

biz4Biz

Insight

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Contents

- 4 NEWS**
- 6 JOBLAB: REDUCING TIME TO HIRE**
The cost-effective way to find graduate talent
- 7 FORTHCOMING EVENTS**
- 8 JAGUAR EXPERIENCE**
Find out about the fascinating day enjoyed by biz4Biz
- 10 HERTS BIG WEEKEND**
Win tickets to your favourite attraction
- 12 RAISING CONSULTANCY PROFILES**
Hertfordshire Growth Hub's new flagship event
- 13 RESOLVING BUSINESS DISPUTES**
John Wiblin explains the use of mediation
- 14 HERTS FUTURE TRANSPORT SYSTEM**
Have your say on the 2050 Transport Vision
- 15 A RESOLUTION WITH A DIFFERENCE**
Support young people move into work
- 16 WHAT ARE SOCIAL ENTERPRISES?**
Find out why it is important to 'Buy Social'
- 17 A COLD WIND IS BLOWING**
How business rates are affecting our high streets
- 18 THE MANAGEMENT FILE**
Recordkeeping and the board of directors
- 20 HOW TO BUY CONSULTANCY**
An insider's guide to help you make the best choice
- 21 AZTEK LOGISTICS ACHIEVE FORS GOLD**
What it means to reach the Gold standard
- 23 HOUSING, PLANNING & DEVOLUTION**
Recreating the shape of local government

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ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVES

We have started 2016 with strange things happening in financial terms worldwide. Commodity prices are falling, oil is heading to less than 20 USD per barrel and in recent weeks £4,000 billion has been wiped off the value of global equities. This does not bode well for any western economy nor will it help the argument for the UK to remain within the European Union as the UK's woes can be multiplied considerably in relation to those of the rest of Europe. There is the feeling that this conversation may now be postponed until 2017.

None of this is at all helpful to SMEs nor I suspect large corporates. It does, however, strengthen the argument that we are all in this together and our collaboration within the business community is now more necessary than ever. We must remain positive, there are still bills to be paid, employees wages and taxes to cover. Working smarter replaces the need for working harder. Our local business environment is looking very positive and there are many interesting articles in this copy of Insight we are sure you will find of interest. Let's all concentrate on the positives, the rest will come right in the end.

Adrian Hawkins

Co-Founder & Chairman biz4Biz

Chairman Weldability Sif established 1925, Director and Trustee of the Weldability Sif Foundation, Herts LEP Main Board, Chair of the Hart Schools Trust.

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NEWS



biz4Biz Connexions launch event

biz4Biz Connexions is a new, exciting networking club for senior managers, directors and CEOs of Herts-based businesses. There are no annual fees to be a member of Connexions nor complex rules.

At each meeting you will have the opportunity to:

- Network and grow your business contacts
- Discuss issues of interest with like-minded business people
- Listen to informative speakers on topics of interest to Herts-based business leaders
- Gain access to educational seminars on

a wide range of topics from finance and tax to HR, marketing, IT and leadership.

The launch event will take place on Thursday, 25 February 2016 from 7.00 am to 9.00 am at Mercure Letchworth Hall Hotel. The cost of the event will be £20.00 per head plus VAT. The price includes tea, coffee and a full English or continental breakfast.

For more information and to book a place go to <http://www.biz4biz.org/connexions.html>

Great new service for all biz4Biz members

What is the Business Support Service?

biz4Biz have knowledgeable members who are confidential and trustworthy individuals and are well known for their expertise in their particular field. This service is available to all biz4Biz Members. For your first consultation, each Member will be given a voucher entitling them to a FREE 60 minute 1-2-1 consultation, potentially valued at £350 (by arrangement) with your chosen expert. Additional support over and above this may be subject to a cost to be agreed between yourself and the expert. To book an appointment with one of our experts, please contact Louise Case by email secretariat@biz4biz.org or by telephone 01462 478031.

biz4Biz local business survey

We want to engage with the local business community in Hertfordshire to find out what business managers and owners think about a range of issues that affect their businesses. As a start we have put together this brief survey. We hope you can spare a few minutes to complete it at <http://www.biz4biz.org/survey.php>

NORTH HERTS ACTION GROUP OPPOSE LOCAL HOUSING PLANS

Two Local Authorities, North Herts District Council (NHDC) and Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) are creating their Local Plans and will shortly be making them available for public comment. As with all plans there are often parts that make their delivery controversial and both NHDC and SBC plans are not without these highlights. Unfortunately neither authority own any land options and therefore they are in the hands of speculators and developers as to what is finally produced based on availability rather than any formal plan. Currently the NHDC are expecting to permit building on 65% and the sites available currently are registered as Green Belt.

The Stevenage plan will build on 35% of currently regulated and restricted Green Belt land. There has been much debate in recent times whether small additions to villages and towns are the most appropriate way to develop, given the increased pressures this is likely to create on roads, flooding, sewerage and other utilities. Indeed the MPs for North Herts, Sir Oliver Heald QC MP, the Rt Hon Peter Lilley MP and Stephen McPartland MP are firmly on the record in opposition to Green Belt removal and are actually calling for both authorities to jointly support the development of a new Garden City with various sites available.

Parish Councils have also objected

to sporadic developments in an open letter to the NHDC and many have formed their own Neighbourhood Plan Forums to ensure their locality is sympathetically developed. Many North Herts residents are against these Local Plans similarly and have taken to *Facebook/NorthHertsActionGroup* to express their concerns.



HIGHER GROWTH RATE FOR THIRD YEAR

Hertfordshire's businesses have achieved a higher rate of growth than the overall UK economy for the third year in a row. There have been increases in employment and fixed assets signalling investment for future growth, says the authoritative Hertfordshire Limited report conducted by business advisers Grant Thornton in association with Hertfordshire LEP. The report provides financial analysis of the performance of the 200 largest companies owned and managed in the county. It shows that the combined turnover for those companies grew by a hefty 11.4 per cent to £14.1 billion. Total profits also rose by more than 18 per cent to £937 million. Profitability delivered by small and medium sized businesses that is those with a turnover of less than £50 million increased by almost 40 per cent. The total number of employees in the top 200 companies also passed the 100,000 mark for the first time, following a 4.8 per cent rise in staff levels.

PLAN LAUNCHED TO BOOST ST ALBANS ECONOMY

A plan to create a Business Improvement District in St Albans has been launched. The scheme is to enhance the city centre, attract more visitors and to generate more jobs. The proposal was unveiled by St Albans City Centre Partnership at a launch hosted by St Albans Chamber of Commerce. Businesses will then vote in the autumn to see if they wish to go ahead with the Government recognised scheme.

BIDS first started in 2004 and there are now about 200 in Britain generating a combined £65million in levies that are spent locally. Other towns in the area with a BID in place are Hitchin, Luton, Bedford and Watford.

There are around 500 businesses based in St Albans including St Peter's Street, the High Street, Chequer Street and Holywell Hill. Businesses will provide the funding by being charged 1.8 per cent of their rateable value but those with rateable values of less than £10,000 will be exempt. Approximately £500,000 a year will be raised and the money will be spent on a range of projects to improve and promote the city.



JOBLAB: REDUCING TIME TO HIRE THROUGH BETTER TECH

SMEs look out – there’s a new website giving the recruitment industry a tech overhaul. JobLabs revolutionary model makes finding the right interns and graduate talent simple and cost-effective.

Candidates create one single profile. Employers search users according to their specific needs, and find the right candidates instantly. Once employers have shortlisted candidates, they can meet their choices prior to interview via video cover letters – providing a greater level of control.

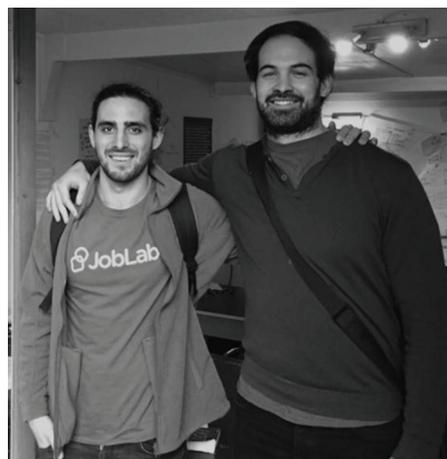
Hertfordshire-based graduates Matt Sinderberry and Aidan Cramer founded JobLab last year. They experienced first-hand how convoluted, outdated and unnecessarily time-consuming the traditional job hunt can be for both employers and candidates;

“It’s the ideal tool for SMEs, where hiring is often handled by senior management. It reduces time-to-hire and the associated costs of hiring, plus it’s free to join and search the talent base; you only pay if you decide to hire.”

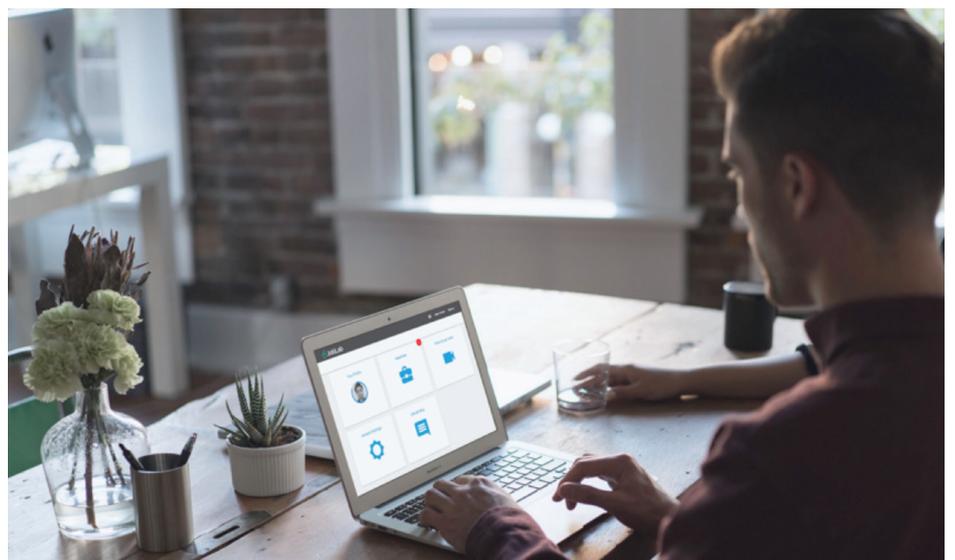
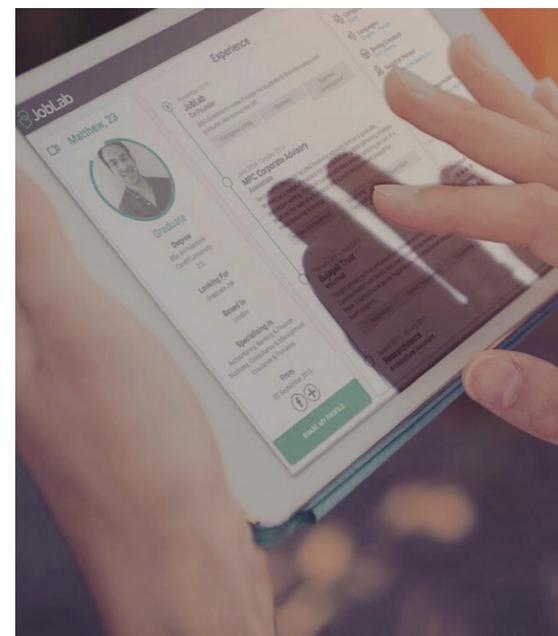
“We understand that less brand awareness means it can be a struggle for SMEs to attract quality candidates. Our partnerships with universities across the UK, including the University of Hertfordshire, grant you instant access to top-notch talent.”

JobLab isn’t just a tech solution. The team is on hand to help drive the process forward and ensure you get the best out of the service at a price 10 times cheaper than most recruitment agencies.

“We want to make it easier for businesses to find the right candidates so more young people can access great opportunities. Through JobLab



graduates are represented honestly, based on their skills, allowing for a genuine meeting of needs on both sides. We count among our clients Business Insider, Nestle and local SMEs such as DV signage and CloudCustom.”



FORTHCOMING EVENTS



Lunch at the House of Commons

House of Commons is the lower house of the Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland which, like the House of Lords (the upper house), meets in the Palace of Westminster. The House is an elected body consisting of 650 members known as Members of Parliament (MPs). The House of Commons of England evolved at some point during the 14th Century becoming the House of Commons of Great Britain after the political union with Scotland in 1707 and then assuming its current title after the political union with Ireland in the nineteenth century.

Dining Room B is situated in one of the most iconic buildings in the world. No other venue is more instantly recognised than the Palace of Westminster. It is impossible to walk through its corridors or dine in its imposing function rooms without a deep sense of awe.



Networking breakfast for Stevenage Town Centre Redevelopment

Following the success of the first breakfast networking meeting in November, Stevenage Community Trust has passed the baton to biz4Biz to build on the business community spirit of Stevenage. The main aims of the breakfast events are to give you a say on key local issues affecting your business and listen to, and question, those who could take action on your behalf.

The event takes place on Thursday 3rd March, 7.30 - 9.15am at Lytton Suite, Novotel Knebworth Park, The cost of the event will be £20.00 per head plus VAT .

Speakers are Scott Crudginton, Chief Executive at Stevenage Borough Council and Andrew Percival, board member of Hertfordshire LEP and chair of Stevenage First

If you would like to book a place go to <http://www.biz4biz.org/events.html>

DATES FOR THE DIARY

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

Thursday, 25th February 2016

biz4Biz Connexions, Letchworth Hall Hotel 7am- 9am

Thursday, 3rd March 2016

Networking Breakfast, Novotel, Knebworth Park 7.30am- 9.15am

Friday, 10th June 2016

Lunch at the House of Commons, London 11am - 3pm *Member only event*

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



JAGUAR EXPERIENCE

On Thursday, 15 October a group of biz4Biz members and associates visited the Jaguar Experience at Castle Bromwich and watched the F-type sports car being made. We had directors from various Hertfordshire businesses as well as two colleges and the University of Hertfordshire.

The Castle Bromwich factory complex, where once Supermarine Spitfire and Avro Lancaster aircraft were produced in volume, now echoes to a different sound; the manufacture of the range of Jaguar motorcars. While the computer controlled automatic machines seem light years away from the technology of over 60 years ago, the pride of building something special is still evident at this historic plant.

The day was fascinating and watching the blend of robotic and human interaction in the making of the cars was a sight to behold. Interestingly the cars are made to order with the paint shop having just 10 seconds to wash through the paint hose and set up for the next colour.

What our visitors thought of the day

“I found the visit to Jaguar a very memorable day – seeing the full process from building the aluminium chassis, all along the production line to firing up the superb sounding engines and then driving the sports cars off the end of the production line. The

attention to detail and blend of man and robot was fascinating”.

“It was a really worthwhile opportunity to mingle with the other business people and relate to what we were seeing at a seat of excellence such as Castle Bromwich. The attention to detail was staggering”.

Some history on Castle Bromwich

On 19 July 1934 Stanley Baldwin, the Prime Minister, announced in the House of Commons the first of a series of measures to re-arm Britain and expand the Royal Air Force, which was in serious need of modernisation. One of the objectives of the proposed expansion programme was an increase in military aircraft production, which had declined dramatically after World War One.

Scheme F of the expansion programme aimed to improve production by setting up a manufacturing capability outside the aircraft industry. In April

1936 Scheme F was adopted and the obvious candidate as a partner was the motor industry.

Six major motor manufacturers were invited by the Air Ministry to take part in a ‘shadow’ scheme, for which the government would pay for the new factories but the motor companies would supervise construction, manage the plant and be responsible for recruiting and training the required labour force.

Daimler, Austin, Rootes, Rover and Standard agreed to the scheme but the largest, Morris Motors, under Lord Nuffield, declined to take part due to a personal disagreement between Lord Nuffield and the then Air Minister, Lord Swinton. Months slipped by and the scheme was revised several times. Some of the delays in getting aircraft such as the Hawker Hurricane, Supermarine Spitfire and Bristol Blenheim into production was due to government indecision!





On 16 May 1938, Swinton resigned and was replaced by Sir Kingsley Wood who wasted no time in persuading Lord Nuffield to join the scheme. His industrial might was so important and so offered him the opportunity to build a large factory to produce the Spitfire.

Post-war the site was taken over by Fisher and Ludlow a local manufacturer of sheet metal products as well as many business interests including a controlling holding in the American Bendix Corporation. It was responsible for manufacturing many car body shells largely for Standard-Triumph but also produced the body for the Morris Minor.

In 1953 Fisher and Ludlow became part of the British Motor Corporation (BMC), which took over Pressed Steel Ltd in 1965 and Jaguar Cars in 1966. Two years later BMC disappeared into the British Leyland Group (BL) and Pressed Steel was merged with

Fisher and Ludlow to become Pressed Steel Fisher, which assumed control of Castle Bromwich.

Jaguar Cars Ltd took over control of the site on 28 July 1980 and continued production of the XJS sports and XJS saloon bodies. These were assembled and painted, before being taken to the plant at Browns Lane for final assembly.

In the years under Jaguar's ownership, Castle Bromwich was fully operational and completely refurbished. When Ford took over Jaguar in 1989, further investment was made to modernise the plant. It was in 1995 that the decision was made to manufacture the new Jaguar S-type at the factory. A completely new assembly line was installed and further updating of the plant was carried out for production of the S-type which was unveiled in 1998.

LOUISE CASE

Editor and Secretariat, biz4Biz

Some interesting facts

- 83% of Jaguar vehicles that are manufactured at Castle Bromwich are exported to 101 markets worldwide.
- 398 staff
- 2,388 rivets applied
- Each F-type model is available as a coupe and convertible
- 101 metres of adhesive per F-type (the height of Big Ben)
- 247,296 deliveries of parts each month
- Zero spot welds
- 600 - 2,000 tonnage capacity on three automated press lines
- Site area is 112 acres
- 43 robots that rivet, bolt, seal and/or move parts



St Albans Cathedral



Knebworth House

Photo Christine Smith



TICKETS TO YOUR FAVOURITE ATTRACTION!

Excitement is building for Hertfordshire's first ever Big Weekend, when hundreds of residents will be able to visit some of the county's finest tourist attractions for free.

Organised by Hertfordshire's new tourism service, Visit Herts, the Herts Big Weekend is designed to encourage residents to rediscover the amazing things to see and do in their home county - and to then spread the word about them.

The event will see attractions across the county donating free tickets or experiences for residents to use on 12th and 13th March 2016. Residents can bid for available tickets to as many attractions as they wish until 16th February at www.hertsbigweekend.co.uk, and two tickets per household will be allocated by ballot to the lucky winners (some family tickets will be available as well).

Dozens of attractions have already donated free tickets for the fun-filled weekend, with activities including tours of Hatfield House, Knebworth

House, The Henry Moore Studio and Gardens and The Natural History Museum at Tring. Activities include paddle boarding lessons, a glamping experience, family days out Lee Valley Park White Water Centre and Warner Bros. Studio Tour London.

Attractions have also donated extra tickets to the Family Holiday Association charity, which helps struggling families to enjoy a day out for free.

Visit Herts joint project manager David Curtis-Brignell said: "We are thrilled with the enthusiastic response to the first Herts Big Weekend from local businesses – dozens have signed up so far, and we hope more will follow!"

"The Big Weekend is a fantastic way to kick-start the tourist season, but it's also a great way to re-ignite excitement for the county amongst those who should be its biggest advocates – the residents."

The Big Weekend is the first in a series of campaigns planned by Visit Herts to strengthen Hertfordshire's tourism offer as part of the new Destination

Management Service for the county.

Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership awarded the county's tourism service to destination management specialists Go To Places on a two-year contract last year. Visit Herts is the interim name ahead of its consumer launch in spring when the new brand name and identity for the service will be announced.

Every Hertfordshire resident aged 18 and over can apply for two tickets to any of the attractions listed. Attractions that are already free to enter will be offering a range of extras such as guided tours, refreshments and special gifts.

Big Weekend is also part of the national English Tourism Week celebrations, organised by VisitEngland to highlight the importance of tourism as one of the fastest growing sectors in the national economy.

Tourism attractions who would like to find out more about the new service can visit the interim website www.visitherts.co.uk.

The attractions that have offered tickets to Herts Big Weekend include:

- Aldenham Country Park
- British Schools Museum
- Bushey Museum and Art Gallery
- Celtic Harmony Camp
- Cheshunt Football Club
- Cheshunt Park Golf Centre
- City & District of St Albans Tour Guides
- Courtyard Arts Centre
- Harefoot Brewery
- Hatfield House
- Henry Moore Studios and Gardens
- Knebworth House
- Hitchin Lavender
- John Warner Sports Centre
- Lee Valley Canoe Cycle
- Lee Valley Caravan Park, Dobbs Weir
- Lee Valley Park Farms
- Lee Valley White Water Centre
- Mill Green Mill and Museum
- Natural History Museum at Tring
- Novotel Stevenage
- Paradise Wildlife Park
- Puddingstone Distillery
- Redbournbury Watermill & Bakery
- Reveley Lodge
- Royston & District Museum & Art Gallery
- Royston Cave
- RSPB Rye Meads Nature Reserve
- St Albans Signal Box and Railway Museum
- St Albans Cathedral
- St Albans Organ Theatre
- St Michael's Manor Hotel
- Stotfold Watermill
- The Heritage Park Pitstone Museum
- Tring Brewery Co. Ltd
- Warner Bros Studio Tour London
- Watford Central Leisure Centre
- Watford Museum
- Welwyn Roman Baths
- The XC

About Visit Herts

Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership awarded the county's tourism service to destination management specialists Go To Places on a two-year contract following an open competitive tender process last year.

The team behind Go To Places, which also operates Visit Kent, has a sound track record in marketing and developing key destinations, and brings over 13 years' experience to the role. Visit

Herts is the interim name of the service, ahead of its official launch next spring.

Sandra Matthews Marsh MBE, CEO of Go To Places, said: "We are thrilled to be delivering this project and eager to promote everything that Hertfordshire has to offer by creating a unique and inspiring programme of work."

Find out more about your LEP at www.hertfordshirelep.co.uk
Call: 01707 358744 or email info@hertfordshirelep.co.uk



HERTS BIG WEEKEND

Saturday 12th & Sunday 13th March 2016

WIN free tickets to your favourite Hertfordshire attraction!

Be part of the first ever Herts Big Weekend on 12th and 13th March 2016.

For one special weekend you could visit your favourite stately home, treat your family to an adrenaline-fuelled adventure or discover a hidden Hertfordshire gem for FREE!

Enter the ballot at www.hertsbigweekend.co.uk by 16th February 2016 to be in with a chance!






Herts Big Weekend is proud to support





#hertsbigweekend

Visit Herts

RAISING THE PROFILE OF LOCAL CONSULTANCIES AT HERTFORDSHIRE GROWTH HUB'S NEW FLAGSHIP EVENT

December saw the Hertfordshire Growth Hub host the first in a series of free events to help consultancy business owners grow and develop their local client base.



Hertfordshire Growth Hub

Local support and advice for Hertfordshire businesses

Consultants from across the county were given the opportunity to 'pitch' their services to the team of advisers and find out how they could be referred into Growth Hub clients seeking specialist expertise.

The Growth Hub deals with hundreds of businesses every year, many of whom seek this support locally. By getting a better understanding about consultants' areas of specialism, as well as the type of clients they are looking to engage with, the team of advisers at the Growth Hub can effectively refer clients to the most relevant consultants.

Feedback from those pitching on the day was extremely positive. Charles Payne of Business Aspirations tweeted, "Thank you to Hertfordshire Growth Hub for interesting consultant presentations and networking with consultants. I was pleased to have the opportunity [to pitch] so we can both grow business in Hertfordshire."

Those presenting on the day also benefitted from the chance to receive constructive feedback on their pitch from the Growth Hub team. This provided fresh and welcome insight as



well as a different perspective into their business offering. "The Growth Hub team led a really professional event. Their style of facilitation and feedback was excellent," said David Lucas of The Maple Partnership Ltd.

Amanda Freeland, Hertfordshire Growth Hub Manager said "It was really interesting to meet such a wide variety of consultants and find out more about their areas of specialism. Our service to Hertfordshire's growing SMEs is free and impartial and we're very keen to work together with consultants to help them grow their business and win more clients. By having events like this we are able to represent their services effectively to local SMEs we are engaging with on a regular basis

and also provide opportunities for the county's consultancies to network with each other."

Due to its popularity, the Growth Hub has already hosted a second event and is looking to run more throughout 2016. Their full events programme has been published with places filling up fast for their next event, 'Joining the dots in Digital Marketing,' on 24th February at BioPark, Welwyn Garden City.

Get in touch with the Growth Hub to book your place at their events and find out how the team can help you grow your business. Call 0844 725 5575, email enquiries@hertsgrowthhub.com or visit their website www.hertsgrowthhub.com.

A BETTER WAY TO RESOLVE BUSINESS DISPUTES



JOHN WIBLIN

Solicitor and Accredited Civil and Commercial Mediator
Head of Commercial Litigation,
Longmores Solicitors LLP

Disputes swallow up management time, cause stress and injure business relationships. But few businesses that have traded for some time will have been able to avoid disputes altogether. The next best thing is to resolve any dispute quickly and cost-effectively.

Mediation is a very effective method of doing that. The courts have recognised this and in any civil court claim in England and Wales, each party is now obliged to certify to the court at an early stage that they have considered mediation and if they have rejected it, to explain their decision.

Mediation is a process aimed at achieving a settlement and mediators are individuals who have undergone

specialised training to help them assist people to reach agreement. Many mediators have formal legal training but there are many fine mediators who come from very different backgrounds. The mediation training course I went on included a number of lawyers but also a retired anaesthetist and an actress.

One cannot make someone who is in dispute with your business take part in mediation if they don't want to. But business people are familiar with negotiation and they understand the benefit of early resolution and this is really just a negotiation that is assisted by someone else - the mediator.

When acting as a mediator I never say that I think one party is right and the other wrong. If I were to express a partial view in that way then I would surely lose the confidence and co-operation of one of the parties immediately. And that would reduce the chances of achieving a settlement. Rather, I work to build a relationship of trust with both sides, meeting with them in private and inviting them to share with me their goals in the negotiation, the strengths and weaknesses of their cases as they perceive them, and their alternatives to a settlement. Without revealing to anyone what I have been told privately, I am in then a unique position to see where the potential points of agreement are and carefully to steer the conversation in that direction.

The settlement rate nationally for mediations is high and my own experience as a solicitor specialising in business disputes is that even when my clients' matters haven't settled at mediation, the mediation process can significantly shorten the remaining litigation process. That is because everyone will have understood much better from the mediation what the battle is really all about and what they are looking to gain from it.

Your solicitor may be able to recommend a good mediator. If not, there is a national database available at <http://nmd.clerksroom.com/>. When a dispute arises, why not consider mediation at an early stage? My view is that as soon as you know what you want and you think you know what the other side to the dispute want and they are sufficiently far apart that you think you cannot bridge the gap on your own then it is time to consider mediation



HAVE YOUR SAY ON HERTFORDSHIRE'S FUTURE TRANSPORT SYSTEM

What will Hertfordshire look like in 2050, and how will people and goods move around? This is a key question Hertfordshire County Council is considering in the work on our 2050 Transport Vision, which will result in the creation of a new long term countywide transport strategy and the prioritisation of major future enhancements to our transport system.

At Hertfordshire County Council we are halfway through our Transport Vision work, and recently undertook engagement with local stakeholders. Working alongside the Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce and Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, we engaged with the business community to receive their comments on how transport can best support short, medium and long term growth in the county. In summer 2016, we will undertake a public consultation on our draft strategy before its adoption later in the year.

Major transport infrastructure takes many years to plan, fund and deliver, hence why we are working on identifying our future infrastructure needs now, and looking at what the long term requirements will be.

Should investment match ever increasing demands for car travel with greater levels of highway capacity? Or, should transport provision in Hertfordshire focus on encouraging more travel by walking, cycling and passenger transport modes?



Is road safety a higher investment priority than reducing congestion or supporting the transport needs of people without access to the car? How should we plan our future transport systems in the face of technological uncertainties, increasing population size and more frequent extreme weather events? And finally what are the most likely future patterns of housing growth in the county, and how should the transport system develop to support this?

The Transport Vision and Strategy will inform the answers to such questions, and take account of the plans and priorities of national government and our neighbouring areas.



Over the course of 2016 there will be further opportunities for stakeholders and the public to engage on the work we are undertaking, and I am keen for the work to be sense checked and challenged to ensure our future plans are robust and supported. As part of this I would like local business leaders to be involved and invite you to register on our engagement list. To receive further updates on the Vision work, and opportunities to comment, please email the Transport Policy Team your details: ltp@hertfordshire.gov.uk



A RESOLUTION WITH A DIFFERENCE

The season for New Year's resolutions is upon us. But between dusting off your trainers and digging out that unfinished novel, think about what a New Year's resolution for your business might look like. I'd ask you to consider what you could do to support a young person looking to move into the world of work.

There are numerous challenges that young people face. Developing the 'soft skills' that employers look for isn't easy. And gaining a realistic understanding of the workplace from the outside can be tough. It creates a conundrum for our young people: can't get the job without experience, but how to get the experience without a job?

There are a surprising number of things that you can do to help – and it needn't be painful or expensive. Nothing compares to hearing it from someone who's done it for real, and seeing the workplace from the inside.

Here are 10 ideas to get you started:

1. Deliver a talk in a local college/school on your business, sector, or your own career.
2. Attend a careers fair.
3. Work with a college/school to make their curriculum more relevant.
4. Open your doors to a group visit.
5. Support work shadowing (a day or two).
6. Offer a work experience placement (a week or more).
7. Take on a young person on a trial basis – traineeships allow you to offer a 3-6 week placement with the option to hire if you're impressed.
8. Consider making your next hire an apprentice – apprenticeships are jobs with training, suitable for a huge range of occupations.
9. Offer training to develop your workforce from within.
10. Share what you're doing with others, through networks like biz4Biz. The bonus is that there are plenty of benefits to you too. In a competitive

marketplace, raising awareness of your brand/sector is key to getting the future employees you want. Interacting with young people gives you visibility of potential great candidates. And businesses that hire young people report improvements in productivity, the products they can offer, and their ability to attract good staff.

So if your gym resolution fails, don't worry – but do keep an eye out for what you could do for young people and they could do for you.

If you would like to discuss any of these ideas further, we at Hart Learning & Development would be happy to assist. We're an emerging talent business that exists to help other businesses address their talent challenges. We work alongside North Hertfordshire College, which allows us to join the dots from education to work. You can find us at www.hartld.co.uk and on Twitter @hart_ld.

WHAT ARE SOCIAL ENTERPRISES?

Social enterprises are businesses that trade for social and environmental purposes. If you've ever bought the Big Issue, eaten a bar of Divine Chocolate, bought a bottle of Belu water in a restaurant, or watched Jamie Oliver's Fifteen on TV, then you're already familiar with the idea. They are businesses that earn money and make profits, but do different things with those profits – reinvesting them back towards their social mission, to do more good and change more lives. So when they profit, society profits.

Social enterprises aren't only well-known retail brands like those above – they operate in almost every industry: from transport to training, healthcare to housing, finance to facilities management, recycling to regeneration and construction to catering. Through their work, they provide vital services and create employment opportunities for people who might not get them otherwise. Right now they are growing faster than mainstream businesses, with much greater start-up rates. In fact, the social enterprise movement is growing around the world.

There are many social enterprises operating in Hertfordshire. Examples include Hertfordshire Community Meals delivering 500,000 meals a year – 365 days a year to the elderly and disabled, RECOVER is a vibrant furniture up-cycling social enterprise, creating pathways into volunteering and work for vulnerable adults. Sunnyside Rural Trust in

Hemel Hempstead has a number of trading activities such as a selling their own produce, running a farm shop and café to providing a PAT testing and gardening service. All of these services provided opportunities for their employees and trainees to fulfil their potential.

Buy Social

Awareness is growing among businesses and consumers alike about the social impact that businesses and other organisations have. Just like having a carbon footprint, each business has a social footprint, and any business can take simple steps to improve theirs.

Perhaps the simplest and most effective thing you can do is to 'Buy Social'. Buying social means buying the everyday goods and services you need, from a social enterprise. That way you can ensure that the

money you have to spend is making a real difference. More and more businesses and people are looking to Buy Social as a way of improving the lives and communities of those around them.

Social Enterprise UK has the largest membership database and directory www.socialenterprise.org.uk/membership/members-directory



Social Enterprise East of England (SEEE)

We are the regional body for social enterprise. We act as a point of contact and the voice for the social enterprise movement and are passionate that social enterprise offers a great way to do business.

SEEE has over 100 social enterprise members and communicates through our monthly newsletter with over 2,000 individuals interested in the sector.

SEEE works closely with Social Enterprise UK the national organisation that helps grow the social enterprise movement and offer a joint membership package.

SEEE can help you link with the social enterprise sector or if you're a social enterprise we can help you grow.



A COLD WIND IS BLOWING THROUGH HERTFORDSHIRE'S HIGH STREETS

For businesses in the retail sector, Christmas is a make or break time of the year. As the post-Christmas sales figures are published, it is clear there are a few winners and a lot of losers. A range of reasons have been touted by retailers for the disappointing sales figures – the mild winter, more people buying online, heavy discounting, more household spending on big-ticket items like cars and furniture. A KPMG/Ipsos report claims that our spending is shifting away from 'things' to holidays and leisure.

If retailers cannot agree on the reasons for their poor Christmas sales, there is one thing they all agree about – the unfairness of business rates. Retail revenues have been falling and, while some retailers may be able to negotiate a reduction in the rent they pay their landlords, the government still expects them to pay high levels of business rates.

Helen Dickinson, chief executive of the British Retail Consortium (BRC), believes that the chancellor needs to reduce the disproportionate burden of business rates on the retail industry. This comes at a time when the retail sector faces the prospect of higher wage costs via the national living wage and apprenticeship levy, as well as the gradual removal of retail relief on business rates.

But George Osborne has other ideas. Rather than reforming the system, he has decided to devolve the setting, collection and spending of business rates to local authorities. The £26bn currently raised may be kept and spent by local authorities, which will also be able to set local rates. In reality, there will be more scope for cutting, as Mr Osborne is keeping a cap on rate increases.

However, local authorities will be given scope to increase rates by up to 2p in the pound to help fund local infrastructure projects, subject to them getting the support of local businesses and their local enterprise partnership (LEP).

So how will this play out in practice? In theory we could see local authorities competing with each other by cutting rates to attract new businesses and more employment into their area. It also means that local authorities will have a major stake in the local economy, which could have far-reaching effects on planning applications and infrastructure projects.

For example, councils may be less likely to repurpose commercial business space and may look more favourably

on a planning application from an established local business wanting to expand, or a developer wanting to build a new warehouse or office block. Local authorities will have to build closer ties with local enterprises and by working with their local LEP business will have more of a voice about decisions that affect them.

Could allowing local authorities to set business rates help rejuvenate the high street? A reduction in business rates could attract businesses that are not affected by online shopping, such as bars, restaurants and specialised food or craft shops, but I doubt that things will change significantly until the government puts bricks-and-mortar shops on the same footing as the large online-only retailers. Amazon has an unfair advantage in the retail war, as it pays a low rate of tax overall.



TIM BAUGH
Partner at Howardsgate
Directorbiz4Biz

THE MANAGEMENT FILE

RECORDKEEPING AND THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Insight for business owners, directors and officers – provided by rhg Insurance Brokers.



ANDREW SYKES

Director biz4Biz, Chairman rhg
Insurance Broker

Recordkeeping preserves a company's history of business and financial decisions.

Unfortunately, creating and maintaining accurate records is often overlooked by companies of all sizes. It's more than just a formality; recordkeeping is a critical element of directors and officers liability loss control.

For executive management, maintaining accurate records – most importantly, documenting important business decisions and the context in which they were made – not only builds a clear financial and business foundation for future decisions but also reinforces a director's or officer's case in the event of litigation.

Documenting Decisions; Board Meeting Minutes

Business decisions that require board member or shareholder participation necessitate the creation of board meeting minutes to capture the details and context of decisions made. Meeting minutes serve as an important area of directors and officers liability loss control. If any business decision is questioned by shareholders, auditors, donors or regulatory agencies later on, directors and officers can bolster their defence with accurate, detailed minutes that can serve as the chief piece of evidence for their side of the case.

Directors and officers should expect that board meeting minutes will be subpoenaed as evidence for a potential legal action; therefore, minutes should be prepared with diligence and detail. The minutes should be accurate and should include:

- A list of the attendees of the meeting and who was absent
- A detailed account of what occurred at the meeting
- A list of voting results, including the names of those who voted in favour and those who dissented
- Copies of any supporting documents distributed at the meeting and a reference to those documents

In the event of a legal action, directors and officers cannot claim ignorance or absence when decisions were made that resulted in wrongdoing. Directors and officers who are unable to attend a board meeting should review the meeting minutes to find out what decisions were made. If they disagree with a decision made in their absence, they should submit their disagreement in writing to include with the record.

Leaving a paper trail of critical decisions

Maintaining company records creates a paper trail of important financial and business decisions that may be referenced in the future by other directors and officers, shareholders, funders, auditors and more. Not only is this important in the case of litigation but it helps to streamline the deliberation process of future decision-making.

A comprehensive business record should contain:

- Bylaws or operating agreement
- Resolutions
- Company policies (conflicts of interest, political contributions and more)
- Board meeting minutes
- Annual meeting minutes
- Shareholder communications

- Stock certificates issued to shareholders
- Current list of shareholders
- Annual reports
- Year-end financial statements and tax returns
- Employee personnel files
- Dissolution documents

Before simply stuffing papers into filing systems, it's important to review the overall records management system of the company, or create one if not already in place. Organising company records is key; establishing an easy-to-use and accessible filing system will help if a document needs to be located and referenced in the future.

Scanning printed documents and saving an electronic copy on an external storage device may help to save physical storage space, although paper records should be kept as well.

Example Claim:

A fire results in the Company's premises being destroyed. It is subsequently discovered that the Director responsible for arranging the Company's insurances had inadvertently failed to keep the insured values up to date, resulting in a significant underpayment by the Company's Insurers for the loss. This in turn meant that the premises could not be rebuilt with the insurance proceeds alone. The other Directors decide to sue the Director responsible for insurances for the shortfall.

Some companies decide to store their records off-site.

Controlled access to company records may also be necessary, as many documents such as employee personal files, must be kept confidential. Controlled access should be part of a company's recordkeeping policy that complies with UK laws. All directors, officers and employees should be aware of this policy.

Directors and officers face numerous liabilities; good recordkeeping of company decisions is just one way to mitigate the risk of costly legal actions. Contact rhg Insurance Brokers for more information about directors and officers liability and how to mitigate risk with Directors and Officers Liability (D&O) insurance.



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Aztek Logistics Ltd are extremely proud to announce that they have become the 25th General Haulage company to currently hold the Gold standard for Transport for London's Freight Operator Recognition Scheme (FORS).

The Gold standard separates out operators that Transport for London believe are exceptional and are going the extra mile to raise their standards and performance. The FORS voluntary scheme sets its standards based upon lawfulness, safety, efficiency, and environmental protection. The standards cover all aspects of the distribution business including management, vehicles,

drivers and operations. Aztek's progression from Bronze to Silver, then onto Gold, demonstrates their dedication to improving road safety and bettering their procedures and policies. Reaching the Gold standard positions Aztek as a high quality operator who takes good practice, compliance and safety extremely seriously.

Working with FORS has allowed Aztek to continually improve their growing fleet, evidenced in their heavy investment in vehicle safety systems such as cameras, nearside proximity sensors and audible alarms for all vehicles. Furthermore all of Aztek's drivers have completed the Safe Urban

Driving course in association with Transport for London.

Duncan Pannell, Operations Manager for Aztek, explains how important FORS is to the company. "We came across FORS when tendering for work across London. When we looked at the requirements and benefits of joining the scheme we saw that they fitted in perfectly with our ethos of improving safety whilst complementing our drive to improve fuel efficiency and reduce our environmental impact. Since embarking on the accreditation process, we have reduced our Parking Fines and Charges by 33% and improved our MPG and idling across the Fleet".

Providing a coherent voice for businesses in Hertfordshire

The network for forward-thinking professionals

- Strong links to local MPs
- CEO Policy Forums with an emphasis on creating a business friendly policy
- Strong links to the Hertfordshire LEP via LEP Board Member and biz4Biz co-founder and Chairman Adrian Hawkins
- Regular meetings for networking and interaction with topical guest speakers
- Regular informative trips e.g. European Parliament, Houses of Parliament, Jaguar Tour, Gherkin
- Business Support and Mentoring Service with FREE 60 minute 1-2-1 valued at £350
- biz4Biz magazine – Insight.
- New members entitled to a FREE profile in the magazine valued at £900
- Reduced rate advertising for biz4Biz members

biz4Biz

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.

For more information contact
Louise Case, biz4Biz Secretariat
01462 47803 | secretariat@biz4biz.org
www.biz4biz.org

HOUSING, PLANNING AND DEVOLUTION

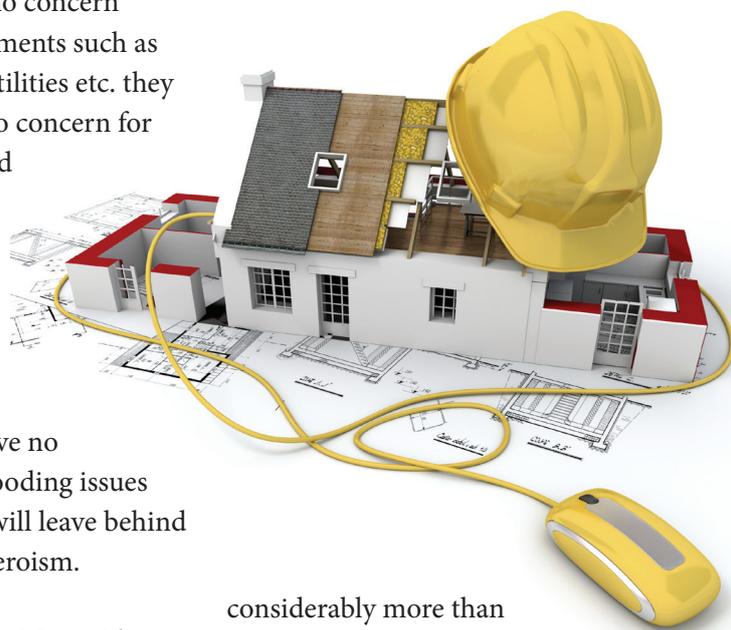
2016 delivers a real opportunity to take advantage of current central government thinking to pursue devolution and recreate the shape of local government here in Hertfordshire, if only everyone leading local authorities can be persuaded that devolution and the powers this will provide is the right way forward for our County. My fear is that we will not seize the independence opportunity quickly enough and we may then be forced to join up with a devolved arrangement with another county like Bedfordshire. Not that I have anything against Bedfordshire, but devolution will take some implementation alone and it would be far easier to address one county let alone two!

So what does devolution allow? Have you ever thought about Hertfordshire and considered why this high value, physically small county, with its diversity in population, skills, employment and education has so many separate local authorities (10 in number)? Currently each Local Authority is creating their local plans to establish house building for the next 15 years and in some cases they are advocating up to 65% of house building on the Green Belt. Unfortunately these same local authorities can only advocate the building of homes on land owned by others and promoted in the main by developers who will provide a “heroic” public service in building new homes. These same

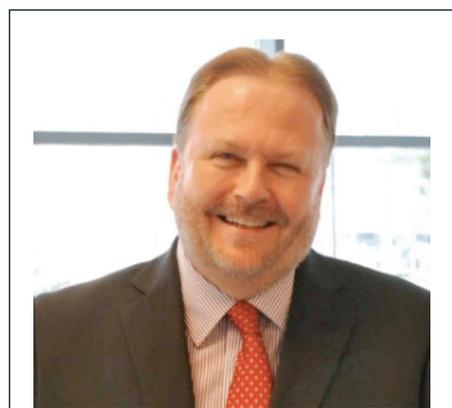
developers will have no concern for infrastructural elements such as drainage, highways, utilities etc. they will have absolutely no concern for what they leave behind once they have made inordinately more money from converting low cost agricultural land into homes. They certainly will have no compassion for the flooding issues and traffic jams they will leave behind in the wake of their heroism.

Currently, along the A1M corridor, we have local authorities promoting the building of up to 60,000 homes despite the, recognised need for only 33,000. These apparently would be built before 2031. Herts County Council has declared in their Highways Growth Plan that they have no intention of expanding the A1M until after 2031. At whatever number of homes that are eventually built, I see a major problem arising just in one small part of Hertfordshire. This is a clear example of how best intentions are not being properly correlated and how the teams of local and regional government sadly act to the detriment of the rate payer.

Devolution will likely change this. It will create far greater unison, cost control and clarity across the region. In 2020 business rates will be payable to local authorities. Currently there is 23 billion paid annually to the Exchequer in business rates,



considerably more than that paid by householders to local authorities. I am certain that businesses will expect a far better, more joined up service from local government, once they become aware they are contributing at this level to their local service provider.



ADRIAN HAWKINS

Co-Founder & Chairman biz4Biz
Chairman, Weldability Sif, established 1925. Director and Trustee of the Weldability Sif Foundation,
Herts LEP Main Board,
Chair of the Hart Schools Trust.



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