, Fireheart Digital is celebrating the town's unique community spirit by donating to two local causes.

In a move that highlights the power of local collaboration, Fireheart Digital's co-founders, Stacey Whitney and Steph Houghton-Johns, have made a generous £650 donation to the event organisers, Kirsty James and Tony Longmore. Their request was simple: that these funds be shared between the two guest speakers who represented their charities at the Expo.

The Fireheart Digital team knows that in a town like ours, there are so many worthy causes where every penny counts. Having worked closely with the Expo team to support the event, Stacey and

Steph wanted to ensure this extra gesture went directly to the two charities involved:

Warrington Disability Partnership, led by CEO Dave Thompson MBE.

Making Space, led by CEO Rachel Peacock.

This collaboration shows exactly what makes Warrington such an amazing place to live and work. When local partners like Kirsty, Tony, and the Fireheart Digital team work together, the whole community benefits.

"Warrington has so much heart, and the Expo really showcased that energy," says Stacey. "A huge thanks to Kirsty James and Tony Longmore for a fantastic event. We were inspired to provide further support to the charities involved, and championing the life-changing work David and

Rachel do was the perfect choice. It's a great example of why we always choose to collaborate with local partners."

Fireheart Digital is a local digital marketing agency based in Warrington, led by co-founders

Stacey and Steph. Celebrating their six years in business this year, they're passionate about helping businesses grow and believe that the best results come from building strong, honest, and local relationships.



Warrington coach launches business to boost performance in customer-facing teams

A Warrington-based coach has launched a new business aimed at helping employees and managers perform more consistently in high-pressure, customer-facing environments.

Jack Longton, founder of Jack Longton Life Coaching, is combining over 10 years of commercial experience in sales, leadership and customer service with a structured, wellbeing-focused approach to performance and behaviour change.

Having built his career in fast-paced, target-driven environments, Jack experienced first-hand the pressures faced by employees expected to deliver results while managing constant customer interaction.

"Performance is often measured purely on outcomes, but very little attention is given to how people manage the pressure that comes with it," he explains. "What I've seen consistently is that when confidence drops or stress increases, performance becomes inconsistent."

His business has been built around bridging that gap between performance and wellbeing.

Jack now works with organisations to deliver structured training programmes focused on communication, resilience, confidence and performance in customer-facing roles. These are delivered through a range of flexible formats including workshops, multi-week programmes, team development

sessions and one-to-one coaching for managers and senior staff.

Programmes can be tailored to specific business needs, with examples including Confidence & Communication with Customers, Resilient Performance in Customer-Facing Roles, and leadership-focused development for managers looking to improve team performance and consistency.

"The focus is on practical application," he says. "It is not just about teaching skills, it is about helping people actually use them in real situations. Whether that is handling objections, managing difficult conversations or staying composed under pressure, those are the moments that define performance."

The programmes combine behavioural insight with simple, repeatable frameworks that can be embedded into day-to-day roles, helping organisations improve customer experience, team confidence and overall performance.

Alongside his corporate work, Jack also offers one-to-one coaching, supporting individuals looking to build confidence, gain clarity and develop greater consistency in both their personal and professional lives.

His coaching approach is structured and action-focused, helping clients move beyond awareness and into measurable change.

"I work with a lot of driven individuals who know what they

need to do, but something is getting in the way," he adds. "That might be self-doubt, overthinking or a lack of consistency. The goal is to help them build trust in themselves and take action, so progress becomes something they can rely on."

With increasing focus on both wellbeing and performance across UK workplaces, Jack believes his combined approach offers a practical and relevant solution for modern organisations.

"Businesses want results, but those results come from people," he says. "If you can help people feel more confident, communicate more effectively and manage pressure better, you create performance that is not just higher, but far more sustainable."

To find out more about available programmes, formats and pricing, visit www.jacklongtonlifecoach.co.uk, call 07448 510034 or email jack@jacklongtonlifecoach.co.uk



Care UK Charity seeks business professionals for new trustee roles

Care UK Charity is a Warrington-based local charity that supports those most in need by providing furniture, household goods, clothing, baby equipment, and toys free of charge.

The charity operates two shops—one in Runcorn and one in Warrington—and is powered by a team of 19 staff members and approximately 60 volunteers.

During 2025, Care UK Charity achieved the following milestones:

- Completed 701 household essentials referrals, distributing 3,347 items of furniture, 130 beds, 1,220 pieces of bedding, 695 kitchen essentials, and 237 cleaning packs.
- Assisted 318 households with children, directly supporting over 600 children within those homes.
- Distributed more than 10,000 items of essential clothing.

The charity is seeking to recruit new trustees with experience in any of the following fields:

- Charity or general retail
- Transport logistics
- Marketing or income generation
- Finance, HR, or IT
- Prior experience as a trustee at other charitable organisations

The Board of Trustees meets approximately every 8 weeks on a Saturday morning in Warrington.

To learn more about the charity's work, visit the website: www.careukcharity.org.uk

Individuals interested in applying or discussing the role further are invited to contact Di Hubbard (General Manager) at diane Hubbard@careukcharity.org.uk





Toy Bank Weekend at Gulliver's World proves a big hit for KidsOut charity

A special weekend at Gulliver's World in Warrington saw thousands of toys donated to KidsOut, a charity supporting children affected by domestic abuse.

The four Gulliver's theme parks around the country stage a 'Toy Bank Weekend' each year, with entry discounted for families that bring a new, unused toy to donate.

This year's event saw an incredible 2,625 toys collected across the four sites.

Craig Clews, resort director at Gulliver's World, said: "The team here were so moved by how generous our visitors were over the weekend. The toys just kept coming and it's great to think that these donations will help bring enjoyment to children who have been through such challenging times."

Each year in England alone, more

than 28,000 children along with a parent, flee domestic abuse to seek sanctuary in refuges or safe accommodation. These children will have witnessed or experienced emotional, violent, or sexual abuse and will typically arrive in refuge with nothing.

KidsOut is a national charity that supports thousands of these children by providing them with brand-new toys on arrival in refuge and again at Christmas. It also takes them on fun days out. The toys collected over the weekend will be included in the boxes of new toys that children receive when arriving in refuge so they have something to call their own.

Louise Sherwood, community engagement manager, at KidsOut said: "A massive thank you to everyone at Gulliver's and their visitors across the four theme parks. The weekend was a tremendous success and the

staff that helped on all sites were amazing. The donated toys will make such a difference to the children we support in Refuge."

To find out more about the work of KidsOut, visit: www.kidsout.org.uk/

Toy Bank Weekend wasn't the only big success at Gulliver's World recently - Food Bank Weekend proved to be popular with visitors, with lots of much-needed supplies donated for Warrington Foodbank, part of The Trussell Trust, which has a network of more than 1,300 food bank centres around the UK.

Craig said: "So many toys and so much food donated over the two weekends, these events show what a fantastic community spirit there is among our visitors."

Gulliver's World is gearing up for a busy summer, with lots of rides, attractions, shows and activities on offer to entertain families. These include Desperado Drop,

Pirate Ship, Antelope Wooden Coaster, and the amazing animatronic dinosaurs.

There's also Gulliver's Gears car-themed area, home to the Grand Prix Racer rollercoaster and Overdrive - a 360-degree thrill and one of Gulliver's most daring rides - and the Land of Oz themed area, which has a Winged Monkeys Wicked-inspired adventure and Munchkin Motors.

The park has a variety of cool family accommodation options for those looking to stay overnight, including an onsite hotel housing Unicorn, Cowboy, Sweetie and Pirate-themed rooms, and themed dens, lodges and tipis in Wilderness Wharf.

For more information and to book tickets, please visit www.gulliversworldresort.co.uk

Quick-fire apprenticeship levy guide

From April 2026, the apprenticeship levy becomes the Growth and Skills Levy, introducing more flexibility and changes to how funds can be used and managed.

Levy funds can be used for apprenticeships, foundation apprenticeships and apprenticeship units - short, flexible training courses for new and existing staff.

Cheshire and Warrington Local Skills Improvement Plan have put together the following quick guide.

Is your payroll bill more than £3 million?

- Apprenticeship units will allow you to upskill staff over 1-16 weeks without committing to a full apprenticeship.
- From August 2026, the 10% government levy top-up will end.
- New levy funds will expire after 12 months, while existing funds keep a 24-month expiry period.

• Employers will contribute 25% towards apprenticeship training costs once levy funds are exhausted.

• Employers should review workforce plans and prioritise levy spending strategically.

Is your payroll bill less than £3 million?

- From September 2026 apprenticeships for under-25s will be fully funded.
- From October 2026, SMEs may receive incentive payments of up to £2,000 for recruiting

apprentices aged 16-24.

• Foundation apprenticeships offering paid entry-level roles focused on employability skills and progression.

• Initial sectors include construction, engineering, health and social care, & digital.

• Additional sectors launching in 2026 include catering, hospitality, retail, supply chain and administration.

To find out more get in touch! LSIP@sccei.co.uk



Bilfinger strengthens skills pipeline at Hinkley Point C with apprenticeship programme

Warrington-based Bilfinger has reinforced its commitment to developing the next generation of inspection professionals through its Non-Destructive Testing (NDT) Apprenticeship Programme at Hinkley Point C, with the latest intake of 12 new apprentices appointed to the project.

The award-winning programme was introduced in 2023 and plays a key role in supporting quality, safety, and inspection capability on one of the UK's most complex infrastructure projects, while creating long-term career pathways in a critical engineering discipline.

In addition to welcoming the new cohort, Bilfinger has also celebrated strong success from all eight of its Year 3 NDT apprentices at Hinkley Point C, who successfully completed their End Point Assessments with Distinction

from the British Institute of Non-Destructive Testing (BINDT) – demonstrating the quality of training, mentoring and on-site experience provided through the programme.

The NDT Apprenticeship Programme combines practical, site-based learning with formal qualification routes, ensuring apprentices develop the technical competence, safety-critical mindset and quality-centric approach required by the nuclear sector.

Charlie Cullimore, a current Year 3 NDT Apprentice at HPC, said: "Reflecting on the past three years, my apprenticeship has been an incredibly rewarding journey. While it certainly came with its challenges, particularly learning more complex techniques and balancing practical work alongside coursework, these experiences

pushed me to develop, stay focused, and improve.

"There were also many highlights, such as gaining hands-on experience with a variety of inspection methods, leading jobs which helped build my confidence in a leadership role, and working alongside an excellent team at HPC. I am extremely proud to have achieved a distinction overall in my Level 3 NVQ Apprenticeship, which made all the hard work worthwhile.

"Overall, I am genuinely pleased with how far I have progressed, and I am excited to continue building my career with Bilfinger."

Dr David Hall, Vice President of Inspection at Bilfinger UK, said: "Developing highly skilled and motivated inspection professionals is essential for the future of our industry. The NDT Apprenticeship Programme at Hinkley Point C demonstrates Bilfinger's commitment to investing in people, not just projects. By combining hands-on experience on a world-class project with structured training and recognised qualifications, we're building capability and capacity that will support the UK energy sector for decades to come.

"Hinkley Point C provides an exceptional environment for apprentices to learn and grow in confidence, offering exposure to advanced construction processes, uncompromising quality requirements, and a strong safety culture – all underpinned by experienced inspection and engineering teams."

Bill Gray, Project Manager, Hinkley Point C, said: "The success of our apprentices reflects the quality

of support and mentoring they receive on site. Achieving BINDT End Point Assessment success is a significant milestone, and it shows that apprentices at Hinkley Point C are developing the competence, confidence, and professionalism needed to support this project safely and effectively."

The appointment of 12 new apprentices further strengthens Bilfinger's inspection capability on the project and ensures effective knowledge transfer is embedded across the generation of engineers.

Hinkley Point C (HPC) is one of the UK's largest and most complex infrastructure projects and the first new nuclear power station to be built in the country in a generation. Located in Somerset, the site will play a critical role in the UK's long-term energy security by providing reliable, low-carbon electricity to millions of homes.

Bilfinger is a long-standing Tier 1 supplier on the project, delivering a wide range of inspection and industrial services, including non-destructive testing (NDT), to support the integrity, safety, and quality of safety-critical systems throughout construction. Bilfinger's ongoing involvement at Hinkley Point C reflects its expertise in the nuclear sector and its commitment to supporting major national infrastructure projects while providing a legacy of skilled talent to support future projects. These apprenticeships also contribute to the wider Hinkley Point C programme, which has trained more than 1,700 apprentices in a diverse range of disciplines since construction began – underlining the project's significant role in building the UK's future workforce.



■ Charlie Cullimore carrying out radiography in the East pool Bunker.



■ Year 3 Apprentices who all achieved a distinction on their apprenticeship end point assessment.

Wolves alumni celebrates 50 years of King's Trust at Buckingham Palace

A former Warrington Wolves player turned multi-million-pound logistics entrepreneur has attended The King's Trust 50th Anniversary Garden Party, held in Buckingham Palace Gardens.

Today Team founder and managing director Jamie Boyd, 44, was among invited guests who gathered to celebrate five decades of the charity's work supporting young people across the UK.

The event also coincided with the 21st anniversary of Today Team – the Risley-headquartered logistics firm that Jamie established in 2005 after a knee injury ended his professional rugby career.

"It doesn't seem that long ago since I was stood in front of the Trust's panel in Chester as a 24-year-old lad – asking for a £3,000 loan to lease a van and start a courier business," recalled Jamie, whose invitation reflects his ongoing contribution to the Trust as an ambassador.

"Over the years, it's been really fulfilling to give something back by public speaking and mentoring young people who are starting their own businesses through the Trust. It's a brilliant organisation that gives people the confidence and support to take that first step, and I'll be forever grateful for the help it gave me to take mine."

Pavlos, Crown Prince of Greece, joined King Charles on the Palace

steps for the British national anthem – signalling the beginning of the festivities attended by celebrity guests including Dame Helen Mirren, Damien Lewis and Myleene Klass. His Majesty also took a turn behind the DJ decks alongside Christian St Louis and Idris Elba.

"Walking past the likes of Rob Brydon and Rod Stewart was pretty surreal," admitted Jamie. "But after a busy period in the business and becoming a dad to a very lively nine-month-old, I especially appreciated the opportunity to relax, have a cup of tea and wander around the Palace Gardens."

The visit proved to be a deeply reflective moment for the entrepreneur, who started his playing career at Crosfields ARLFC.

"Having to walk away from the sport I love after making the first team at Wolves was devastating," admitted Jamie, who continues to support both his former clubs through sponsorship initiatives with Today Team.

"Back then, I could never have imagined a future that would see me attending a garden party at Buckingham Palace while celebrating 21 years in business. Building Today Team from the ground up has given me a sense of purpose and allowed me to create a legacy beyond my playing career, which makes moments like this even more meaningful."



Manufacturer lights up hospice relaxation room

Lighting manufacturer Ansell Lighting has continued its support for St. Rocco's Hospice in Warrington with the creation of a feature lighting wall for a new relaxation room.

St. Rocco's was Warrington-headquartered Ansell's charity of the year in 2025, with the business raising more than £1,200. The lighting specialist offered to support with the new relaxation facility, which is now benefitting patients and loved ones who use St. Rocco's.

Ansell created and installed the feature wall board using its LED Cell strip lighting range. The lighting has a remote control so colours and relaxing scenes can be adjusted according to the needs of the individual patients.

To create a tranquil and relaxing space the room also includes recliner chairs, salt lamps, throws, a music player and blackout blinds and is used for therapies including reflexology, hand and head massage, group therapy sessions and relaxation classes.

Gemma Sheerin, Marketing and Communications Manager at St. Rocco's, said: "The lighting feature wall has brought another dimension to our relaxation room. Using the lights we are able to provide a calm and soothing environment for our patients. The

lights help to induce a feeling of relaxation for our patients as soon as they enter the room. During treatments, the lights are also a gentle distraction to help calm the mind as the therapy soothes the body."

Sarah Ankers- HR Director, from Ansell Lighting, said: "I'm incredibly proud of the way our colleagues and the wider business have come

together to support St. Rocco's. The generosity, energy and commitment everyone has shown truly reflects who we are as an organisation. St. Rocco's does truly incredible work, providing compassionate care and vital support to patients, and those important to them, during some of the most difficult moments of their lives. Being able to contribute to that mission is something we value deeply.

"One of the standout moments this year has been the beautiful lighting scheme our team designed, using our products to enhance the therapy room. This has helped create a warm, calming space that supports the wellbeing of those who use it, and it's a wonderful example of how sharing our skills and creativity can make a meaningful difference."



Property Review hears how Warrington poised for economic transformation as Northern Powerhouse Rail gains momentum

Warrington's economic future took centre stage at a major property and infrastructure event held at the Park Royal Hotel, where over 200 business leaders and policymakers attended the 28th annual Property Review.

Speaking on behalf of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership, Chief Executive Henri Munson outlined how long-awaited rail improvements could reshape Warrington's role within the North of England. He emphasised that the proposed Northern Powerhouse Rail would significantly enhance east-west connectivity, linking Warrington more effectively with major cities including Leeds and Sheffield.

The plans include a new rail line passing through Manchester Airport and connecting to Warrington, with services expected to begin development in the 2030s. Crucially, Newman stressed that the benefits go beyond faster journeys. "It's about frequency and reliability," he explained, noting that regular, turn-up-and-go services would fundamentally change commuting patterns and perceptions of distance.

A key feature under discussion is a new underground station in Manchester, enabling through-services across the Pennines without the need for trains to terminate and reverse. For Warrington, this would mean seamless connections across the North, effectively expanding its labour market and making the town more attractive to both businesses and residents.

Newman argued that improved connectivity would allow Warrington to "have the best of both worlds" – maintaining its identity as a thriving town while gaining access to the economic opportunities of larger neighbouring cities. He dismissed concerns that major cities drain prosperity from surrounding areas, instead pointing to Warrington as evidence that proximity to Manchester and Liverpool has historically driven growth.

Local leaders also highlighted how the rail project could unlock significant housing and regeneration opportunities, particularly around new and existing stations. By focusing development in well-connected areas, planners could avoid the infrastructure pressures that have challenged previous housing proposals.

Early modelling suggests the potential for around 10,000 new jobs, 4,500 new homes, and substantial commercial development centred on a new east-west station at Warrington Bank Quay. Improved journey times – including as little as 15 minutes to Manchester and under 20

minutes to Liverpool – would place Warrington firmly at the heart of a "Northern Growth Corridor."

Alongside infrastructure ambitions, the event also showcased Warrington's strong economic fundamentals. A detailed property market review presented by BE Group revealed that the town has experienced one of the fastest growth rates in the UK over the past decade. Between 2013 and 2023, economic output rose by 41%, while employment increased by 23%.

Warrington now boasts the highest disposable income levels in Northern England and has seen significant expansion in knowledge-intensive sectors. Around 20% of businesses operate in professional, scientific, or technical fields, while the town has doubled employment in knowledge-based services since 2015.

The property sector remains a key driver of this growth. Industrial and logistics markets continue to perform strongly, with major investments and rising rental values. However, a shortage of high-quality office space was identified as a potential constraint, with limited new development in recent years.

Retail and leisure activity has also rebounded, with increased investment in town centre destinations and a growing visitor economy. Meanwhile, residential demand remains robust, with average house prices exceeding £275,000 compared to the national average of £270,000 and ongoing large-scale housing developments across the borough.

Despite these positive indicators, speakers stressed that infrastructure investment must be matched with coordinated policy on skills, innovation, and decarbonisation to fully realise the region's potential.

The Property review event, hosted by Warrington & Co and compered by former Northern news correspondent Jim Hancock, concluded with a clear message: Warrington is already a standout economic performer, but projects like Northern Powerhouse Rail could elevate it further – transforming the town into a central hub within a more connected and prosperous Northern economy.

Since its inception, the report has been independently compiled by Warrington-based commercial property consultants, BE Group, providing a definitive health check on the borough's economic activity and future growth prospects.

The 2026 Review highlights a year of continued growth. While many regions face economic headwinds, Warrington continues to perform at a high level, bolstered by over



More than 200 business leaders attended the event.

£150 million of investment flowing into the town over the last year.

Key findings from the report include:

- **Top-tier growth:** The Cities Outlook report 2026 ranks Warrington among the UK's best for growth in living standards, a result of high-value job creation and robust economic foundations.
- **Business boom:** Prosperity is underpinned by a healthy increase in new businesses choosing Warrington, alongside consistently low unemployment rates.
- **Thriving high streets:** Warrington's high street is performing well, with new shops, independent cafes, and vibrant restaurants springing up across the borough.
- **Major developments:** Significant progress has been made on the expansion of Omega South, while future-facing schemes like the Fiddlers Ferry regeneration are set to transform industrial landmarks into sustainable communities.
- **Innovation and culture:** Using government Town Deal funding, Warrington is investing heavily in its digital and cultural identity. The Causeway at St James Business Centre is already a hive of innovation, while the transformation of the Pyramid theatre into a premier cultural hub is on track for completion later this year.
- **A better-connected Warrington:** Warrington is set to be a

key transport hub after the government confirmed its commitment to Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR). The planned low-level station at Warrington Bank Quay will act as a vital link between Liverpool and Manchester, unlocking thousands of jobs and positioning the town at the heart of one of the North's most significant infrastructure projects in a century.

CLlr Hans Mundry, Leader of Warrington Borough Council, said: "While the national conversation has often been dominated by stories of slow growth and economic stagnation, Warrington has consistently bucked the trend. Our continued success is the result of strong partnership work between our business sector, our residents, the council, and our local and regional partners. It's helping us build a town that is resilient, innovative, and ambitious."

Stephen Fitzsimons, Chief Executive of Warrington Chamber and Warrington & Co board member, added: "It was great to have the opportunity to once again bring businesses together to share our success, provide a valuable insight into all of the progress being made within our property development and investment market and look ahead to the future."

This year's event was sponsored by:

- Bell, Lamb & Joynson Solicitors
- Cactus Clothing
- Orbit Developments
- Pin Property
- Panattoni
- Warrington's Own Buses



Host Jim Hancock.

United Utilities is a double winner in Ofwat's Water Breakthrough Challenge

United Utilities has been awarded £9.5m funding to take the lead on delivering two innovative projects focused on using wastewater as a useful resource.

Of the 19 successful bids in Ofwat's sixth Water Breakthrough Challenge, United Utilities is taking the lead on two and working as a partner on nine others.

Having already delivered a world first by using biogas as a sustainable feed source to produce clean hydrogen and graphene, United Utilities will once again join forces with tech firm Levidian to move the technology from a small-scale demonstration to full-scale installation.

The new larger version is expected to produce three times as much sustainable hydrogen and the advanced material graphene, as the earlier trial.

United Utilities will work with Severn Trent Water; Anglian Water Services; South West Water; Wessex Water; Yorkshire Water and Scottish Water to explore adoption across the water sector.

Manchester-based Concretene will provide a commercial output for the graphene produced through their admixture for lower-carbon concrete whilst Merseyside-based technology company ULEMco will assess potential transport uses for the hydrogen derived from LOOP, Carbon Ion Energy will test the graphene for use in the manufacture of their supercapacitors for improved

energy storage and Tarmac will explore other uses.

United Utilities is partnering with US tech provider General Atomics on the 'SCWO with the flow: Super Critical Water Oxidation (SCWO) for a cleaner future' project. It will determine whether the technology is suitable for adoption in the UK as a method of reducing the volume of sludge produced as a byproduct of the wastewater treatment process.

Cleanfields Technologies will provide support for trials taking place in the US while Queen's University in Belfast will model the SCWO system for application for UK sludge. Yorkshire Water and Wessex Water are also partners.

Tom Lissett, Bioresources and Green Energy Director at United Utilities said: "These exciting projects are focused on how we can create the most value from sludge processing and deliver the most efficient operations for our customers.

"We know that graphene can be produced from a sustainable biogas feedstock and has fantastic potential to be used to further reduce carbon within and beyond the water sector. Biogas generated from sewage waste could produce up to 75,000 tonnes of hydrogen a year – enough to fuel more than 40% of all UK bus and coach journeys. Our ambition is to see this transformative technology used more widely across the sector, playing a key role in the UK's transition to net zero."

Jo Jolly, Director, Innovation, Ofwat, said: "The water sector is going through its biggest transformation in 30 years. We have to make sure these changes drive far better outcomes for society and the environment. Multiple urgent challenges must be solved. And, importantly, our mindset must change. So that's our mission: bold, innovative solutions that take a long-term approach to the health of our vital water system and the impact of the water industry on environments and communities. This line-up of winners shows us

just what can be achieved when we set our minds to it."

The Water Breakthrough Challenge is delivered by innovation prize experts Challenge Works (part of Nesta), in partnership with Arup and Isle Utilities, and funded by Ofwat's Water Innovation Fund.

The Water Innovation Fund is a key pillar in Ofwat's mission to drive innovation that ensures the water sector is ready for the challenges of the future and results in better outcomes for customers and the environment.



■ Tom Lissett, Bioresources and Green Energy Director.

Investment in qualifications strengthens management team

Senior members of Kemtile's management team are better equipped to lead and contribute to its business growth plans having secured a highly regarded management qualification.

All recently completed a Level 7 NVQ Diploma in Construction Senior Management, a work-based course covering procurement, budgeting, team leadership and project oversight.

The six-month qualification was a flexible, remote NVQ for experienced construction professionals, designed to focus on workplace performance and increased competency to better deliver results for customers and the company.

Business Development Manager Akeel Ahmed commented: "It's given me more confidence in my leadership role, stronger commercial awareness and a greater understanding how to use all the resources at our disposal to achieve our business development goals."

Jamie Cook, Director, said that the investment in individuals was a long-proven strategy at Kemtile, not only serving the business needs, but identifying and building

skill sets for loyal employees.

He said: "Everyone wants to progress, be capable of doing more, developing themselves and helping to build a business. That drives job satisfaction. It makes so much sense to put experienced people through these qualifications."

Chris Cloherty, Commercial Operations Director and Wayne Briers, Operations Manager also completed the training.

Chris commented: "It's a joined-up investment across sales and commercial operations which makes us stronger, better able to cope with pressures and builds resilience. Completing it as a team had great benefits as well – we encouraged each other to get the most out of it."

Achieving the Level 7 NVQ Diploma in Construction Senior Management for Akeel, Chris and Wayne will also enable them to secure the coveted CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme) Black Manager Card providing tangible proof of competence to clients.

It also acts as a direct route to Membership of the CIOB (Chartered Institute of Building),

further enhancing company reputation.

Kemtile has been providing turnkey industrial flooring for over 40 years. It is a division of Stonhard, one of Europe's leading manufacturers and installers with 100+ years of experience itself

operating across 50+ territories. Together it serves the UK manufacturing and engineering sector – in food and beverage, pharma and increasingly growth areas like EV production and data centres – with a bespoke 'single source' solution to all commercial flooring needs.



■ Akeel Ahmed (left), Wayne Briers (top right) and Chris Cloherty (bottom right) have recently completed a Level 7 NVQ Diploma in Construction Senior Management.

Cheshire and Warrington “an engine for growth”

Cheshire and Warrington was declared “an engine for growth” as the region’s trailblazing companies were cited among the North’s transformative projects – taking centre stage for the launch of a £14bn investment pipeline.

Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority chair Cllr Louise Gittins was also able to bang the drum for the region joining mayors, leaders and businesses for a panel discussion on Northern growth at the Great North Investment Summit.

The event saw the launch of The Great North Investment Prospectus which backed by the Chancellor Rachel Reeves, highlights a multi-billion-pound pipeline of

opportunities across the North.

Cheshire and Warrington’s diverse and innovative businesses feature highly in the prospectus, which details opportunities in the North’s clean energy, advanced manufacturing, defence, AI, life sciences and creative industries.

Cllr Gittins said: “Cheshire and Warrington stands ready to play a leading role in creating prosperity across the North and for UK PLC.

“Our trailblazing businesses and industries are rightly recognised in the Northern Growth Prospectus. But today is about more than individual places- it’s about the North coming together with a shared purpose

and a shared ambition for growth, investment and opportunity. The North has scale, ingenuity and determination to drive the UK’s future prosperity. By working as one North, we can unlock that potential and deliver long-term impact; our vision is bold and united, and we have the collective strength to turn our vision into lasting national impact.

“The blueprint also complements the CWCA’s own ambitions and in the coming months we will be bringing forward plans to invest in accelerating growth priorities and business support for a region home to almost one million residents, national strengths in clean energy, life sciences and advanced manufacturing, 41,000 businesses,

and a £4bn tourism economy.”

Steve Purdham, chair of the Cheshire and Warrington Business Advisory said: “The Great North Investment Summit is the moment Cheshire and Warrington steps onto the national stage – not as a Northern add-on, but as one of the engines of Northern growth. To investors looking North the window to engage early in Cheshire and Warrington is open now.”

Bringing together combined authorities, local councils, business, universities and government, The Great North is the UK’s first mayoral led collaboration, established by northern leaders to elevate the voice, visibility and economic impact of the North.





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

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From Essex grit to Cheshire Innovation: How FindU is ending the “Tick-Box” era of diversity

For Adrian Garwood, founder and majority owner of Cheshire-based recruitment firm FindU, business isn't just about filling roles - it's about fixing a broken system.

Originally from Essex and a recent graduate of the Warrington Chamber Plus business accelerator, Adrian has combined his entrepreneurial drive with his personal journey with ADHD to rethink how companies approach hiring.

“For too long, neurodiversity in the workplace has been treated as a ‘tick-box’ exercise,” Adrian explains. “On paper, companies look inclusive. In reality, brilliant minds - people with ADHD, Autism or Dyslexia - are being overlooked. They end up stuck in a cycle of short-term roles because traditional structures prioritise rigid processes over people.” FindU was built to change that.

Working alongside co-founder Keria Jones, who brings strong recruitment expertise and industry insight, Adrian has developed a model that bridges the gap between talented individuals and forward-thinking employers.

Together, they have created what they call a “Balanced Talent” approach - helping businesses build teams that combine dependable execution with the creative, problem-solving strengths often found in neurodivergent professionals.

“The combination of lived experience and recruitment knowledge is what makes our approach different,” says Keria. “We don't just place candidates - we ensure both the individual and the employer are set up for long-term success.”

The timing couldn't be more important. With ADHD-related employment challenges rising significantly in recent years, many employers are unsure how to properly support neurodiverse staff. FindU reframes this challenge as an opportunity.

“When businesses move beyond ‘tick-box’ diversity and start genuinely supporting people, they unlock a real competitive advantage,” Adrian says. “These individuals often become some of the most innovative and valuable members of a team.”

FindU offers more than recruitment. The company provides a structured “Success Plan,” helping employers access government support such as the Access to Work scheme, which can fund specialist equipment and coaching at little or no cost. For candidates, the focus is on finding psychologically safe environments where they can perform at their best.

“The Chamber Plus programme gave me the clarity to build something scalable,” Adrian adds.

“Now, we want to help businesses across Warrington and beyond see that neurodiversity isn't something to manage - it's something to harness.”

Whether you're a professional tired of trying to “fit in” or an employer ready to innovate, FindU is helping to lead the shift towards a more inclusive and high-performing future.

For more details visit <https://findupeople.co.uk/>



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