

biz4Biz

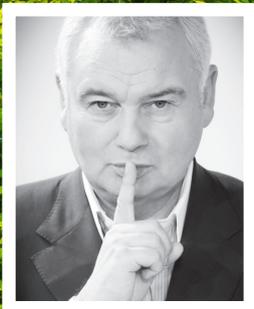
Insight

SEPTEMBER 2017 | ISSUE ELEVEN

THE VOICE OF BUSINESS IN HERTFORDSHIRE

BIZ4BIZ AWARDS 2018

Get voting and nominate your business now!



THE BIG INTERVIEW

Bim Alofami MP tells us about his journey from business to politics



FEATURES

- Food for Thought with Paul Beasley
- Networking
- Commercial Property
- Company Profile

LILLEY ON BREXIT



The Rt Hon Peter Lilley talks about life after the EU



For the cover you actually need...

The thing about insurance is that it doesn't really matter until it **REALLY** matters



T: 01438 350222
E: info@rhgib.co.uk

Make sure you're properly covered.

www.rhgib.co.uk

At BBW whether you're a private individual, running your own business, working for a charity or representing a large corporation, we're ready to *listen, consider and advise.*



Areas of Expertise:

Company & Commercial | Commercial Property | Commercial Litigation | Residential Conveyancing | Employment | Disputes | Family & Children | Wills, Tax & Financial Planning | Probate

Our three offices are conveniently located in the heart of the local community along the A1 corridor



Letchworth Office
Broadway Chambers
Letchworth Garden City
Hertfordshire, SG6 3AD
01462 482248



Stevenage Office
Forum Chambers
The Forum, Stevenage
Hertfordshire, SG1 1EL
01438 359311



Biggleswade Office
2 London Road
Biggleswade
Bedfordshire, SG18 8EP
01767 313813



biz4Biz

www.biz4biz.org

PUBLISHING

Publisher Adrian Hawkins

EDITORIAL AND PRODUCTION

Editor/design Jane Males
magazine@biz4biz.org

Editorial Assistant Giacomo Lee
contact@biz4biz.org

ADVERTISING

Sales/distribution

hello@jabbercoms
0330 9001 777



Jabbercoms
Communication Design Agency

CONTRIBUTORS

actioncoach.com
alyssasmith.co.uk
assign-it.co.uk
azteklogistics.co.uk
bbwlaw.biz
beststarthr.com
brownandlee.com
chilfen.co.uk
dmlk.co.uk
exemplas.com
georgehay.co.uk
hertfordshirelep.com
iquda.co.uk
jabbercoms.com
jjburgess.co.uk
johnconner.co.uk
lsh.co.uk
octree.co.uk
reallymoving.com
rhg.co.uk
rhgib.co.uk
rothamstead.ac.uk
stevnagecommunitytrust.org



You can follow us @biz4biz for news, articles and updates on our current stories. Over 2000 others already do! Our articles to follow get tweeted regularly.

A BIG WELCOME TO INSIGHT ISSUE 11



We are living in strange and challenging times. Certainty is now a thing of the past as we witness activities and events in the USA, North Korea, the Middle East and Europe. The UK is negotiating itself out of the EU and that uncertainty prevails. It is likely that the UK government will pursue a manufacturing, agricultural and fisheries renaissance, as Brexiteer Michael Gove heads up as Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Much of the activities of these industries suit the genre of a new agricultural and industrial strategy that we shall rely upon once again to support our own economy.

We are pleased to welcome our new Herts based MP Bim Afolami to our pages, who I am sure will feature in various issues of our Insight magazine in the future. It is a great opportunity to get to know what makes Bim tick, and we are delighted to welcome him to our biz4Biz Connexions breakfasts as a speaker in the future.

Hot on the trail of our inaugural awards event in March 2017, we are delighted to advise that you are now able to vote and nominate the leaders of local business in our second biz4Biz Awards programme, culminating in our glittering Gala Awards Evening on the 2nd of March 2018 at Tewinbury Farm, Welwyn. We have a great evening's entertainment in store for you all on the night, alongside the awards we have detailed on pages 12 to 18. Please visit the biz4Biz Awards website at www.bizawards.info and cast your votes now to help us support the rising stars of our important, local business sector. It's high time that we celebrated the huge knowledge pool of talent working for our local businesses and demonstrate to the world just why Hertfordshire is simply the best at what we do.

Adrian Hawkins

Co-Founder & Chairman biz4Biz

Chairman Weldability Sif established 1925, Director and Trustee of the Weldability Sif Foundation, Deputy Chair Herts LEP Main Board, Chair of Skills and Employment Board.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO TARGET 63,000 BUSINESSES IN HERTFORDSHIRE?

biz4Biz has an online reach of 600,000

To advertise in the next edition of biz4Biz Insight magazine contact the team on 0330 9001 777
contact@biz4biz.org

Second Annual biz4Biz AWARDS

Recognising excellence
in business across
Hertfordshire



Online nomination and
voting is now open at
www.bizawards.info

VOTE TODAY!

Voting closes
30th November 2017

Book your
place at

THE biz4Biz AWARDS CEREMONY

Friday 2nd
March 2018

www.bizawards.info

Diary dates in Hertfordshire

THE WIZARDS OF ONCE

Top children's author Cressida Cowell launches her new book series, *The Wizards of Once*, while also discussing her previous series, *How To Train Your Dragon*.

Wednesday 20th September 2017 - Letchworth

Info: <http://www.davids-bookshops.co.uk/>

AMERICAN IDIOT

The West End musical inspired by the Green Day album of the same name comes to Hertfordshire. Expect rock music with a sprinkle of politics.

Thursday 21st to Saturday 23rd September 2017 - Hoddesdon

Info: www.ehos.co.uk

ST ALBANS FOOD & DRINK FESTIVAL

Back for its 10th year, this year's festival includes a major 'Street Festival' to kick off October!

Wednesday 27th September to Saturday 7th October 2017 - St Albans

Info: <http://www.radioverulam.com>



HERTS JAZZ FESTIVAL

The Hawthorne Theatre plays host to three days of jazz sounds and big band.

Friday 13th October to Sunday 15th 2017 -

Welwyn Garden City

Info: www.hertsjazzfestival.co.uk

PUMPKIN TRAIL & TREATS

Dress up with the kids and enjoy some spooky fun at Knebworth House.

Wednesday 25th October to Friday 27th 2017 - Knebworth

Info: www.knebworthhouse.com



RUSSIAN STATE BALLET: THE NUTCRACKER

For one night only the Russian State Ballet comes to Herts.

Sunday October 29th 2017 - Stevenage

Info: www.gordon-craig.co.uk

Have you got a forthcoming event that you would like us to include in our next issue?

Email: contact@biz4biz.org

CONTENTS

6 NEWS

8 NETWORKING

biz4Biz ConneXions

11 OCTREE CYBERSECURITY

Don't let your firm be hit by the next Wannacry

12 BIZ4BIZ AWARDS LAUNCH

biz4Biz Awards launch news

14-17 BIZ4BIZ AWARDS WINNERS

Last year's winners speak exclusively to Insight

18 THE BIG INTERVIEW

A chat with Bim Alofami, the newest minister for Hitchin & Harpenden

23 FREE TO DECIDE - BUT HOW?

Richmond House Group guide us on pension freedom

25 COSTS CAUSING CONCERN

Thoughts from Martin Williams of George Hay Chartered Accountants

26 BUSINESS PROFILE

An insight into the LEP Envoy Programme

28 BUSINESS NEWS

Updates on Herts business

31 FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Paul Beasley of Richmond House Financial Services is ready to eat

32 PDR MARKET COMMENTARY

Lambert Smith Hampton present their market overview to Insight

34 STEVENAGE & OFFICE SPACE

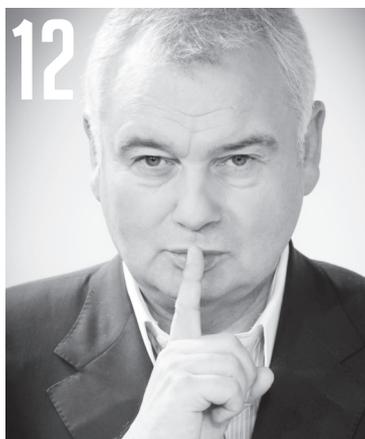
Brown & Lee Chartered Surveyors give us an office market forecast

36 BREXIT AND TRANSITION

The Rt Hon Peter Lilley gives us his take on a 2019 transition period

38 WHAT COST OF BREXIT?

Adrian Hawkins talks money and the EU



NEWS

Herts broadband gets a boost from Bim

8,276 broadband connections in Hitchin and Harpenden are not getting the proposed minimum broadband download speed, according to a new report from the British Infrastructure Group of MPs (BIG) co-signed by Bim Afolami MP.

Bim has joined 55 colleagues from across political parties to co-sign BIG's latest report, 'Broadband 2.0'. As many as 6.7 million broadband connections across the UK do not receive speeds above the proposed minimum standard.



The report also investigates broadband customer services to find a worrying lack of minimum standards. Of the major broadband providers in a voluntary agreement with Ofcom, none could provide BIG with any clear information about their complaints procedures, or on the amount of compensation that they currently pay to their customers.

The group have therefore called on the government to progress secondary legislation setting out the terms of a broadband Universal Service Obligation (USO), and to provide statutory footing to the Voluntary Codes of Practice for broadband speeds. It has also called on Ofcom to consider fixed broadband speeds in a new automatic compensation scheme.

Hoddesdon Museum secures 5 years of stability

After a period of uncertainty, the beloved Lowewood Museum at the heart of Hoddesdon has had its future secured for a further five years. A series of failed attempts at making cuts and generating more income saw Lowewood preparing for closure. In addition to its £101,000 in annual running costs, the Georgian building also needs £25,000 worth of repairs in order to guarantee its future.

July 11th saw Epping Forest District Council's museum service vote to continue their support of Lowewood, alongside their own local museum. Working with Broxbourne Borough Council, a trust fund will be put into place by the two councils to help them apply for grants which are currently out of arm's reach.



The centre boasts exhibits pertaining to noteworthy figures from the Broxbourne Borough such as Royal Academy artist James Ward, as well as information on Hoddesdon's local history, from prehistoric times right up to the modern day. Time will tell where the Lowewood Museum ends up, but for now, its future is in safe hands.

Startups and sweet flavours coming to Stortford

September will see an influx of start-up businesses coming to Bishop's Stortford, after plans were approved to turn part of Charringtons House into a new innovation centre for the town.

Proposals laid out in July before East Herts District Council have made way for Launchpad, a 12-month pilot scheme designed to encourage new businesses into the area. Perks for any businesses signing up to the scheme include the free use of facilities for up to three months.

The brainchild of East Herts business engagement manager Chris Smith, Launchpad will be run by the Herts-based training company Wenta, in a location not too far from the historic centre of the town.

The news about the centre follows this summer's arrival to the town of dessert company Gü Puds, who are bringing a new, 100,00 sq ft facility to Dunmow Road, creating with it a hundred new jobs.

Sarah Baldwin, managing director of Gü Puds, said: "We're delighted to be setting up operations in the historic town of Bishop's Stortford. Not only does the new site give us room to grow, it's located close to our London HQ and near to the M11 making it an excellent logistics hub".

Robert Lee, President of Bishop's Stortford Chamber of Commerce said on the news: "The move clearly demonstrates the town's attractiveness as a gateway to Europe and the area's potential scope for growth."



Over £7000 awarded to small Herts businesses

Eight small businesses in Welwyn and Hatfield have received grants to help them towards their future goals. On July 10th cheques between £500-£1000 were presented to businesses such as Welwyn's Chappell Solutions Ltd, developers behind portable clothes washing device Laundreez, who aim to use their grants to invest in new marketing schemes and equipment. Hatfield's Calamity Comics meanwhile intend to create art workshops to further their contributions to the local community.

The grants have come after a period of decline in small business investment, and will surely go a long way in expanding these ventures.

DATES FOR THE DIARY

For more information and to register online visit www.biz4biz.org/events.html

Thursday, 21 September 2017

Make Social Media Work For Your Business, Needham House Hotel, Little Wymondley

For more details of these events, visit www.biz4Biz.org or contact biz4Biz Secretariat on 01462 478031



biz4Biz ConneXions

June 24th saw a biz4Biz hosted Brexit debate over breakfast, with the Rt Hon Peter Lilley as speaker.



biz4Biz Board Members with Rt Hon Peter Lilley and MP Bim Afolami

Our guest speaker, Peter Lilley, was first elected to parliament in 1983, and recently stood down having decided not to seek re-election at the June 2017 general election.

As an MP, he represented the constituencies of Hitchin and Harpenden, along with St Albans before boundary changes came into effect. He was a cabinet minister in the governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major, serving in two roles as Trade and Industry

Secretary and Social Security Secretary.

Peter has strong views on Brexit and how the UK should negotiate, and was the last serving cabinet minister to negotiate a trade deal with our EU partners. Read more from Peter on page 36.

The new MP for Hitchin and Harpenden, Bim Afolami, has been elected to replace Peter Lilley. Read Bim's Big Interview on page 18.



Rt Hon Peter Lilley



DMLK Video, hosts of recent biz4Biz seminar The Power of Video Marketing, talk to Insight about their solutions in the world of video promotion.

What is DMLK Video?

Mahlon Prince - We are a Video Marketing Agency specialising in promotional videos for businesses and charities.

What's the biggest misconception about video marketing?

George Day: Potential clients put too much emphasis on the "video" element, and not enough on the "marketing". We prepare thoroughly so that we understand exactly what the goals of the project are.

What's your favourite part of running DMLK?

GD: Being on set or location. Directing is definitely the most enjoyable part of my job.
MP: I love pre-production. Meeting the



clients, getting to know them and their company. It feels great when you come up with a concept that the client loves because it's specific to them and their vision. After all, how can you be successful if you haven't agreed on what success looks like?



If you want to add video to your marketing mix, visit us today at dmlk.co.uk, or call us on 01923 606501 for a free consultation. You can also reach us at info@dmlk.co.uk

A KIND DONATION FOR BIZ4BIZ AWARDS' CHOSEN CHARITY, JOCA



biz4Biz Chairman Adrian Hawkins receives the kind donation from Adam Norsworthy at Performance Telecom on behalf of JOCA

Performance Telecom is a telecoms and software company based in St Albans. Since its inception 18 years ago it has been partnering with businesses and contact centres to provide telecom services, as well as develop systems that support our customers' strategic interests.

Their aim is to unlock aspirations, which is why they listen to each team member, supplier and customer, really understanding what drives them and what they wish to achieve. It helps their own development process too, allowing them to tailor solutions for individual clients, as well as to prioritise what technology to engage with. Performance Telecom also specialise in automation

solutions, and help companies monitor and improve customer experience, agent performance and operational profitability. They always aim to deliver simple solutions that provide powerful results.

The business has always been keen to support organisations outside their own that fit with their mission, which is to 'Unlock Aspirations.' Recently they have been engaged with biz4Biz, and have really enjoyed meeting other local businesses. The company attended the biz4Biz awards in March, and apart from having a great time they were also touched by a presentation delivered by the awards' chosen charity, JOCA, which led to their donation of £1000.

Performance Telecom felt this was the way to inspire similar donations from attendees so as to help JOCA tackle mental health issues among young people.

They invite you to get in touch - maybe they can help you too!

GET IN TOUCH

Centurion Point, Abbey View,
Everard Close, St Albans,
AL1 2PS

0330 303 4321

info@performancetelecom.co.uk

www.performancetelecom.co.uk

PERFORMANCE
TELECOM

WANNACRY RANSOMWARE

IT'S GONE AWAY, HASN'T IT?



In May 2017 Wannacry ransomware infected over **400,000 systems across the world**, crippling several NHS Trusts in the UK. A & E departments were closed, ambulance services halted, routine operations cancelled.

FSB figures show that a staggering **seven million cyber-crimes** are committed against smaller businesses in the UK every year - that's 19,000 every day. These crimes cost small business victims on average nearly £3,000 and generally take more than two days to recover from.

To combat this ever-increasing threat **OCTREE** have developed a simple on line free security audit for companies to identify their level of vulnerability and exposure to external attack at www.octree.co.uk/audit.

- CYBER SECURITY
- DATA PROTECTION
- CLOUD COMPUTING
- MANAGED IT SUPPORT



OCTREE

PROTECTING YOUR BUSINESS
SECURING YOUR DATA

www.octree.co.uk

T: 08456 17 18 19 E: cyberscurity@octree.co.uk

WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?

Paul Maguire, Director, Magnite PR

With so many competing brands and businesses clamouring for attention, it can be hard to get your voice heard above the noise.

It's not enough just to keep broadcasting relentlessly in the futile hope that some customer, somewhere, will pick up and respond.

In order to engage effectively, start by clarifying what it is you want to communicate and with whom. Rather than shout about what products or services you can

provide, highlight what problem you can solve.

Customers aren't interested in what you are 'selling' unless it satisfies or addresses a real concern of theirs. View the world from their perspective, not yours.

Express your solution or how you can help in terms that are compelling and which also demonstrate tangible benefits. Only then can you begin a mutually beneficial dialogue, and stop turning up that background noise up another notch.



GET IN TOUCH

01438 791029

hello@magnitepr.com

www.magnitepr.com

Magnite | PR



DON'T LET THE NEXT WANNACRY SURPRISE YOU

If there is anyone who didn't know what ransomware was before, they surely do now after the events of recent months. WannaCry was the largest ransomware attack in history – infecting 300,000 systems in 150 countries within a matter of hours – and the tip of the ransomware threat iceberg, which grew by over 6,000 percent in 2016.

Cybercrime continues to flourish. A new report, published recently by Beaming, reveals that more than half (52 percent) of British businesses fell victim to some form of cybercrime in 2016. Beaming's study, which was conducted by researchers at Opinium, indicates that 2.9 million UK firms suffered cybersecurity breaches nationwide last year, at a cost of £29.1 billion.

Small businesses face a range of cyber threats daily and are often more vulnerable than the larger organisations. Small businesses that see themselves as too small to be targeted by cyber criminals are putting themselves at direct risk. In fact, two thirds of small UK firms were attacked by hackers between 2014-2016, according to a report from the Federation of Small Businesses.

It really is a case of *when* you're compromised, not *if*, unless you act today.

The most significant threats today include:

ransomware - malware that encrypts and threatens to destroy, permanently remove access to, or publicly post data unless a victim makes payment, often increasing as time elapses.

Phishing and Whaling (aka CEO Fraud) - A malicious attempt to acquire sensitive information by masquerading as a trustworthy source via email, text, pop-up message, or to coerce an employee into making a money transfer.

DDoS – Distributed Denial of Service attacks that swamp and take down websites and web applications.

And, of course, **the insider threat**, whether malicious or accidental, which according to research may account for more than 50% of all reported data breaches.

So, what can we do? Certainly adopting tighter technical controls internally, such as following the Government's Cyber Essentials

initiative, would go a long way to defending against more than 80% of internet borne threats. Ensure you have adequate anti-malware deployed and up to date, your systems are "patched" religiously, your desktops are locked down and users only have the necessary access rights to be able to do their jobs. Implement an ongoing security awareness training program to educate staff to identify potential threats and act accordingly. And continue to monitor your security!



GET IN TOUCH

If you would like to find out more about the services that Octree can offer contact 0845 617 1819
cybersecurity@octree.co.uk
www.octree.co.uk



THE BIZ4BIZ AWARDS RETURN FOR 2018 WITH EAMON HOLMES AT THE HELM

Your chance to bring your business into the limelight at Hertfordshire's brightest awards bash for business

biz4Biz is proud to announce The biz4Biz Awards, sponsored by Barclays, returning for their second year in March 2018. These Awards are impartial, independent and open to anyone involved in a business in Hertfordshire. Insight readers are encouraged to get involved, and who knows, maybe you'll be one of the lucky nominees on the night!

The next glittering biz4Biz awards ceremony will be held on Friday 2nd March 2018, returning to Tewin Bury Farm Hotel, Welwyn, Hertfordshire, and biz4Biz are proud to announce Eamon Holmes will host the evening and present the awards. Eamon has been a TV legend for almost three decades, and with so much presenting experience under his belt we are sure he'll do a great job on the night.

The night is sure to provide another stunning showcase for those attending and is a fantastic platform for all nominees, with the award winners having full on-going publicity, following the ceremony, and all nominees given the opportunity to publicise on the biz4Biz Awards website.

We have 12 categories to choose from, and to enter, a company must be nominated online at our website, via www.bizawards.info. Our list of categories are printed in full over on the next page.

Once nominated, all entrants are listed on the website and are subject



“We have 12 categories to choose from, and to enter, a company must be nominated online at bizawards.info”

to a public vote. Voting will finish at the end of November 2017, with final judging taking place throughout January 2018.

Companies can nominate themselves and all nominees will be required to confirm their application. Successful applicants, awarded with the most votes in each category, will then be invited to attend a judging day at a Hertfordshire hotel during the month of January 2018.

As regular Insight readers will know, the first biz4Biz Awards were a resounding success, with businesses from all over Hertfordshire coming together to celebrate and recognise the deserving winners and finalists. You can read more on how biz4Biz success has benefited our winning businesses in this issue, along with some great photos taken on the evening.

If you are proud of your business, then we encourage you to enter. Similarly, if you recognise excellence in others, please nominate them, as it's a great opportunity for any business.

The biz4Biz Awards provide exceptional marketing and profile raising opportunities for the finalists as well as providing a unique platform for business networking between companies of all forms and sizes, right across Hertfordshire.

Such an enterprise is part and parcel of biz4Biz's aim to provide a coherent voice for businesses in



Last year's lucky biz4Biz Awards winners

BIZ4BIZ AWARDS 2018 - OUR CATEGORIES IN FULL

Which one will your business win?

- BUSINESS OF THE YEAR
- BEST FAMILY BUSINESS
- BEST CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
- MADE IN HERTS AWARD
- BEST INTERNATIONAL TRADE
- BEST APPRENTICESHIP
- BEST PROPERTY SERVICES PROVIDER
- BEST LEGAL AND FINANCIAL SERVICES PROVIDER
- BEST MARKETING AND PROMOTIONAL SERVICES
- BEST TECHNOLOGY SERVICES PROVIDER
- BEST EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROVIDER
- BEST EXECUTIVE VENUE OR LEISURE FACILITY

Vote for your company to win at
The biz4Biz Awards 2018 at
www.bizawards.info

Sponsored By



Hertfordshire. With outreach ventures like Insight, we aim to influence and shape policymaking and encourage investment in Hertfordshire by engaging with local and central government, relevant public sector bodies and local organisations to promote the county of Hertfordshire as a great place to live and work.

For further information about The biz4Biz Awards 2018, please visit our website at www.bizawards.info. If you are interested in becoming a member of biz4Biz, or for more information, please visit www.biz4biz.org

“The first biz4Biz Awards were a resounding success, with businesses from all over Hertfordshire coming together to celebrate”

BIZ4BIZ AWARDS 2017

iQuda

Winning Best Professional Service was a milestone for iQuda. The award gave us an opportunity to showcase our business to new and existing clients and to market ourselves as an award-winning company in our sector.

The awards process was professional from start to finish. We reflected back on how hard our team is working to keep our clients happy and on all we have achieved together. The judges made the awards process a pleasure by showing a genuine interest in us, and what we're doing to support other businesses.

The awards night proved to be an excellent opportunity to connect with local businesses and celebrate. From the entertainment and host, to the



food and venue – the whole event was well organised and enjoyed by all. It was a privilege to be nominated alongside respected business leaders in the area and we would highly recommend the biz4Biz awards to other businesses.



Alyssa Smith

I was delighted to be nominated for the first biz4Biz awards, which are designed to support the best businesses in Hertfordshire by recognising their outstanding achievements. The nomination process was very simple and allowed my customers to show their support by voting for us online in different categories.

The award dinner was a great night out, with the excellent Michael Portillo mentioning my business as Hertfordshire's Best Retailer, which was fab.

Overall it was a great experience and I would recommend others to enter, and it's also free, which is a bonus!



Alyssa Smith
celebrity jeweller

WHAT OUR WINNERS SAY...

J.J. Burgess & Sons

Having never been involved in awards outside of professional ones, the whole process was new to me and a bit of a learning curve!

I was nervous about my presentation to the biz4Biz board as graphs, charts and PowerPoint aren't really my thing.

I gave up fumbling through my presentation about five minutes in and just spoke passionately and honestly about my business and my involvement therein. Something I said must have had resonance with the board as I was honoured to be shortlisted.

Attending the awards evening was very enjoyable but I had no aspiration of taking home the award, so sat back and enjoyed the evening and the company of my family and staff. In fact, as our



category was read out, I headed to the bar only to be pulled back by my son to hear our name read out as Best Family Business!

It was an extremely proud moment and one that stands as a pat on the back to not only me but the team at J.J. Burgess and Sons for all the hard work and effort

that goes into caring for each and every one of our clients.



Independent Family Funeral Directors
Established 1839

Chilfen Joinery

Chilfen Joinery were absolutely thrilled to win the Made in Herts category in the first biz4Biz Awards. The awards process itself was very well thought out. The independent online voting platform to shortlist competitors was a very fresh approach. The awards were very organised with a clear breakdown of content required for each category and an easy submission process. After being shortlisted, we gave a 20 minute presentation about our business. We found the judges to be extremely engaging and honestly interested in learning more about Chilfen Joinery and our future plans for growth, sustainability and commitment to Herts manufacturing.

We thoroughly enjoyed the awards night, the organisers were incredibly supportive and the whole evening



had a very positive and inspiring atmosphere. It was great to meet other like-minded local businesses. We are honoured to have been announced winners of the Made in Herts award. We have never forgotten our Hertfordshire roots; the award is a testament to our hardworking teams.



BIZ4BIZ AWARDS 2017

John O'Conner

We are a nation of gardeners, and John O'Conner promotes horticulture as a key sector and celebrates our UK-wide contribution to the preservation of green spaces, historical and architectural landscapes for future generations.

We are delighted that John O'Conner has been recognised for its commitment to apprenticeships. Our apprentices are working extremely hard and we are proud of their achievements on our contracts. Our staff are committed to supporting them as well.

Our recent award for Best Apprenticeship really consolidates our apprenticeship success and our contribution to horticultural and land-based industry skills development.



Our win has helped us highlight our commitment to staff training and development with both existing and potential customers.



Aztek

At Aztek Logistics Ltd, we were extremely honoured to have received the Business of the Year Award at this year's biz4Biz Awards. From initial nomination through to the final awards ceremony, the overall experience has been very positive and the process highly organised.

The online voting system which allowed individuals to support their favourite and most inspiring businesses is a great way to engage people in their local communities and the awards ceremony at Tewin Bury Farm Hotel offered a great opportunity for local businesses to come together and celebrate their achievements.

We are proud of the business we have built and the trusted partnerships we



have nurtured over the past 14 years and winning the Business of the Year award reaffirms all the hard work and effort put in by the Aztek team.



READ WHAT OUR WINNERS SAY...

reallymoving

While winning The Judges' Award at the biz4Biz Awards 2017 was exciting for all of us at reallymoving, the real thrill came from the reactions we received from people outside of the company.

After being shortlisted in several categories against some extremely strong competition, we were ecstatic to be named as winners of the Judges' Award, an award that spanned all categories. We received positive feedback on social media, congratulations from clients and even a few congratulations from other local businesses around St. Albans.

We were filled with enormous pride and joy to have our hard working and dedicated team receive such acclaimed recognition.



Rothamstead

Rothamsted Research is delighted to have received the award for Best International Business at the biz4Biz Awards 2017. We see the award as an endorsement of our success in bringing fresh thinking to farming practices worldwide, and of the value this achievement delivers locally.

Rothamsted is the world's oldest agricultural research institute. We develop better crops, improved productivity and more sustainable farming practices for the UK and beyond. Our staff represent more than 35 nationalities, including students and emerging scientists, and we work with partners in over 50 countries to benefit agriculture globally and to fund our research.

Our thanks go to our fellow nominees, to the judges, to the



organisers and to the sponsors, particularly BBW Solicitors, who sponsored our award. Besides the thrill of winning, the event was a great opportunity to meet other local businesses and to feel that vibrancy and diversity of Hertfordshire's business sector.



ROTHAMSTED
RESEARCH



THE BIG INTERVIEW

Bim Alobami MP tells us about his journey from business to politics, in an exclusive chat with the newest minister for Hitchin and Harpenden



“**World class local education and skills are central to our successful businesses**”

Bim Afolami is the newest Member of Parliament for Hitchin and Harpenden, having won the seat in the General Election on June 8 of this year. Replacing the outgoing Rt Hon Peter Lilley, Bim has already hit the ground running, paving the way for better broadband and an increase in education funding over the summer.

Insight reached out to Bim shortly after his victory, eager to know his thoughts and plans on the future of business in Hertfordshire. We also canvassed him for his thoughts on

Brexit, and just how education factors into his business overview.

What was your career before becoming Conservative MP for Hitchin and Harpenden?

Before entering politics, I spent the last ten years in business and the City. After I left Oxford University, I spent six years as a corporate lawyer advising on mergers/acquisitions, capital raisings and stock market flotations. After that I moved to HSBC, where I was a senior executive working in strategy - essentially restructuring the bank and improving its relationship

with small and medium sized enterprises. I have also advised several SMEs, and we have experience of a very small business as a family as well - my wife Hetti runs a small family business that employs four people.

What is your main focus at the moment, and how have you been busy since your victory?

My main local priorities are education and SMEs. I have met all the heads of the local schools already, and been to several local business events. Why? Because education and business are inextricably linked. World class local education and skills are central to our successful businesses, and productive, innovative businesses are the beating heart of our local economy. Both are critical for our future prosperity. We have already had some success in education - I was one of the MPs lobbying the Department for Education for more funding



for schools, and the Department announced a £1.3 billion increase in funding for schools last month. We still have a lot to work on in terms of teacher recruitment and retention and high levels of bureaucracy, but I hope that the funding increase will have helped to put several minds at rest over the school holidays.

Where would you most like to see change for SMEs?

I am acutely aware of some of the problems that SMEs face (though please do carry on getting in touch – I always have more to learn!). Short term, the big issues I want to tackle are infrastructure and regulation. A couple of weeks ago, I was one of 57 MPs who released the report ‘Broadband 2.0’ (sic), which called on Ofcom to consider fixed broadband speeds in a

“ **SMEs are becoming, and will increasingly become, more and more important to our economy** ”

new automatic compensation scheme. Areas in Hitchin and Harpenden are forced to put up with unacceptably low broadband speeds and this has a huge impact on productivity – I spoke to a partner of a local accountancy firm recently who was told they would have to allow three days for company servers to update! They now have two separate broadband providers and an added expense for the company. I hope that new legislation will go some way to improving things, but I will carry on holding the government to account on this issue.

What impact do you think Brexit will have on businesses?

Brexit provides us with a huge opportunity to overhaul the regulatory environment for small businesses, but we must make clear to the government

what it is we want and the tangible benefits such change can bring. I would welcome input from your readers on this.

What could be overhauled exactly?

In general terms, my view is that taxes can always be lower (and some are unacceptably high, such as business rates) but just as importantly we need to get serious about simplifying taxes, which would have huge benefits right across the economy, not least in reducing the stress levels for every small businessman and businesswoman across this country. Now, I am not naïve. I recognise that the politics of simplifying taxes are harder than they seem initially; I recognise that this is a project that might take a decade to achieve, but we need to start taking the first steps now.

What steps are you taking exactly?

I will be meeting with many SMEs over the coming weeks and months to get their views: please call my office to arrange a meeting or a chat if you are able, or send me an email with your thoughts. SMEs are becoming, and will increasingly become, more and more important to our economy (indeed in all Western economies). 60% of people in the private sector work for SMEs. They need a voice. I want to be your voice, and to work on your concerns in the months and years ahead.

What are your more long-term aims?

In my Maiden Speech, I called for a new 21st-century economy with education as its focus: in a world where we don't know what jobs will look like in ten years, let alone twenty, we need



to make sure we are truly preparing our children for this second industrial revolution we are living through. It is vital that we train our children up to solve tomorrow's problems as we ourselves have no idea what those problems will be! Part of ensuring our children are prepared is getting business more involved in education. I am passionate about this and am busy meeting with local schools and colleges and with businesses small and large to get lots of ideas for how this could work. I met the Chairman of Oaklands College recently – where many of my constituents are enrolled on vocational courses – and heard about their collaboration with big companies like Airbus to ensure that the courses they provide truly prepare their students for the workplace. This benefits all involved hugely.

More broadly, I want to be a leading voice in politics for solving the seemingly intractable problems that bedevil our economy. Why has innovation slowed significantly in areas outside technology? Why is productivity persistently 20% lower than our competitors? How will we adapt an economic model that has recently seemed to require extremely high levels of immigration to one where we control that immigration more tightly, without damaging our economic prospects and leaving business without necessary skills? These are the big challenges that I came into politics to work on.

Reach Bim Afolami at
House of Commons
London, SW1A 0AA
bim.afolami.mp@parliament.uk



RICHMOND HOUSE GROUP

FINANCIAL PLANNING
BENEFIT CONSULTANTS
CORPORATE PLANNING
INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT

ATTRACT &
RETAIN STAFF

Show me the money

...and the benefits

Attracting and retaining staff is key. Potential recruits not only look to see how much you're paying, they also want to know the benefits you offer. A good benefits package demonstrates that you're a good employer.

Unlike salary, benefits aren't always easy to understand. You may offer a generous benefits package, but is it clearly explained, do staff realise just how generous you're being? Staff can't value something they don't understand.

Of course, you'll offer a pension – you've got to do that. But do your staff know if you've opted to offer more than you're legally required to?

And what about you?

Are you clear what your benefits package includes and how much it's costing? Are you sure that you're mitigating some of the costs of providing employee benefits? For example, there is an increased tax deductible allowance that employers can spend on paying for pensions advice for their staff.

What about your senior staff?

Are you providing employee benefits to help them plan for their future and protect their families in a tax efficient way?

If you need some advice on your current benefits package, or you would like to discuss introducing one, call Corporate Services Director Ian Jenkins on 0333 241 3350 or email ijenkins@rhg.co.uk. Or visit us at www.rhg.co.uk.

RHG and the Richmond House Group are trading styles of Richmond House Financial Services Ltd, which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). The FCA does not regulate taxation and trust advice.



FREE TO DECIDE - BUT HOW?

I am sure you will have heard of pensions freedoms that took effect two years ago. This legislation was welcome and gives everyone much more flexibility over how they accessed their private pension pot. However, increased choice brings added complexity to a topic most people already found utterly confusing. In most cases an individual's pension pot is likely to rank second only to their main residence in terms of asset value. The choice made will be one of the most important decisions they take. There are three main options, and it is possible to choose any combination of these.

Lifetime annuity

As previously, it is possible to use some or all the available funds to buy an annuity which will be payable at least for the rest of your life. There are many options to consider including the option to take a tax free lump sum of up to 25% of the pension pot at the same time. A widow's/widower's pensions can also be included.

Flexi-access drawdown

It is also possible to put funds into drawdown. Since 6 April 2015 there are

no limits on how much or how little can be taken from individual drawdown plans. The pension plan can be used like a bank account, drawing money when needed and adding additional contributions if appropriate. The timing and make up of drawings need to be considered carefully to minimise tax.

Lump sum payment

Pension freedoms now allow some or all of the pension fund to be cashed in, without having to buy an annuity or retain an income. This was the most controversial aspect of the legislation as people's future security in retirement could be blown on a whim. There would also likely be a very large tax bill due.

Employees are often a business's biggest asset and unfortunately employers can no longer predict when a key employee (asset) will retire as there is no longer any set age. It might even be that the employee does not know when they can afford to stop working. Employers can assist employees in planning their retirement by providing access to advice. This also benefits you the employer, as working together will

enable you to plan properly and in a more timely fashion, your human resources. You can also subsidise the cost up to a maximum of £500 per employee per annum without it being classed as a taxable benefit.

Finally a word about Final Salary pension schemes. Requests for transfers out are peaking as transfer values offered are more generous now than ever. Many advisers do not have the requisite higher level qualifications to advise and many others are simply refusing to provide advice due to the high liability factor. Transferring out exchanges a guaranteed income for one that is at the whim of stock markets so one can understand why. However, we take a different view.

Not only do we have several advisers suitably qualified but we have many years' experience advising both companies and trustees on their final salary schemes, including winding up. We therefore have a greater depth of knowledge than the vast majority of firms still offering transfer advice.

We also believe there are often very good reasons to transfer. Most of the clients we have recently advised are using a transfer as an inheritance tax planning exercise. The value of a private pension fund is inherited free of IHT and, if death occurs before age 75, it is free of all taxes. Those with ample other assets choose to live off these and leave the pension fund untouched to pass on to the next generation. This is much better value than leaving a reduced widow's/widower's pension, particularly if it is not needed.

As a Chartered firm, we work to the highest of professional standards to assist business owners, employers and employees to understand their pension and retirement options to mutual benefit. If you would like to have a no obligation discussion about how we may be of value to you and your employees then please get in touch.

Call David Griffiths on 01438 34560

George Hay provide audit, accountancy, taxation, VAT and business advisory services to a wide range of clients

George Hay have been leading the accountancy field for **over 75 years**. We offer a personalised, friendly service backed up by a wealth of professional expertise and we work with a range of industry sectors. Our services include:

- taxation
- VAT advice
- audit
- bookkeeping
- online accounting
- payroll
- new business start-up advice
- management accounts
- financial planning
- year end accounts
- probate
- business advice

Letchworth office: 📞 **01462 708810**
We also have offices in Biggleswade and Huntingdon

www.georgehay.co.uk    

George Hay is the trading style of George Hay Partnership LLP. Registered in England and Wales number OC373025. Registered Office: Brigham House, High Street, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, SG18 0LD. Registered to carry on audit work in the UK & Ireland, regulated for a range of investment business activities by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales. Our Probate services are provided through GH Probate Limited. Registered in England and Wales number 9630102. Registered Office: St George's House, George Street, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE29 3GH. Authorised to carry out the reserved legal activity of non-contentious probate in England and Wales by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales.



THE 4 ROUTES TO SUCCESS

Steve Saunders, Action Business Coach

I find it really rewarding helping fellow business owners to succeed and achieve their goals.

The way I do that is by helping business owners get clarity around how they are going to grow their business. But firstly, I help bring awareness of what may be going on in their business. These may be the opportunities that they have in front of them or the challenges that are getting in the way.

The second is education. I bring strategies & solutions to help overcome those challenges and take advantage of any opportunities.

Third is implementation, working together to implement these solutions and strategies, plus ensure they are working to their best advantage.

The fourth is probably the most important and that's discipline. I bring accountability that most business owners lack, but sorely need in their business. And I'm not talking about hard work.

By discipline I really mean doing the things week in, week out that are going to move their business forward. So I help my clients stay sane and focused, especially when problems arise. After all, being in business always brings new challenges.



GET TO ACTION

Find more on Steve now at www.actioncoach.com/stevesaunders

Reach him at **07949335002**
stevesaunders@actioncoach.com

ActionCOACH[®]
business coaching

INCREASING COSTS CAUSING CONCERN AMONGST VULNERABLE BUSINESSES



MARTIN WILLIAMS
Partner George Hay
Chartered Accountants

Following the first revaluation of the rateable value of properties for nearly ten years in England and Wales last year, changes to business rates arrived in April, resulting in some smaller enterprises facing increases of up to 3,000%.

These increases proved so controversial that the Chancellor, Philip Hammond, was forced to announce measures in the March budget to assist vulnerable businesses; these included a cap on rate rises for 16,000 small businesses, who previously paid very little or no business rates, to ensure that they

would not see their bill increase by more than £50 a month.

Despite the measures announced, at the time of writing this article a staggering number of businesses are still waiting for their bills to be correctly adjusted.

It seems that a lack of published guidance from the Government, combined with the snap general election, is to blame for the pause in proceedings as local councils shy away from finalising adjustments without the guarantee that they will recoup any money lost.

Mr Hammond said at the time of the announcement concerning support measures that there was 'scope to reform the revaluation process, making it smoother and more frequent, to avoid the dramatic increases that the present system can deliver'. We hope this will be looked at to give greater certainty to business owners.

Businesses have also had to deal with the recent increase in Insurance Premium Tax to 12% which came into force in early June.

There are so many measures, including the above, either coming in or already in place that will affect small business, such as changes to dividend taxation, a substantial increase in the minimum wage and compulsory employer pension schemes. At a time where there is also great uncertainty over the economy, due to the Brexit negotiations, it is essential that businesses look at their own profit and cashflow forecasts to assess the impact of these changes. Furthermore, the government must look at ways to support the business community during this period.

Here at George Hay, with a large proportion of our client base made up of small, local businesses, we understand the issues facing these firms. We are on hand all year round to ensure you're always up to date on the latest legislation and aware of the tax-saving opportunities available to you. We work across all industry sectors to provide comprehensive audit, accountancy, taxation and business advisory services, tailored to the requirements of your business. If you'd like to find out more about how we can help you visit our website www.georgehay.co.uk

ENVOY BUSINESS LEADERS HELP TO ACCELERATE ECONOMIC GROWTH



Business leaders across a wide range of industry sectors and parts of the county have joined Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership's new Envoy Programme to work together on key issues for the county.

MBDA, NatWest, BT and Lloyds are just some of the major household names which have chosen to get behind the innovative programme to help find creative solutions to local problems.

In its first six months the programme has looked to address some of the challenges surrounding upskilling the workforce to meet local employers' needs, take-up of apprenticeships and encouraging more young people to pursue careers in STEM.

By calling on its cross-sector expertise, the Envoys have also looked at how to balance the county's need to provide new homes versus the loss of employment land. At its last Envoy event at Oaklands College, where catering students

served up haute cuisine quality fare, Envoy Nigel Palmer, Director of Lambert Smith Hampton, St Albans, talked about the consequences of Permitted Development Rights (PDR) in relation to loss of key office accommodation and the impact on land values which was threatening the viability of office redevelopment and refurbishment in St Albans. Read his market commentary on page 32.

Many Envoys echoed this view across the county with Cllr Sara Bedford, Leader, Three Rivers District Council, calling on the LEP and industry to work together with local planning authorities on a collective response to show the impact PDR is having in the South East. Cllr Bedford argued the impact was being felt not just on the loss of office space but on entire communities where the work/life balance was being seriously eroded.

As a result of this discussion several actions are to be taken forward including the proposal to set up a working group to focus on these issues in greater depth. Envoys and the wider business community will be asked to feedback their responses to help shape the LEP's economic priorities and ensure that its core aims reflects the needs of businesses.

Mark Coppen, Director of Corporate and Commercial Banking, NatWest, and member of Hertfordshire LEP Banking Forum, is Chair of the Envoy Programme. He said: "This is not a talking shop but a very powerful and effective way to help harness business expertise to bring about real change."

Our revised Strategic Economic Plan

Our first Strategic Economic Plan was published in 2014. Since then we have negotiated three significant Growth Deals with Government and have secured around £55.3m of EU funding to invest in our businesses, people and places.

Politically and globally the world has changed radically over three years too. With that in mind we consulted widely with business leaders and stakeholders to assess whether the priorities laid out in our first Strategic Economic Plan were still broadly the right ones.

From these consultations, we determined that our four main drivers for economic growth should remain the same. These are:

Priority 1: Maintaining global excellence in science and technology

Priority 2: Harnessing our relationships with London and elsewhere

Priority 3: Reinvigorating our places for the 21st Century

Priority 4: Foundations for growth

The refreshed SEP now also takes into account wider macro-economic and political changes, such as the impact of leaving the EU, the growth of London as well as changing patterns of working and living in relation to digital connectivity which is set to have a transformative effect on the future of our towns.

Our SEP should also be read within the wider national context of the Government's Industrial Strategy Green Paper which outlined three overarching challenges facing the UK which map directly onto the priorities set out in our Strategic Economic Plan. Read our response in full here.

What is the Envoy Programme?

Our Envoy Programme is made up of our private sector Board Members and a small and select cohort of influential business leaders covering a wide range of industry sectors.

The Envoys work with the LEP by bringing their expertise to help identify and solve key issues for the county and act as external advocates for the LEP to Government, industry and inward investors. In return, Envoys can help influence future LEP priorities and join a prestigious network of like-minded peers that work together to find creative solutions to local challenges.

What are the goals of the Envoy Programme?

- Create external advocates for the LEP to government, industry and external investors;
- Improve visibility and reputation of the LEP within the local business community;
- Ensure that voice of enterprise remains strong in Hertfordshire;

- Build business-led advocacy and campaigning opportunities.

What are the benefits of becoming an Envoy?

- A unique opportunity to join a network of like-minded business peers that works together to identify creative solutions to locally significant issues;
- The ability to influence and shape Hertfordshire LEP's activities and priorities;
- The prestige of being part of a select and exclusive group of business leaders;
- To enhance the reputation of the LEP within the local business community.

Envoys should be knowledgeable about the wider economic benefits of Hertfordshire LEP's work and be able to explain its influencing role locally around economic growth and job creation. They should be willing to share their industry expertise on both a formal and informal basis with the LEP Main Board and Programme Board Members so that current business

opinion is reflected in Hertfordshire LEP work and thinking.

The LEP issues invitations to become an Envoy and there is no cost to join. It does not require significant time commitment nor is it exclusive. Envoys can also be members of similar programmes such as Dacorum Ambassadors.

Who leads the Envoy Programme?



Mark Coppen,
Director of
Corporate and
Commercial
Banking, NatWest,
and member of
Hertfordshire LEP
Banking Forum

is Chair of the Envoy Programme. He is supported by Lucy Gravatt, Hertfordshire LEP's Communications and Engagement Manager. Meet our Envoys and keep up to date with their progress [here](#).

The Industrial Strategy Green Paper outlined three overarching challenges facing the UK.

These can be summarised as building on our strengths and extending excellence into the future; ensuring that every place meets its potential; and making the UK one of the most competitive places in the world to start or to grow a business.

Building our Industrial Strategy: Hertfordshire's response

Hertfordshire is exceptionally well placed to make a significant contribution to the UK's productivity. We have earned a reputation as a credible delivery partner following the successful delivery of Growth Deal projects. We have pipeline opportunities to deepen the knowledge-based industry clusters around world class research capabilities. And we are starting to address the regeneration challenges to revitalise our New Towns.

In our response we set out the assets and potentials that exist within Hertfordshire and outline how we are already harnessing them to achieve our strategic ambitions. We also set out our agenda for action which would help us to exploit these more fully, spearheading the delivery of a modern Industrial Strategy for Hertfordshire.

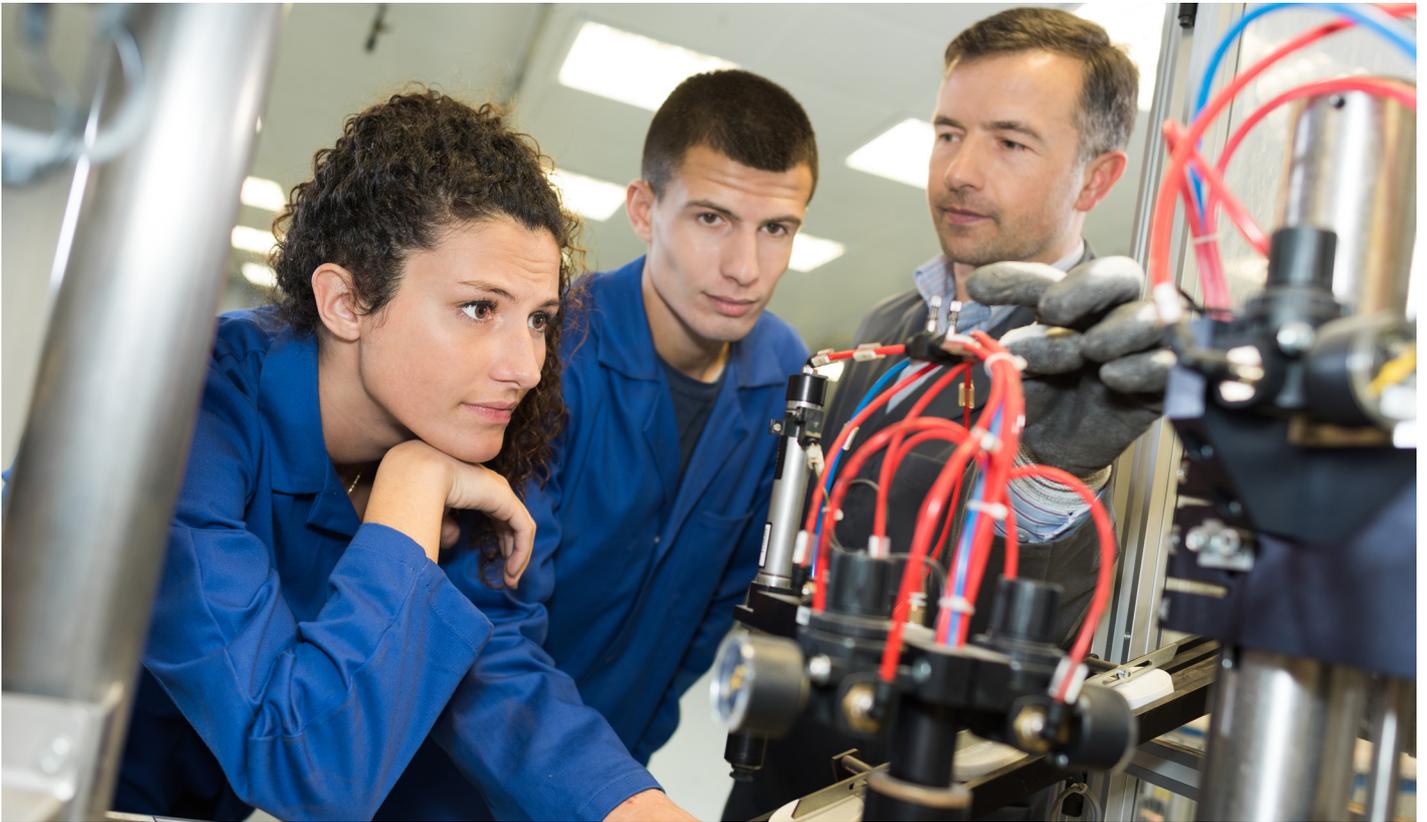
Local Enterprise Partnerships will be at the forefront in developing localised Industrial Strategies thanks to their business expertise and knowledge of place. The proposed Shared Prosperity Fund, which is due to come into effect once the UK leaves the EU, will be vital in helping us build on our success in bringing long-term sustainable, inclusive growth to Hertfordshire.

We look forward to sharing with you the results of further discussions as these ideas are formulated into Government policy and believe that our Strategic

Economic Plan and Green Paper response gives us a solid base on which to help bring these ideas to substantive fruition.

You can read more about the opportunities we have identified and our more detailed full response to the proposed Industrial Strategy [here](#).





NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE COLLEGE TO INTRODUCE NEW SKILLS-BASED APPRENTICESHIPS

NHC has pledged to develop a new centre for skills-based learning, including welding, plumbing and electrical installation. 1,229m² of new floor space filled with industry standard equipment and technology will provide 60 SMEs and almost 1,500 new apprenticeships.

The apprenticeships will aim to help get young people into work, as well as to fulfil the skills needs of local businesses, helping to aid recruitment by looking at the pool of freshly qualified graduates from the centre. North Herts College will also work with businesses to help them begin to provide apprenticeships and get the most out of the funding available.

In addition to this, small and medium sized local businesses will be able to

“Apprentices will be equipped to make a valuable contribution to the local economy”

use the facilities to provide training for their existing employees.

Adrian Hawkins, Chair of Hertfordshire LEP’s Skills and Employment Board, continues:

“Our £400K investment to provide upgraded industry standard engineering equipment has enabled

the college to provide a state of the art learning environment attuned to the needs of local employers.

“We know how vital it is to deliver higher level apprenticeships, particularly in relation to engineering, technology and construction. By replicating a modern sector workplace, apprentices will be equipped to enter the local workforce and make a valuable contribution to the local economy.”

The centre will include a state of the art mechatronics lab, computer aided design (CAD) suite, professional workshop and electronics lab, coming at an investment of £900,000. Such features will obviously go some way to fulfil the county’s pledge to encourage STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) subjects.

HOW BESTSTART IS INVESTING IN FUTURE SUCCESS

Hertfordshire based HR Consultancy is celebrating their 10th Anniversary, and as part of these celebrations, they have chosen to support future athletic talent.

Beststart Human Resources is a HR Consultancy offering dependable and practical HR advice for employers.

With headquarters in Hertfordshire, Beststart pride themselves in creating a strong and lasting relationship with their clients, principally through face to face HR support, to ensure the right outcome is achieved.

They provide a multidisciplinary service, through a team of talented and knowledgeable HR Consultants. Their ability to quickly build relationships by understanding and removing the barriers people sometimes create enables them to offer alternative routes to make everything achievable.

In September 2017, Beststart HR will be celebrating their 10th Anniversary. As part of this celebration, the Consultancy chose to support a young, talented athlete who would reflect the company's values. Someone who would be passionate in their attitude, have an ability to approach challenges openly and flexibly, and above all else, possess a desire to reach their full potential.

Following discussions with the charity SportsAid, which provides financial support and recognition to the country's brightest sporting prospects, Pippa Earley was selected.

Identified as someone who would embody the company's values and capabilities, Pippa is a talented all-



Anita Wynne, Beststart CEO, with Pippa Earley.

rounder from the Kingston AC & Polytechnic Harrier Athletics Club.

Having been selected to represent Great Britain at the Commonwealth Youth Games, recently held in the Bahamas, we are pleased to report that Pippa secured fourth place in the U18 100m hurdles.

She is currently the England National Indoor Pentathlon U17 women's champion and was previously coached by two-time Olympian Lorna Boothe. Pippa's sporting idol is Dame Jessica Ennis-Hill, who was supported by SportsAid as a 15-year-old, and Pippa also competes in the heptathlon.

Speaking about the support, Anita Wynne, CEO of Beststart HR said, "We are delighted to assist Pippa as she trains and competes over the next 12-months across a range of athletic disciplines. We believe Pippa's journey will not be too dissimilar to that of our own, as she draws on skills and differing capabilities to achieve the best result in each of her events. We look forward to being part of that journey and sharing in her continued growth and development."

See how Beststart can help your business at www.beststarthr.com





Stevenage 
Community Trust

Business supporting local people in need

Stevenage Community Trust awards grants to organisations and individuals across Stevenage and the surrounding villages to fund projects and equipment to ensure charities, voluntary groups and sports clubs can provide invaluable support to local residents from all walks of life.

“Thanks to local companies and individuals, we have given over £1m in grants since 1990.”



To find out more call 01438 525390
or visit www.stevenagecommunitytrust.org

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

PROFILE

Name: Paul Beasley

Job title: Managing Director

Company: Richmond House Financial Services

What town do you live in?
Lower Stondon, on the Herts/Beds border



What is one thing that must always be in your fridge?

I have a real love of cheese so there will always be a small selection for a quick snack, and a nice white wine of course.

Who is your favourite chef?

Originally Keith Floyd. I loved the way he'd slowly get drunk as the show went on. Today James Martin is probably similar in that he doesn't take himself too seriously.

What is your favourite recipe from them?

On Saturday Kitchen he hollowed out a loaf and filled it with layers of chicken and vegetables with pesto. Looked fabulous for a picnic but I haven't got round to trying it yet.

Where is your favourite place to eat in Hertfordshire for a business date?

Needham House Hotel in Wymondly has really established itself in the 18 months since new ownership. The Brasserie now has 2 AA Rosettes.

What is your favourite dish from there?

I love the sharing board starter. It's more like a main course!

Where in Hertfordshire would you recommend for a family meal?

Emma and I have five children between us and a love of curry is a common theme. We flit between a Beds restaurant that shall be nameless and the Raj Douth in Hitchin.



What is your idea of food heaven?

This depends so much on mood and circumstances. Relaxing with friends it has to be tapas, a chilli on a cold winter's evening, and in the summer a salmon fillet wrapped in prosciutto.

What food can you not stand?

All fellow Chelsea fans will know the famous 'Celery Song.' Strange thing is, I cannot stand the stuff and why it always has to ruin a cheese board I have no idea!

What is the strangest thing you have ever eaten?

On a golfing trip in Portugal once we decided to try sea urchin. They were served alone and looked rather unappetising. The waiter spoke no English, so we just tucked in. They were as horrible as they looked, and we only ate half of one each. We later found out we should have removed the outer casing! I also had zebra in Kenya.

What dish would you order from there?

Jeera Lamb. Not just hot, but flavoursome.

What is your favourite recipe to cook at home?

Scallops with chorizo followed by beef wellington.

Where is the best restaurant to let your hair down after a hard week's work?

La Concha Tapas in Letchworth is intimate and lively.

What is an ideal snack?

Scotch eggs from Chapmans Butchers in Baldock, bliss!

Is there anything that you haven't tried but would like to?

I can't think of anything. Unlike our parents' days, everything is available now. I love ostrich, and it is very low in fat and cholesterol, yet restaurants have been intimidated into not serving it. I really don't understand why and I would like to see it more widely available.

What is your favourite tipple?

A couple of pints of Directors Bitter followed by a Gevrey Chambertin. over dinner.

GET IN TOUCH

Richmond House Group

T: 0333 241 3350

W: www.rhg.co.uk

PDR MARKET COMMENTARY

Against the backdrop of Central Government's Permitted Developments Rights (PDR) initiative to allow the automatic conversion of office space into residential by relaxing current planning processes, Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH) recently presented their market overview to the LEP Envoy Dinner on the 18th May.

While this view is focused primarily on the St Albans office market, the current national focus on housing provision, the importance of which is acknowledged, appears to be very much at the expense of not just the office sector, but more generally employment.

LSH is witnessing this across Hertfordshire and has expressed previous concerns at this imbalance in land available for different uses.

In considering the St Albans office market, we need to evaluate the office stock lost to PD conversions, and its impact on current limited stock. We summarise with our concerns for the local market:

Office Stock

- St Albans is an established and recognised M25 office location.
- Overall office stock of circa two million sq ft.
- North West M25 office market is "robust":
 - strong occupational demand;
 - increase in take-up;
 - reduction in void periods;
 - upward pressure on rents.
- Zero under construction.
- LSH UK Vitality Index had St Albans placed in top 10 for growth in 2016 and 2017, but note the warnings!

Office Space Lost

- Over 200,000 sq ft of office stock lost to PDR office conversions to residential in last three years.
 - Ridgmont Plaza / Keystone / Apex House / Ziggurat.

- 2016 sale of two large potential office conversions:
 - 62,000 sq ft Grosvenor Road;
 - 40,000 sq ft Abbey View.
- Assuming occupancy of 1:200 sq ft, this equates to a loss of 1,000 jobs over the last three years.

Current Market Overview and St Albans Market Status

- Increase in prime office rents:
 - £34.50 per sq ft achieved and rumours of £37.50 per sq ft now agreed.
- LSH Office Market Pulse reported rental increase of 9% last year.
- Rental growth of 46% over the last three years.
- Reduction in tenant incentives.
- Insufficient grade A space available.

Current Grade 'A' Space

- Take-up for 2015 in North West M25 area was 54% above the seven-year average.
- Over 75% of all take-up since 2008 has been in the city centre.
- Take-up over last six years – 255,000 sq ft.
- Grade A vacancy rate only 2.6%.
- Grade A space under pressure with no speculative consented office schemes available – only 125,000 sq ft offices available (55% being grade A).
- Pressure remains due to conversion schemes.
- No new supply in St Albans city through the Strategic Local Plan.



Apex House



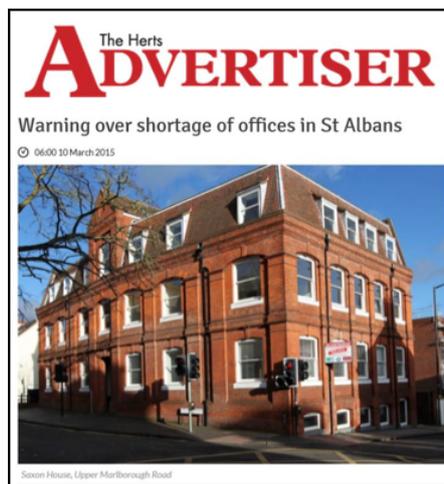
Ziggurat Building

Since our original presentation, office availability locally has become even more restricted. The amount of grade A quality office accommodation available for example has further reduced with the letting of 4 Beaconsfield Road and there are market indications that the surplus space in Victoria Square is now under offer.

- Note that since the presentation office availability locally has become even more restricted.

Our Concerns

- Success of central government PD initiative– too much office space in St Albans has been lost.
- Over 200,000 sq ft lost to date:
 - more to come;
 - lost quality not just secondary space.
- Need to protect what we have:
 - article IV initiative;
 - need to promote new schemes.



These concerns are not new. Back in March 2015, The Herts Advertiser ran a story to warn over shortages of offices in St Albans. LSH together with other local commercial agents across the county are keen to highlight that a lack of current employment stock, in both office and industrial/warehouse accommodation, is making it increasingly difficult to respond to new enquiries and meet demand.

This situation is only likely to get worse over Local Plan periods where

those plans make minimal provision for new appropriately located supply providing accommodation in accordance with modern standards and expectations. It is important to note that vacancy exists in some employment areas since they contain stock which is no longer fit for purpose / or where location matters mean the stock is not the right type, in the right place, to meet market requirements.

LSH believe there are real live issues regarding not just the ability of new companies to locate in Hertfordshire, but given the losses of employment stock to other uses, of existing businesses to find stock and remain in the towns where they are located.

In the days of the Structure Plan, there would have been some attempt to ensure that as part of the strategic planning of the county, the growth in housing was matched by some appropriate distribution of new employment space.

That is not necessarily happening now, with the understandable sensitivity of the Green Belt release leading to a perhaps understandable concentration on housing delivery in many Local Plans.

When Hertfordshire commercial agents comment that occupiers and providers of jobs are leapfrogging Hertfordshire due to scarcity of accommodation and the resulting upward pressure on rents, and that economic activity is being lost to neighbouring counties, then matters need to be addressed.



PROBLEMS AHEAD FOR STEVENAGE OFFICE MARKET

In 2013 when Permitted Development was introduced, which effectively allowed offices to be converted to residential stock without obtaining planning consent, there was over 530,000 sq ft of office space available in Stevenage.

The take-up at that time was around 65,000 sq ft per annum, meaning there was 8 years' supply of office space in the town.

Whilst this was an unhealthy ratio, with far more supply than demand, the introduction of PD has now changed the dynamics of supply and demand. There is now a dangerously low supply of offices available to businesses looking to relocate within the town, or for new companies looking to move into the town for the first time.

At the beginning of 2017, there was just 120,000 sq ft of office space available, and the take-up during 2016 was over 135,000 sq ft. This means that there is now less than 1 years' supply of office space in Stevenage.

There is no doubt that the idea of PD was an excellent one for bringing back into use redundant office buildings which were laying vacant and which are now providing much needed

residential accommodation. However, as is so often the case, when governments interfere with the market they do not realise the extent to which their actions will distort the market.

Over the last 3 years, over 500,000 sq ft of office space has been converted to residential in Stevenage alone. This is despite the fact that Stevenage applied to have part of Gunnels Wood Road protected from these PD Rights, and was successful in being one of the very few areas in the country that could refuse PD Rights in certain locations within the town.

If this had not happened then undoubtedly the conversion from offices to residential would have been substantially worse, and Stevenage would have become even more of a commuter town, rather than providing a place for people to live and work without having to travel vast distances.

If a company wanted to move into the town and required to occupy a building of more than 25,000 sq ft, there is not a single building in Stevenage that could accommodate that size. This means that any company looking to move into the town for that sort of size would

be forced to look elsewhere, and any existing company looking to expand within the town to larger accommodation would be unable to identify any suitable space.

The real problem will come when the economy does pick up and demand for offices starts to increase as there will be no buildings available to satisfy that demand.

There is no land suitable for commercial development available in Stevenage, and even if that land was available, current rents are not high enough to support any speculative office development, meaning the prospect of any new office schemes being built in the town are a long way in the future, which means that the existing stock is all that is available to satisfy the future needs of businesses in Stevenage and companies potentially looking to move into the town.

Clearly there is a demand for more housing, and the fact that the residential market has continually been subsidised by successive governments has resulted in residential values outstripping commercial values. Landlords, therefore, cannot be blamed for converting their commercial properties into residential properties if they are going to increase the value of their portfolio.

The Government and Local Authority need to readdress this balance by encouraging land owners and developers to build offices speculatively in order to provide for future office space demand, otherwise Stevenage will end up as a town full of commuters travelling to other locations to obtain employment.

Mike Phoenix, Partner in Brown & Lee Chartered Surveyors, Stevenage

DELIVERING IT SUPPORT & IT SECURITY SERVICES TO BUSINESSES THROUGHOUT HERTFORDSHIRE AND BEDFORDSHIRE

Assign-IT started 16 years ago with the aim of providing corporate levels of support to the SME market, offering complete solutions to businesses across a wide spectrum. Assign-IT had organically grown in the past based on its reputation of delivering, if not necessarily the cheapest, definitely the most effective solutions out there, which in turn allowed its clients to grow with us. The time soon came when we felt we were ready to start moving to the next phase of our growth plans. We decided to focus on IT security, and soon realised



this was becoming the starting block of all decisions made about IT and data going forward, in the process moving into providing support in the regulatory domain, particularly the General Data Protection Regulation where we certify and assist companies to comply.

We quickly realised that we needed to reintroduce ourselves, and found that the best way to achieve this was to actively engage in local county networking groups. This is how we got introduced to biz4Biz. The group is made up predominately of senior

level managers & directors across all sectors with expertise in all areas of business. biz4Biz has helped Assign-IT enter into different dialogues with the right people, which in turn has allowed our company to grow.

David Privett
Commercial Director
01727 843 888
www.assign-it.co.uk/

ASSIGN-IT
Keeping IT Secure

INNOVATE 2 SUCCEED - FULLY FUNDED MENTORING PROGRAMME TO HELP SMES TAKE NEW PRODUCTS & SERVICES TO MARKET

Innovate 2 Succeed is a bespoke innovation mentoring programme designed to support ambitious and established SMEs in Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire commercialise new products or services. Fully funded by Innovate UK and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF),

the programme can help eligible businesses in a variety of ways, including supporting the development of new products and services, exploring new market opportunities both nationally and internationally, exploiting and protecting intellectual property, plus implementing

commercial strategy. Are you looking to bring new products or services to market? Contact the team on 0845 600 9130, i2s@exemplas.com or visit www.exemplas.com/innovate2succeed for more information.



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

Innovate UK

REMAINERS NEED TO STOP RELYING ON THE BREXIT TRANSITION CRUTCH

As the UK heads to Brussels to bring about Brexit, the Rt Hon Peter Lilley brings his EU negotiation skills to bear on the talk of a transition period in 2019.



Yet others assume transition relates not to things we will negotiate with the EU27 but to our own policies once we get back control over immigration, agricultural, fishing etc. Die-hard Remainers see it simply as a way of prolonging the status quo in the hope that we never actually leave the EU.

Many of these ideas are mutually contradictory. Almost all involve prolonging the damaging uncertainty facing business.

Most people who have not analysed what a free trade agreement between the UK and the EU27 will involve – including most journalists and ministers – assume it will require major changes and complex details which will take ages to agree. They have been repeatedly told that the Canada/EU agreement took years to negotiate.

“An agreement between the UK and EU would be the first free trade agreement ever between countries which already have free trade”

But that is a totally false comparison. An agreement between the UK and EU would be the first free trade agreement ever negotiated between

countries which already have free trade. So it would be uniquely simple and involve minimal changes to the status quo.

Conventional free trade negotiations can involve years haggling over how fast to phase out tariffs on 10,000 different products and how to “converge” thousands of product specifications to remove differences which distort trade. But the EU and UK start with zero tariffs on each other’s goods and identical rules.

Any free trade deal would end with zero tariffs and minimal changes to our rules. Zero tariffs to zero tariffs cannot take more than ten minutes to agree and unchanged rules not much longer. Neither need any conceivable transition.

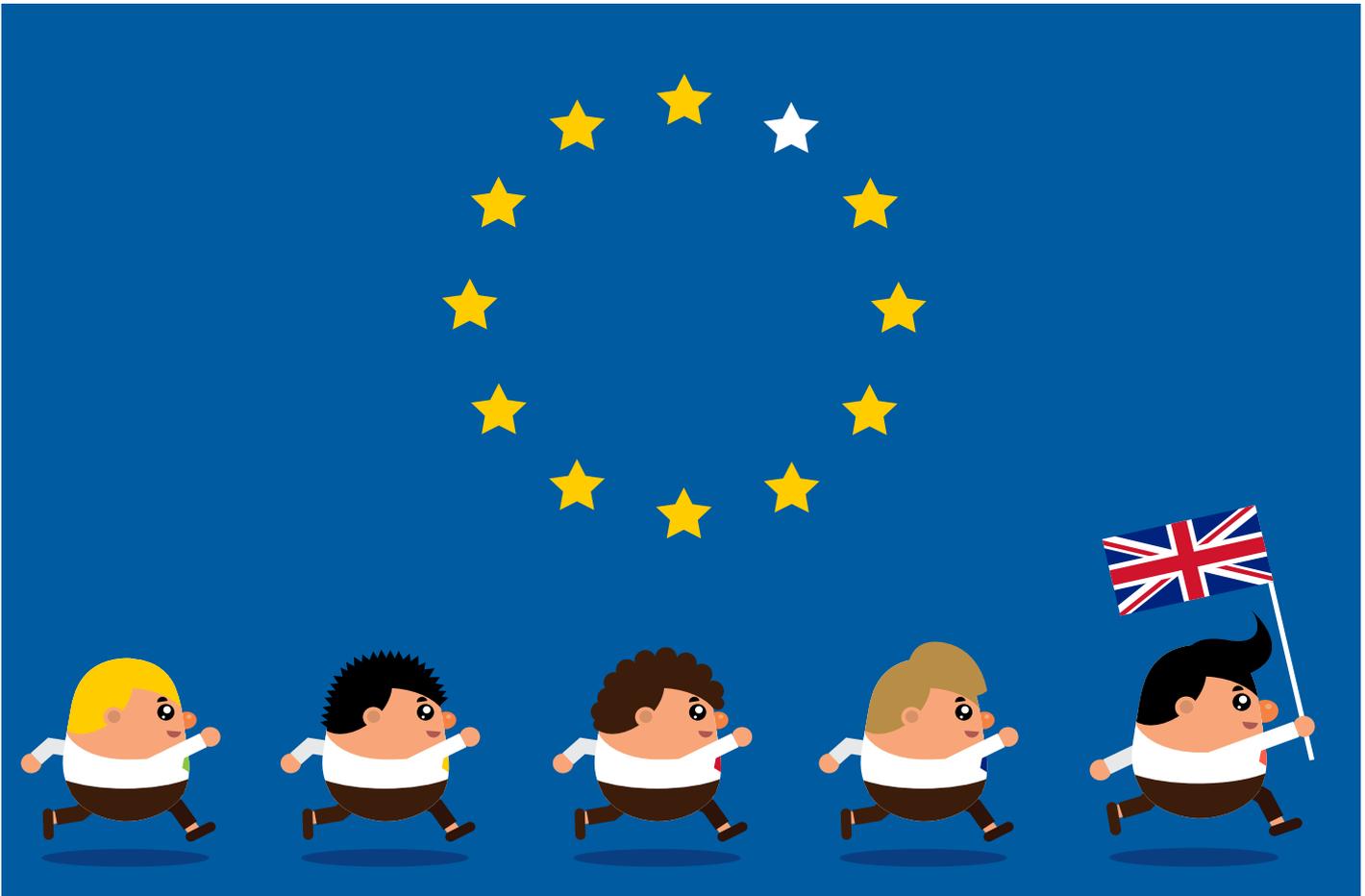
A free trade agreement with the EU27 would entail only two significant changes. First, the EU would introduce Rules of Origin. These are designed to prevent third countries avoiding the EU’s Common External Tariffs by routing goods through the UK once we abolish tariffs on certain goods from outside the EU.

These rules are normal features of free trade areas. They apply to exports from Norway and Switzerland to the EU. Whether the EU will apply the same or different rules to us may not be known until late in the day. HMRC should prepare to operate whatever rules emerge and encourage companies trading with the EU to familiarise themselves with these procedures.

There is nothing more dangerous in politics than a solution in search of a problem. From time to time the chattering classes are beguiled by a policy proposal which sounds desirable without being at all clear what it is supposed to achieve. The latest example is a “transitional” arrangement following Brexit.

Ask its proponents what “transition” is supposed to achieve and each gives a radically different answer – if any. For some, it is a period post March 2019 during which we continue negotiating the details of a permanent free trade agreement. For others, it is a period during which we phase in a final agreement already settled before we leave.

Others still want a period during which we retain the Common External Tariff while we implement our own administrative arrangements including a new Customs computer system.



The need to implement final decisions could justify retaining the Common External Tariff for at most a few months post-Brexit.

The second feature of a free trade agreement would be a “divergence” process – what happens when the EU or UK alter any initially identical regulations. Divergence processes are normal in trade deals. Given the precedents both parties have accepted in other agreements that should not take long to agree. Nor is there any conceivable transition to such a mechanism.

Many advocates of transition imagine that a free trade deal will involve introducing tariffs on some products – and want to phase them in.

However, WTO rules say a free trade agreement must remove tariffs from substantially all goods. Others

“Remainers rely on any notion of a ‘transitional’ deal like drunks lean on a lamppost”

envisage problems which will only arise if the EU refuse a free trade agreement. In which case, we will trade with the EU on the same terms as America, Japan and China.

Our exporters will face an average tariff of 4 per cent – scarcely a “cliff edge” compared to their 15 per cent exchange rate boost since the referendum. It might be desirable to phase in above average tariffs (on cars, food, etc).

But the EU will only refuse a free trade deal if they want to show their voters that leaving the EU causes difficulties – in which case they are scarcely likely to agree a transitional deal to mitigate those difficulties.

In short, a transitional arrangement would only be negotiable when it was unnecessary. And when it might be useful it will not be negotiable.

Remainers rely on a “transitional” deal like drunks lean on a lamppost – more for support than illumination. It is time they spelt out what problem it would solve, how and why the EU would agree to it.

Keep up with Peter and his opinions on the latest Brexit developments through his official website, available at www.peterlilley.co.uk

WHAT COST OF BREXIT?



The cost of Brexit is fast becoming clear. The UK currently pays a net £8.6bn into the European Union annually, and we remain the second largest contributor of the 28 countries involved in this unique group of nations. The estimates for the final divorce settlement have ranged up to £100bn, and there seems to be a general acceptance of a sum around £50bn that might become the final price tag of our departure.

50 years ago, the UK was struck by a fear of isolation from trade with the European mainland and, as I remember at the time, it was this overwhelming concern of being left on our own that drove us to the ambition of EU membership, such that we were willing to turn our backs on the Commonwealth. We were convinced that we would be excluded from European trade and that this would be detrimental to the future growth of our nation's wealth. It was very much a no-brainer when, in 1975, many of us voted to remain members of a single market of 6 nations, one which became 9 in 1973 with the inclusion of the UK and Ireland, and which now numbers 28 in total.

At the time, free movement of goods and people was an attractive option, but none of us could quite guess how free this movement would be. Gone are the borders, the customs posts, the currency exchange, the threat of rabies. Or have they? The UK appears to have maintained many of these pre-conditions to free movement.

In the 70s there was very little knowledge of the forthcoming IT boom that would do far more to connect the world than any trading bloc could. Now the world is a 'Global Village' of trade connected by the internet, and much of the protectionism in trade that existed post war has been swept away by the visibility of manufacturers supporting demand, on a worldwide basis. It is this visibility, via the internet, that will lead to the ultimate demise of any trading bloc.

Unfortunately, in the intervening years, the UK has done much to transfer its own manufacturing prowess abroad, and the advent of the EU's Free Trade Zone enabled major manufacturing plants based here to source materials from facilities across Europe, thus reducing our nation's manufacturing community, and increasing our reliance on the financial sector.

We should pay the EU what it is owed, not a penny more nor a penny less, and it is a source of major disappointment for me that the Europeans have lowered the tone of such negotiations to that of money now, rather than the potential for tariff-free trade in both directions after Brexit. It is fascinating to see that there are only one million Brits that have domiciled themselves throughout

Europe, yet there are some three million Europeans living in the UK. A ratio of 3:1 for our small island, something which speaks volumes for both the social harmony and the safety to be found here within our shores. Is there any wonder that such a stark influx of people would have caused the final decision in supporting a Brexit vote? Perhaps the EU should take account of the likely impact of their desire for a federal Europe on the people of Europe, rather than just the cost, and even take account of the effects of globalization along the way?

As an island community, the UK will rise to the challenge and the range of opportunities that will result from our stepping away from the current protectionism implied by our membership of the EU. We have much to gain from our relevance to the rest of the world, and the freedom to trade globally will deliver the wealth and wellbeing our enterprising nation now needs.



ADRIAN HAWKINS

Co-Founder & Chairman biz4Biz
Chairman, Weldability Sif, established
1925. Director and Trustee of the
Weldability Sif Foundation,
Deputy Chair Herts LEP Main Board,
Chair of Skills and Employment Board.

Providing a coherent voice for businesses in Hertfordshire

The network for forward-thinking professionals

- CEO Policy Forums with an emphasis on creating a business friendly policy
- Strong links to the Hertfordshire LEP
- Regular lunch and breakfast meetings for networking and interaction with a topical guest speaker
- Educational/factual trips e.g. European Parliament, Houses of Parliament, Jaguar Tour, Gherkin
- Business Support and Mentoring Service with free 60 minute 1-2-1 consultation for new members
- biz4Biz magazine – Insight.
- New members entitled to a FREE profile in the magazine and reduced rate advertising
- biz4Biz Blog

JOIN US NOW
<http://www.biz4biz.org/join.html>



biz4Biz provides a coherent voice for businesses in Hertfordshire. We aim to influence and shape policymaking and encourage investment by engaging with local/central government, relevant public sector bodies and local organisations to promote the county as a great place to live and do business.

biz4Biz has broadened its activities to represent the interests of businesses and people. Its networking, local government liaison and charitable involvement aims to benefit the residents, commuters, workers and business owners who contribute to Hertfordshire life.

biz4Biz is a not-for-profit company that is run by a board of directors who are all experienced business people.

biz4Biz

For more information contact
biz4Biz Secretariat
01462 47803 | • secretariat@biz4biz.org
www.biz4biz.org



WE'RE IDEA ECCENTRICS

**WAITING TO INVENT
YOUR NEXT BRAND
BREAKTHROUGH**

Marketing matters, and the rise of social media means that getting noticed on the right channels by the right communities is now vital for growing your business. But the 'right' crowd can be harder to find than you think. JABBERCOMS can take the stress out of social media and manage it for your business for **ONLY £350 PER MONTH.**



0330 9001 777 • www.jabbercoms.com
@jabbercoms • hello@jabbercoms.com

