

biz4Biz

Insight

AUGUST 2025 | ISSUE FORTY SIX

**STRATEGIC
INVESTMENT
PARTNERSHIP
LAUNCHED**

**NEW SKILLS ARE
HONOURED**

**FIGHTING THE
CANCER BATTLE
AT HOME**

*Hogwarts and Hollywood
at home in Herts!*





biz4Biz IS A VOICE FOR BUSINESS

biz4Biz was created in 2009 followed by our ConneXions business networking group. We launched our first Insight magazine back in August 2014 and our phenomenally successful biz4Biz Awards programme in 2017.

biz4Biz has become a well-established and highly respected brand that provides a voice for the local business community. As part of our continued growth, we have expanded our activities to cover Herts, Beds, Bucks, Essex, and Cambs. We are now able to offer our clients the

ability to market their businesses via our Let's Work Together integrated digital marketing package which includes:

- **Advertising and editorial in our magazines:**
 - **Insight – East of England**
 - **Sustainable Biz - National**
 - **Manufacturing Biz – National & International**
- **Regular biz4Biz ConneXions networking meetings**
- **Regular WebeXions webinars**
- **Regular Newsletters**

- **Blog posts**
- **Email blasts**
- **Video content in the magazine and on the website**
- **Social Media posts**

In addition, we can offer specialised website promotion via our focused expert pages. These would be suitable for a wide range of professional services companies in accountancy, legal, HR, financial services, property services, corporate finance, IT, marketing, and insurance amongst others.



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MAGAZINE ARCHIVE

When Brexit became Braccess

BRITAIN NOW HAS WORLD ACCESS

As Donald Trump unveils what looks like a permanent set of tariffs on imports into the American market, one point is absolutely clear: Britain's 10pc rate is now the best deal in the world and is 33.3% lower than the rate applied to the EU.

With Canada stuck with 35pc, the European Union is on 15pc, Switzerland is on 39pc while India is on 25pc, with the rest of the world somewhere between those levels, this makes Britain the "Country for Opportunity" now and in the future.

Brexit has been used by the media and the civil service as a place to park the blame for our country's failure in recent years despite there being significant benefits to the UK which remain quietly forgotten.

Key Advantages Attributed to Brexit

1. Sovereignty & Regulatory Independence

- The UK regained full domestic control over laws, regulations, immigration, agriculture, fisheries, and monetary policies—no longer subject to EU oversight or the European Court of Justice.



- Reform of regulations (e.g. in gene-editing, AI, financial services) is now governed domestically. For instance, the UK adopted tougher carbon trading targets post-Brexit.

2. Independent Trade Policy

- The UK now negotiates its own trade deals and holds its own seat at the World Trade Organisation.
- A recent UK-U.S. tariff agreement.
- The UK is joining CPTPP, opening access to emerging Asia-Pacific markets (though projected to add only ~0.04–0.08% GDP growth).

3. Resilience & Local Supply Chains

- Some ONS economists suggest the UK's supply chains have become more resilient and reliant on domestic suppliers—reducing vulnerability to global shocks.
- Small and mid-sized businesses have cited ease of using UK suppliers and fewer regulatory burdens as positive developments.

4. Exports and Trade Facilitation

- A new MRCA (Mutual Recognition of Certificates) framework with the EU could raise UK exports by nearly 10% on average, and up to 28% in sectors such as machinery and electronics.

- A recent UK-EU "reset" deal announced in May 2025 projected economic gains of around £9 billion per year by 2040, by cutting food and energy export frictions, improving mobility (e-gates), and joining EU defence procurement schemes without rejoining the EU.

5. Security & Foreign Policy Autonomy

- The UK regained full control of its immigration system and border policy, ending free movement from the EU. This is seen by supporters as enhancing domestic security and policy flexibility.

We would suggest that you read our further editorial on **page 7** where Lord Peter Lilley suggests how the situation with the ECHR is handled and given his close association with both joining and leaving the EU his thoughts are quite revealing.

The word BRACCESS appears far more upbeat and influential than Brexit ever did and this is now the time for us to be excited about the future for Businesses in the UK.

ADRIAN HAWKINS OBE

Chairman - biz4Biz

Chairman - Hertfordshire Futures Board

Chairman - Stevenage Development Board

Chairman - Hertfordshire Skills & Employment Board



A Letter from our Editor

In my newspaper days we used to call this the 'silly season.'

I think it may still be a term in common currency, but while we know many people are away on holiday, it is anything but silly for businesses and their employees.

We are entering a key time of the year, the oncoming of September marks the big push into the final quarter and the need to hit any number of key targets.

There has been plenty of talk about business confidence at this time and support, or otherwise, from government. What is crystal clear is that those of us who are generating the wealth do so making our own decisions. External influences of

course play a major part, but take a look at any of the amazing businesses featured in this edition of Insight - their future is in their hands.

Once again it is a pleasure to feature the creative aspect of this region and the news that a Harry Potter series is now set for filming near Watford.

With that and the news that Universal Studios in Bedfordshire is moving at a fast pace, global opportunities are clearly presenting themselves.

But have no fear, cutting edge technologies across Pharma, the battlefield and in space communications are also part of the mix we enjoy.

And when it comes to congratulating these high performers, what better way than The Hertfordshire Business Awards which is moving towards its judging phase.

Save the date for November 28 - tickets always sell out and no wonder - it is a night when everyone in business can come together to recognise the hard work which all have put in to keep this country thriving.

DARREN ISTD
Insight Editor



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"We are entering a key time of the year, the oncoming of September marks the big push into the final quarter and the need to hit any number of key targets"



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Our articles get posted regularly to 2400 followers!



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THOUSANDS IN CONSTRUCTION TO GAIN PRACTICAL NET ZERO SKILLS UNDER NEW NATIONAL PROGRAMME

Free programme focuses on upskilling the future workforce and enabling small businesses to meet rising sustainability demands.

- Tackles urgent net zero skills gaps across the construction supply chain
- Co-designed with leading contractors including Balfour Beatty, Kier and Morgan Sindall
- Delivered via the Supply Chain Sustainability School's proven free training model
- Focuses on business growth, carbon reduction, and workforce readiness
- Free to access, with resources available beyond the 24-month programme



Berkeley Group, in partnership with the Supply Chain Sustainability School, has launched the Net Zero Skills in Construction Programme – a practical initiative aimed at equipping the built environment sector with the skills needed to meet the UK's net-zero goals. Supported by the CITB's Industry Impact Fund, this programme has been developed collaboratively with input from a broad group of industry leaders and education providers. Key organisations, including Berkeley Group, Kier, Balfour Beatty, Morgan Sindall, and others from the School's Future Workforce Leadership Group, have helped shape the training to ensure it addresses real-world needs across the construction supply chain. Over the next two years, the programme will provide tailored training, resources, and support designed to build practical skills, increase awareness, and open new business opportunities linked to sustainable construction practices. The focus is on empowering both education providers and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to confidently adopt net-zero approaches.

"The built environment sector plays a vital role in the UK's journey to net-zero"

Programme highlights include:

- **Training and Resources for Education Providers:** Developing accessible materials to upskill trainers and assessors, ensuring the next generation of professionals is well-equipped with net-zero knowledge.
- **Support for SMEs:** Offering bespoke training sessions to help SMEs understand and benefit from net-zero strategies in their operations.

Ian Heptonstall, Co-Founder and Director of the Supply Chain Sustainability School, said: "Our platform offers practical, high-

quality training free of charge, making net-zero skills accessible across the sector. This programme is about creating lasting impact – with resources available long after the initial rollout to support ongoing industry progress."

Catherine Hawke, Senior Future Skills Manager of Berkeley Group, added: "The built environment sector plays a vital role in the UK's journey to net-zero. By working with CITB and the Supply Chain Sustainability School, we're ensuring the sector has the skills and tools needed for a sustainable future."

Vanessa Freeman, CITB Head of Grant & Funding Products at CITB, commented: "Our Industry Impact Fund will play a vital role in advancing net zero skills across construction – and we're delighted to be supporting a range of net zero projects across the industry. Through our work with Berkeley Group and the Supply Chain Sustainability School, we're equipping education providers and SMEs with the tools needed to drive real progress toward the UK's climate goals."

[CLICK HERE](#) For more information



Leaving ECHR may be the only way to avoid politicising judiciary, warns Lord Lilley

A willingness to withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights may be Britain's only option to resolve a growing constitutional tension that threatens democratic accountability, respect for our impartial judiciary and the rule of law itself, according to a major new analysis by a former Cabinet Minister.

In a new report published by the Centre for Policy Studies, Peter Lilley demolishes claims that the ECHR was a British invention enthusiastically adopted by Attlee and Churchill.

Research reveals that the Convention was reluctantly ratified by Attlee only on condition that it had no jurisdiction in the UK, a position immediately upheld by Churchill.

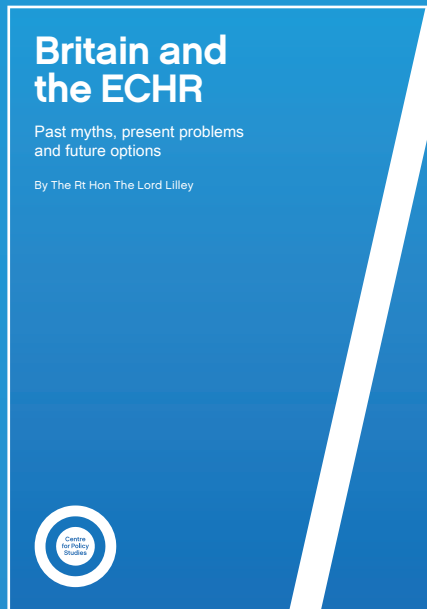
'Britain and the ECHR: Past Myths, Present Problems and Future Options' documents how the Strasbourg Court has found the UK in violation in 329 out of 567 cases, covering everything from national security and military operations to environmental policy and prisoner voting.

The 'living instrument' doctrine enables the Court to create new laws in areas never envisaged by signatory states.

Lord Lilley's research shows that leading figures from both main parties have repeatedly considered withdrawing from the Convention. Even Tony Blair instructed ministers to examine withdrawal after court rulings prevented deportation of foreign criminals.

David Cameron, Theresa May and Rishi Sunak all publicly considered leaving.

The report argues that by giving courts power to interpret vague Convention rights and override



CLICK ABOVE TO READ THE REPORT IN FULL

Parliamentary decisions, the ECHR transfers law-making authority from elected representatives to unaccountable judges. This unavoidably politicises judicial decisions and undermines the rule of law.

While reforming the ECHR would be the preferred option, there is unlikely to be the international support required. The report examines options short of withdrawal which might mitigate the problems.

However, it shows that withdrawal would not leave Britain as an international pariah, unless that description applies to other common law democracies like Canada, New Zealand and Australia.

Lord Lilley demonstrates that withdrawal would not breach the Good Friday Agreement or our trade agreement with the EU.

Lord Lilley, author of Britain and the ECHR: Past Myths, Present Problems and Future Options, said: "This report demonstrates that the ECHR has created constitutional problems for Britain from the start, with successive Labour and Conservative Prime Ministers recognising that giving the courts power to make law and overrule Parliament results in legislation without representation. The myth that this was a British creation enthusiastically embraced by our leaders simply doesn't stand up to scrutiny."

"I instinctively prefer reform, but that is inconceivable unless Britain is prepared to withdraw until meaningful change is agreed"

"It is not the fault of judges themselves, but the role imposed on them by the Convention to make inherently political decisions, that is politicising our courts and undermining respect for the rule of law itself. I instinctively prefer reform, but that is inconceivable unless Britain is prepared to withdraw until meaningful change is agreed."

"Leaving would simply mean the UK joining other respected democracies like Australia and Canada that successfully protect human rights through Parliamentary accountability without depending on an international court."



Outdoor Play: A Foundation for Future Success

By Alexis Bond

THIS ISSUE, THE FOCUS IS ON **OAKLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL** AND THE BELIEF THAT A STRONG FUTURE STARTS WITH A GREAT SPACE TO PLAY, EXPLORE AND THRIVE

Primary education in the UK plays a pivotal role in laying the foundation for a child's academic, social, and personal development. It is during these formative years that children acquire essential literacy and numeracy skills that underpin all areas of learning and daily life. Building on these core competencies, primary education nurtures curiosity, encourages a lifelong love of learning, and helps shape the values, character, and interpersonal skills vital for future success. It serves as the starting point for developing the leaders, innovators, and professionals of tomorrow - those who will drive progress and prosperity within our county and beyond.

Oaklands Primary School is an esteemed one-form-entry, nondenominational primary school located in Oaklands, Welwyn Village, Hertfordshire. Catering to children aged 4-11, the school currently enrolls around 200 pupils in a nurturing, family-style environment.

Led by Headteacher Thomas Hassan, Oaklands is built on its guiding values of Kindness, Honesty, and Respect. The Ofsted inspection in July 2023 rated the school 'Good' across all key areas - including quality of education, personal development, and leadership - highlighting the pupils' enthusiasm for learning and their strong mutual respect with staff.

Within its caring and inclusive ethos, Oaklands emphasises an ambitious and stimulating curriculum. Its vision is clear: every child is valued, supported to reach their full potential, and equipped to "learn without limits." According to Ofsted, pupils "respond well to their teacher's advice" and appreciate the engaging, varied subjects on offer.

Parents echo this positive sentiment. One described the atmosphere as "a family for both us and our child," while another praised the school as "an absolute gem," noting how it has fostered confidence and



"In a world that is increasingly structured and screen-based, unstructured outdoor play has never been more important"

flourishing in their child.

The school has long been a cornerstone of the local community - a place where education extends far beyond the classroom walls. With a proud history rooted in inclusivity, ambition, and care, Oaklands has educated generations of children with a deep commitment to nurturing the whole child. Today, it continues to inspire, evolve, and lead - most recently through its bold investment in play as a vital part of learning. As part of Oaklands' commitment to supporting the local community, the school hosts monthly 'Stay and Play' sessions, free of charge and open to all local families with pre-school children.

These inclusive sessions provide a welcoming and engaging environment where children can explore, play, and learn under the guidance of the school's experienced Forest School teacher. By opening up its grounds and resources in this way, Oaklands helps foster early childhood development, strengthen community bonds, and offer families a meaningful connection to the school from the very beginning of their educational journey. Please contact the school directly for more information or to book a session. As an OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) school, Oaklands is leading the way in rethinking how children experience play. OPAL schools recognise that high-quality play is not an "extra" - it's essential. They understand that play is not simply a break from learning - it *is* learning. Through outdoor play, children develop resilience, creativity, communication skills, and mental and physical wellbeing. It's where they learn to take risks safely, solve problems, make friends, and discover who they are. In a world that is increasingly structured and screen-based, unstructured outdoor play has never been more important.

To further support this ethos, Oaklands Primary School are launching an exciting new project: the expansion of their

playground space to provide even more enriching, inclusive, and imaginative outdoor opportunities. This is not about replacing what they have - it's about growing with their children and enhancing their environment in line with the School's OPAL vision.

They've set their sights on a purpose-built, fully-bespoke, transformative play space valued at approximately £53,000 and the journey to make it a reality has already begun.

It's an ambitious project however and whilst the school has made significant progress in funding this exciting venture, along with help of their dedicated Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) who have been hard at work raising funds through community events, sponsored activities, and school initiatives, it cannot reach the finish line without the support of the wider community.

The school would like to invite local and national businesses, community organisations and individuals who believe in the power of play, the importance of education, and the value of investing in the next generation to help support this transformative project and kindly consider sponsorship opportunities and donations. Every contribution - whether financial, material, practical or simply being able to offer your time and advice will make a meaningful impact and directly benefit children and families for years to come. Supporting this project is an investment in social value. For businesses, it's a meaningful way to demonstrate corporate social responsibility (CSR) in action - supporting education, wellbeing, and

"This is more than a school initiative; it's a business case for social impact"

community engagement and development in a positive, visible and lasting way. Sponsors will be proudly acknowledged and invited to be part of the playground's official launch, showing employees, customers, and the wider community a genuine commitment to making a difference.

As a sponsor, your business can:

- Be featured in our school communications and event materials
- Be acknowledged on-site within the new playground space
- Engage your employees in a positive, community-focused initiative
- Leave a meaningful, visible and lasting legacy in the local area

The social impact of this project is clear: improved health and wellbeing for children, enhanced opportunities for outdoor learning, reduced behavioural issues, and a stronger, more connected school community. It's a powerful reminder that when we invest in children, we invest in everyone's future.

If you or your organisation would like to be part of this exciting journey, please contact the school directly or email the PTA at

oaklandsprimarypta@gmail.com to find out more about the various sponsorship packages and donation opportunities. By supporting Oaklands Primary School's playground project, you're not only helping to create a space where children can thrive today, you're investing in the growth of tomorrow's workforce, entrepreneurs, and community leaders. This is more than a school initiative; it's a business case for social impact. When we invest in safe, stimulating environments where children can play, learn, and grow, we lay the foundation for future innovation, resilience, and collaboration. Together, you can help build not just a playground, but a launchpad for the next generation of thinkers, doers, and dreamers. Your support will echo far beyond the school gates - for years, for futures, for all of us.



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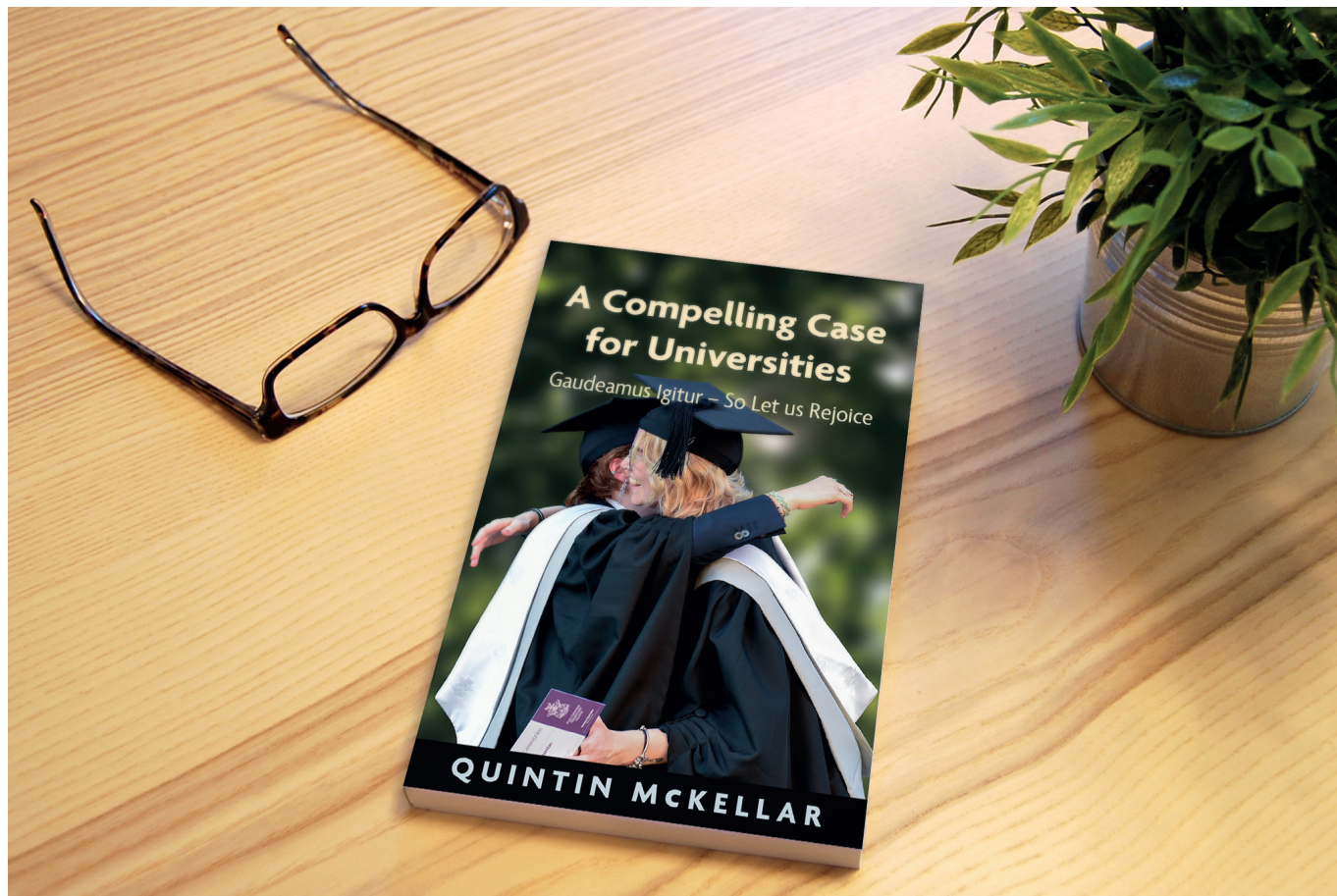
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BOOK REVIEW

A COMPELLING CASE FOR UNIVERSITIES

BY QUINTIN MCKELLAR



Insight magazine has been privileged to read a copy of Professor Quintin McKellar's *A Compelling Case for Universities* and is delighted to relay that it is a deeply informed defence of one of the most enduring and transformative institutions in modern society: the university.

Indeed in an era when higher education faces fierce scrutiny - be it over costs, free speech, or relevance - Professor McKellar offers a persuasive argument for evolution over revolution, grounded in practical proposals and respect for tradition. Rather than propose dismantling or replacing universities, as some critics and reformers have done, Professor McKellar views universities as "splendid institutions" - resilient, adaptable, and essential. He sees them not as broken relics, but as dynamic ecosystems

"Professor McKellar offers a persuasive argument for evolution over revolution, grounded in practical proposals and respect for tradition"

constantly evolving through internal innovation. This optimism runs counter to much public discourse and is one of the book's strengths.

Professor McKellar highlights the

extraordinary durability of universities over a millennium, asserting that technological forces like artificial intelligence are more likely to be absorbed by universities than to make them obsolete. His framing of universities as simultaneously traditional and progressive gives the book its persuasive power.

The final chapter of the book is a masterclass in pragmatic reform. It doesn't call for tearing down the system, but suggests ways it can be improved. Professor McKellar's proposals span key domains - access, pedagogy, research, funding, business engagement, and governance - each carefully explained with insight and clarity.

Professor McKellar critiques England's over-reliance on A-levels, advocating for broader educational horizons similar to Scottish Highers or the U.S. SAT system. He

supports a post-qualification admissions system and contextualised offers that consider social disadvantage, which would increase fairness without disrupting the existing timetable.

He is refreshingly blunt in criticising universities' tendency to inflate advertised entry requirements to boost their prestige, suggesting instead the use of actual admissions data, which would promote transparency and equity.

Professor McKellar acknowledges the utility of blended learning, AI, and workplace engagement, but warns against a narrow focus on employability. He argues that critical thinking and intellectual breadth should remain central to university education, lest we turn universities into mere training centres.

The balance he strikes - supporting degree apprenticeships and internships while defending the humanities and broad academic enquiry - is compelling.

Professor McKellar's discussion of research funding is one of the book's most striking sections. He supports a metrics-based REF (Research Excellence Framework)

"Professor McKellar writes with authority, clarity, and calm conviction"

to reduce costs and bureaucracy but acknowledges its risks, particularly its potential conflict with DORA principles. He is especially critical of the current cross-subsidisation of research with international tuition fees, calling for more transparent and sustainable funding. On teaching, he suggests sensible, if politically thorny, solutions: index-linking tuition fees to inflation, fine-tuning repayment thresholds, and introducing discipline-based fee banding (as done in Australia). His proposal to involve business more directly in funding tertiary education via a levy is particularly salient given ongoing debates about graduate value and industry benefit.

Professor McKellar's recommendation

for a risk-based regulatory model through the OfS (Office for Students), and for depoliticised board appointments, would increase trust and efficiency. On international students, he makes a forceful case for maintaining the graduate visa route, emphasising both its economic and cultural importance.

Professor McKellar writes with authority, clarity, and calm conviction. His tone is one of constructive engagement rather than polemic, and he brings long experience to bear without arrogance. The chapter ends on a lyrical note with John Masefield's famous ode to universities—a fitting tribute to institutions that, as Professor McKellar sees it, “anchor our communities, enhance our human capital, stimulate our economy and shape our culture.”

Professor McKellar's book is a well-evidenced contribution to the higher education debate. It avoids ideological extremes and importantly, it restores a sense of purpose and pride in the university as a place not just of skill development, but of intellectual and societal progress.



ABOUT PROFESSOR MCKELLAR CBE

Professor Quintin McKellar CBE is Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hertfordshire. An academic leader with over four decades of experience, he has previously served as Director of the Moredun Research Institute and Principal of the Royal Veterinary College. He is the author of *A Compelling Case for Universities: Gaudeamus Igitur – So Let Us Rejoice*, a new book exploring the vital role of universities in society.



HERTFORDSHIRE SUPPORTS UK CITIES & PARTNERS TO DRIVE STRATEGIC INVESTMENT ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Invest Hertfordshire and Gascoyne Estates, as part of UK Cities & Partners (UKCAP), are set to exhibit at EXPO REAL 2025 - Europe's leading international trade fair for property and investment, held annually in Munich.

Invest Hertfordshire, part of Hertfordshire Futures, is proud to announce its partnership with the **UK Cities & Partners (UKCAP)** programme – a strategic initiative designed to connect global capital with the UK's most compelling investment opportunities. This partnership is supported by **Gascoyne Estates**.

They will be presenting as a unified UK investment narrative at the **UK Investment Pavilion** at EXPO REAL, located in **Hall B3, Stand 110**. The delegation will host private meetings, roundtables, panels, and a major investor dinner, highlighting over £100 billion in investment opportunities across UK cities and regions, including Hertfordshire and Gascoyne Estates.

"EXPO REAL 2025 offers the ideal stage to connect with global investors who share our long-term vision and are ready to be part of Hertfordshire's journey"

Taking place on 6-8 October at Messe München, EXPO REAL will bring together stakeholders from across the real estate,

finance, and urban development sectors to explore investment opportunities, market trends, and innovative solutions for the built environment. The event features a high-profile conference programme with over 400 speakers and extensive networking opportunities.

The **Hertfordshire Investment Prospectus 2025** is a comprehensive digital showcase of the county's most strategic and investible opportunities. It highlights a **£12.8 billion pipeline** across **24 key sites**, including **17 investor-ready projects** and **7 horizon developments**. These opportunities span town centre regeneration, housing-led growth, commercial development, and innovation zones.

Featured sites include:

- **Station Gateway, Stevenage:** a £1 billion mixed-use regeneration across 30 acres led by Stevenage Borough Council, English Cities Fund, and Network Rail – includes residential, 175-key hotel, commercial, and infrastructure; development agreement in place, construction from 2027
- **Hatfield Innovation Campus (Marshmoor):** A nationally significant innovation and technology campus within the London–Cambridge science corridor.
- **Brookfield Riverside and Garden Community:** £1 billion, 400-acre development delivering 1,250 homes, retail, leisure, and infrastructure, offering investors a prime opportunity in a high-growth, well-connected UK location.

Adrian Hawkins OBE, Chair of Hertfordshire Futures, said: “With a £12.8 billion pipeline of transformative projects, Hertfordshire has made a commitment to sustainable, innovation-led growth to attract cutting-edge enterprise, nurture the next generation of talent and reimagine places in which our communities and businesses will thrive. EXPO REAL 2025 offers the ideal stage to connect with global investors who share our long-term vision and are ready to be part of Hertfordshire’s journey.”

Rachael Elwin, Senior Development Manager at Gascoyne Estates, said: “EXPO REAL 2025 offers the ideal opportunity to showcase Hertfordshire’s most forward-thinking investment propositions. We are proud to support Invest Hertfordshire at this year’s event, reaffirming our commitment to sustainable placemaking to help unlock the county’s full potential.”

Explore the Hertfordshire Investment Prospectus 2025 at

investhertfordshire.com

Learn more about UKCAP:

ukcitiesinvestment.co.uk

Learn more about Gascoyne Estates:

gascoyne.org



Station Gateway, Stevenage



Brookfield Riverside and Garden Community

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We can save the world

As someone who lost both of my wonderful parents to Cancer and consequently has been proud to support the development work in these sciences in Stevenage, I am today mindful of the developments of personalised vaccinations to cure this significant disease.

A company based in Hertfordshire has advised me that they now have the technology to resolve, 3 types of Cancer such as Colon, Lung and Skin Cancers with 4 personalised vaccinations provided per patient. The NHS-specific spending on cancer is estimated at around £14–15 billion annually, however Including broader economic and personal costs (lost productivity, caregiving, etc.), the total burden of preventable cancers to the state and society is in the £90–130 billion ballparks annually.

I am supporting a request from this company to government for a £15M grant in total over three years delivered monthly to bring this 4-injection based personalised vaccine treatment safely to market and we have the suitable production facilities already established and available at the Catapult facility in Stevenage.

HERE ARE THE VERY SAD FACTS

Every minute of every day, there are **18 people dying** from these Cancers globally, making a total of **1084 every hour** and **26,000 people per day** worldwide.

What do we need to resolve situations like this.

We need an early-stage investment scheme that takes opportunities like these with such a huge potential return in the national interest and mankind across the world to be provided with early financial support to further attract investment from the investment world. There is a suggestion that only 1 in 9 Angel Investments pay off and this is correct, which is why people and investment organisations steer clear of these unique opportunities in the first place, but areas that have the potential for such a significant impact on Government



"We have the capability, the knowledge, the equipment, the desire and the intention to save lives and we only need initial funding to get the concept safely tested and delivered"

spending should be considered for some special assistance which can provide huge benefits to the future operational costs of the NHS and generate a valuable income for the UK economy.

Innovate U.K. exists to provide funding but sadly do not engage on a "non-disclose" basis which in some instances this means that inventors and scientists are not keen to share their specific details with them.

The **Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA)** in the United Kingdom was officially established by an Act of Parliament—the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022, which received Royal Assent on 24 February 2022 and

came into force in January 2023.

The Act was introduced in Parliament by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy at the time, Kwasi Kwarteng, and the concept was notably championed behind the scenes by Dominic Cummings, a key adviser to then Prime Minister Boris Johnson

ARIA was provided the task to manage approximately **£800 million over five years**, and it was reported by the Financial Times that around half was still unallocated as of mid-2025. However, sadly I understand that a technical research funding project does not exist in relation to Cancer prevention.

None of the above proposals should cost our government a single penny in real terms as they could all be constructed purely based on controlled funding release and eventual repayment but will provide stimulation and not contraction in the economy. Think in terms of a Student Loan arrangement with significant returns.

We have the capability, the knowledge, the equipment, the desire and the intention to save lives and we only need initial funding to get the concept safely tested and delivered.

ADRIAN HAWKINS OBE

Chairman - biz4Biz

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AWARDS CEREMONY SHINES A LIGHT ON HERTFORDSHIRE'S INSPIRATIONAL ACHIEVERS

Recognising the considerable achievements of Hertfordshire's residents who face barriers to education and employment.

The Step2Skills annual awards event, which has been running since 2016, honours the exceptional achievements of people who have undertaken learning or received employment support during the last year. Awards are also presented to local employers and partners who have supported individuals, who may have learning or physical disabilities, low skills or mental health conditions, into the workplace.

The highlight of the evening, the formal awards ceremony, shone a light on the achievements of more than 20 winners and runners up through 10 categories.

Arulkumaran, who was the overall winner in the Lifelong Learning Award category, was overjoyed at having his accomplishment recognised in such prestigious company that included the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire, the Leader of Hertfordshire County Council, the Chair of Hertfordshire Futures and the Deputy Mayor of Watford. On receiving his award, Arul said: "This was more than just a course...this was a fresh start".

Arul is a shining example of lifelong learning. After a 21-year break from education, he took the courageous step to return and improve his English literacy. Though he already speaks English fluently, reading and writing remain difficult due to possible dyslexia. Despite this challenge, Arul never gave up.

Arul's learning journey began with a Speaking and Listening course, which he found intimidating—but his perseverance paid off, and he passed confidently. He is now studying reading and plans



"This was more than just a course...this was a fresh start"

to complete a writing course before progressing to Functional Skills next academic year. His learning is driven by personal motivation. He actively participates in class, completes homework consistently, and follows feedback to fill gaps in his skills. Outside the classroom, Arul dedicates his evenings to reading, listening to TED Talks, and expanding his knowledge.

His progress began when he joined Step2Skills and met tutor Liubov, who helped him build confidence, refine his understanding of English idioms and collocations, and improve communication

at work. Now, his conversations at the Royal Mail are not only clearer but more engaging—he connects with colleagues on a deeper level. These milestones have boosted his confidence, enriched his personal and professional life, and opened doors for career advancement.

Beyond his own progress, Arul's influence radiates outward. He supports his children's learning and serves as a role model in his community. Working full time and caring for his family, he still prioritises personal growth and shares his journey to inspire others. His story proves that dedication and hard work can overcome long-standing barriers—and that learning truly has no age limit.

The Step2Skills Achievement Awards also provide an opportunity to showcase best practice and innovations in community learning

and employment support, acknowledging the importance of funding to deliver this crucial work.

Runner up in the Tutor of the Year Award category, Natalie remarked when receiving her award,

'Teaching comes from within. I always think you have to feel it with your gut. If you do not have that warm, fuzzy feeling after teaching a lesson that all the learners have loved, then teaching isn't for you. I've always been dedicated to passing my skills to others, watching them grow in confidence and improve their mental

"Teaching comes from within. I always think you have to feel it with your gut"

wellbeing.'

Step2Skills is a leading provider of adult learning and employment support in the community. Over the last year they have provided more than 3600 skills development opportunities / learning events, have supported 101 people into employment and worked within excess of 150 local businesses.

For more information about the broad range of support and learning opportunities being delivered, visit: www.step2skills.org.uk



STEP2 SKILLS

ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS 2025

WINNERS AND RUNNERS UP FOR EACH CATEGORY:

Essential Skills Learner of the Year Award

Presented by Evelyn Djan

Winner - Jack Burlingham

Runners up - Phil Lambeth, Mehreen Younas

Lifelong Learning Award

Presented by Temi Fawehinmi

Winner - Arulkumaran Govindaraj

Runners up - Zoe Rochester, Joeuma Rocha Coy

Tutor/Coach/Mentor of the Year Award

Presented by David Cairncross

Winner - Alison Graham

Runner up - Natalie Moss

Volunteer of the Year Award

Presented by Dani Bailey

Winner - Sue Collett

Runner up - Ravi Sanghani

Step to Employment Award

Presented by Helen Bradley

Winner - Elfjona Shehaj

Runner up - John Hague

Employer of the Year Award

Presented by Adrian Hawkins OBE

Winner - Europe Snacks LTD

Runner up - HertsLynx

Community Partner of the Year Award

Presented by Cllr Clara Ansong

Winner - HACRO

Runner up - Stevenage & Letchworth JobCentre Plus

Delivery Partner of the Year Award

Presented by Norman Jennings

Winner - SPS Training

Runner up - ISales

Inspirational Learner of the Year Award

Presented by Cllr Steve Jarvis

Winner - Tetiana Zeleniak

Runner up - Faiza Hussain

Star Achiever of the Year Award

Presented by Cllr Paul Zukowskyj

Winner - Stephanie Heath

Runner up - Mehdi Mohammad

What HR professionals & employers need to know about Data Subject Access Requests (SAR)

Miranda Mulligan, Senior Employment Solicitor, at Longmores Solicitors explains what employers and senior HR professionals need to know if they receive a subject access request from an employee.



CAN AN EMPLOYEE RAISE A SUBJECT ACCESS REQUEST AT ANY TIME?

Yes. Any individual, including an employee can make a request to an organisation that holds their personal data. Personal data means any information relating to an identifiable or identified (living) individual. This can include an individual's name, telephone number or an address. It could also include an employee's employment reference number if they are identifiable from that information.

HOW LONG DOES AN EMPLOYER HAVE TO RESPOND TO A SAR?

A SAR must be dealt with within one month of receipt but this period can, if the matter is complex, be extended by a further two months. Matters which might make the request complex can include technical difficulties in retrieving information, for example where data has been electronically archived.

IF THE DOCUMENTS REQUESTED IDENTIFIES ANOTHER INDIVIDUAL, CAN I JUST REFUSE TO PROVIDE THAT INFORMATION?

If another individual is identified or identifiable from the request, you may

not need to provide that data. However, you would need to consider whether the other individual has consented and if not, whether it is reasonable to disclose that information without their consent. It may also be possible to redact the other named individuals so that the documents can be provided without identifying others. In employment matters, if the other individual identified is a line manager and the request is in relation to performance of that individual's role, then it may be reasonable to disclose the line manager's name even in the absence of consent. This is a balancing act and each request will need to be reviewed individually.

ARE THERE ANY EXEMPTIONS TO PROVIDING PERSONAL DATA?

Whilst there are exemptions which may apply, these are limited in application. The most common exemption within the employment context is in relation to any reference given in confidence which would fall outside the scope of the request.

CAN AN EMPLOYEE SUBMIT A SAR WHEN THEY ARE THREATENING OR HAVE STARTED LEGAL ACTION?

Yes, the fact that litigation is pending or threatened does not prevent an employee from bringing a request or the employer from responding. However, any information which is subject to legal privilege can be excluded from the SAR response.

SHOULD AN EMPLOYEE HAVE ANY DOCUMENTS OR POLICIES IN PLACE?

Yes, an employer shall have a privacy notice setting out the details of data collected on behalf of staff as well as the grounds relied upon for processing such data. Additionally, it is helpful to put procedures in place setting out the process to be followed when responding to a SAR.



Miranda Mulligan

Senior Solicitor in Employment Law

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enquiries@longmores.law
 01992 300333

 **LONGMORES**
SOLICITORS



Be the vital spark that changes a life

Become a volunteer mentor and dedicate just one hour a week with **MCR Pathways**

MCR Pathways is an award-winning, relationship-based mentoring programme working to level the playing field so all young people can find a path to achieving their ambitions.

When you've had the most unfair start in life, it's easy to lose your way. For too many young people, an unfair start means navigating life's toughest challenges alone. But mentoring builds confidence, instils belief, awakens ambitions, and expands their future horizons.

Mentoring not only improves a young person's educational attainment, career aspirations, and life chances, it's also

incredibly rewarding for the mentor. Supporting someone to reach their full potential can increase your own confidence, develop communication skills, and give a deep sense of fulfilment and purpose.

MCR Pathways has an urgent need for more volunteer mentors to come forward across Hertfordshire, especially at Haileybury Turnford in Cheshunt; Simon Balle in Hertford; and Barnwell, Barclay, Marriott, Nobel, and Thomas Alleyne schools in Stevenage.

You don't need any specific skills or prior experience to become a mentor; all you need is a willingness to make a positive

impact. Mentors receive training and support from MCR Pathways to dedicate an hour each week listening to and encouraging a young person in their local school, empowering them to believe in themselves and their abilities.

If you're curious to learn more, email Ernest: moses@mcrpathways.org or join an information session at mcrpathways.org/information-session or head straight to mcrpathways.org/become-a-mentor



Herts studio ready for **HARRY POTTER FILMING**

Production has commenced on the HBO Original HARRY POTTER television series at Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden near Watford. The series will debut in 2027 on HBO and HBO Max where it's available, including in upcoming launch markets Germany, Italy, and the UK.

The newly announced cast includes: Rory Wilmot as Neville Longbottom, Amos Kitson as Dudley Dursley, Louise Brealey as Madam Rolanda Hooch, and Anton Lesser as Garrick Ollivander.

Newly announced department heads are: Adriano Goldman (Director of Photography), Cate Hall (Hair and Makeup Designer), Paul Herbert (Stunt Coordinator), Mark Holt (SFX Supervisor), Mara LePere-Schloop (Production Designer), Naomi Moore (Set Decorator), John Nolan (Creature Effects Design Supervisor), Alexis Wajsbrot (VFX Supervisor), Dom Sidoli (VFX Producer), and previously announced Holly Waddington (Costume Designer).

The series is written and executive produced by Francesca Gardiner. Mark Mylod will executive produce and direct multiple episodes of the series for HBO in association with Brontë Film and TV and Warner Bros. Television. The series is executive produced by J.K. Rowling, Neil Blair, and Ruth Kenley-Letts of Brontë Film and TV, and David Heyman of Heyday Films.

The HBO Original Harry Potter series has cast six-time Emmy®, two-time Tony Award®, Olivier winner, and BAFTA and Oscar® nominee John Lithgow as Albus



Dumbledore; Tony Award®, Golden Globe®, and Olivier winner, and Oscar® and Emmy® nominee, Janet McTeer as Minerva McGonagall; Emmy®, Olivier, and BAFTA nominee Paapa Essiedu as Severus Snape; and BIFA nominee Nick Frost as Rubeus Hagrid. All will serve as series regulars.

Newly announced guest/recurring cast include Luke Thallon as Quirinus Quirrell and five-time BAFTA winner Paul Whitehouse as Argus Filch.

“We are happy to announce the casting of John Lithgow, Janet McTeer, Paapa Essiedu, Nick Frost, Luke Thallon and Paul Whitehouse to play Dumbledore, McGonagall, Snape, Hagrid, Quirrell and Filch,” said Francesca Gardiner, showrunner and executive producer and Mark Mylod, director of multiple episodes and executive producer. “We’re delighted to have such extraordinary talent onboard, and we can’t wait to see them bring these beloved characters to new life.”



Harry Potter Cast (from left to right): John Lithgow (Credit: Jessica Howes), Janet McTeer (Credit: Andrew Crowley), Paapa Essiedu (Credit: Ruth Crafer), Nick Frost (Credit: Lee Malone), Luke Thallon (Credit: Phil Sharp), Paul Whitehouse (Credit: Mike Marsland).

"We're delighted to have such extraordinary talent onboard, and we can't wait to see them bring these beloved characters to new life"

The series will be a faithful adaptation of the beloved Harry Potter book series by author and executive producer J.K. Rowling and will feature an exciting and talented cast to lead a new generation of fandom, full of the fantastic detail and much-loved characters Harry Potter fans have adored for over 25 years. Exploring every corner of the wizarding world, each season will bring Harry Potter and its incredible adventures to new and existing audiences and will stream exclusively on Max where it's available globally, including upcoming markets such as Turkey, the UK, Germany, and Italy, among others. The original, classic, and cherished films will remain at the core of the franchise and available to watch around the world.



Partnership to develop masterplan and vision for Stevenage Station Gateway

Stevenage Borough Council and ECF – a joint venture between L&G, Homes England, and Muse – are working in partnership to develop a masterplan and vision to deliver a new residential and commercial quarter in Stevenage town centre.

Station Gateway will regenerate a significant area around Stevenage rail station, and in addition to important infrastructure upgrades could deliver around 1,000 new homes, workspace, education and innovation space, retail, hospitality, and public spaces.

The UK's first New Town, Stevenage hosts some of the country's most important innovation-led companies in nationally significant industries including life sciences, defence, and aerospace. The masterplan allows already established businesses the infrastructure to grow, building upon Stevenage's global reputation and driving the next phase of the evolution of the town, securing talent and investment for generations to come. Station Gateway is an opportunity to deliver a new 'front door' for Stevenage, better connecting the town centre to the station. The masterplan will focus on addressing the needs of the local community, working closely with local people to co-create an approach to create skills and development opportunities whilst underpinning the long-term economic growth of the town.

Cllr Richard Henry, Leader of Stevenage Borough Council, said:

Station Gateway is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to further invest in our town centre to shape our economy and communities for decades to come."

"Successful places regenerate themselves and it's right that we continue to invest in Stevenage to enhance and maintain our reputation as a world-class commercial hub and a great place to live."

"Significant investment in the train station, new homes, offices and innovation space, retail, leisure and public spaces will deliver a dynamic new mixed-use community. This partnership with ECF will allow us to bring forward a vision and masterplan,



"The Station Gateway will be an exciting new area ensuring full connection with the Leisure Park and the Town's central spaces"

keeping our businesses and local communities at the centre of proposals as we continue to make Stevenage Even Better."

Sir Michael Lyons, Chair at ECF, said:

Stevenage Borough Council is a bold and ambitious local authority. Station Gateway is at the heart of the council's vision for the town centre."

"It is a unique opportunity for infrastructure-led regeneration which will not only deliver new homes – including affordable homes – for all the whole community but continue to promote Stevenage as a fantastic location for businesses to invest and grow."

"Stevenage is undergoing a £1bn

transformation of its town centre, delivering a mixed-use space reflecting the needs and aspirations of its people, businesses and recognising its new town heritage and spirit. With the support of the Stevenage Development Board, Station Gateway is the next stage on this journey and marks the latest milestone in the evolution of the town."

Adrian Hawkins OBE – Chair of the Stevenage Development Board said:

The Stevenage Development Board is delighted that this projects funding request has progressed to a point where we will be able to deliver such an important project for England's first new Town."

"The development board has invested considerable time and effort in bringing the parties together such that Network Rail are keen to see a new railway station and the ECF is ready to support the plans developed and managed by Muse."

"An initial investment of £6 million has already been made by the Stevenage Development Board, the Station Gateway will be an exciting new area ensuring full connection with the Leisure Park and the Town's central spaces, delivering maximum benefit to the people and the businesses in Stevenage and the locality."

FROM ID CHECKS TO NI HIKES: Compliance and cost challenges impacting businesses

In recent months, there has been a wave of regulatory and tax changes that will impact businesses in 2025 and beyond – both in terms of cost and compliance.

RIISING EMPLOYER COSTS

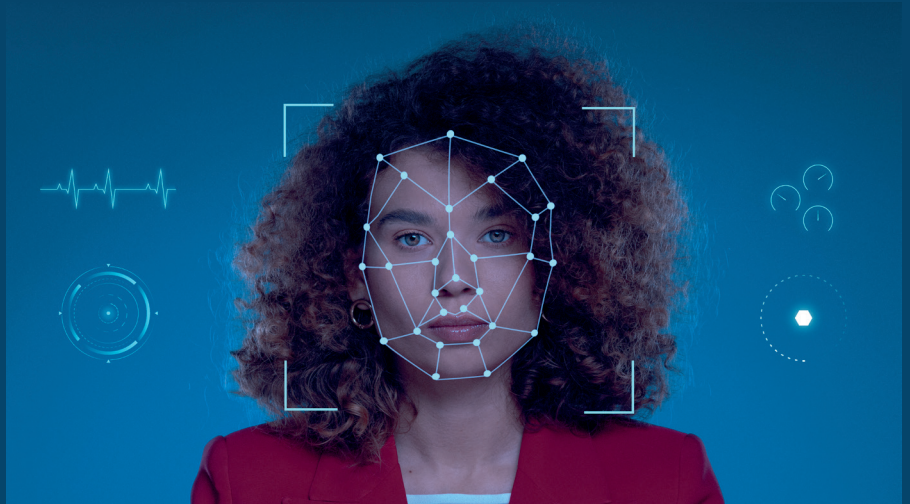
Employers were hardest hit in the last Budget, with the double whammy of an increase to the National Minimum Wage (NMW) together with a significant increase to Employers National Insurance contributions (NICs).

The NMW for those aged 21 and over increased to £12.21 which, as well as impacting the amount of Employers NIC due, also affects Employer pension contributions.

Employers now pay secondary Class 1 NIC sooner, and at a higher rate of 15%. Despite the Employment Allowance being increased to £10,500 and the £100,000 cap being removed, this is still a significant additional cost for employers to shoulder. Single director payrolls that are not eligible for the Employment Allowance can potentially claim this with some simple planning.

COMPANIES HOUSE ID CHECKS

Tougher legislation introduced under The Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act (ECCTA) 2023 will require all company directors, PSCs, and those filing on behalf of companies to verify their identity.



"The Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act (ECCTA) 2023 brings major changes for limited companies and directors"

Implemented on a voluntary basis from 8th April 2025, checks will become mandatory for filings made from Autumn 2025. ID checks can be carried out either directly through Companies House or via Authorised Corporate Service Providers (ACSPs), such as ourselves.

PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNTS

The ECCTA will also bring major changes to reporting and filing requirements, for micro-entities and small companies. From April 2027 it will be mandatory for these entities to submit a Profit and Loss account, meaning potentially commercially sensitive information will be on public record.

At the time of writing there has been some noise that an exemption may come in for small/micro entities, but nothing has been confirmed so we continue to plan for the changes.

HOW CAN WE HELP

At George Hay, we have been helping local businesses to navigate change for decades. Whether compliance, reviewing systems, or planning for cost increases, our expert team is here to support you.



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Co-Space Expands Stevenage Site by 7,000 sq. /ft in Response to Growing Demand

Co-Space is proud to announce the expansion of its Stevenage site, adding a further 7,000 square feet of premium workspace to meet the growing demand for flexible office solutions.

This exciting development has been made possible through a strategic partnership with a prominent financial institution, underscoring Co-Space's reputation as a trusted provider of dynamic working environments.

The new space will be fully self-contained, catering to the businesses needs of a private and professional setting while still enjoying the benefits of Co-Space's collaborative ecosystem. This expansion aligns with the company's innovative hub-and-spoke model, which combines centralised hubs for networking and collaboration with

localised offices for flexibility and convenience.

Stevenage has emerged as a key destination for businesses across various industries, thanks to its strategic location and thriving economic environment. By expanding its footprint in the area, Co-Space is not only strengthening its presence but also contributing to the local business community's growth and success.

The additional 7,000 square feet will be tailored to modern business needs, featuring state-of-the-art facilities, ergonomic designs, and a focus on sustainability. Whether for startups, SMEs, or larger enterprises, Co-Space's enhanced offering in Stevenage will provide the tools and environment needed to innovate, grow, and succeed.

This expansion marks another milestone in Co-Space's mission to redefine the future of work by providing flexible, inspiring, and accessible workspaces that empower businesses to thrive in a changing world.

SPECIAL OFFER for Insight Readers

Co-Space is offering Insight readers an exclusive **15% discount** on all meeting room bookings. Take advantage of this offer and enjoy beautifully designed meeting rooms with optional catering.

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www.co-space.co.uk



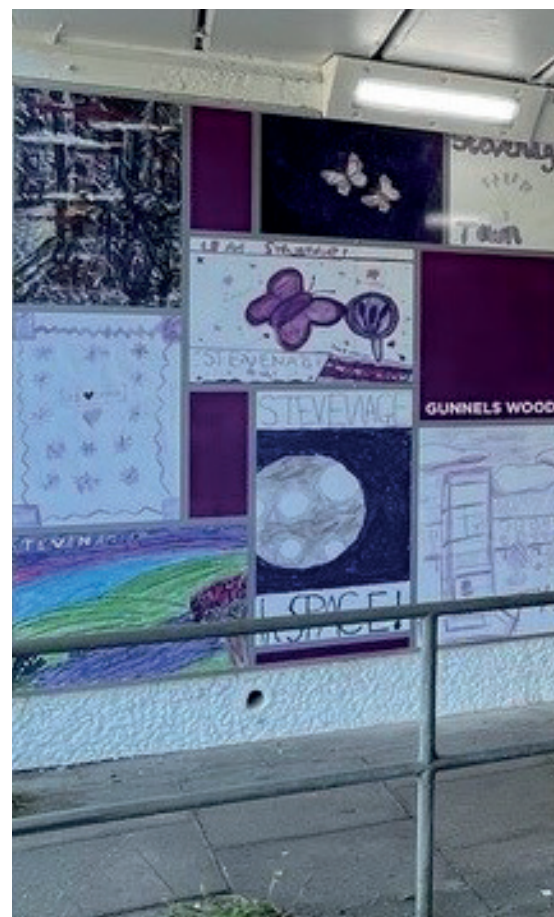
Representatives from HCC, SBC and SDB and Deputy Youth Mayor

School children transform Stevenage underpass

A colourful new underpass art display has been unveiled in Stevenage showcasing the creativity of local schoolchildren. In late 2024 Stevenage schools were invited to submit their colourful designs in a competition as part of a wider programme of underpass transformations throughout the town. The winning 268 entries from 19 schools are now displayed in the Martins Way/ Hitchin Road roundabout underpass. The unveiling event was attended by pupils from participating schools and representatives from Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council and the Stevenage Development Board. Councillor Simon Speller, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Wellbeing at Stevenage Borough Council, commented: "It's wonderful to see the children's colourful artworks

in this latest underpass transformation – thank you everyone for entering the competition! The children should be very proud of their work. This new underpass transformation, alongside others already transformed, will be enjoyed by many pedestrians and cyclists and are key to championing the arts and cultural offering of the town. Stevenage has so much history to be celebrated, so much community spirit and vibrancy, and I thank everyone who has made this underpass into the work of art it is today!"

The project has been funded by the Stevenage Development Board through the UK Government Towns Fund, of which Stevenage received £37.5m in March 2021. Part of the funding is allocated to improving cycling and pedestrian connectivity, and artworks to the underpasses and cycleways



throughout the town are a key part of this. Chair of the Stevenage Development Board Adrian Hawkins OBE added:

"The Stevenage Development Board has directed funding for projects in the town into several key areas such as the healthy enjoyment of our facilities and opportunities for skills improvements, alongside recognising our very important heritage as the First New Town. We are blessed with 44km of cycleways as the town has developed and using bikes is sustainable, cost effective, healthy and safe. Our recent links with schools to encourage them to support our cycleways project with students' artwork is supporting and delivering our heritage further for the future. We are a community with a real opportunity to work together and this we are achieving by making our underpasses more interesting and safer for everyone to enjoy."

This transformation would not have been possible without the participation of local schools.

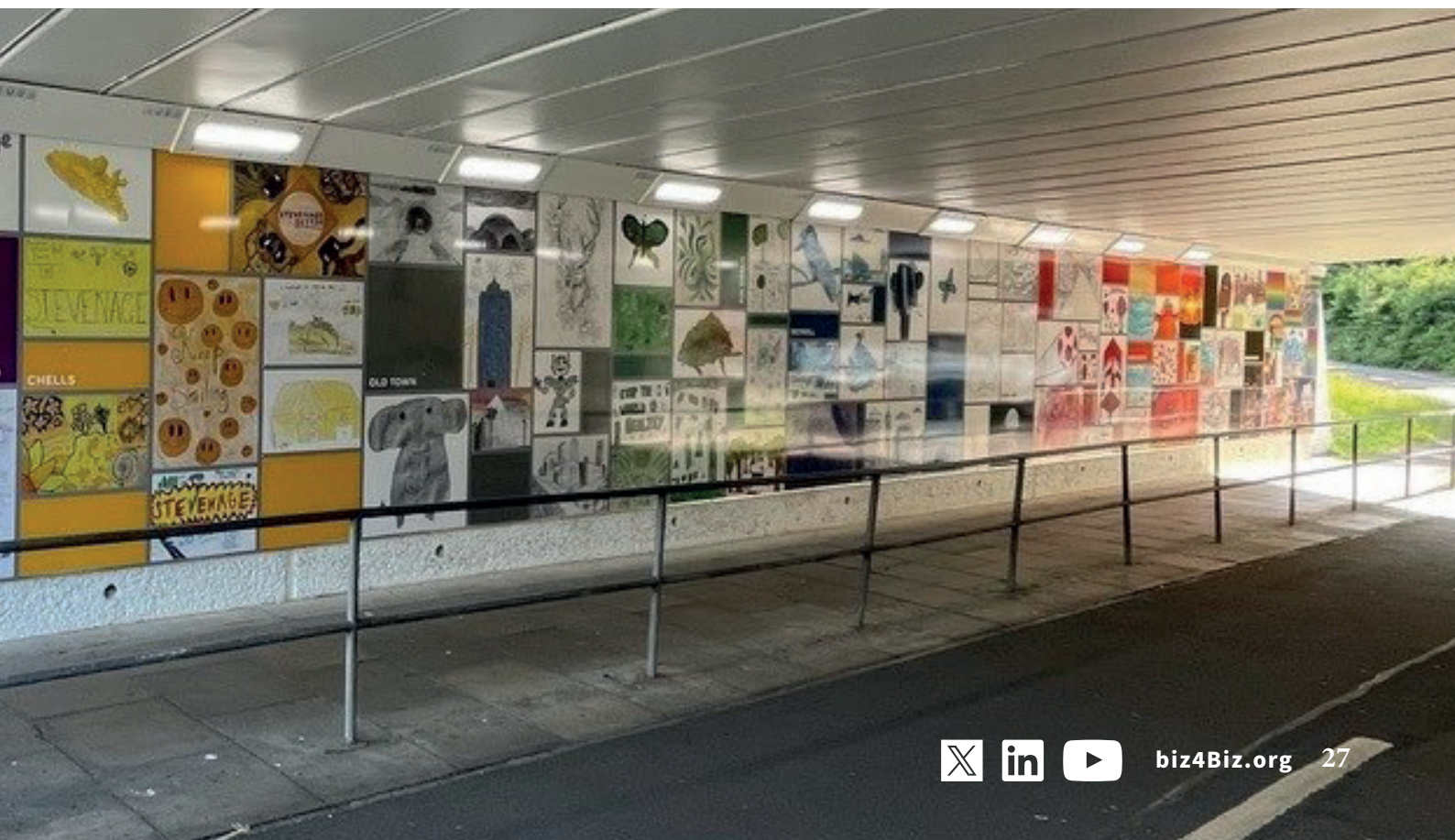
Christina Anderson, Chair of the Stevenage Creative Network of schools commented: "It is wonderful to see the children's creativity with colour in this latest underpass transformation. Creativity provides children with the opportunity to explore and communicate ideas - and the overall result is stunning. Having their artwork on display in the public domain supports a sense of



"This stunning artwork is a brilliant celebration of Stevenage's young talent and a shining example of what can be achieved when we invest in local spaces and communities"

belonging and pride in our town. I'm delighted that so many children took part in this fantastic opportunity."

This underpass is the latest to be improved as part of a collaboration between Stevenage Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council. Over the coming weeks, a further series of underpasses are due to be transformed. Councillor Paul Zukowskyj, Executive Member for Environment, Transport and Growth at Hertfordshire County Council, added: "This stunning artwork is a brilliant celebration of Stevenage's young talent and a shining example of what can be achieved when we invest in local spaces and communities. By working as a team, we're creating safer, more welcoming routes and places for people - and making our towns places to be proud of. Huge thanks to all the children, schools and partners involved - this really brings the underpass to life."



Three Training Myths Smart Businesses Are Moving Past

BY SIMON LITTLEWOOD, CEO, ESTU

Hertfordshire's businesses are ambitious, capable, and well-positioned to lead in a fast-changing economy. But many are missing out on one of the region's most powerful growth tools: training programmes funded by the government and designed specifically for today's business realities. Despite record levels of public investment in workforce development, over £3 billion nationally this year alone, uptake in Hertfordshire remains lower than expected. Why? Many leaders are still holding on to three outdated misconceptions. Here's why now is the time to look again:

1. "Training Takes Too Much Time Away from the Day Job"

It used to. But not anymore.

Today's training is flexible, relevant, and designed for working professionals. These programmes are built to fit around existing responsibilities, allowing staff to learn without leaving gaps in your operations.

Estu's upcoming autumn programmes in Hertfordshire include team-based formats and on-the-job learning, helping people build skills while continuing to deliver value. Programmes like Team Innovation – Operationalising AI or Customer Success are structured for fast impact without disruption.

Training is now designed to work with your business – not take your people away from it.

2. "It's Too Theoretical to Create Immediate Value"

Not anymore.

The latest wave of training is practical, targeted, and designed to create real-world results quickly. Whether your goal



is to improve customer retention, reduce waste, respond to AI, or lead sustainability change, there's a course designed to get you there.

This isn't classroom learning for its own sake. It's skills that connect directly to your bottom line.

For example:

- AI Innovation helps turn curiosity about AI into its useful application.
- Sustainability Training supports teams in meeting customer and regulatory demands.
- Commercial Change Leadership builds internal capacity for growth.

These are programmes built for action — not academic theory.

3. "It's Too Expensive or Complicated to Access"

This is one of the biggest myths, and it's

costing businesses opportunities.

Much of the training available in Hertfordshire is fully funded or heavily subsidised, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises. These aren't token discounts; in many cases, the government is footing the entire bill.

What's more, administrative support is available. Organisations like Hertfordshire Futures, Estu, and the Hertfordshire Opportunities Portal are there to make access easy, quick, and business-friendly.

If you've been put off by red tape in the past, it's time to take another look. The support is there to help you get started — and stay focused on growth.

The Time to Act Is Now

The government wants you to use this funding. Your teams want to develop. The programmes are ready.

And in Hertfordshire, the opportunity is significant: from leading-edge TV & Film supply chain innovation to AI, customer success, sustainability, and commercial change, these courses are tailored to the region's priorities and employer needs.

Even better, they're not just for new hires. Nearly half of apprenticeships now support staff aged 25+, showing that professional upskilling is not just accepted, it's expected.

Your Next Step

Don't let old assumptions hold your business back. Visit the following to explore funded training opportunities in Hertfordshire:

- www.estuglobal.com
 - www.hertfordshirefutures.co.uk
 - Hertfordshire Opportunities Portal
 - Or contact your local skills broker today.
- The funding is here. The training is excellent. Your growth can start now.

Don't miss the moment.



Skills you need in AI, Innovation and Sustainability.



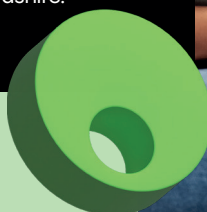
Enrolling for September 2025:

- Team Innovation - Sustainability
- Team Innovation - Customer Success
- Team Innovation - Operationalising AI
- TV & Film Supply Chain Innovation
- Commercial Innovation & Change Leadership Apprenticeship

Your time is now.

70% to 100% funding available for businesses in Hertfordshire.
Quote code "Biz4Biz"

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Estu





James Turnock receives his award from CECA Southern Chair, Alan Cox

HERTS MAN NAMED MOST PROMISING APPRENTICE AT CECA SOUTHERN AWARDS

Watford based Former semi-professional rugby player James Turnock has been named Most Promising Apprentice (Level 2-3) at the Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA) Southern Awards ceremony in London.

James received the accolade for his team ethos, appetite for learning, natural leadership and willingness to put others before himself.

His enthusiasm, commitment, keen intellect and instinct to innovate while maintaining close attention to detail enabled him to meet every challenge and he was fast-tracked to Site Engineer from Site Technician at his employers Barhale.

"James is an exceptional apprentice who has firmly set himself on the path to an outstanding career in civil engineering construction"

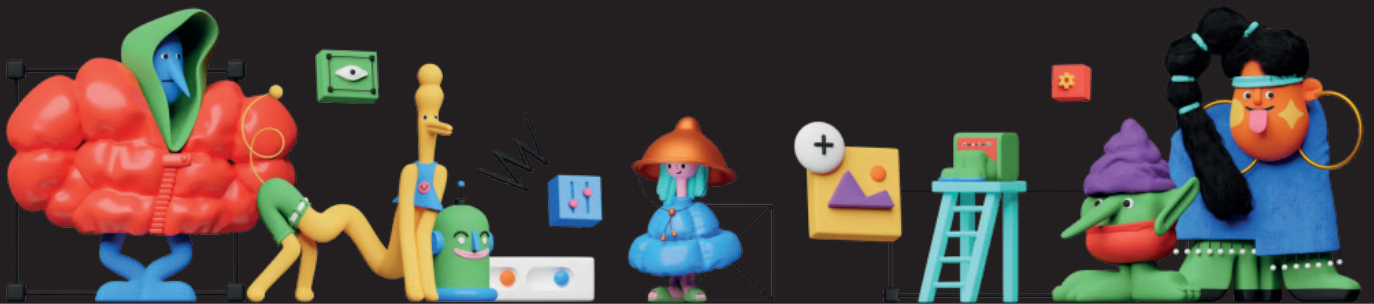
Alan Cox, CECA Southern Chair, commented: "James is an exceptional apprentice who has firmly set himself on the path to an outstanding career in civil engineering construction. Well-regarded by everyone he works with, he brings the qualities of the successful sportsman to his personal and professional development and is just the type of young person who will thrive in our industry."

The CECA Southern Awards are presented annually in recognition of exceptional performance. As winner of Most Promising Apprentice Award, sponsored by Murphy, James received an inscribed trophy and cheque for £500.

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UK TO LEAD CRACKDOWN ON CYBER CRIMINALS WITH RANSOMWARE MEASURES

Hospitals, businesses, and critical services are set to be protected under measures designed to crack down on cyber criminals and safeguard the public, following public consultation on ransomware proposals. Ransomware is software used maliciously by cyber criminals to access victims' computer systems. Systems and data can be encrypted, or data stolen, until a ransom is paid. Ransomware is estimated to cost the UK economy millions of pounds each year, with recent high-profile ransomware attacks highlighting the severe operational, financial, and even life-threatening risks.

Public sector bodies and operators of critical national infrastructure, including the NHS, local councils and schools, would be banned from paying ransom demands to criminals under the measure, with nearly three quarters of consultation respondents showing support for the proposal.

The ban would target the business model that fuels cyber criminals' activities and makes the vital services the public rely on a less attractive target for ransomware groups.

Under the proposals, businesses not covered by the ban would be required to notify the government of any intent to pay a ransom. The government could then provide those businesses with advice and support, including notifying them if any such payment would risk breaking the law by sending money to sanctioned cyber criminal groups, many of whom are based in Russia.

Mandatory reporting is also being developed, which would equip law enforcement with essential intelligence to hunt down perpetrators and disrupt their activities, allowing for better support for victims. Consultation responses showed strong support for a new mandatory reporting regime to better protect British organisations and industry.

The new package of measures will lead the way in tackling ransomware and are



designed to strike against cyber criminals' business model, bolstering our national security and protecting key services and businesses from disruption - delivering on our Plan for Change. They follow an extensive consultation with stakeholders across the UK which showed strong public backing for tougher action to tackle ransomware and protect vital services. Security Minister Dan Jarvis said:

"Ransomware is a predatory crime that puts the public at risk, wrecks livelihoods and threatens the services we depend on. "That's why we're determined to smash the cyber criminal business model and protect the services we all rely on as we deliver our Plan for Change.

"By working in partnership with industry to advance these measures, we are sending a clear signal that the UK is united in the fight against ransomware."

In addition to the proposed new measures, the government continues to urge organisations across the country to strengthen their ability to maintain operations in the event of a successful ransomware attack. This includes having offline backups, tested plans to operate without IT for an extended period, and a well-rehearsed strategy for restoring systems from backups.

Cyber criminals have not only cost the nation billions of pounds but in some cases have brought essential services to a standstill.

The devastating consequences are not just

financial but can put lives in danger, with an NHS organisation recently identifying a ransomware attack as one of the factors that contributed to a patient's death.

These attacks have brutally exposed the alarming vulnerability at the core of our public and private institutions, from flagship British retailers and essential supermarkets including the Co-op to NHS hospitals.

British Library Chief Executive Rebecca Lawrence said: "The British Library, which holds one of the world's most significant collections of human knowledge, was the victim of a devastating ransomware attack in October 2023.

"The attack destroyed our technology infrastructure and continues to impact our users, however, as a public body, we did not engage with the attackers or pay the ransom. Instead, we are committed to sharing our experiences to help protect other institutions affected by cyber-crime and build collective resilience for the future."

NCSC Director of National Resilience Jonathon Ellison said: "These new measures help undermine the criminal ecosystem that is causing harm across our economy."

Ransomware remains a serious and evolving threat, and organisations must not become complacent. All businesses should strengthen their defences using proven frameworks such as Cyber Essentials and our free Early Warning service, and be prepared to respond to incidents, recover quickly, and maintain continuity if the worst happens.

Co-op CEO Shirine Khoury-Haq said:

"We know first-hand the damage and disruption cyber-attacks cause to businesses and communities. That's why we welcome the government's focus on Cyber Crime.

"What matters most is learning, building resilience, and supporting each other to prevent future harm. This is a step in the right direction for building a safer digital future."

biz4Biz

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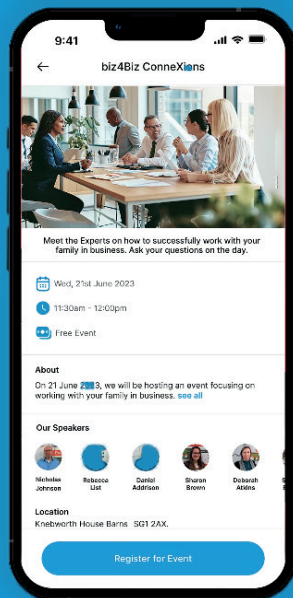
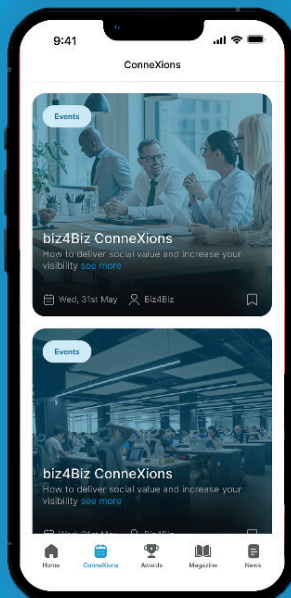
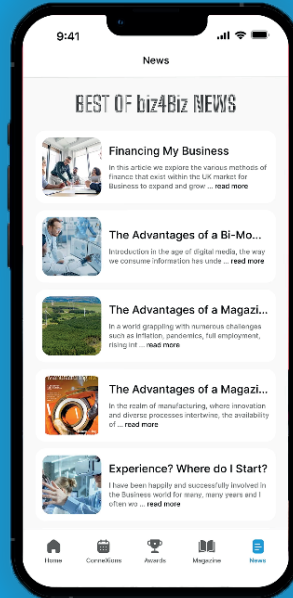
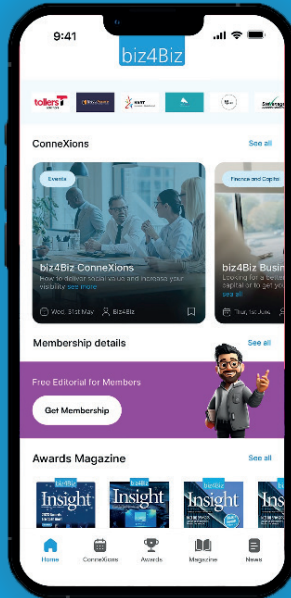
The app offers a number of exciting features with networking at its heart, allowing you to build meaningful connections with like-minded individuals and businesses within our vibrant community.

We are also renowned for our variety of curated magazines which each offer a unique perspective on topics ranging from business to lifestyle. You can use the app to explore Insight, Sustainable Biz and Manufacturing Biz and see these stories and this rich multi-media experience come to life.

The app also moves you closer to a wide range of biz4Biz events and not only offers seamless registration but allows you to manage your attendance and access full event details from one centralised platform.

While making sure you never miss any of our must-attend events, the app also ensures that you completely maximise all of our exclusive membership packages and fully benefit from all of our enhanced features.

Finally, as you would expect from a cutting edge organisation, we also keep you informed instantly, allowing you to access the latest news and breaking stories in the region and around the world.



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BizCrunch

Looking to Buy or Sell a business?
BizCrunch has the data, you need to make that purchase or sale.

In an era characterised by seismic shifts in the global economic landscape, a remarkable phenomenon is unfolding, one that heralds the largest generational wealth transfer in history. As the sun sets on the careers of the baby-boomer generation, a new dawn beckons for the young, ambitious and visionary. At the heart of this transition lies the vibrant domain of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), where opportunity knocks louder than ever before.

A HISTORIC TRANSFER AWAITS

Picture this: over 75,000 companies in the UK alone, each a testament to the entrepreneurial spirit, boasting revenues north of £1,000,000. Their architects? A generation of business

"This burgeoning wave of entrepreneurs sees not just companies, but legacies ready for a new chapter"

owners now on the cusp of retirement. But this isn't a narrative confined to the British Isles. From the fjords of the Nordics to the vibrant markets of the USA, and the bustling economic landscapes of Germany and Australia, this trend paints a global

canvas. The baton is poised for passing, but the question looms – who will take the helm?

AN UNPREPARED LEGACY

A startling revelation by Wilmington Trust sheds light on a critical gap – almost 60% of these privately-owned bastions of industry lack a clear succession plan. The foundation of their life's work, their companies, remain without a formal valuation, an oversight that could lead to untold losses in potential and opportunity.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP THROUGH ACQUISITION: A NEW PARADIGM

Enter the bold and the brave, fuelled by the pioneering ethos of "Entrepreneurship Through Acquisition," a movement birthed in the hallowed halls of Harvard

Business School. This burgeoning wave of entrepreneurs sees not just companies, but legacies ready for a new chapter. They recognize the inherent value in established enterprises, where profitability, not just potential, shapes valuation. It's a shift from the ground-up approach, moving away from the venture capital frenzy to a more measured, value-driven investment in proven entities.

THE MISMATCHED MARKETPLACE


Yet, the journey is fraught with hurdles. According to insights from BizBuySell, a staggering 80% of businesses listed for sale find no buyer, a testament to the chasm between seller expectations and market realities. Often, inflated valuations, spurred by overzealous brokers, derail potential deals, leaving businesses in limbo.


BIZCRUNCH: THE BEACON FOR ASPIRING ACQUIRERS

In this landscape of untapped potential and navigational challenges, BizCrunch emerges as a lighthouse for the intrepid acquirer. With its vast repository of data on millions of companies, BizCrunch.

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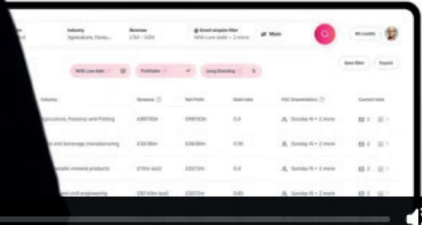















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Financial services hit by falling activity and sharp drop in sentiment

Business volumes in the financial services sector fell at the fastest rate since December 2023 in the second quarter of 2025, according to the latest CBI Financial Services Survey. Optimism also declined at its steepest pace since September 2022. The quarterly survey, conducted between 29 May and 16 June, found that FS firms expect activity to stabilise next quarter, with volumes set to be broadly unchanged. However, headcount is expected to decline at a rapid pace, and investment intentions remain poor – reflecting heightened economic uncertainty and the ongoing impact of last year’s Autumn Budget measures.

Key findings:

- Business volumes declined in the quarter to June (weighted balance of -24% from +5% in March) at the fastest rate since Q4 2023. Firms expect volumes to be broadly unchanged in the quarter to September (+3%).
- Optimism fell sharply in June, at the steepest pace since September 2022 (-55% from -8% in March).
- Average spreads narrowed in the quarter to June, though at a slower pace than in March (-22% from -38%), and are expected to be flat over the next three months (-1%).
- The value of non-performing loans fell in the quarter to June at the fastest rate since September 2021 (-20% from 0% in March). Their value is anticipated to decrease at a similarly firm pace over the next three months (-21%).
- Profitability declined at a steeper pace in the quarter to June relative to March (-24% from -9%). FS firms expect profitability to rise modestly over the next three months (+9%).
- Headcount fell in the quarter to June (-7%), after being broadly unchanged in the previous quarter (+2%). Firms expect headcount to decline at a significantly steeper rate in the three months to September (-52%).
- Firms expect to reduce investment in land & buildings and vehicles, plant & machinery over the next 12 months (compared to the last 12). Meanwhile, capital expenditure in IT is set to rise modestly.
- Uncertainty about demand was the most commonly cited factor expected to limit investment over the next 12 months (55% from 42%; long-run average of 48%)
- Almost half of firms reported that “other” factors were likely to limit investment (45% from 36% in March; long-run average of 8%). Comments suggested that the volatile economic climate, regulation, and Autumn Budget measures were weighing on capex plans.

Alpesh Paleja, Deputy Chief Economist, CBI said: “Conditions deteriorated in the FS sector over the second quarter, with business volumes falling at their fastest pace since late 2023 and sentiment dropping sharply. Profitability was squeezed further, as firms faced narrowing spreads. While activity is projected to stabilise next quarter, firms still expect to cut back on hiring and investment going forward.

“In light of our latest survey data, we look forward to the Financial Services Growth & Competitiveness Strategy and urge its swift implementation to bolster the UK’s competitive edge. But firms facing continued economic uncertainty now will be looking ahead to the Chancellor’s Mansion House speech and to the Autumn Budget for reassurances, particularly that the burden of potential tax rises doesn’t fall squarely on their shoulders.

“Given the Employment Rights Bill also poses further pressure on firms, it’s critical that government give financial services the clarity and confidence needed to achieve its Growth Mission.”





TOUGH NEW LAWS TO MAKE ONLINE MARKETPLACES SAFER

Tougher powers to make online marketplaces safer and protect the public from dangerous products as part of the Government's Plan for Change, have moved a step closer following Royal Assent of the Product Regulation and Metrology Act. The new legislation will provide powers to target new and emerging dangers and hold online marketplaces to account for dangerous products sold through their platforms, creating a level playing field with bricks and mortar stores. The rising popularity of e-bikes and e-scooters has brought with it an increase in safety incidents – the Office for Product Safety and Standards in 2024 received reports on 211 fires involving e-bikes or e-scooters - equivalent to a fire every 1.7 days. Most of these reports (175) were from London Fire Brigade, and many were caused by unsafe lithium-ion batteries purchased through online marketplaces. To help address the sale of unsafe products like these by online marketplaces, the Government intends to introduce requirements for online marketplaces at the earliest opportunity to update their responsibilities.

These will create a proportionate regulatory framework where online marketplaces are expected to:

- prevent unsafe products from being made available to consumers
- ensure that sellers operating on their

platform comply with product safety obligations

- provide relevant information to consumers;
 - and cooperate closely with regulators.
- Product Safety Minister Justin Madders said: "By giving regulators the teeth to clamp down on unsafe products, we're ensuring people can shop with confidence whether online or on the high street. "This will establish a level playing field and mean online marketplaces are held to the same high standards as bricks and mortar shops, ensuring we back businesses and protect consumers as part of our Plan for Change.

"The new measures will ensure clarity for the approximately 300,000 UK businesses operating in regulated product markets with a combined estimated turnover of £490 billion."

The Office for Product Safety and Standards will continue its targeted programme to tackle dangerous products, including the threats from button batteries and small magnets, and building on successful initiatives like the "Buy Safe, Be Safe" campaign launched last October and recent guidelines on lithium-ion battery safety introduced in December.

This balanced approach protects consumers while supporting economic growth across all nations of the UK.

Rocio Concha, Which? Director of Policy and Advocacy, said: "Which? has campaigned for years to hold online marketplaces to the same standards

as high street retailers. For too long, consumers have been exposed to dangerous - and in some cases lethal - products.

"The Product Regulation and Metrology Act has the potential to be a game changer for consumer safety. It paves the way for new laws to clarify and strengthen responsibilities for online marketplaces, which is crucial in the fight against the sale of dangerous products online."

Following the bill's Royal Assent, the government must act fast to tighten definitions of online marketplaces, introduce a clear duty so that online marketplaces are accountable for product safety, and empower regulators to issue heavy fines for those that fall short of the required standards.

London Fire Brigade Deputy Commissioner Charlie Pugsley said: "We are pleased that the Product Regulation and Metrology Bill (PRAM) has been granted Royal Assent.

"London Fire Brigade sees one e-bike or e-scooter fire every two days and we have long called for regulation to improve product safety and safeguards on online marketplaces to protect people from buying dangerous products that pose a fire risk.

"We welcome this new piece of legislation, which will better regulate unsafe products being sold and help to protect the public from unsafe products and particularly poor quality or non-compliant lithium battery products, which can present unique fire safety challenges."

biz4Biz AWARDS2025

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The Hertfordshire Business Awards programme organised by biz4Biz, returns for their seventh year. These Awards are impartial, independent and open to Hertfordshire-based businesses. The Hertfordshire Business Awards programme organised by biz4Biz, is recognised as the best business awards programme in Hertfordshire as it brings together the highest number of nominees from across the county and provides physical judging. Winning a biz4Biz Award is coveted and award winners continue to expand their businesses and extend their economic contribution to the greater success of Hertfordshire. There are many excellent award schemes but none have such a high level of support and engagement, or attract the volume of nominations from across the county and all business sectors. Our 2024 Awards programme was a great success and set a record for the number of nominations,

votes and engagement in the press and on social media. Entry and participation are completely free of charge.

Adrian Hawkins OBE
Chairman, biz4Biz



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To see the current voting state of play](#)

biz4Biz AWARDS 2025

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A NIGHT OF CELEBRATION!





DACORUM'S DEN BUSINESS GRANT 2025 WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Seven budding entrepreneurs were awarded up to £2,000 to support their business growth after they pitched their ideas to a team of Dacorum's Den judges.

The panel of judges, led by Cllr Adrian England, Portfolio Holder for Place, awarded a total of £9,300 to fund a range of business ideas that included an illustrator, e-commerce, make-up artist, blinds and shutters and graphic design businesses.

THE WINNERS WERE:

Suziey Walker owner of **MumBloom** was awarded £2,000 to provide marketing support for her mums and mums-to-be e-commerce gifting business.

Beccy Brotherton Make-Up-Artist was awarded £1,800 for website development, marketing and make-up supplies to grow her business.

Debbie Shrimpton Illustrates was awarded £1,500 to develop her website and develop a social media strategy to develop her business.

Sean McLoughlin & Tom Templeton, owners of **A-Smart CV** were awarded £1,000 for strategic digital marketing of their new start-up on-line CV consulting service.

Kaila Merridan owner of **Made With**

Knots of Love was awarded £1,000 for a website up-grade and digital marketing for her personalised gifting business.

Sophie Barker owner of **Studio East** was awarded £1,000 for event marketing to grow her wedding graphic design and printing business.

Joana Parfin & Cristian Nicolaescu owners of **Bravo Blinds and Shutters** were awarded £1,000 for website and digital marketing to grow their business to the next stage.

In addition to financial support, the winners will also receive free business support provided by local experts:

- **Marketing support** from Bloom with BB.
- **Sales coaching** from Sales Geek.
- **Free annual membership** to the Connect Dacorum Networking Group.
- **Portrait photography package** from Trent Portraiture.

Now in its eleventh year, Dacorum's Den has awarded more than £114,000 to 88 local businesses, creating additional jobs within the borough.

Cllr Adrian England, Dacorum Borough Council's Portfolio Holder for Place, said: "We heard impressive personal stories, and we saw invested individuals, partnerships and whole families, passionate about their plans.

"Dacorum's Den brings with it the provision of pre-pitch and post-pitch support and development, which makes me delighted to present the award amounts, and celebrate the process. It was clear how much everybody was aiming high, and we felt privileged to see these ideas on their journeys. In some cases we will see them develop and come back brighter, in others, we will watch them fly!"

This year's sponsors were **Beeches Group, Sopra Steria, Sureserve Compliance Central** and **RSK Geosciences**.

To find out more about the 2025 Dacorum's Den winners visit the **winners page** on the website.

Looking to apply for Dacorum's Den funding next year? Sign up to our **Business Update Newsletter** to keep updated on the launch of the 2026 scheme.

If you are a Dacorum business and would like to get involved with sponsoring this initiative next year, please email the **Economic Development Team** at Dacorum Borough Council.



GET YOUR WALKING BOOTS ON FOR HERTS CHILDREN:

Great Big Walk for Herts

returns this September

Hertfordshire's much-loved fundraising event, the Great Big Walk for Herts, is back on Saturday 27 September 2025 — and it's set to be bigger and better than ever!

Organised by Herts based charity, Helping Herts, the walk invites residents across the county to take on a 13-mile countryside loop in support of a cause that matters to them. With 12 unique routes to choose from — each championing one of 12 Hertfordshire-based children's charities — walkers can enjoy stunning local scenery while raising funds for a cause close to home.

Each loop is guided by experienced volunteers, with support from the Friends of Hertfordshire Way, ensuring a safe, scenic, and enjoyable experience. From rolling fields and woodlands to charming villages and historic trails, the routes showcase some of the best countryside Hertfordshire has to offer.

Thanks to a generous match-funding pot, every penny raised will be doubled, helping to create even more impact for children and young people across the county.

You can walk solo, with friends, or as part of a team from your workplace, school, or community group.

Last year, more than 300 people took part in the Great Big Walk for Herts, raising over £80,000. The funds helped local children with disabilities, young carers, those facing family breakdown or mental health challenges, and many more.

This year, participants can either choose a specific charity to support or fundraise for the overall Helping Herts campaign, with donations split across all 12 partner charities.

Jim Tatchell, co-founder of Helping Herts, said: "This is a fantastic opportunity to explore your local area, meet like-minded people, and raise funds for the brilliant charities working tirelessly to support children in our communities."

Gordon Morrison, founder of Helping Herts, said: "The Great Big Walk for Herts is about inspiring hope and creating lasting change for children who face real challenges every day. With match-funding doubling every donation, participants' efforts will have an even greater impact on the lives of young people across Hertfordshire."

CLICK HERE to take part, register your interest. You'll then be guided through your next steps, including choosing a loop and setting up your fundraising page.

Walk the miles. Double the impact. Make a difference.





ROBIN MYDDLETON WINS LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Perrin Myddelton took a table at the Hertfordshire Law Society Annual Dinner and Legal Excellence Awards Ceremony recently at Hatfield House. The event was greatly enjoyed by all the team and the evening was made even better when it was announced that Commercial Property partner, Robin Myddelton, had won the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Robin qualified as a solicitor in 1970 and has worked in practice as a commercial property solicitor in Hertfordshire for over 50 years, acting for a large number of Hertfordshire based businesses.

PM is very proud of Robin. He still works full time at their offices in Waterside, Station Road Harpenden and is an inspiration to the younger lawyers and trainees, sharing his knowledge and experience with them.

THE CRITERIA FOR THE AWARD ARE:

To be awarded to an individual who has made an exceptional contribution to the legal profession, their firm and/or their clients during their career. The winner will have demonstrated a strong and

"An inspiration to the younger lawyers and trainees"

dedicated commitment to the supply of high quality legal work for the benefit of individuals, organisations and the local region and/or notable commitment to supporting causes or projects in the local region.





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