

KENT DIRECTOR



A BAE Systems early careers group training session

Fresh research highlights BAE Systems' contribution to Medway

Go-ahead firm plans 500 extra jobs in Kent within five years

NEWLY-released research carried out by Oxford Economics shows the extent of BAE Systems' contribution to the economy of the South East, including creating highly skilled jobs, funding world-leading research and sustaining a vibrant national supply chain.

BAE Systems is Medway's largest private employer and its 1,500 staff are part of the firm's 8,200 full time employees in the South East who deliver some of the world's most advanced defence technology, from satellites to electronic systems and cyber capabilities.

News that the company plans to increase its Medway workforce by up to 500 within the next five years has been welcomed by Medway Council.

Cllr Lauren Edwards, Medway Council's cabinet

member for economic development and inward investment, said: "This announcement sends a positive message about Medway as a place for cutting edge science, technology and engineering to other international businesses looking for a UK base.

Leading company

"BAE Systems has long been one of Medway's leading companies. This investment demonstrates huge confidence in Medway as a great place to invest and will be a further boost to the local economy. It will offer long-term skilled employment for hundreds more of our young people and attract others to move to the area.

"BAE Systems' commitment to developing

Continued on page 4

INSIDE



Where to focus in challenging times

page 13

Ashford's Green Week success

page 6



The secret of successful learning

page 11

Car thefts have reached epidemic proportions

page 15



Protect your data when staff leave

page 12



INSIGHTFUL • COMMERCIAL • RESPONSIVE

Contact us to find out how we can help you and your business thrive

Nexus House, 2 Cray Road, Sidcup, Kent DA14 5DA | 020 8309 0011 | info@mcbridesllp.com | www.mcbridesllp.com





WELCOME

Learning to teach others

HOW many times have you been disappointed with the service you've received as a customer, either in business, out shopping or in a restaurant?

Not too many times I hope. Successful businesses will always strive to ensure that their customers are not disappointed. They will have procedures in place to avoid such outcomes and will have trained their staff well.

However, on this last point and according to the article on page 11, while the majority of senior executives rate the learning culture in their firms as positive, quite a large number of employees do not!

Surprise

This came as a surprise to me. Although I know that for trainers encouraging employees to participate can, at times, be difficult – there will always be those in the class who feel reluctant to ask questions for fear of being singled out or appearing dumb for asking.

It comes down to good teaching really and not everyone is able to impart their knowledge in a clear and precise manner which inspires without causing a modicum of fear in those being taught!

All that said, the training and development of staff has undoubtedly been put on the back burner over the last

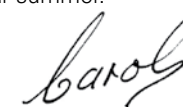


Carol Hansom is the founder and CEO of Pride Publications, established in 1982, which publishes successful business and lifestyle magazines in the south and east of England

couple of years due to covid and many employees working from home. So perhaps now that we are 'mostly' back in the office or workplace, we can give some serious thought to this subject.

After all, in these times when every order counts, let's not lose business when a little thoughtful guidance will help those on the front line deal more effectively with customers. In so doing, they stand to achieve more for themselves and for us as employers.

I hope you are enjoying your summer.



Publisher: Carol Hansom
Editor: Trevor Gehlcken
Published by Pride Publications, 14 Middletons Road, Yaxley, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire PE7 3LR
Telephone: 01733 242312
Email: editorial and advertising – carol@pridepublications.co.uk
Website: www.pridepublications.co.uk

The publisher does not accept any responsibility for the content of advertisements or contributed editorial in this magazine. Opinions expressed editorially are not necessarily those of the editor or publisher and no responsibility is accepted for loss, damage or injury incurred as a result of opinions, advice or comment. Readers should consult their advisers before acting on any issue raised.



MAGEE GAMMON
 CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS
 TAX & BUSINESS ADVISORS



Working WITH YOU, not just FOR YOU

- Tax planning
- Profit improvement strategies
- Business development advice
- Inheritance tax advice
- Succession planning
- Payroll

Tel: 01233 630000
www.mageegammon.com



GAROLLA PREMIUM Increased Security • Double Insulation One-Touch Close	PRICED EXAMPLE £1,990 PREMIUM • 3.4M • ANTHRACITE	PRICED EXAMPLE £895 COMPACT • UP TO 2.4M
FREE FITTING PAYMENT ON INSTALLATION	PRICED EXAMPLE £2,740 PREMIUM • 5.1M • BLACK	

Improve, Don't Move!

Maximise the value of your home.

It's time to upgrade your current garage door to a Garolla. They're strong, secure and thermally insulated. So if you're transforming your garage into a home gym, office space, garden bar or simply using it to house your pride and joy, Garolla has the perfect solution to transform your home.

- SPACE- SAVING - MAXIMISE YOUR GARAGE HEADROOM
- SECURITY-ENABLED AUTO-LOCKING SYSTEM
- CHOICE OF 21 COLOURS TO MATCH YOUR HOME
- REMOVAL AND RECYCLING OF YOUR OLD DOOR
- DEDICATED AFTER-CARE TEAM



CALL NOW
01843 880 238

LINES OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK

www.garolla.co.uk



Top award for birds and rare plant conservation

A KENT producer which grows more than 60 different crops has been presented with a top conservation award for its work supporting farmland birds and rare plant species.

The Country Land and Business Association (CLA), which represents hundreds of farmers, landowners and rural businesses across the county, awarded its Emsden Trophy.

The awards presentation and drinks reception was hosted by last year's winner, Fidelity Weston, of Romshed Farm near Sevenoaks.

The 2023 recipient is Watts Farms, a family-run business headquartered in Aylesford, nominated by Kent Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) for its work supporting and improving diverse habitats.

It farms over 600 hectares of land, growing dozens of varieties of vegetables, fruits, salads and herbs from asparagus to mint, supplying over 500 restaurants as well as major retailers and the NHS.

Joe Cottingham, director at Watts Farms, said: "We have been working hard on the environmental culture and philosophy, both on the farm and in the production facility. Environmental impact and taking care of our land is a key pillar of our culture, now and for the future. "We see ourselves as



Caroline Ayeards-Johnson of Watts Farms receives the trophy from Paul Cobb

caretakers of the land we farm for future generations and as such monitor all of our actions against the environment, to ensure that the baton can be passed on."

Kent FWAG adviser Paul Cobb said: "The interest and dedication shown by the team in encouraging and monitoring species of conservation concern is really inspiring."

PLANNING ADVICE FIRM LAUNCHES NEW LONDON OFFICE

DEMAND for planning advice and support has given planning consultancy DHA the confidence to expand and open its first London office.

The move by the South East's largest independent planning and highways consultancy, which already has offices in Maidstone and Gatwick, reflects the firm's success since it was crowned 2021 South East Planning Team of the Year by the industry's governing body, the Royal Town & Planning Institute (RTPI).

Alex Hicken, managing director of DHA, said: "With a portfolio of national landowners, property developers and housebuilders looking to take forward major projects across the South East, it made sense for us to open a central London office.



The site of the new DHA office in central London

provide planning, transport, urban design, environment, infrastructure and land consultancy advice for DHA's expanding roster of national and regional clients.

Patrick said: "This is a great step forward for the business, with our newest office in an ideal, central location.

Already there

"The expansion builds on the work we are already doing in Greater London, from high-end bespoke new homes to major scale referable schemes. I have no doubt this will help us to better serve the needs of our clients, cementing DHA's position among the most respected development consultancies in the capital and beyond."

DHA's London team, based at Metal Box Factory on Great Guildford Street close to London Bridge railway station, will be able to call upon the support of its 65-strong team across the firm.

Experience

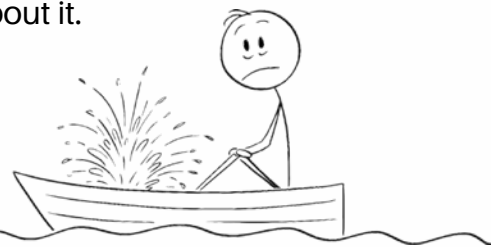
"Thanks to the experience of our team, we will continue to attract major planning projects.

"London is increasingly an important part of our business. Our team has established a reputation for delivering high standards and we will be able

to make ourselves more easily accessible." The London office will be headed up by Patrick Reedman, director, and will



Don't wait for a disaster to take place before you start to think about it.



Maxim can advise on:

- Crisis communications strategies
- Testing and reviewing scenarios
- Media training

www.maxim-pr.co.uk



BAE Systems' contribution

From page 1

a skilled workforce is to be congratulated and we welcome any opportunity to help it strengthen its supply chain links with other local businesses and our three universities."

Last year, BAE Systems' supply chain sustained a total of 26,500 jobs in the South East.

The company is hiring thousands more experienced professionals and early careers trainees this year across the South East, with opportunities in a range of areas including marine and electronic engineering, project management and finance.

Charles Woodburn, BAE Systems' chief executive, said: "As one of the UK's largest employers, we recognise our responsibility to help deliver economic prosperity as well as national security. Our continued investment in skills, technology and the communities where we live and work supports thousands of jobs and is

creating opportunities for people to play an important role in helping to keep our country and our allies safe."

Data published in the 'BAE Systems' Contribution to the UK Economy' report shows that last year, the company spent £1.15 billion with local suppliers and provided mentorship for SMEs in a boost for regional business. Across the UK, BAE Systems supported 132,000 jobs and contributed £11 billion to GDP – equivalent to 0.4% of the domestic economy.

Almost 40% of the company's employees are based in the UK's most deprived areas, where long-term employment opportunities are especially important.

To support learning and development in these communities and across its workforce, the company spent £180 million on education and skills last year, almost doubling its annual investment since the previous year.

Vintage railway festival proves a huge success

A VIBRANT Railway Vintage Festival was held at Newtown Green to commemorate the 180th anniversary of the Ashford Railway Works and the 175th anniversary of Newtown Railway Works.

The event was organised by South Willesborough and Newtown Community Council (SWANCC), sponsored by Ashford Borough Council and Ashford International Development Company.

There was a wide range of entertainment and activities on offer, including classic cars, a vintage funfair and handcrafted market stalls, plus the land train which ran around the green for the whole day.

There were also professional acts from London and Brighton who performed iconic music and dance pieces through the eras 1920s to 1960s, to signify when the last steam train left Ashford. Creative local talent was also showcased on the community stage.

There was also an exciting world record attempt, for the largest human image of

a train. The evidence has been submitted and the outcome will be eagerly anticipated.

SWANCC worked tirelessly to ensure the event was a fitting tribute to the important role Newtown Railway Works has had on the area.

A community memories tent hosted the Newtown Railway History Exhibition produced by local historian Ani from Tales on the tracks. Residents brought their own diaries and photographs to give a rich tapestry of local history and memories of the life of Newtown Railway Works.

Mayor Cllr Larry Krause and deputy mayor Cllr Lyn Suddards attended the event and with chair Cllr Sue Mullan and vice-chair Cllr



There was a wide range of vintage entertainment and activities on offer

Andy Rogers, planted trees in memory of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and Cllr George Koowaree.

DISCOVERY PARK EXTENDS LINKS WITH UNIVERSITY

AN agreement that will bring together students and businesses to benefit from access to state-of-the-art scientific equipment and facilities has been announced.

Discovery Park and the University of Greenwich have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that will see Kent's science park work closely with the staff and students at the university's three campuses.

The strategic partnership will see the two organisations collaborate on digitisation, data analytics, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, with a specific focus on drug and pharmaceutical science-related issues.

Martino Picardo, chairman of Discovery Park, said: "Bringing together students, academics and the businesses that have made Discovery Park their home will help nurture the all-important skills in the industries that will drive the future growth of the economy.

"Our Skills Hub will be a major focus of the agreement and strengthen academic/industry links and promote the provision of degree apprenticeships and learning programmes.

"Over the last year, we have put in place agreements with the county's three universities and leading further education providers to ensure that we, as the county's largest science park, can make the biggest possible impact for Kent."

SHEPHERD NEAME ANNOUNCES NEW CHARITY OF THE YEAR PARTNER

FAVERSHAM-based brewery Shepherd Neame has named FareShare as its charity of the year for 2023/24.

FareShare is the UK's biggest charity fighting hunger and food waste. It works with the food industry to get good-to-eat food, that might otherwise go to waste, to a network of 8,500 charities and community groups.

These charities help tackle the root causes of poverty and provide vital services, including homeless shelters and lunch clubs for elderly people suffering with isolation and support with issues including debt, employment and mental health.

Chief executive Jonathan Neame said: "We are committed to doing the right thing for our communities, our people and our environment. In light of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, we wanted to choose a charity partner which made a real difference



From left: FareShare's corporate partnerships officer Gemma Viner, Shepherd Neame chief executive Jonathan Neame and FareShare corporate partnerships manager Hannah Woolcott

to families and individuals in need. FareShare's ethos also fits with our ongoing efforts throughout the business to limit waste and recycle wherever possible, in line with our pledge to achieve zero waste to landfill by 2025."

Last year, FareShare provided the equivalent of 128 million meals to charities and groups across the UK, reaching one million people. For every £1 raised by Shepherd Neame, FareShare

will be able to provide the equivalent of four meals.

The 'Sheps Giving Committee', which oversees Shepherd Neame's charity initiatives, will be working with FareShare to organise fundraising activities at the brewery and across its pub estate throughout the next 12 months. These include a pledge to donate 50p from every Kids Meal Deal sold across its managed pubs and hotel to the charity.

Ashford Great Big Green Week activities prove a great hit

THIS year's national 'Great Big Green Week' activities organised by Ashford Borough Council proved a big hit with local residents.

The week is a national celebration of community action to tackle climate change and protect nature. The council organised various activities throughout the week to ignite conversations and encourage residents to get involved.

The main event, Great Big Green Week Roadshow, which took place in Ashford Town Centre, saw residents bringing in small electrical items in need of repair to the pop-up Repair Café Ashford or to be rehomed

by the Pilgrims Hospices. For those items unable to be repaired, residents could leave them to be recycled.

Many attended the free craft activities courtesy of 'Made in Ashford' and came along to the Craft Pre Loved sale. For the more musical, lots enjoyed a jamming session with the Junk Yard Orchestra, which took over the bandstand.

A green themed market stall took over Park Mall and experts were on hand to give advice on biodiversity, home energy efficiency and recycling, with live music courtesy of Revelation to enjoy while they wandered around.

A special environmental award was presented to Goat Lees Primary school by the Mayor, Cllr Larry Krause, in recognition of the exceptional achievement in gaining several environmental awards from the RSPCA and the 'Action Climate: Race to Zero' award.

The staff and students are leading the way in the ongoing enhancement of their school grounds and empowering the next generation to make a difference.

Eight Eco Schools came together to take part in a day learning about nature conservation, made possible by the 'Led by the Wild' group.

Six centuries of tradition continue with new wardens

A MEDIEVAL charity has elected two new wardens in a tradition that stretches back more than six centuries.

Derek Butler has been elected as senior warden, while Russell Cooper is the new junior warden of the Rochester Bridge Trust.

A former Maidstone Borough Councillor and Mayor, Derek was nominated to the trust in 2015 and served as junior warden since 2021. His experience includes work at the National Coal Board and the court service.

He said: "The trust is an historic charity operating in the modern world and all our work is carried out with the future in mind. From the long-term maintenance of our bridges or the immediate reduction of our carbon impact to the scholarships we offer to encourage and support



Russell Cooper (left) and Derek Butler

the education of future civil engineers and farmers – it is forward thinking that has ensured this medieval organisation has continued for more than 600 years."

Russell joined the trust in 2007 and has previously served as junior warden from 2015-

17 and senior warden from 2017-21. He is a Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

The pair were formally elected in May, when they were joined by two new members of the Court of Wardens and Assistants, John

Farmer and Dr Helen Pascoe, while long-standing member Paul Harriot stepped down after 40 years. These changes mean there are now 13 unpaid charity trustees.

The Rochester Bridge Trust was established in the 14th century, to take on the responsibility for the maintenance and provision of crossings of the River Medway at Rochester – at no cost to the public. It is governed by the Court of Wardens and Assistants. Of these, six are nominated members, with three by Medway Council, two by Kent County Council and one by Maidstone Borough Council.

A further seven are appointed from the community, based on their experience in engineering, estate management, finance or other areas useful for the business of the trust. The two wardens are elected by the members of the court.

ASHFORD LEADER VISITS No10 TO DISCUSS NUTRIENT SOLUTION

ASHFORD Borough Council leader, Cllr Noel Ovenden, has visited No10 Downing Street to meet with the prime minister's special advisers to discuss Government support in finding a national solution to nutrient neutrality.

The leader specifically raised the need to unblock the delivery of affordable homes in Ashford, that not building new homes does very little to slow the increase in water pollution and that Government organisations need to own this problem.

Cllr Ovenden said: "With hundreds of desperately needed affordable, shared

ownership and social homes held up by the moratorium on building in the Stour Valley due to the ongoing pollution of the Stodmarsh nature reserve, we need Government intervention now – and I made this very clear.

"What we're facing is a lack of ownership of the problem. Somebody in Government needs to take possession of the issue. The prime minister needs to act quickly to help us get our Local Plan back on track to deliver much needed homes in the right places and put a stop to the speculative applications we are seeing

across the borough."

Cllr Ovenden joined a number of local authority leaders across the country in signing a letter asking the prime minister to act now on nutrient neutrality.

Without it, they say, it will continue to stifle housing development and local economies. The letter from the District Councils' Network outlined the concerns from local government leaders and demanded Government intervention. A round-table discussion on the issue took place at the last Local Government Association Conference in Bournemouth.

girlings.com

Girlings

SOLICITORS

If it matters to you, it's important to us.

For all your business and personal law needs, speak to one of our experts today.

Ashford
01233 664711

Canterbury
01227 768374

Herne Bay
01227 367355

Dispute?

Not all businesses run smoothly – disputes inevitably occur. Partners fall out, Directors disagree, and once harmonious relationships can sour, impacting business performance and profits. So it's essential to resolve commercial disputes as quickly as, and as effectively as possible.

Disagree?

Our Dispute Resolution team provides expert advice, short-term tactics and long-term strategies to resolve business disagreements. Ranked in Chambers and Legal 500, we have an enviable track record in achieving mutually acceptable agreements, and preserving future relationships.

Divided?

To find out how we can help, call us on **01622 698000** or email enquiries@wmlaw.uk

whitehead-monckton.co.uk

Whitehead Monckton



Whitehead Monckton Limited (no. 08366029), registered in England & Wales. Registered office 5 Eclipse Park, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 3EN. Authorised and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority under no. 608279.



Josh Healey, owner of Addington Leisure, with Lorenzo Zaccheo, managing director of Alcaline

FOOTBALL CLUB ANNOUNCES NEW MANAGEMENT DEAL

FOLKESTONE Invicta Football Club is under new leadership after a consortium of committed local businesses came together to take on the day-to-day operations of the Isthmian Premier League team.

The deal will see Addington Leisure join forces with Folkestone Invicta's new headline sponsor Alcaline, the Anglo-Italian haulage, shipping and warehousing group based at Lympne. The aim is to secure the long-term financial future of Folkestone Invicta at its Cheriton Road ground for the benefit of the local community.

Josh Healey, owner of Addington Leisure, will work closely with former chairman Jim Pellatt, who has helped shape the club, as he takes on the new role of chairman.

Positive changes

Commenting on the deal, Josh said: "We're confident fans will see positive changes on and off the field. We're fully behind joint-head coaches Michael Everitt and Roland Edge and their efforts to strengthen the squad – work which is already under way

with some exciting new signings.

"We have a five to 10-year plan for the club and will build an even more engaged and passionate community around it. A key part of that will be making it a place to not only watch great local football, but also to enjoy memorable family events in the new Dug Out sports bar.

Fan partnership

"We want to work in partnership with the fans, council, sponsors, residents and the whole football family of Folkestone and we are committed to putting the club at the heart of the local community."

In the coming seasons, the consortium's plan is to transform the club and introduce new training facilities, including a 3G pitch.

Lorenzo Zaccheo, managing director of Alcaline, said: "As an Italian, football is in my blood and when Josh approached us to get on board and join the Invicta team as commercial partner, we jumped at it. There's already a strong desire to win within the club."

"We have a five to 10-year plan for the club and will build an even more engaged and passionate community around it"

Getting an awards shortlisting can do wonders for your company

WE all know the importance of positive feedback and testimonials to help convince new clients you're the person or business they want to work with, but much as I like to read and share positive comments, if I don't know the person, how can I be sure the testimonial is genuine?

If it comes with contact or business information, that can be reassuring, but if it's by 'Sam, Maidstone', that's less reassuring.

In contrast, being shortlisted for an award can be an example of positive feedback from a named organisation,



"Winning is obviously the dream, but coming second, third or fourth is definitely not a failure"

one that most likely utilises judges who have their own professional experience in the field – which is something that can be easier to trust.

The type of awards you may wish to consider could be small business awards, or regional awards.

Then there are targeted (local and national) awards, such as housebuilding, catering, product design, customer service, environmental activities, etc.

However, there's a cycle to awards – entry, shortlisting, winning, repeat – that means it's vital you make the most of being involved while they are a current event.

Publicise

We often advise clients to publicise an awards shortlisting as soon as they find out about it. They're sometimes reluctant to do so in case they don't win – but the reason to publicise a shortlisting is for that reason: in case you don't win.

Being a finalist in an awards scheme is a big achievement. For example, one of your staff has been shortlisted in an award for customer service.

Even if those awards are restricted to your particular area of work, there will still be countless other people who could have made the list, but your 'Chris from the Ashford branch' is one of just four who has been invited to attend the awards ceremony.

Over the moon

Chris will most likely be over the moon to be recognised – and celebrating his or her achievement will help them to feel valued and know their efforts are appreciated.

It's also an indicator to any potential customers that if I go to the Ashford branch I'm likely to get good customer service. Even if I can't be served by Chris, surely some of their good work will be reflected in their colleagues?

Then the day of announcements arrives and Chris could stay a finalist, become a runner-up or bag the prize as the winner.

If Chris stays a finalist, your publicity of the awards probably ends here, but that finalist listing can still be included on marketing materials.

Depending on who won, you could share congratulations on social media, demonstrating the good nature of your organisation.

Those congratulations are



Erica Jones is an account director at Kent PR and marketing agency Maxim

worth considering even if the winner is a rival, for example if their business is based in Northumberland, your address may appeal more to those in the south and so being named alongside them won't necessarily do you any harm.

Another round

If Chris is a runner-up or winner, another round of publicity should celebrate that achievement, drawing attention to their brilliance – and so your brilliance for having such an exemplary employee.

Winning is obviously the dream, but coming second, third or fourth is definitely not a failure.

It cannot be emphasised enough that any kind of placing (including as a finalist) is a very good thing.

Make your business prosper and grow

Our Director magazines are read by named chief executives and directors of companies with turnovers of £250,000 upwards, including the top 1,000 companies and senior partners in law and accountancy firms. Can YOUR business afford to ignore such a high profile readership?

We don't think so! Contact us now to see how our Director magazines can help you prosper and grow.

Tel: 01733 242312 Email: carol@pridepublications.co.uk Web: www.pridepublications.co.uk





Verena Holmes' great niece Caroline Yardley

KENT TRAIL BLAZER HONOURED

ON 'International Women in Engineering Day 2023', Southeastern, the railway company serving Kent, Sussex and Southeast London, has honoured engineering trail-blazer, Kent-born **Verena Holmes**, the first woman to become an elected member of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE).

Awareness

In marking the event, Southeastern wants to raise awareness of roles for women in engineering, traditionally a male-dominated field.

Verena, a native of Ashford, was born in 1889. The train being named after Verena is a Class 375 operating on Mainline routes between London, Kent and East Sussex, which was unveiled at a ceremony at London's Cannon Street station. Verena Holmes' family was represented by her great niece Caroline Yardley.

Verena was arguably the first female in the UK to have a full-time career as a professional mechanical engineer. She was also a strong advocate for women in engineering.

MCBRIDES CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS REVEALS NEW MANAGING PARTNER

MCBRIDES Chartered Accountants has revealed **Tanya Hamilton** as its new managing partner, as **Nick Paterno** steps down from the role after 13 years at the helm.

Tanya becomes only the third managing partner in the firm's history. Nick will step back from management responsibilities and concentrate on advising his client portfolio and business development.

A 'home-grown' talent, Tanya joined the Sidcup-headquartered firm as a graduate 28 years ago, qualifying as a chartered accountant in 1998. She was made partner in 2014 and worked alongside Nick developing a specialism advising clients in the professional services sector.

During her time as partner at the firm, Tanya has led recruitment, training and



development and initiated successful community fundraising and education initiatives.

Tanya said: "I'm delighted to step up and take on the challenge of managing McBrides and continue the excellent work that Nick has pioneered over the last 13 years. On behalf of our other partners, I thank

him for leading the firm so ably, particularly through the challenges presented by the pandemic.

"As we look to our next 50 years and more, I'm excited to create an environment where we provide our clients with the highest quality services, recruit the best local talent and provide staff with exciting career development opportunities, and ensure we continue to work responsibly with our local community."

Nick said: "I have thoroughly enjoyed the challenge of managing McBrides over the last 13 years and I am proud of how far the partners and team have progressed the practice over that period. As we celebrate our 50th anniversary in business, it feels like this is a good opportunity to hand over the reins to Tanya."

MEDLEY OF MEDWAY TASKS RAISES SMILE FOR CHARITY

A TRIO of trials along the River Medway saw a team from planning consultancy DHA raise more than £5,000 for Smile Train, the firm's charity of the year.

Twenty members of DHA, which is based in Maidstone, Gatwick and London, started their 'Medway Medley' challenge at Turners Hill in West Sussex, the source of the River Medway, and made their way to Sheerness, where the Medway reaches the Thames Estuary.

The team started by trekking 22 miles on foot, following paths through East Grinstead, Cowden and Peshurst, before arriving in Tonbridge, where they swapped their hiking boots for water shoes and canoes.

After paddling for six hours, navigating nine locks, the DHA team docked 18 miles down the River Medway at Allington Lock



The DHA team completed the Medway Medley challenge for charity

near Maidstone. After a quick refuel, the team donned cycling helmets, grabbed their bikes and headed off to their final destination via Rochester.

After cycling over the Old Sheppey Bridge, the team arrived at Sheerness 17 hours later.

Pat Reedman, director of DHA, who came up with the fund-raising challenge, said: "The Medway Medley epitomises the spirit within DHA. We focus on what we've

got to achieve. We've all got our strengths and as a team we come together and support each other until we reach the finishing line."

Alex Hicken, managing director of DHA, added: "While it was a fun day out, testing the team mentally and physically, we can't forget the reason why we were all there in the first place, to raise money for Smile Train, which does so much good work around the world helping children with clefts."

Top executives struggle to implement learning cultures – and businesses are paying the price

Report finds top executives struggle to get traction for a company-wide learning culture, at the cost of business performance. In response, Kelly Palmer (pictured right), chief learning and talent officer at Degreed.com, provides five tips to bridge the gap between the C-Suite and wider workforce

DEGREED, a global innovator in learning technology, has uncovered a strong mismatch between how C-level executives and individual employees perceive their learning culture.

While more than 70% of C-level executives rated their learning culture as positive, less than 30% of individual employees rate their company learning culture the same way.

A positive learning culture is one where employees feel empowered to learn and continuously build their skills as part of their day-to-day work, to both get better at the job they already have and to get ready for the next step in their careers.

The World Economic Forum states that more than one billion people need to be upskilled by 2025. Degreed is partnering with

the World Economic Forum in the worldwide 'Upskilling Revolution' initiative and it's clear when people are upskilled, it isn't just the people themselves who benefit but also businesses, the wider economy in which they operate and society as a whole.

Building a strong learning culture is critical for the success of upskilling the workforce. However, despite the data showing a positive learning culture is directly linked to greater organisational agility, faster revenue growth and increased employee engagement, companies still have work to do.

In Degreed's *How The Workforce Learns* report, the data shows a long way to go to implement a company-wide learning culture. Here are five tips on how companies can achieve this.

Manager support: Managers play a crucial role in creating strong workplace learning cultures, with promoters being more likely to say their manager supports their development by setting up development plans and goals.

Conversely, detractors were more likely to feel that their manager hasn't meaningfully supported their development over the past year.

Managers need to feel equipped with the right power skills to have these important career conversations with their teams and to coach individual development.

Managers can make or break a true learning culture since they create the environment where work and learning actually happen.

• Tailored guidance

Employees want guidance on how and what to learn, especially as economic and political uncertainty impact the job market. This begins by identifying a couple of focus skills that give people a direction for their learning efforts.

People managers can discuss individual learning plans and co-create team learning goals. Department leads can identify critical skills needed to execute their short and middle-term strategy, and skill data (gathered from learning and HR systems), can provide further insights to personalise learning opportunities.

• Time

Employees spend only 24 minutes a week on their learning and, at that rate, it will take them 24 years to fully upskill for a new role. Those



in the C-Suite can share what they are learning, incorporating learning discussions into team meetings and 1-1s.

• Peer learning and peer coaching

Workers learn a lot from their peers.

Peer coaching is an area where organisations can leverage the peer connection. This is where two employees discuss their goals and help each other develop plans to meet those goals. It can provide additional motivation and accountability, while honing power skills like empathy and communication.

• Opportunities to practise skills

To really learn skills, people have to do more than just consume content. It's important to practice, reflect and get feedback.

Learners can reinforce new skills through stretch assignments, shadowing, new projects, volunteering and mentoring.

Shadowing is an activity that leaders can do to stretch their skills and widen their experiences.

“Building a strong learning culture is critical for the success of upskilling the workforce”



Peer coaching is an area where organisations can leverage the peer connection

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM EX-EMPLOYEES SETTING UP IN BUSINESS AND POACHING YOUR CLIENTS

By Antonio Fletcher

THE Government plans to limit restrictions around non-compete clauses when employees leave to join a competitor or set up a rival business, according to a recently published policy paper.

Proposals in the 'Smarter Regulation to Grow the Economy' policy paper include limiting the length of non-compete clauses to three months.

Typically, such clauses are drafted to limit employees from acting in competition with their former employer for as long as 12 months.

The use of non-compete

clauses in employment contracts is designed to protect business interests and may restrict a leaving employee from working for a similar business, or setting up a competing business.

Soliciting

Other types of restrictions may seek to prevent a leaving employee from soliciting clients or poaching colleagues within a defined period, but the proposed reforms do not extend to such clauses.

The three-month cap will apply to contracts of employment and worker contracts in England, Wales and Scotland, but not to

partnership or shareholder agreements.

Employers might benefit from planting the seeds that will protect against future changes. That could include evaluating existing confidentiality clauses and those restricting employees from poaching clients if they leave – and tightening up where necessary.

To keep things in perspective, it is worth remembering that very lengthy non-compete clauses are rarely upheld and as an employer you are both poacher and gamekeeper. Protecting the business when staff move on is essential, but you may also have greater opportunity to recruit.

Economy boost

The changes set out in the policy paper are described as being intended to boost the UK economy by improving flexibility in the workplace and the opportunity to recruit talent.

Other proposals cover cutting the amount of reporting on Working Time Regulations and to simplify employment regulations when a business transfers to a new owner.

Employers need to be aware of the impact of shorter non-competes on possible enforcement action, as the window for proceedings will be even tighter than it is now. Even if there is no desire to take enforcement action, the shorter timeframes

may necessitate that steps necessary to protect the business are taken more promptly, so developing a contingency plan for such circumstances is advisable.

Another option

Adding a clause to existing contracts requiring employees to share information at the earliest opportunity is also an option to consider.

Generally, it is good practice to keep a close ear to the ground and to have procedures to monitor for any unexpected activity in data collection by employees, or other relevant triggers, whatever the future for non-competes may be.



Antonio Fletcher is associate director and head of employment at Whitehead Monckton Solicitors.
Tel: 01622 698018
email: AntonioFletcher@wmlaw.uk
Web: www.whitehead-monckton.co.uk

“Keep a close ear to the ground and have procedures to monitor for any unexpected activity in data collection by employees”



Protecting the business when staff move on is essential

PARTNERSHIP TO SLASH CARBON EMISSIONS BY 20% IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS

SSE Energy Solutions has delivered a project that is targeting a 20% reduction in carbon emissions across 11 major public buildings in South East England as part of an ambitious energy partnership with Medway Council.

The forecasted savings will reduce emissions by 476.5 tons of CO₂, the equivalent of taking more than two

million miles of car journeys off the roads every year. The partnership has seen vital community assets such as libraries, theatres and leisure centres undergo a range of energy-reducing measures including the installation of rooftop solar, energy storage systems, air-source heat pumps, demand controlled ventilation and LED lighting. The work

will deliver cost savings of 35% for the local authority, based on 2019 rates. All of the libraries have had oil boilers and gas heaters removed, with Daikin heat pumps installed.

Additionally, waterless urinals and ultra-low flow showers have been installed in some buildings to help reduce water usage by up to 10%.

Where to really focus your efforts in these challenging financial times

Q: Of all the business challenges I'm currently facing, where should I be focusing most effort?

A. SME business owners can often feel they are facing issues alone, particularly when they wear so many different hats – finance, management and HR for example.

Despite being in different industry sectors, all businesses go through very distinct stages in their lifecycle. However, the challenges of recent years mean many SME owners are now faced with multiple additional issues that are pulling them in different directions. These include:

- Key skill shortages and

challenges attracting the right staff

- The fast pace of change in technology with artificial intelligence (AI) becoming more mainstream in the workplace
- Wider economic and political influences and pressures
- Climate change and modifying businesses to plan for net zero carbon.

It certainly isn't an easy ride!

Business owners have become adept at adapting to the ever-changing landscape. It's tested resilience, but now is a good time to take stock.

Having a clear plan for your business is key and this must include keeping sight of

longer-term objectives with the capacity for navigating the many obstacles and challenges put in your way.

Issues

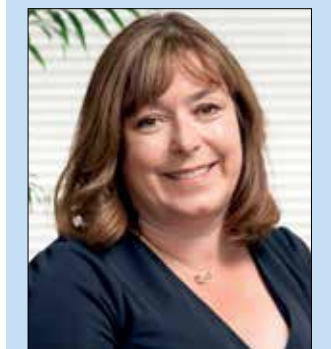
Taking a few of the issues above, where AI is concerned, identify the benefits and threats and where you want to be in your sector. How will you track, develop and embrace this emerging technology?

The wider economic and political markets are outside of our control and difficult to predict. Inflation, uncertainty in tax rates, interest rates and the ability to finance projects are among the challenges, but the past few years have shown we should prepare for the unexpected. Factor in these variables and rigorously stress test your plans.

The impact of climate change on the future of our businesses cannot be underestimated. It's influencing the organisations that employees choose to join with the most attractive emerging as those demonstrating an active approach to reducing carbon emissions. What is your business doing and have you detailed this on your website?

Prior to becoming managing partner in July, I led the 'people' side of my firm.

Attracting the best talent is one of the main challenges for businesses right now, along with retention and the need to adapt to accommodate



Tanya Hamilton is managing partner at McBrides Chartered Accountants. She can be reached on: tanya.hamilton@mcbridesllp.com

changing staff needs, while balancing the requirements of the business.

It's important to understand what employees are looking for and what motivates them at work rather than assuming you know. This will help to ensure that the right working adjustments and benefits are introduced which have the best impact on the team.

Balanced

Of course, changes need to be balanced with commerciality and recognise the impact on existing team members, so communicating outcomes is key to obtaining their support.

Acknowledge achievements and loyalty and think about the changes you can make to attract and retain the best people – and communicate the benefits of any changes. You will build in retention, and this will help with helping address the other challenges.

“Attracting the best talent is one of the main challenges for businesses right now, along with retention”



It's important to take time to understand what employees are looking for and what motivates them at work

CONSULTATION OPEN ON THE PLUCKLEY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

ASHFORD Borough Council is asking for residents in Pluckley to have their say on the Neighbourhood Plan.

The plan was made in 2017 and is used to assess planning applications in the parish. Pluckley Parish Council has undertaken a review and has proposed a number of modifications to update it.

The revised plan has now been submitted to the borough council and the next step

is for consultation with residents and local businesses. Views must be submitted online by 5pm on 8 September.

Anyone interested in finding out more information can do so on the Ashford Borough Council website (www.ashford.gov.uk) or on the neighbourhood plan website (www.pluckley.net).

Everyone is encouraged to have a say using the online portal. However, hard

copies of the plan and comment forms are available to view at the Ashford Gateway, Civic Centre and Charing Library (Pluckley's closest library).

• If you have any queries you can email the council (planning.policy@ashford.gov.uk), telephone (01233) 330229 or write to: Spatial Planning, Ashford Borough Council, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford TN23.

Megane E-Tech is a shining star as the market for electric cars stutters

WORD has it that the electric car market is starting to overheat. This feels a little ironic given that low temperatures are the nemesis of an electric car's range. As always, the factors are complex and the investments at stake bewildering.

All those nascent start-up manufacturers – so full of promise and investment – are facing a slew of new competitors just as their early adopter customer bank is starting to fade.

Legacy manufacturers are continuing to battle the twin perils of being present in a native sector, while maintaining a competitive combustion portfolio for those buyers not interested in making the change.

Awkward moment

And then there was that awkward moment when prices at the electricity charger became almost as expensive as those at the petrol pump.

Much of the initial EV product has also, understandably, been focused towards the upper end of the market, where margins are bigger and consumers can afford the switch. With few exceptions, the true mainstream EV market has yet to arrive.

Even Tesla – once the default dominator of the EV market – has taken to price realignment, partly to stimulate demand but also to destabilise new starters, while adding pressure to established manufacturers whose balance sheets still carry the weight of their legacy business.

But there is one EV that's benefited from a little overheating. Renault's Megane E-Tech is now



Megane E-Tech Techo EV60 – benefiting from an overheated market

fitted with a heat pump as standard in the UK, helping it better realise its range and efficiency targets. And, while still arguably premium in its approach, being priced at £39,445 as tested, it remains relatively attainable.

While the heat pump-enhanced range (now a more reliable 280 miles from the 60kWh battery) may still be eclipsed by rivals with bigger batteries, few have mastered its desirability. Chiselled looks, premium materials and a user interface that combines a slick Google-enhanced touchscreen with plenty of physical controls puts key rivals instantly to shame, even those that are about to benefit from a Volkswagen ID3-shaped facelift.

Punchy

Acceleration from the front-mounted 214bhp motor is punchy at 7.5 seconds from rest to 60mph, with the Megane gaining pace in a pleasing and linear fashion. Grip is strong

and although the Megane may lack the nose-led balance of a conventional combustion car, it seems to manage its weight well when pressing on, the odd shuffle during heavy lateral transfer notwithstanding.

Direct steering

The steering is direct and would benefit from more feel and modulation, but the brakes are strong and supported by adjustable regenerative braking.

It's not all perfect. The tiny rear screen is effectively replaced by the reversing camera. It's legacy – not helped by the small side windows – is a darkened rear cabin.

But once inside, space is good, especially so up front, if slightly bettered by rivals in the rear, and the boot is deep, if not especially wide.

Specification levels are generous with Techno models providing a heated steering wheel and front seats, wireless phone charging and Google Assisted services on the crisp 12.3-inch central screen in addition to full LED lighting, 20-inch alloys and tinted rear windows.

Renault's Megane E-Tech is now fitted with a heat pump as standard in the UK, helping it better realise its range target



Car thefts reach epidemic proportions

The cost to UK insurers has now reached a staggering £1.54 billion

VEHICLE thefts are now costing UK insurers £1.54 billion a year, with a further decline reported in the stolen car recovery rate.

The figures come from Claims Management & Adjusting Ltd (CMA), the UK's oldest specialist motor insurance loss adjuster.

Managing director Philip Swift, a former police detective, said: "Vehicle theft costs to UK insurers increased again last year, up by £100m to £1.54bn. With the number of thefts and vehicle values static, this rise is due to a further 5% decline in stolen car recovery rates.

"The sad fact is, if your car is stolen, you are unlikely to ever see it again. A Freedom of Information Act request to Kent police recently revealed an astonishingly low 6% recovery

rate. According to our analysis, the nationwide picture is better, with around 23% of stolen vehicles currently recovered. However, it is a continuation of the steady downward trend we have seen since 2006, when over three quarters of stolen cars were successfully recovered.

Not a priority

"Unfortunately, vehicle theft and its victims are simply not a priority for many UK police services. Essex recently put as much in writing to us, highlighting their 'unprecedented workload'.

The picture is worse in pound terms than the 'joyriding' epidemic of the 1990s, when there were half a million thefts a year. Today, fewer cars are taken but organised criminal



The picture is worse in pound terms than the 'joyriding' epidemic of the 1990s

gangs target high value models like Range Rovers, often for parts or export.

Data lack

"A lack of data clouds understanding, with forces such as West Midlands not even recording the theft method. We were recently asked to believe that professional thieves used sophisticated security bypass equipment to steal an old Ford. Does that sound likely or just a convenient, often accepted, explanation designed to expedite an insurance payout?"

"Years ago, the excellent Operation Igneous demonstrated how a more thoughtful approach could expose fraudulent claims and reduce vehicle crime by 30%. A plan to roll it out UK-wide was shelved on grounds of cost – a false economy if ever there was one.

"The future of vehicle crime investigation lies in quickly utilising data from modern connected cars, but this will require closer co-operation between insurers, the police and vehicle manufacturers."

The sad fact is, if your car is stolen, you are unlikely to ever see it again

20mph ZONES ARE PROVED TO CUT ACCIDENTS AND SAVE LIVES

By Trevor Gehlcken

ANY company drivers who regularly use city streets will know that driving at 20mph is a pain. We all understand why the new lower limits have been imposed but it feels as though we are driving at walking pace. Might as well have a man with a red flag in front of us.

But the latest data from Transport for London (TfL) shows that the 20mph zones really do work. And few of us would moan if the rules save even one child's life.

Collisions resulting in death or serious injury decreased by a quarter (25%) after speed limits were lowered in London, new data suggests.

The decline was recorded at sites monitored on the Transport for London Road Network (TLRN), where the speed limit has been lowered to 20mph.

The TfL figures also show that collisions



involving vulnerable road users decreased by more than a third (36%).

Lowering speed limits is a key part of the Mayor's Vision Zero goal to eliminate death and serious injury from London's transport network and to enable more walking and cycling in the capital.

In March 2020, TfL introduced

a 20mph speed limit on all of its roads within the central London Congestion Charging zone.

Currently, more than half of London's roads have a 20mph speed limit, of which almost 110km (68 miles) are on TfL's network.

TfL is now working to lower speeds on 220km (136 miles) of its roads by 2024 in inner and outer London and plans to introduce a new 20mph speed limit on more than 28km (17 miles) of roads in Camden, Islington, Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Haringey.

Will Norman, London's walking and cycling commissioner, said: "Sadly, more than 4,000 people are killed and seriously injured on London's roads every year. Lowering speeds is one of the most important things we can do to reduce road danger and make it safer for people to walk, cycle and use public transport."

Experts in Safety

arco®

**IT'S NOT
JUST
HEARING
PROTECTION**

*...it's catching up
with old friends*

We've been in the safety business for over 130 years. In that time, we've learned that it's not just safety gear. It's protecting people from injuries, allowing them to continue living life to the full.

arco.co.uk/experts