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SWINDON BUSINESS NEWS

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**Business Show
Swindon
Exclusive
floorplan
Page 6**

Top 100 Companies

Inside, our comprehensive 4 page pull-out of the area's biggest companies

**New drive to boost
growing firms
The Big
Conversation
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News in Brief

New editor joins SBN

Business journalist Robert Buckland is the new editor of Swindon Business News, only the second person to occupy that role during the title's successful 28-year history.

Robert is a former business editor of the Swindon Advertiser and Western Daily Press and has been a freelance contributor to a number of business magazines and websites. He is also a partner in media training consultancy The Newsroom.

Swindon Business News founder and previous editor Lorne Barling remains with the publication as consulting editor.

Local CEO receives MBE

The chief executive of the Swindon-based British Computer Society (BCS) has been awarded an MBE in the New Year's Honours List.

David Clarke became CEO of BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT, in May 2002 and is widely acknowledged as transforming it into the professional body it is today.

Companies face poor-record fines

Swindon businesses could face fines of up to £3,000 under a new HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) crackdown if they do not have up-to-date records.

The warning comes from Paul Morris, tax planning director at Target Chartered Accountants, who points out that 50,000 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) will be targeted annually. The new business record checks, due to start in July, could raise £600m over the next four years.

Coming up next month

In March's edition of Swindon Business News, we will look at why exporting works for small and growing businesses, analyse the strength of the area's manufacturing industry and investigate how firms can protect themselves against fraud, cyber crime and other threats. Also: What Swindon businesses want from the Budget, plus our regular overview of the area's commercial property, corporate finance and company law sectors.

To find out more contact us on 01793 615393.

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PROPERTY CONSULTANTS

Swindon to make solo LEP bid

Swindon could go it alone and set up its own Local Enterprise Partnership, potentially creating England's smallest private sector-led economic growth organisation.

Business leaders in the town are preparing to submit their own bid to the Government after a previous combined proposal with Gloucestershire and Wiltshire failed to gain approval.

They believe that while Swindon, with a population of around 192,000, is small in comparison with most other Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) areas, which are based on large cities or groups of counties, its vibrant economy and major companies mean it will have sufficient muscle to stand alone.

LEPs will take over the economic growth role of regional development agencies, which are being scrapped under the Coalition Government's localism push. While they will be private sector-led, with the majority of their board directors drawn from the local business community, they will have no budget as such and will have to apply to a central fund to pay for economy-boosting projects.

The combined bid with Gloucestershire and Wiltshire, submitted to ministers last September as one of the first batch of LEP applications, was sent back for more work to be done. Since then nearly 30 other Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) have been given the green light across the country, including the West of England (which takes in Bristol and Bath) and Thames Valley and Berkshire (including Reading and Newbury) – leaving Swindon as one of just 10 areas without an approved LEP.

Bill Cotton, director at Forward Swindon, the town's economic development agency, said: "Creating a LEP just for Swindon would take a lot of effort and getting it approved by ministers would be a big hurdle. But we believe we can do it. We may be small in pure economic terms but we think we are perfectly formed."

"It's early days but we need to get this right. There is no deadline so we have time to draw up a serious bid. There is still quite a bit of white space on the LEP map so we are not alone in taking longer."

The views of delegates at Swindon Strategic Economic Partnership's (SSEP) fourth annual conference on February 10 will be sought. So far many in the town's business community have not joined in the debate about the LEP, fearing that without any funding it will have no real influence or power.

Swindon's go-it-alone move is partly prompted by the decision of business leaders in Gloucestershire to consider their own LEP bid.

That move leaves the door open for Swindon to still combine with Wiltshire in a joint bid although some commentators believe a joint LEP would also struggle to find a clear identity given the psychological barrier of Salisbury Plain and the fact that Salisbury itself has stronger links to the economy of Southampton and the South Coast.

SSEP's conference, called Driving Swindon Forward, takes place February 10 at the STEAM Museum, Churchward, between 9am and 12.30pm.

Business Show comes to town

Seminars tackling vital business issues, speed networking sessions and more than 80 stands showcasing the cream of Swindon's businesses will be among the features at the first business show in the town for several years.

More than 500 visitors are expected at the show, held at the STEAM museum at Churchward – many from

outside the town.

Mark French, area director for sponsor Lloyds TSB Commercial, said: "The show will be a fantastic opportunity for local businesses to hear from experts in the field and network and share best practice examples with firms in the area."

* For your official show floorplan and seminar programme turn to page 6.

Firms to link with China



Shanghai skyline: Swindon companies will be urged to seek opportunities in provincial Chinese cities

• Swindon companies are to get direct access to 15 key cities in China as part of the town's first coordinated effort to develop trading links with the economic powerhouse.

The Links to China programme, which is launched on February 10, aims to generate opportunities for small and medium-sized Swindon business in areas such as finance, technology cooperation, advanced engineering and the emerging low-carbon and clean-fuel economy.

It will also position the town as a prime inward investment location for Chinese businesses eager to break into UK and European markets.

Partners in the programme are Swindon Chamber in partnership with Swindon Borough Council and HSBC, who will jointly launch the initiative at a special breakfast at Swindon's STEAM museum, ahead of the Swindon Strategic Economic Partnership (SSEP) annual conference at the same venue.

To book go to: thamesvalleychamber.co.uk/

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SWINDON BUSINESS NEWS

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Swindon Business News

County Business Publishing

Events

• The Business Show Swindon
When: **February 10, 9am-4pm**
Where: STEAM Railway Museum
Contact: www.businessshowswindon.co.uk

• Business Breakfast - Link to China
When: **February 10, 7-9am**
Where: STEAM Railway Museum
Contact: www.thamesvalleychamber.co.uk

• Intellectual Property Advice Seminar
When: **February 15**
Where: South Marston Hotel
Contact: 01633 814708
www.ipa.gov.uk

• Business Biscotti Networking
When: **February 15, 9:30am-11:30am**
Where: Broome Manor Golf Club
Contact: www.businessbiscotti.co.uk

• UK Trade & Investment - Middle East - Partner Me
When: **March 8**
Where: Hilton Hotel, Lydiard Fields
Contact: Carl Jayasekera on 020 7215 8411
carl.jayasekera@ukti.gsi.gov.uk

• Swindon Mindful Employer Network - One-off CIPD session
When: March 1, 5:45pm
Where: Swindon Marriot
Contact: 07747122767
swindoncipd@hotmail.co.uk

• The Power of Marketing: The customer may be king but money talks
When: **March 31, 9am-5pm**
Where: Renovation Centre, Swindon
Contact: 01628 427340
cimevents@cim.co.uk

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SSEP
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Chamber of Commerce
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People

Vectura, the Chippenham-based specialist pharmaceutical group, has appointed Neil Warner as a non-executive director and chair of its audit committee. He was previously finance director of Chloride Group for nearly 14 years, over which time the value of the company grew more than 10 fold, culminating in its £1 billion acquisition by Emerson Electric last September. As audit committee chair he replaces Dr John Brown, who remains Vectura's senior



Neil Warner

independent director and chair of its nomination committee. Neil is the senior independent director and chair of the audit committee of Dechra

Peter Slabbert, chief executive of Melksham-based Avon Rubber, has been named CEO of the Year at the 2011 Grant Thornton Quoted Company Awards. The prestigious award, presented at a ceremony in London, follows Avon becoming the International Company Turnaround winner for 2010 by the Institute



Peter Slabbert

for Turnaround last month, triumphing over a number of other high quality nominees, even beating General Motors into second place.

The awards recognise the achievements of Stock Exchange-listed companies outside the FTSE 350. In Mr Slabbert's case the judges were impressed by his long-term strategic decisions, Avon's overseas development and his achievement in re-building a world-class company. They also highlighted that, as well as rapid growth, Avon delivers a yield to its investors.

Barclays Corporate has appointed Chris Elias as its new commercial director for the Swindon area. He will head the

bank's corporate team based at its Old Town offices. Chris brings a wealth of corporate banking experience having worked for RBS/NatWest for nearly 30 years focusing primarily on the commercial banking market. For most of that time he operated in Swindon and across Wiltshire. Barclays Corporate is responsible for a portfolio of customers with a turnover of £5m-plus and is now more closely aligned to Barclays Capital, the investment banking arm, and Barclays Wealth, the wealth management business of Barclays Group.



Chris Elias

Video company appoints non-executive director

BizView.tv, the Cirencester-based internet TV company, have announced a new addition to their top team. Tim Johns, formerly Vice President of Global Communications for consumer goods giant Unilever, is joining as a new non-executive director.

Paul Dunn, BizView director, said: "This is a fantastic opportunity for us to develop a broader client base. We know we have a great product and we look forward to building on Tim's wide experience of working at senior levels in big businesses to help us take BizView to the next stage."

Tim Johns said: "I'm extremely excited at the opportunity to join BizView. I am passionate about the role that broadcast interviews can play in helping organisations get their message across. BizView has proved hugely successful in the SME sector and I look forward to playing my part as the business expands its offer to larger organisations." Visit www.bizview.tv

Sample Video

Tim Johns discusses online communications
...view at www.bizview.tv/sbn

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Success in the hotel sector as annual occupancy rises

Hotels in Swindon have bounced back from three years of declining business to record their first annual rise in occupancy rates.

The welcome turnaround comes despite an increase in the number of hotel rooms in the town over recent years and the challenging climate for businesses – Swindon's hotels have traditionally served the corporate market rather than tourists.

According to research by accountants Deloitte, Swindon hotels had suffered three years

of declining revenues per available room (revPAR) until making a sharp recovery last year.

The latest figures, for 2010, show no change in year-on-year revPAR.

Denis Woulfe, Deloitte's South West practice senior partner, said: "Swindon hotels have steadied the ship. This is most encouraging for the town's hotels considering they reported a 12.8 per cent fall in revPAR for the first quarter of 2010."

The latest – and largest –

addition to Swindon's hotel market was Jury's in Fleming Way which opened in July 2009 and, with 229 rooms, became the town's 10th hotel to boast more than 100 rooms.

Several development sites around the town are earmarked for further hotels, although Swindon Council is keen to restrict new hotels to the town centre.

Mr Woulfe added: "Swindon did particularly well in the final two quarters of last year which enabled hoteliers to end the year on a high-note."



Record market share for Mini

The Mini last year achieved its highest share of the UK car market since its relaunch in 2001, according to figures from parent company BMW show.

The iconic marque notched up sales of nearly 44,000, an increase of more than 10 per cent on 2009 and enough to give it a market share of more than two per cent. The sales boost also made the Mini the UK's ninth best-selling car of 2010.

The news will be welcomed by the 900-plus workers at BMW's Swindon Pressings business, which manufactures most of the Mini's body panels for assembly at a sister plant in Oxford.

BMW Group UK managing director Tim Abbott said: "The new Mini Countryman has made an immediate impact with customers now waiting until the spring for delivery of their vehicles."

The figures bucked the gloomy trend in the UK car industry, with latest estimates suggesting a five per cent fall in new car sales this year.

Demolition firm welcomes New Year with certifications

Demolition company Lawson Group has achieved two ISO certifications.

The national firm, which has its headquarters in Shrivenham, received the ISO 9001 by demonstrating it is working to the highest possible management standards.

It also became certified for ISO 14001 – an achievement based on its environmental management standards.

Lawson Group works with major clients such as developers, housebuilders and local authorities. Local contracts have included the demolition of shops in Regent Street, the former Clares factory at North Star, and St Josephs School.

Warning over company pensions schemes

Chartered accountants Milsted Langdon are warning Swindon business owners that new rules requiring almost all employees to be automatically enrolled into workplace pension schemes could prove costly for smaller firms.

Steve Horton, from Milsted Langdon Financial Services, said: "Under the plans, due to be phased in between 2012 and 2017, employers will normally have to enrol their staff into a scheme unless they explicitly opt out, with the employer then paying in the equivalent of three per cent of the individual's salary."

Wiltshire consultancy opens Brazil office

An international business consultancy run from a barn conversion just outside Marlborough has opened an office in Brazil.

Whitefield International, which works in identifying new markets abroad, has made its first move into South America with the office in Sao Paulo, the continent's largest city.

Managing director Mike Harling said: "Brazil is an enormous market and one that despite the economic recession is still growing at a pace that far outstrips Europe."

Vox gets digital at The Business Show

Public relations agency, Vox PR, will be exhibiting at The Business Show Swindon showing people how they can help harness the power of the internet to support business growth and development.

Digital public relations is now a tool that every company needs to have in its box – engaging with your customers and potential customers online has never been so crucial to boosting sales and

reputation.

Vox will be at stand 61 at The Business Show Swindon and will be demonstrating a variety of the different online techniques and tools that can be used.

And in true PR fashion, Vox will be giving away three bottles of champagne to their Twitter followers who tweet them. To be in with a chance to win, all you need to do is follow @VoxPRTeam on Twitter and

tweet the message 'We're seeing @VoxPRTeam at The Business Show'. The first, sixth and 61st people who tweet this message will receive a bottle of champagne at The Business Show Swindon.

For more information on Vox PR, visit www.voxonline.co.uk, follow us on Twitter on @VoxPRTeam or call 01793 511990.

For full details of The Business Show Swindon turn to page 6

South West firm ready to invest in Swindon

New South West investment firm Horatio is targeting ambitious small businesses in Swindon, armed with £20 million ready to invest.

The Somerset firm wants to hear from businesses ranging from start ups, to those needing investment for early-stage development, expansion and buy outs or buy ins.

Horatio will invest between £100,000 and

£500,000 with a focus on small firms in all sectors with exit plans from three to 10 years or more. In return, Horatio will take an equity stake in the business.

The five-member team is headed by Martin Bowles, former head of corporate solutions at Bristol financial firm Hargreaves Lansdown and Andrew Maynard, former investment manager for the South West Ventures Fund.

Soaring Worldwide appoints 'reputation executive'

Suti Sahariah has been appointed as a new reputation executive at Swindon communications and PR agency Soaring Worldwide. He will spearhead its strategic growth plans as the agency seeks to maintain a growth rate that has seen it double in size year on year since its foundation in 2006.

Its national and international clients include London's Barbican Centre and Kyoto Convention Bureau in Japan.

Suti joins from London-based PR giant Bell Pottinger. He also has a post-graduate diploma in journalism and worked as a forward planner for the foreign affairs desk of an international TV channel based in India.

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The 6th, 1st and 61st tweets will have a bottle of champagne waiting for them at Vox PR's stand – stand 61 – at The Business Show Swindon on 10 February.

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CARTER JONAS

The Property People

Solar energy prospects for those who do their homework

Renewable energy developers are increasingly looking for suitable sites in urban and rural areas, presenting land and property owners with new and potentially lucrative business opportunities.

Angus Williams, Commercial Property Partner at Withy King Solicitors in Swindon, explained:

Solar Photo Voltaic is widely regarded as one of the most flexible and dependable renewable power technologies; it is supported by the Government's Feed-In Tariff (FIT) which is guaranteed until April 2012.

Several of our clients have been approached in recent months by renewable energy developers wanting to secure options over sites which would make suitable solar parks. Typically, they are looking for large expanses of open land or roof top spaces which can accommodate solar panels.

What should you do if you are approached by a renewable energy developer?

1. Do not sign anything without taking professional advice! If the Developer is serious about your site, they will be willing to meet or make a significant contribution towards the cost of your professional fees. This should include taking advice from a suitably qualified surveyor, who will be able to look at the suitability of the site, rentals and associated issues such as access and servicing, advice from accountants on the tax implications and comprehensive legal advice on the documentation.

2. Agree the Heads of Terms. By bringing the professional team together, you will be in a position to agree the key terms upon which you are prepared to proceed.

3. Address mortgage and security issues. Your land or building may have been taken as security by a financial lender. You will either need to obtain a release from the Charge, thus allowing you to have complete discretion in the terms you agree with the Developer, or get the Lender's consent.

4. Review documents. Once the key terms are agreed, it is likely the developer will instruct its solicitors to issue their standard documentation. This needs to be reviewed by the professional team. In our experience these documents heavily favour the developer and may require substantial amendment to re-address the balance.

Rentals are sometimes offered on a pounds per hectare basis, or can be linked to generation or generation over the predicted output.

You should also consider the alienation provisions within the option, namely: is the option personal to the developer or will the developer have the right to assign the option to a third party, such as a utility company? This may or may not be to your advantage depending on their resources and their experience.



Angus Williams

Land owners also need to ensure that the particular developer or project is genuine. You do not want to risk tying up your site with a company that does not have the knowledge or resources to bring the scheme to fruition.

The Lease itself may contain provisions for renewal and extensions but these should be resisted and you should always ensure that the Lease is contracted out of the security of tenure provisions contained in the Landlord and Tenant Act, 1954.

5. Security issues. Consider bonds, escrow accounts or other security. The Utility Provider will usually finance the scheme but in turn this means that the valuable equipment will belong to the provider, rather than the developer. If the scheme fails and the equipment is removed, where does this leave you if there are no monies available for reinstatement?

6. Existing leases. If you own a building or series of buildings with sufficient roof space, you will need to look at whether you are in a position to grant the lease. Do you have an occupational tenant and if so, does the lease include the roof and the air space above it? If so, then you may need to consider agreeing a variation with the Tenant to enable you to utilise the roof and air space.

If you are currently in the process of granting new leases, this is something you may want to address now.

While the development of land and property for renewable energy provides additional opportunities, it is important to remember that the Government's Feed-In Tariff is currently only guaranteed until April 2012. If planning permissions are not granted by this date, you may find your investment no longer stacks up.

For further information and advice on renewable energy developments or any other property matter, please contact Angus Williams at Withy King Solicitors on 01793 536526, email angus.williams@withyking.co.uk or visit www.withyking.co.uk

Private equity deals expected to increase

Private equity-backed deals are expected to rise in the South West this year - but with valuations dropping significantly.

Nearly two thirds of executives in private equity (PE) firms expect the number of new investments to increase, with a third believing deal volumes will remain the same and just four per cent predicting a decrease.

But over the last quarter, PE groups have significantly lowered their views on valuations in all sectors apart from hi-tech and healthcare.

The largest drop in valuations is expected in the materials and chemicals sectors, while expectations for media and communication companies are also significantly down.

These trends emerge from accountants Grant Thornton's quarterly Private Equity Barometer. Mark Naughton, the firm's regional corporate finance director, said: "A growing number of private equity groups are shifting their focus from portfolio management and exits to making new investments. They are keen to take advantage of an expected drop in valuations in 2011."

The Barometer shows that 55 per cent of respondents expect their portfolio companies to meet targets this year while 30 per cent expect targets to be exceeded. Only 15 per cent expect their portfolio companies to slightly fall short of targets.

PE groups have also cut the number of businesses that they plan to sell. Some 14 per cent do not plan to exit any investments in 2011, while 66 per cent expect to exit less than a quarter. Just 20 per cent plan to exit more than a quarter of their portfolio companies.

"A focus on investment portfolios over the last couple of years is bearing fruit for private equity firms as there is significantly more stability in portfolio company performance, and the trickle of exits is now turning into a more sustained flow," added Mark.

"The immediate need to refinance has also reduced and the focus is most definitely on new investments. This is reflected in the pick-up in activities that we are seeing in deal flow."

Nationwide appoints new chief economist

A new chief economist has been appointed at Swindon-based Nationwide Building Society.

Robert Gardner has taken over the role from Martin Gahbauer who leaves the role after more than three years with the Society.

As Chief Economist, Robert assumes the position of the Society's key spokesperson on the Nationwide House Price and Consumer Confidence indices, as well as other issues relating to the UK economy. Having joined the Society towards the end of last year, he has this week featured as Nationwide's commentator on December's consumer confidence figures, the report for which can be viewed at: www.nationwide.co.uk/consumer_confidence



Robert Gardner

Businesses urged to take advantage of grants now

As we experience a period of Government and public sector cut backs, it's easy to believe that external support for small businesses is diminishing and more and more has to be done on your own. Yet surprisingly perhaps, there is still a lot of grant support out there and it's worth small businesses looking to take advantage of this.

As the bank's lending criteria remains onerous and the cost of finance more expensive, looking at support for projects, either in the form of a grant or a loan from a Government or other public sector body can be increasingly attractive.

The first step in the process is identifying the grant which is suitable for your project.

Each grant or funding arrangement has its own qualification criteria and these are often based on the purpose of the grant, location of business, size of business and business sector. Many grants offer financial assistance, often in the form of a cash contribution or loan to support capital projects, whilst others may offer access to free or subsidised services such as training or business support.

Once potential funding has been identified, it is important to stop and confirm that the funding fits with the overall business strategy and plan - there's no point applying for a grant which will not benefit the business. It's also important to ensure that the business has the resource available to benefit fully from the grant if awarded

- for example, if you apply for a grant for capital to finance a new production system, do you have the technical expertise in the organisation to implement this?

If the funding does fit the planned direction of the business, then the application will need to be made and this often has to be supported by a business plan. When

preparing the application, always read the guidelines carefully, make sure that the proposal includes details of the strategic reason for obtaining the grant, and once the proposal has been written, double check it against the guidelines.

To increase the chance of the application being successful make sure the plans are focused, the necessity of the funding to achieve these plans is clear and the impact of the plans is documented. Ensure that there is up to date information to support statements in the application and where

matched funding is required, it is usually necessary to prove how this will be provided.

As public budgets are put under increasing pressure, it is likely that the availability of grants will diminish, so companies should try and maximise any opportunities now before they disappear.

For further details please contact Vijay Tanna, Director of RSM Tenon (www.rsmtenton.com) T: 01793 603300 or email: vijay.tanna@rsmtenton.com

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Team on target for growth

A major recruitment drive at Target Chartered Accountants has resulted in staff numbers increasing by more than 20 per cent. Bath's largest firm of accountants has taken on 56 new recruits, with the biggest intake in its Private Client Tax, Corporate Business Tax, and Financial Management teams.

The move brings the total number of staff in the group to 185, with more than 80 located at the firm's Bath office. Debbie Taylor, HR Director at Target, said: "Investing in our team is part of our ongoing strategy to strengthen the Target brand and drive business growth, especially when some competitor firms are cutting back."



Dorothy Thorpe, recruitment manager (centre) welcomes some of Target's new recruits (from left to right): Zoe Cooper (junior finance assistant), Alastair Halcrow (senior analyst, corporate finance), Lauren Wilkins (tax consultant), Elaine McLaren (tax consultant), Martin Strong (assistant manager), and Tara Nash (tax assistant)

'Changing times'

By Andrew Sandiford
Director, Target Chartered Accountants

Confused, stunned, or even a little punch drunk – it's easy to feel all these things when looking back at 2010. For starters we had the snow and then the ash cloud, swiftly followed by the Election, the Emergency Budget and the Spending Review, before the snow reappeared. In spite of this disruption, businesses did move forward.

Last year the number of new clients on our Business Services team's books increased by 20 per cent on the previous year. All these businesses are performing reasonably strongly, investing in services such as financial planning and outsourcing to grow efficiently.

Unsurprisingly, when it comes to succeeding in difficult times, clients

seem to be saying the same thing – businesses can't afford to stand still in spite of all the uncertainty. The message is clear: you have to be determined, keep on doing the right things, and don't get distracted by the headlines.

It may have been all doom and gloom in the press over the VAT increase, but personally I don't think it will cause a double-dip recession as some have predicted. However, if people are told to feel nervous, they will be. The same goes for public sector jobs. A lot of the cuts will be made through natural wastage, such as people retiring or changing jobs, but this is rarely mentioned.



Andrew Sandiford

One of the most telling statistics of 2010 is that insolvencies were at their lowest rate for years. While some may argue that some businesses that should have gone bust were propped up, it is more likely to reflect an underlying strength in the sector.

Although no one can say for sure what 2011 will hold, at Target we are confident that businesses have a lot to be optimistic about. Of course one of the key questions for businesses will be what banks are doing to increase the availability of funds. This is crucial to help create new opportunities, innovate existing products and find new markets. In other words, making sure businesses don't stand still.

Spending cuts and tax rises were one of the key themes of 2010 and this shows no sign of going away. The increase in NIC payments is just one of many issues that businesses will have to contend with this year.

Although, all eyes will be on this year's Budget, there are plenty of tax planning opportunities now that businesses can take advantage of, such as accelerating remuneration into the current year to lessen the impact of the NIC change. Tax rates tend to only go in one direction so businesses need to be proactive – the greater the forward thinking, the greater the return.

In our experience the SME market is in relatively good health. It will always be a case of 'survival of the fittest'. However, the businesses that are growing have learned and are more prepared; they are running more efficiently and effectively and in many cases, more profitably.

Target is a Top 50 firm of chartered accountants working exclusively with entrepreneurial individuals and their businesses around the country. The firm has 12 directors and 185 staff working from offices covering the South West, the City of London, Thames Valley and the Midlands. Established 12 years ago as a specialist tax consultancy, Target is lead adviser in six core integrated service areas: Audit and Assurance, Business Services, Tax Planning, Corporate Finance, Financial Management and HR Consultancy.

To find out more, please visit www.target-accountants.com, or call 0845 241 3387.

Ask the experts - Should I stay or should I go?

I have been through a very difficult time in refocussing my business over the last two years. I am thinking about selling now; should I stay or should I go?

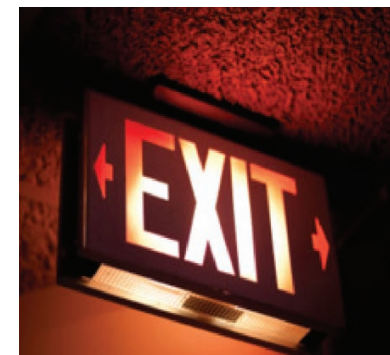
This is just about the biggest decision you will ever make – and I would never advise anyone to rush.

Many owners are thinking this through after what have been traumatic times for so many. A UK-wide survey conducted by Haines Watts revealed that with the competitive environment remaining fierce, many were faced with competitors bidding for work at below cost and nearly a quarter surveyed in the West Midlands were having to pitch for work on a 'zero profit basis' – so it's not surprising many owners are feeling the strain.

The first step is to draw up a Succession Plan to help you and your family/shareholders think through the options and the issues.

Pricing? Crucial of course. But what are your shares really worth? That is net of tax. Why pay 28% tax on your gain when it could be 10%? This applies to all family shareholders and might require a share restructure up to a year ahead of any sale. A valuation exercise can flush out pricing issues by focusing teams on the next two or three years trading projections.

Who might be a potential purchaser? Would the existing management team be interested? A management buy-out might be worth considering – but would they be fundable, credible buyers?



If to a trade buyer, how would you market your business? Competitors are an obvious choice but confidentiality might be a sensitive area. What of non-competitors that might have a similar customer-base to yours? And is the buyer likely to be UK or foreign owned?

Be wary of advisers that promote the need for highly expensive vendor due-diligence reports which they say helps marketing but that are often not necessary.

Finally, take a step back and a break if you can to think it through. When you are more refreshed and relaxed, you may decide that a better option is to reap the rewards of your hard work at a later date.

Your Succession Plan should help you determine whether a medium term exit might produce a better return.

For more information and help with your succession planning, contact Mike Lloyd at HW, Chartered Accountants on 01793 533838 or email mlloyd@hwca.com



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The Business Show Swindon

Cream of local companies at landmark event

Up to 500 visitors are expected to attend the Business Show Swindon on Thursday, February 10 – proof, say organisers GWE Business West and sponsor by Lloyds TSB Commercial, of the pent up demand for such an event.

The show's 80 exhibition stands, which feature a broad showcase of businesses from Swindon and surrounding areas, were sold out several weeks ago.

The event takes place at the STEAM museum, Churchward.

GWE Business West chairman Nicky Alberry said: "There has been a gap without a business show in Swindon for several years. The tremendous interest shown by the business community has demonstrated the appetite for this type of show."

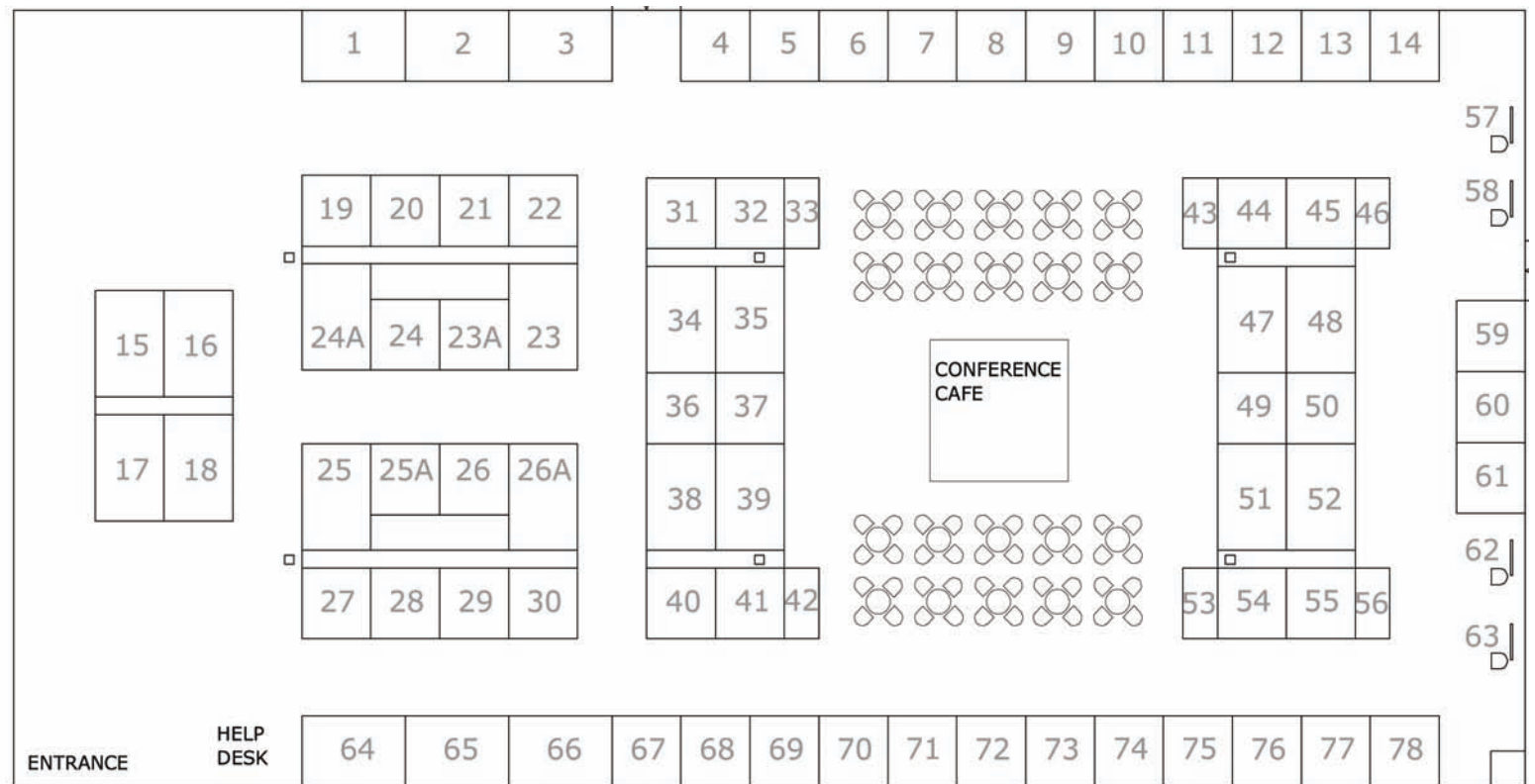
"This is a great opportunity for businesses to connect with companies in Swindon and beyond, to network, exchange ideas and make new contacts."

The show includes a LinkedIn Espresso Bar where delegates can expect a topical seminar programme, free speed networking sessions and a conference café for networking and refreshments.

There will also be an exclusive espresso bar for members of the Initiative in Swindon and GWE Business West's LinkedIn group. This group, with 1,800 members, is the largest of its kind in the South West. Members can meet at 10am-11am or 1pm-2pm on the mezzanine floor.

There are two, free speed networking sessions at 9.30am and 10.30am. This fun, fast-paced way of networking guarantees anyone attending meets 99 per cent of participating delegates. Registration is on the day and will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

Seminar topics include social media, networking, marketing, intellectual property and funding for growth. All seminars cost £5 (except funding for growth, which is free) and can be pre-booked online or booked on the day on a first-come, first-served basis.



- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|----------------------------------|
| 1 - Monahans | 22 - Access - Direct | 34 - Prestbury Marketing & Consulting | 57 - Business Against Poverty |
| 2 - Electrical Control Products | 23 - Isys Intelligent Systems | 35 - UK Trade & Investment | 59 - Swindon Commercial Services |
| 3 - Advanced Imaging Systems | 23a - The British Postal Museum & Archive | 36/37 Business Link | 60 - JHP Training |
| 4 - Intellectual Property Office | 24 - Swindon Coaching Team | 38/39 - GWE Business West | 61 - Vox Public Relations |
| 5/6 - Marriott Hotels | 24a - Brunel & Gordano Training | 40 - Qtac Payroll Products | 62 - Guide Dogs - Swindon |
| 7 - Business Doctors | 25 - Acas | 41 - Recognising Excellence | 63 - Jurys Inn Swindon |
| 8 - Emnico Technologies | 25a - IT Support365 | 42 - Mediation in Business | 64 - Plan 500 |
| 9/10 - Robert Hitchins | 26 - Ashlar ID | Training, Business Advice, Dispute Resolution Services | 65 - Business First |
| 11 - Mytton Williams Brand & Design | 26a - GWE Business West | 43 - ADGIFTCO | 66 - Bristol Business School |
| 12 - Federation of Small Business | Training and Speakers Corner | 44 - Basepoint Business Centre | 67 - Southwest Business |
| 13 - Working Matters | 27 - The Community Foundation for Wiltshire & Swindon | 45 - Logically Secure | 68 - UKAS |
| 14 - St John Ambulance | 28 - Fast Forward -Training & Development | 46 - Thornton's Business Travel Services | 69 - Focused on Results |
| 15 - Office Connexions / Genacom | 29 - Syntacta Translation & Interpreting | 47 - Alexandra House & St David's Hotel | 70 - Bruck Payne Associates |
| 16 - DPDS Consulting Group | 30 - PHS Datashred | 48 - Continental Airlines | 71 - Forward Swindon |
| 17 - Lloyds TSB Commercial | 31/32 - Enterprise Europe Network | 49 - Planet Gold | 73 - Acorn Health and Safety |
| 18 - Jobcentre Plus | 33 - Business in a Box | 50 - RSM Tenon | 74 - Barceló Hotels |
| 19 - Executive Support Solutions | | 51 - Shred - it | 75 - Elzware |
| 20 - CDPA Credit Insurance | | 52 - RTS Communications | 76 - Bluefin Insurance Services |
| 21 - Four Pillars Hotels | | 53/56 - Unique Venues of Bath | 77 - Kendlebell |



11

THE
BUSINESS
SHOW
SWINDON

Business Show programme

- 11.30am-12.15pm Social Media with Neil Wilkins
- 12.30 and 1.15pm Sticky Marketing with Grant Leboff
- 1.30pm-2.15pm The Art of Effective Networking with Neil Wilkins
- 2.30pm-3.15 pm Is your business built on sand? Why Trade Marks matter? with Berry Davies
- 2pm-3:30pm Funding for Growth with a panel of trusted experts

The Swindon Strategic Economic Partnership (SSEP) Annual Conference will run alongside The Business Show Swindon 2011 in the morning. SSEP will outline its achievements over the past 12 months, together with their vision for the future, including Swindon Borough Council's 'One Swindon' strategic framework.

Prior to the SSEP Conference there will be a Swindon Chamber of Commerce Breakfast at which the 'Link to China' programme will be launched.

To register for the show go to www.businessshowswindon.co.uk

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NEW Health and Safety at Work Qualification Course dates for 2011

May	04, 05 & 06	Sept	12, 13 & 14
Jun	20, 21 & 22	Oct	17, 18 & 19
Jul	18, 19 & 20	Nov	21, 22 & 23
Aug	22, 23 & 24	Dec	12, 13 & 14

NEBOSH NATIONAL DIPLOMA Course dates for 2011

Unit A	Unit B	Unit C
Week 1 - 04-08 Apr 2011	Week 1 - 24-28 Oct 2011	Week 1 - 12-16 Dec 2011
Week 2 - 09-13 May 2011	Week 2 - 14-18 Nov 2011	Week 2 - 09-13 Jan 2012
Week 3 - 06-10 Jun 2011		

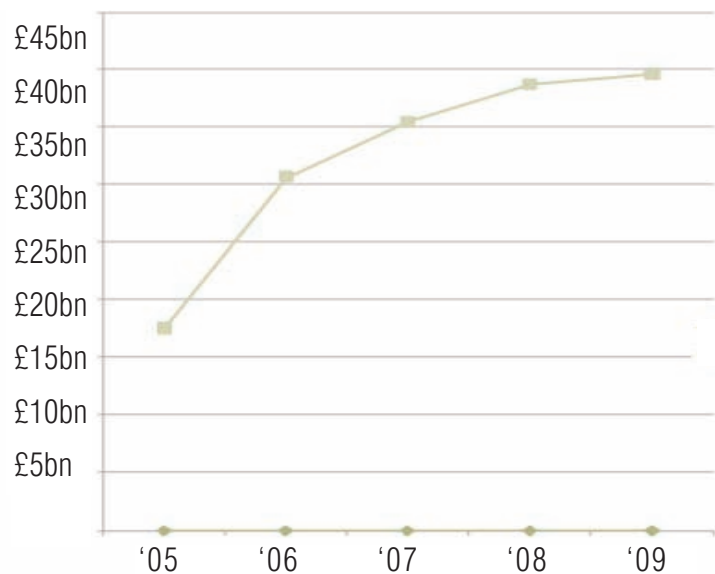
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SWINDON'S TOP 100 COMPANIES

Learning curve: Growth slows



A little slow but still growing

The Swindon area's major businesses are still expanding – but the rate of growth has slowed sharply, according to data supplied to Swindon Business News.

Drawing on information from Bureau van Dijk, supplied by Swindon-based County Data Publishing, we have established the combined value of the area's 1,000 largest businesses over the past five years.

In 2005, ahead of the global

financial meltdown, our major companies had a combined value of more than £30 billion.

The rate of growth remained strong between 2005 and 2006 but has steadily slowed since then and almost flatlined between 2008 and 2009, when the recession was at its fiercest.

However, this low-level growth is still in marked contrast to the UK economy as a whole which declined in both 2008 and 2009.

Leading firms prove resilient in tough economic conditions

Once again, Swindon Business News's Top 100 Companies report proves that Swindon and its surrounding towns pack a powerful economic punch.

Few other areas of the UK can boast such a diverse and dynamic collection of businesses. Proving this point is the fact that the top 10 companies are all drawn from different sectors.

The whole table shows that from advanced manufacturers to financial services providers and from food processors to hi-tech pioneers, the Swindon area is a powerhouse of forward-looking companies.

As our unique Top 100 table, printed overleaf, shows, many of our top businesses have continued to grow, despite the chill winds of recession. And while, as expected, the number posting a loss is greater than in previous years, a majority have generated strong profits.

While commentators believe this year will be another tough one, the industrial make up of the Swindon area, illustrated by the businesses making up our Top 100, means it is well-placed to benefit once the recovery takes hold.

Some of the Top 100 businesses are long-established – for example Arkell's Brewery at no 92 has been making beer in Swindon for nearly 170 years. Rival Wadworths (no 47) in Devizes, best known for its 6X bitter, celebrates its 125th anniversary this year.

But the Swindon area's reputation as a great business location means the table has a large number of relatively-new companies.

The area has long been a strong base for financial services – Zurich, at no 4, remains a major player. Newer businesses in the sector have established themselves including, at no 15, Openwork, the largest multi-tie network in the UK. The firm, which has its roots in Allied Dunbar (later Zurich) and is based in former Zurich offices at Swindon's Tricentre, has grown rapidly since its 2005 launch.



Intrinsic Financial Services, at no 31 was launched in March 2006 by Lord Leitch, the former global chief executive of Zurich and a key figure behind Allied Dunbar's success.

Manufacturing remains strong, despite the tough trading conditions of recent years, with global players such as Honda in Swindon (no 6), BMW-owned Swindon Pressings (no 19), and Malmesbury-based household appliance pioneers Dyson (no 10).

Melksham-based Avon Rubber continues to be a force both in its own right at no 22 and through its offshoots Cooper Tyre & Rubber (no 18) and, at no 66, DTR VMS, the former Avon Automotive which designs and makes engine mounts and other car components in Chippenham.

At no 68, Deceuninck in Calne is a leading designer and manufacturer of high-quality systems for windows and

doors.

Retailing is another strong sector. WH Smith, at no 8, is long-established. At no 32 and growing quickly is Kemble-based Cotswold Outdoor, which started life in 1974 as Cotswold Camping. Today it has a national chain of stores and successful online mail order services.

The area's agricultural heritage continues through companies such as Devizes-based farmer co-operative United Oilseeds at no 35 and at no 49 Danisco's Animal Nutrition Business in Marlborough.

Among the new entries are at, no 100, Outsourse, the award-winning IT recruitment consultancy supplying supply contract, permanent and interim staff to businesses across the UK and Europe.

• See page 10 for Swindon's Fastest Growing Companies

The Top 10

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------------|
| 1 NPower | 6 Honda |
| 2 Intel | 7 Smiths News |
| 3 Arval | 8 WH Smith |
| 4 Zurich | 9 First Great Western |
| 5 Wincanton | 10 Dyson |

The table is based on data sourced from Bureau van Dijk. Businesses are ranked on turnover. All those in the table have their principal business activity based in the area covered by the SN postcode. As far as possible, figures relate to the parent or main trading company.

Business Services Business & Company Acquisitions & Disposals MBOs & MBIs Company Reorganisations & Restructuring Partnership and Shareholder Agreements, Commercial Contracts, Terms Franchise Agreements Business Property Sales and Purchases, Property Development, Leases of Commercial, Industrial & Retail Sites Employment Law	Private Law Wills, Trusts and Probate Will, Probate, Trusts, Tax and Estate Planning, Elderly, Inheritance Claims, Contested Wills Family Law Divorce, Living Together, Children, Care Residential Property Conveyancing, Investment Property, Remortgage, Development Land, Tenancies, HIPS Preparation	Litigation Mediation/Alternative Dispute Resolution Business Disputes Company, Partnership, Contract, Negligence, Fraud Property Landlord, Tenant, Building Consumer Law Sale of Goods Personal Injury Debt Recovery Employment Tribunals Health & Safety
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SWINDON'S TOP 100 COMPANIES

Rank	Company	Turnover (£'000s)	Profit (£'000s)	Staff	Business description
1.	NPOWER	3,304,000	88,400	8,506	Marketing and supply of electricity and related services
2.	INTEL	3,297,834	-26,296	956	Selling, marketing and distributing Intel products
3.	ARVAL	2,843,696	-9,737	881	Vehicle and fuel related services
4.	ZURICH	2,280,000	232,000	-	Life assurance
5.	WINCANTON	2,182,900	-17,000	27,840	Contract logistics
6.	HONDA	2,039,374	-13,113	4,570	Manufacture of motor vehicles
7.	SMITHS NEWS	1,829,600	9,700	5,721	Wholesale distribution of newspapers, magazines and books
8.	WH SMITH	1,312,000	7,000	16,858	Retailing
9.	FIRST GREAT WESTERN	845,011	19,732	4,840	Passenger railway services
10.	DYSON	769,700	78,453	2,410	Manufacture and sale of domestic appliances
11.	WATSON PETROLEUM	584,716	-5,116	611	Wholesalers of fuel oils
12.	SYNERGY HEALTH	286,421	8,199	3,997	Outsourced healthcare and contract sterilisation
13.	CAMBRIA AUTOMOBILES	255,466	1,276	758	Sale and servicing of cars
14.	DICK LOVETT	224,456	1,771	451	Sale and maintenance of motor vehicles
15.	OPENWORK	207,134	3,264	361	Financial advice
16.	CASTROL (LUBRICANTS)	202,600	-13,073	770	Blending and marketing of lubricants
17.	TYCO ELECTRONICS	167,378	-29,572	1,758	Design, manufacture, distribution and sale of electronics
18.	COOPER TYRE & RUBBER	165,174	9,511	946	Distribution of tyres
19.	SWINDON PRESSINGS	162,297	-9,623	932	Manufacture of steel and aluminium pressings
20.	STONEGATE	147,542	3,975	534	Production, packing and marketing of eggs and egg products.
21.	DIALOG SEMICONDUCTOR	134,753	13,689	310	Designer of low-power mixed signal circuits
22.	AVON RUBBER	117,574	6,143	719	Design and manufacture of rubber components
23.	CAPITA INFORMATION SYSTEMS	110,600	3,358	922	Service provider, primarily to public sector customers
24.	ECOLAB	100,102	-1,969	990	Manufacture and sale of hygiene products
25.	TH WHITE	99,197	-1,197	492	Agricultural and automotive services
26.	WAVIN	98,852	2,114	528	Innovative pipe systems
27.	FAIRCHILD SEMICONDUCTOR	91,347	-4,038	47	Marketing, sales and distribution of microelectronic components
28.	FONTERRA	87,980	443	4	Importers of New Zealand dairy products
29.	HERMAN MILLER	85,309	-9,579	293	Manufacture and sale of office furniture
30.	COTSWOLD MOTOR	83,121	-	171	Selling and servicing of BMW
31.	INTRINSIC FINANCIAL SERVICES	73,420	474	116	Financial services
32.	COTSWOLD OUTDOOR	72,678	3,317	935	Retailing of outdoor pursuits clothing and equipment
33.	FISH BROTHERS	72,409	776	303	Sale, servicing, rental and contract hire of motor vehicles
34.	KNORR-BREMSE RAIL SYSTEMS	71,841	-1,039	327	Design and manufacture of braking systems for rail
35.	UNITED OILSEEDS MARKETING	66,440	-257	24	Commodity merchants and brokers
36.	HILLS UK	66,329	-5,045	398	Sand and gravel extraction, waste management, haulage
37.	QUADRANT CATERING	65,465	-2,093	1,539	Catering and mobile vending
38.	NATIONWIDE LIFE	65,412	-16,682	83	Long-term insurance business
39.	ZIMMER	65,060	-1,247	110	Sales and marketing of medical and other orthopaedic products
40.	CATALENT	63,867	9,393	593	Development and design of the zydis fast-dissolving capsules
41.	YUASA BATTERY	62,888	1,327	281	Manufacture and sale of batteries
42.	T QUALITY	62,673	-451	219	Purchase, distribution of food products to the fast food industry
43.	EXCEPTION	62,511	1,400	362	Manufacture of fast turnaround prototype printed circuit boards
44.	TS TECH	59,706	-23,362	483	Production of car seats
45.	PATHEON	57,908	6,507	576	Commercial manufacturing, development for prescription drugs
46.	STANLEY SECURITY SOLUTIONS	52,768	3,679	377	Sale, service and distribution of security products
47.	WADSWORTH	52,590	-582	626	Brewing and packaging of beers, trading in beers, ciders, wines
48.	E.W. BEARD	50,073	-404	175	Building contractors
49.	DANISCO	49,969	20,673	122	Manufacturing, sale and marketing of Danisco products
50.	TRIUMPH INTERNATIONAL	46,052	-2,325	356	Distribution and retail of women's underwear



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SWINDON'S TOP 100 COMPANIES

Rank	Company	Turnover (£,000s)	Profit (£'000s)	Staff	Business description
51.	HOCHTIEF	43,452	-184	153	Building and civil engineering construction
52.	MAN FINANCIAL SERVICES	42,752	-2,325	37	Vehicle financing
53.	SCISYS	41,720	1,674	444	Planning and development of computer systems
54.	TCG BARS	41,545	-	863	Managed estate of pubs and bars
55.	FLEET SUPPORT GROUP	40,991	252	127	Breakdown assistance, property lease and vehicle management
56.	VECTURA	40,100	5,800	267	Therapeutic products and drug delivery systems
57.	CELLULAR OPERATIONS	40,002	41	-	Promotion and sale of mobile telephones and airtime
58.	INTELEK	37,706	-452	380	Design and manufacture of electronic systems
59.	TICAN UK	36,401	-333	6	Importers and wholesale distribution of meat and meat products
60.	LATCHWAYS	33,850	-694	241	Production, distribution, installation of industrial safety products
61.	TM GROUP	32,408	11	64	Electronic transaction and information infrastructure
62.	ALLIANCE PHARMA	31,237	3,316	34	Acquisition, marketing, distribution of pharmaceutical products.
63.	RENELEC	31,050	-99	213	Electrical contracting, plumbing and heating contracting
64.	IP WIRELESS UK	30,532	2,012	126	Research and development of 3G broadband wireless technology
65.	WESTCODE SEMICONDUCTORS	28,704	406	221	Manufacture and supply of high-power semiconductors
66.	DTR VMS UK	28,680	-	171	Design, manufacture and supply of engine and suspension mounts
67.	G PLAN UPHOLSTERY	28,569	1,080	208	Manufacture and sale of furniture
68.	DECEUNINCK	28,561	709	103	Manufacturing and wholesaling of pvcu building materials
69.	GWE BUSINESS WEST	26,670	237	340	Assist economic development and individual company success
70.	GEORGE WHITE MOTORS	26,392	419	74	Motorcycle, parts and accessories and the retail of used cars
71.	ACCESS PLUS MARKETING	26,337	4,337	78	Business solutions to organisations seeking to reduce costs
72.	SOUTH MARSTON DC	25,228	820	541	Logistics
73.	GEMS SURVEY	25,222	-4,483	102	Gophysical and metocean marine survey consultancy
74.	THREADNEEDLE	24,973	-305	34	Investments
75.	BLACK HORSE CONTRACTORS	24,932	-729	189	Civil engineering
76.	INTERCONNECT PRODUCTS	23,926	1,446	17	Importers and sale of electronic components and cable harnesses
77.	PRAXAIR	23,747	571	219	Corrosion, wear and heat resistant coatings
78.	BATHWICK TYRES	23,683	237	200	Fitting and supply of tyres and associated products
79.	IS-RAYFAST	22,790	-324	-	Distribution of heat-shrinking plastic tubing products
80.	LINVATEC	22,562	-341	76	Sale of medical equipment
81.	CPI ANTHONY ROWE	22,524	-334	294	Manufacture of books and journals
82.	BARNES GROUP	22,516	4,385	136	Industrial consumable products, inventory management systems
83.	GALILEO PORTUGAL	21,931	773	38	Marketing of Galileo computer reservation system in Portugal
84.	KOCH FERTILISER	21,893	248	4	Marketing and distribution of fertilizer products
85.	CATERING 328	21,864	-483	-	Distributors and wholesalers of food products for the catering
86.	OMITEC UK	21,282	728	261	Design and supply of automotive diagnostic equipment
87.	METRIC GROUP	21,008	3,536	182	Electronic ticket issuing, revenue control and management
88.	GJ HANDY & COMPANY	20,943	256	51	Retailing and distribution of domestic and professional machinery
89.	SARSEN HOUSING	20,645	-1,056	-	The provision of affordable homes for rent
90.	AFL TELECOMMUNICATIONS	20,071	-2,202	65	Manufacture and sale of fibre optic cable
91.	AEROCAN UK	19,797	-325	106	Manufacture and sale of aluminium aerosol containers
92.	ARKELL'S BREWERY	19,360	-848	333	Brewing of beer, the sale of beers, wines and spirits
93.	MULTIVAC UK	19,286	-143	75	Installation of packaging machinery
94.	SWINDON COMMERCIAL SERVICES	19,217	-	582	Building construction, building maintenance and waste management
95.	RAILSTON DESIGN	18,829	156	62	Designing and fitting of retail outlets
96.	MJ CHURCH PLANT	18,712	-418	214	Bulk excavation and provision of plant and transport services
97.	MANULI PACKAGING	18,462	12	41	Manufacture, distribution of packaging and filmwrap machinery
98.	DELORO STELLITE	18,419	397	99	Manufacture, supply and application of Stellite products
99.	INTERGRAPH UK	18,294	637	150	Marketing and maintenance of computer software systems
100.	OUTSOURCE UK	18,234	6	-	Recruiters, supply of contract and permanent IT staff

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Swindon College, North Star Avenue, Swindon, SN2 1DY



SWINDON'S FASTEST GROWING COMPANIES

Rank	Company	Turnover (£'000s)	% growth on previous year	Business description
1.	OMNIS INVESTMENTS	630	905.71	Financial intermediation
2.	PETER GABRIEL LTD	10,979	885.06	Artistic work
3.	KOCH FERTILISER	21,893	453.13	producers and marketers of nitrogen fertiliser
4.	LIQUIDITY SERVICES	11,213	346.02	Liquidation sales
5.	AERIAL TARGET SYSTEMS	816	307.54	Aerial photography and surveys
6.	UBIQUISYS	3,557	303.75	Software consultancy
7.	THE HILLS GROUP	2,547	247.45	Waste management
8.	N ACH CONSULTING	887	244.92	Education services
9.	AMY SOUTH WEST	988	202.80	Demolition and wrecking
10.	WEMYSS LODGE	5,250	178.85	Social work activities
11.	STONEGATE	147,542	173.48	Farming of poultry
12.	GOOD ENERGY GAS	1,170	169.94	Distribution and trade of gas
13.	NORTHPEARL	811	166.28	Logistics
14.	SILVER ATENA	8,498	165.97	Software engineering
15.	CJI SECURITY CONSULTANTS	508	165.13	Investigation and security
16.	LEAFIELD LOGISTICS & TECHNICAL	6,233	162.17	Freight transport
17.	COPPEREYE	2,029	160.80	Software consultancy
18.	REAL WORLD PRODUCTIONS	3,339	129.65	Artistic productions
19.	KNABS RIDGE WIND FARM	1,414	116.21	Production of electricity
20.	OLD LLTS	6,233	111.79	Building and construction
21.	DANISCO	49,969	109.12	Food producer
22.	ASTONLINE	624	102.36	Electrical installation
23.	WOMAD	1,896	94.64	Music festival
24.	POLYDECK RESINS	1,969	93.55	Floor and wall coverings
25.	EMERY MCLAVEN	17,698	91.83	Advertising
26.	DIALOG SEMICONDUCTOR	10,258	89.05	Designer of low-power mix-signal circuits
27.	SYSTEM UK	1,311	88.50	Industrial machinery wholesaler
28.	JEWEL HOSPITALITY	583	87.94	Hotel group
29.	GWE BUSINESS WEST	26,670	77.43	Assist economic development and individual company success
30.	BILBSTER WIND FARM	524	77.28	Production of electricity

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Growing
Businessthe big
conversationDrive to help firms
understand finance
to help them grow

A major drive to boost high-growth businesses across the region has been launched. Run in collaboration with the Swindon Business News, the 'Growing Business – the Big Conversation' campaign is led by Business Link, Solutions for Business and GWE Business West, with funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

As part of this campaign, here we focus on a new service that has been launched to give Swindon businesses a greater understanding of the finance options open to them – and to help them succeed in proposals to funders.

Entitled Understanding Finance for Business, it offers firms an experienced finance coach, who can work with owners and managers over an agreed period, fine tuning their financial performance and if required put together a compelling case for raising finance.

Neil Higginson, programme manager, ERDF project, is leading the initiative. He said: "It is a cliché, but cash is the lifeblood of a business – and when businesses enjoy strong



Neil Higginson

growth, their requirement for funding can increase significantly.

"Funding decisions made during these periods can have a fundamental impact on the long-term development of the business – our new service is designed to help entrepreneurs make the right choices."

Through discussions with a range of lenders, Neil has identified the following common mistakes:

- Business owners can

struggle to explain their new product or service without using jargon or technical language. The value proposition has to be clearly articulated and it must be compelling.

- Funders want to see evidence that the market is interested in the new product or service. Demonstrate customer feedback that proves serious interest.

- Ensure that there is clarity in cash projections – clearly demonstrate that you will be able to meet repayments. Maybe invest in having this plan vetted by a trusted financial adviser.

- Don't be complacent or take the bank for granted. Make sure that you communicate on an on-going basis, so that there is an understanding of your business. If you are never in touch except for the time when you need a considerable amount of money – don't be surprised if they say no!

The service offers businesses a minimum of 12 hours support including time with their dedicated business finance coach and is available for businesses which seek clarity of the finance and funding options available to support their growth. This comprises specialist workshops, tailored events and one-to-one business coaching.

To find out more about the new programme call 0845 600 9966 visit www.growthsouthwest.co.uk or email info@growthsouthwest.co.uk

To get involved in our 'Growing Business, the Big Conversation' campaign visit: www.business.info/thebigconversation or follow us on Twitter @growthsouthwest

In conversation with Philip Tellwright

Philip Tellwright, managing director of the South West Angel Investor Network (SWAIN), provides some answers on how equity finance – just one of the finance options explored as part of Understanding Finance for Growth – can provide a vital resource for growth businesses.



How difficult is it to raise finance in the current market?

It remains really tough, but you can achieve it by putting forward a compelling business case. This has to be well prepared – it needs to be watertight.

Funding resources are limited and you can't afford to take shortcuts. Some lenders are quite active, but they are able to select the best quality opportunities and the best individuals.

What is the attraction of equity finance?

It's not just about getting your hands on the cash you need to grow. A vital appeal of equity finance is getting access to an experienced investor who can bring a wealth of experience and insight to your business during a period of rapid change and growth. Benefits include access to the investor's contacts.

They can help you shape your business model and avoid making mistakes. Bringing in an investor improves the rigour and discipline of a business. For example, regular board meetings are held and directors are kept on task.

An equity investor can also help you get where you want to be more quickly. It can be more appealing having 70–80 per cent of a bigger business rather than 100 per cent of a smaller one.

What are equity investors looking for?

Investors will often be looking for opportunities in markets that they understand and have experience of. They will want to see a compelling value proposition – what customer problem does your new product or service solve?

They will want to understand it in a market context. Is there a niche market here that the product can fill? Is there a sufficient market in the niche to sustain the projected business growth?

Making the right first impression demands robust financial projections. Investors will be able to sift through a range of opportunities before shortlisting businesses that they will take a serious look at. They will quickly dismiss candidates whose numbers don't appear to add up. The chemistry between the business owner and equity investor is also important – they will want to fund individuals they feel they can get on with and work well with.

There is a special Cleantech Co-Investment Fund for businesses in the low carbon, renewable energy sectors. Companies in this area that attract experienced keystone investors can receive up to £100,000 matched funding from this resource managed in this region by SWAIN.

Understanding Finance for Business offers firms an experienced finance coach, who can work with owners and managers over an agreed period, fine tuning their financial performance and if required put together a compelling case for raising finance.

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Self-build show to be held in February

This free event has everything you'll ever need to know, see, learn and hear, to make your project a success; from finding the right plot or project to finding the right finance, and from sourcing suppliers to discovering eco solutions.

And with a host of exciting demos and talks, and plenty of leading industry experts on hand, we promise to save you time – and money – every step of the way, to help your build ideas and plans come to life.

– 'How to...' seminars on the

The National Self Build & Renovation Show is being held in Swindon from the 25th - 27th of February at the National Self Build & Renovation Centre

basics about finding & funding your project as well as how to manage the project yourself along with top tips and new tricks for old bricks, including eco retrofit solutions.

- Free appointments with more than 20 industry professionals such as; architects, project managers, building control etc.

- Tours of our full-sized renovation house and real-life examples in the Self Build Educational Journey.

- More than 200 companies in our Exhibitor Area.

Hosted in the unique setting of the National Centre, The National Self Build & Renovation Show will provide you with independent expert advice, seminars, case studies, tours, hundreds of exhibitors and plenty of exciting features to give you inspiration and help you understand the homebuilding, conversion and renovation processes, this is an event you really can't afford to miss!

Entry is free if you book in advance or you can turn up on the day to pay on the door.

Visit: <http://www.buildstore.co.uk/show> or call 0845 223 4455.



Bristol Batteries expands its fleet

Bristol Batteries, which has its Swindon base on the Westmead Trading Estate, has invested in a new fleet of 10 new Ford Transits on the back of a successful period of sustained growth. The firm, which has around 5,000 commercial clients, sources batteries from around the world for use in a vast range of applications from commercial vehicles to IT backup. Branch manager Tony Harrison said: "The new fleet completes our rebranding programme and will be key to building on our reputation as the top battery provider in the South West."

Turnover jump for Alliance Pharma

Alliance Pharma, the Chippenham-based speciality pharmaceutical company, has told shareholders it expects its annual turnover to leap by around 60 per cent to close to £50 million. In an upbeat pre-close trading update, the firm, which will unveil its preliminary results for 2010 on March 23, also said it expected pre-tax profits to be slightly ahead of current market expectations. In the half-year to June 30, Alliance reported profits before tax and exceptional items up 166 per cent at £7.7m on sales up 77 per cent to £23.4m.

Second event for networking group

Business Biscotti, a new type of networking organisation, holds its second Swindon event on February 15 following the success of its launch last month. The organisation, is free to join online and free to visit offline. Business Biscotti has been running for nine months and now has 45 groups in 14 counties. Each group has two or three ambassadors who act as hosts at events. Meetings are held between 9.30am and 11.30am at Broome Manor Golf Club, Pipers Way. Further information is at: businessbiscotti.co.uk



Swindon's most unique pedicure

Sole Spa Swindon is bringing the unique concept of the fish pedicure to Basepoint, Rivermead Drive, Swindon. This new and exciting spa is the only spa of its kind in the area and specialises in a completely safe and natural treatment using tiny Garra Rufa fish that gently 'kiss' away hard and rough skin from the feet and hands.

The treatment, which is popular in Japan, Thailand and America, originated in Southern Turkey where the Garra Rufa fish (a type of carp) can be found naturally in rivers and streams.

As the legend goes, the healing powers of the fish were discovered in modern times by a

100-year-old natural Turkish treatment becoming popular all over the globe

proven to help with the skin regeneration process; this is where they earned their popular name of 'Doctor Fish'.

The Kangal Spa in Turkey where the fish originate from has been a healing destination for more than 100 years and many people go for the full body treatment.

These exotic pedicurists gently 'nibble' and suck away at

had! There have been reports in the media all over the world about the health benefits of this treatment.

The fish cannot transfer any diseases to humans. Your feet will be pre-rinsed with a very diluted sanitizer before the treatment, and you have your own dedicated fish and water tank. The water in the tanks is sterilised through the filtration pumps up to 6 times every hour. The tanks also have UV sterilisation. No one is allowed to have the treatment with any cuts or open sores no matter how small.

A spa representative said: "We hope to see you soon at the

The fish are used to treat any skin complaints from general hard skin to conditions such as eczema and psoriasis; this is where they earned their popular name of 'Doctor Fish'.

shepherd and his flock in Turkey 1917. Apparently he stumbled into marshy ground with an injured foot and found the open wound besieged by these 'Doctor Fish'. The wound healed and eventually word got out to the outside world about these incredible little masseurs.

They are used to treat any skin complaints from general hard skin to conditions such as eczema and psoriasis. These fish are so amazing that they actually secrete an enzyme in their saliva called diathanol which has been



the dry areas of skin leaving you with healthier, rejuvenated skin. These super clever nibblers leave the healthy skin untouched. They also stimulate acupuncture points and improve circulation.

Many people who have tried this treatment have reported that as well as seeing soft, supple and smooth skin, they had one of the best night's sleep they'd ever

Spa, it really is a treatment for everyone with no age or gender barriers. If you want a relaxing experience in luxury surroundings, an unusual location for a catch up with friends, a little 'me' time, or even share a giggle and unique experience with a group of mates, then come and see us and our wonderful, amazing little pedicurists.

Wiltshire restaurant retains Michelin star

One of Wiltshire's most prestigious restaurants has retained its Michelin star for the second year running. The Bybrook Restaurant at The Manor House Hotel, Castle Combe, is one of only two restaurants in Wiltshire to hold the coveted stars.

The Michelin Guide is arguably the most revered restaurant book of its kind among chefs, restaurant critics and guests. The Bybrook first gained a Michelin star in 2009.

A Michelin spokesman said The Bybrook's success was testament to the hard work carried out over the past year by Richard Davies and his team.

Hotel management firm signs with Accor

The South Marston Hotel is one of 10 properties run by management company Focus Hotels to be included in a franchise agreement with international group Accor. The South Marston, which has 60 bedrooms, a gym, a 23-metre indoor pool and a health and beauty spa, will be rebranded as the Mercure Swindon South Marston Hotel and Spa. Mecure is one of French-owned Accor's global hotel brands, which also include Ibis and Novotel. The move gives the South Marston another name change – it was previously known as The Nightingale.

Charity art auction to be held at Calcot Manor in February

Cirencester's Wetpaint Gallery will be hosting an art auction at Calcot Manor in February on behalf of the

British Heart Foundation. The charity event titled, 'Mending Broken Hearts' aims to help raise £50m to

fund life-saving research. The auction takes place from 12pm 12th February. www.wetpaintgallery.co.uk

Survey reveals a third of Britons thought 2010 was a bad year for money worries

Samaritans' annual survey of the nation's worries shows that nearly 60 per cent (57%) of people in the UK fear they will not have enough money to live comfortably this year, with well over a third (37%) worried about losing their jobs or having difficulty finding work.

The YouGov poll of more than 2,000 people identified money (debt and bank balance) as one of the nation's biggest concerns of the past year as well, with more than half (53%) of the UK population saying it was one of their top-five worries of 2010, compared with 48 per cent in 2009.

The other main sources of anxiety during 2010 were physical health (reported by 32% of people), relationships with family and friends (30%), domestic politics (28%) and world affairs (26%). In 2009, the nation's top-five worries aside from money were relationships with family and friends (35%), physical health (32%), job security (24%) and workplace stress (24%).

The survey also found that 2010 was considered a bad year or the worst year ever by 30 per cent of the population – a rise from 24 per cent in 2009. It showed too that more than a fifth (21%) of people didn't seek support from anyone to help them cope with their worries.

A spokesperson for Samaritans said: "As a nation, we continue to worry about our health and our relationships, but,

Samaritans advises people with financial worries not to suffer alone amid fears for 2011

unsurprisingly, our concerns have become increasingly focused over the past year on having enough money to live comfortably. It's also clear that, no matter what work we do or where we live, many of us are anxious about keeping our jobs and our homes. The most important thing to remember in these tough times is that we can all help each other and no one should suffer alone.

"We are appealing to anyone facing difficulties, no matter what they are, to call Samaritans. Our volunteers will be there to listen to your worries 24 hours a day, every day, throughout the coming year."

Swindon and District Samaritans. Registered Charity 252847

For emotional support phone us: 08457 90 90 90 or email us: jo@samaritans.org www.samaritans.org/swindon

Other key findings:

- Fear of redundancy is widespread – 38 per cent of those in lower social groups (C2DE) and 36 per cent of those in higher social groups (ABC1) similarly fear losing their jobs or having difficulty finding work next year
- Over half (56%) of people are worried they will suffer directly in 2011 from cuts in spending on public services
- Over three-quarters (76%) of unemployed people and half (50%) of those who are retired are anxious they won't have enough money to live comfortably next year
- Nearly a quarter (23%) of households with children are concerned that they may lose their home.

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Business First offering Value Added Training

Commercial training provider, Business First, at Swindon College, is keen to raise awareness among employers that fully-funded or heavily-subsidised nationally accredited professional qualifications are available in 2011.

These qualifications include business improvement techniques, management, team leading, warehousing and logistics and many more. A wide variety of apprenticeships, which can all be delivered in the workplace, are also available, so there is no need to cut training budgets due to the rise in VAT. These heavily-subsidised courses will help support employers with reduced training budgets and will meet the demand for high quality training across all sectors.

According to a study by the Federation of Small Businesses, more than 70 per cent of small companies surveyed expect the 2.5 per cent VAT rise to have a negative impact on their business. Of the 1600 respondents a further 52 per cent expect to increase prices, 45 per cent expect a fall in turnover and 36 per cent expect a loss of customers as a result.

Andrea Fitzgerald, business development manager for Business First said: "We have spoken to a number of small firms this year and many of them have said that they are being hit hard by the rise in VAT and that they will have to cut departmental budgets in order to survive. Some employers have said that this is likely to result in the reduction of training. However, I believe that this is the time to continue to up-skill or re-train staff to ensure that productivity is increased that businesses are made more efficient, which will lead to greater profitability."

To find out more about how your business can benefit from investing in training, contact the Business First Team on 01793 498404, or email: businessfirst@swindon-college.ac.uk

Business First will be exhibiting at The Business Show at STEAM on Thursday, February 10, 2011. Staff will be on hand to discuss apprenticeships and employer's individual training needs. For more information, visit:

www.swindon-college.ac.uk/training-business/news-and-events

Unlock new talent with apprenticeships



Leigh Foster, one of the latest apprentices working and studying at New College

Companies across Swindon are looking to apprentices as the key to success, and Fast Forward, the Business Services division of New College, is paving the way in providing top quality training for apprentices.

Hiring an apprentice can provide organisations with an employee who is not only trained in qualifications directly relating to their job role, but is also a highly motivated and skilled employee. 88 per cent of businesses agree that employing an apprentice makes the workplace more productive (based on data collected by the National Apprenticeships Service), a statement which has been backed by the FSB (Federation of Small Businesses).

Apprentices aren't just being used to fill gaps in the workforce however. Many employers are now placing current employees on apprenticeship programmes to increase the qualifications and skills they can bring to the business, enhancing reputations as an organisation willing to train their staff.

Proving they practice what they preach, Fast Forward, currently employs two apprentices taking Business Administration qualifications.

Valerie Bateman, apprenticeships manager at Fast Forward, said: "Apprentices are an asset to any business. You can train your employees to have the skills and qualifications which are ideal for the jobs our team needs."

"This is the second time we have hired apprentices and we will continue to do so as long as we have

vacancies within our staff. We have found all our apprentices to be hard working, highly motivated and keen to learn the skills to suit our organisation."

Leigh Foster, one of the latest apprentices working and studying at New College, said: "This is a really productive environment to work and learn in. An apprenticeship was the best option for me, as I can continue my education, while gaining valuable workplace experience."

Funding to support work-based qualifications, including apprenticeships, is still available to employers through Fast Forward.

For apprenticeships, training is fully funded for 16-18 year olds whilst for apprentices aged 19 and above, an employer contribution is required. In all cases, employers are required to pay staff at least the minimum Apprenticeship wage, leading on to higher wages as their knowledge and

value to their employer increases.

In addition, fully-funded level 2 work-based qualifications are still available under Train to Gain in Business Administration and Customer Service – provided that the employee does not already hold a level 2 qualification (equivalent to GCSE A*-C). Employers must register staff before the March 31, 2011 in order to secure Train to Gain funding.

For more information on work-based qualifications and funding available, please contact Erica O'Flynn at New College on 01793 755520 or: Erica.oflynn@newcollege.ac.uk

Funding to support work based qualifications, including apprenticeships, is still available to employers through Fast Forward

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Find out about:

- The range of Apprenticeships on offer through Swindon College
- The opportunities and benefits of employing an Apprentice
- New Apprenticeships now available in the workplace for your staff.

To find out more contact the Business First Team on **(01793) 498404**, or via e-mail on businessfirst@swindon-college.ac.uk or visit: www.swindon-college.ac.uk



Swindon College, North Star Avenue, Swindon SN2 1DY

Apprenticeship week 2011

Apprenticeship Week 2011 takes place from Wiltshire Enterprise - Thursday 10 February 2011

During Apprenticeship Week, Wiltshire Enterprise will be holding their annual Apprenticeship Awards ceremony to celebrate the success of their apprentices and local businesses.

Nick Hewer from the hit TV show 'The Apprentice' will present and the awards include 32 apprentice subject awards, 3 local business awards and an overall apprentice of the year award.

For more information contact Wiltshire Enterprise on 0845 345 2235 or visit: www.wiltshire-enterprise.co.uk

Minister delivers guarantee on youth training programmes

Further education, skills and lifelong learning minister John Hayes has announced new measures to guarantee the quality of the government's flagship Apprenticeship programme, ensuring every apprenticeship delivers training that directly meets the needs of employers and learners.

The Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England, will ensure:

- All apprenticeships deliver high quality, nationally-recognised qualifications relevant to the skill, trade or occupation of the learner and employer.
- All apprenticeships offer

individuals appropriate training to achieve a good standard of literacy and numeracy (and ICT where relevant to the skill, trade or occupation);

- Every apprentice will receive at least 280 hours of guided learning per year.

John Hayes said: "Apprenticeships are at the heart of our skills strategy because they are valued by employers and sought after by learners. By enshrining these characteristics in statute we send a clear message to employers and learners that every Apprenticeship is a high quality investment in the skills they need for the future."

Deals digest



• Security and electronics firm CardPOS Europe is moving into two more units at the Shrivvenham Hundred Business Park in readiness for further expansion.

Loveday and Loveday have sold units 19 and 20, which together have 4,415 sq ft of office and storage space, to the firm, a leading UK distributor of hardware and accessories for the point-of-sale, access and identification markets. The property was marketed with a £295,000 guide price. CardPOS Europe already occupy units 25 and 26 at Shrivvenham Hundred.

• TSP Kar Hire has renewed the lease on its base at Swindon's Transfer Bridge Industrial Estate. The firm rents out a wide range of vehicles from small cars to luxury saloons and from mini buses to people carriers. Alison Williams, senior surveyor at **Alder King**, said: "The Transfer Bridge Industrial Estate is a prominent site with easy access to Swindon and the M4 and so is perfect for a car hire company."

• **Ovivo**, a world leader in engineered water treatment services, has signed a 10-year deal to relocate a major part of its business to Bewley House, Chippenham, the former district council office block. Owned by Bath-based HPH Commercial Property. Ovivo cited the town's transport links as a key factor for the move.

Office market makes an impressive recovery in 2010

Jeremy Sutton of Keningtons takes a look back at the Office Market in 2010

At the end of last year the office take up stood at 222,173 sq ft which is a 71 per cent increase on the figure for 2009 and some 9 per cent above the last 10 year annual average of 202,619 sq ft. The figure was slightly above the last five year annual average.

The out of town take up represents 72 per cent which is roughly consistent with the figure over the last five years.

As with 2009, the take up in the fourth quarter was a particularly low percentage of the total annual take up and is a reflection of the low level of inquiries and activity that took place throughout last year.

There was much uncertainty and 'a wait and see attitude' with the General Election and the initial uncertainty of the Coalition Government. There was then the immediate prohibition on any Government commitment to property transactions and the announcements of spending cuts and reviews.

The uncertainty and low levels of activity then festered until the actual Comprehensive Spending Review

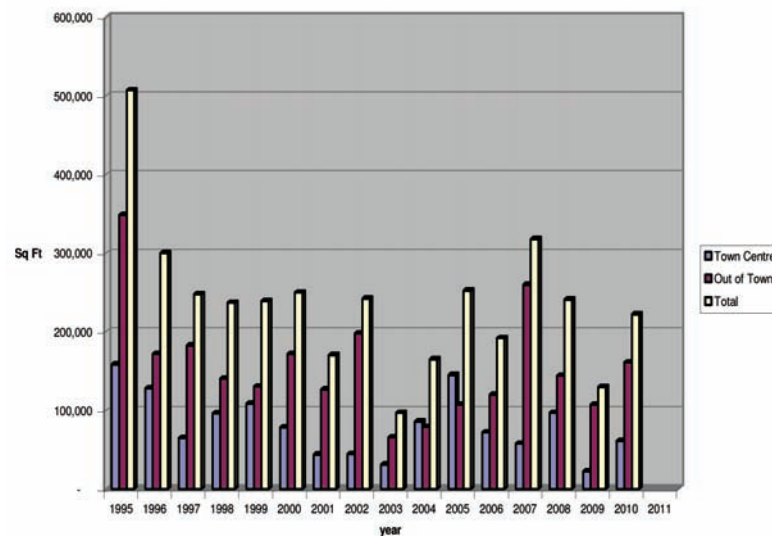
in October. The result is plenty of caution among occupiers and tenants in the market and despite the early signs nationally of economic improvement, confidence has yet to return in any significance to the office market.

The dominant office deal in 2010 was the letting of the Trilogy building at Kembrey Park to Motorola. The office element of this building amounted to 58,400 sq ft. The next largest out-of-town letting saw Wincanton take 10,225 sq ft at Edison Park, Dorcan. An office building of



Jeremy Sutton

Swindon Office Take Up



32,900 sq ft in Cheney Manor, a primarily industrial location was also sold. This is being refurbished for re-letting as serviced accommodation.

In town, the largest transaction was the letting of 17,200 sq ft for educational use while two properties of 15,100 sq ft and 4,709 sq ft were sold for redevelopment. The largest town centre transaction for an office use was 4,480 sq ft in the first quarter

with Outsource taking a floor at Churchward House.

In terms of rents, we have not seen a dramatic cut in quoting rents, and headline rents have been maintained.

However significant incentives in the form of rent free periods and stepped rentals have been granted on the majority of the lettings that have taken place.

• Whitmarsh Lockhart

partner James Lockhart has been appointed to the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) commercial market professional group board. The board ensures the surveying profession maintains and improves on current standards and continues to provide high-quality technical information to its members. James is one of 15 members representing the private and public sectors and all UK regions. Members come from a range of backgrounds – from regional property agencies to international blue-chip companies. James has more than 30 years' professional experience in Swindon dealing with all aspects of commercial property. In 1997 he created Whitmarsh Lockhart with business partner Paul Whitmarsh.



• **Epoc Properties**, the Swindon-based developer, has appointed Alder King to secure an occupier for the 5,000 sq ft ground-floor restaurant at Wessex Court, the former office building on Clarence Road, Swindon, it is transforming into a residential and retail scheme.



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Deals digest

• First retail unit sold at new Chippenham development
The first retail unit in Chippenham's new Gladstone Parade town centre development has been sold to Academy Insurance by **Alder King** on behalf of joint administrators RJ Goode and RS Morgan of GVA Grimley. At 2,762 sq ft, the unit is the largest of the three in the scheme. The remaining two, measuring 1,954 sq ft and 2,108 sq ft, are now under offer. All have been finished to a shell specification ready for shopfitting. Alder King senior surveyor Alison Williams said: "The units are directly opposite a new development of 162 homes and so are well positioned to provide a range of amenities for the local residents." Alder King is acting jointly with GVA Grimley's Bristol office.



• **RO Developments** has sold its third unit in two months at its industrial warehouse scheme RO24 Swindon, Avro Gate, South Marston Park. Unit 7, which totals 4,136 sq ft, has been bought by packaging machinery distributor Ilpra Systems UK. The quoting price was £340,000. The deal follows recent sales to Michael Pollitt and FN Foods. Alastair Andrews, of Loveday and Loveday, said "The RO24 development offers companies an unrivalled location and the units are letting and selling quickly."

Out-of-town office market led in 2010 by Highcross

Highcross' Kembrey Business Park accounted for more than 40 per cent of the out-of-town office space take-up in Swindon last year, with 70,000 sq ft let in eight transactions.

The park's dominant position in the out-of-town office market in 2010, reflects the letting of 58,400 sq ft of office space to Motorola at the Trilogy building (pictured right) on a 10-year lease.

A further five new companies were attracted to the park during the year, including retail services group, Kleerex, which took 2,889 sq ft at Cherry Orchard East. Vivat Direct, which trades as Reader's Digest, moved into 3,000 sq ft at Cherry Orchard North.

Telemarketing/marketing agency, Fresh Integrated Marketing and Close Motor Finance were also new to the park last year, taking 1,540 sq ft and 1,393 sq ft suites. Other lettings included expansion space for existing occupiers, GPSL and e2E.

According to recent figures released by Keningtons, total office take-up in Swindon was 222,173 sq ft, a 71 per cent increase on 2009. Out-of-town office space accounted for 160,982 sq ft of the total.

Highcross director, Nick Turner, said the figures underlined the Park's continuing appeal to businesses. "The letting to Motorola was clearly a highlight of 2010, but we are also very pleased with the range of other lettings achieved at the park. Kembrey's strength is its supply of a wide variety of flexible, high quality space from 400 sq ft suites right up to 70,000 sq ft headquarters buildings."

In addition to the new space let at the park, Highcross also agreed a total of 10,000 sq ft in lease renewals to existing occupiers.

Keningtons are joint agents at Kembrey Park with Loveday and Loveday.



Housebuilder invests £300,000 in new bathrooms

• **Jephson Homes Housing Association** has spent more than £300,000 refitting the bathrooms of 101 homes on Chippenham's Hungerdown Estate. The work, which also included some asbestos removal work, has brought the homes up to the Government's Decent Homes Standard.

• Edison Park, the showpiece office scheme at Dorcan, is being remarketed following the joint venture site developer **Leehampton Developments** (Edison Park) going into administration.

Keningtons and **CB Richard Ellis** have been appointed as joint agents for the offices and development land. The site has four office buildings totalling 52,250 sq ft available at rents of £10 to £12 per sq ft. 1.2 acres of development land is also available.

• Car dealer **Pebbley Beach** has relocated its Wroughton and Eldene dealerships to a purpose-built site on the West Swindon Motor Park. The move brings its manufacturers, Suzuki and Hyundai, under the same roof for the first time, along with sales of Alfa Romeos. The long-established firm said the move will enable it to offer visitors better facilities and improve on its customer service.



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Low carbon fleet for events company

Venues Event Management, the Wanborough-based event and conference group, has replaced its fleet of nine Ford Focus and Mondeo cars with low CO2-emitting

Skoda Fabias and Octavias as part of its commitment to reducing its environmental impact.

The firm, whose clients include BP/Castrol, Bupa and BT, is

working towards the BS8901 sustainable event management standard and also offers its clients a carbon-offsetting option for events.

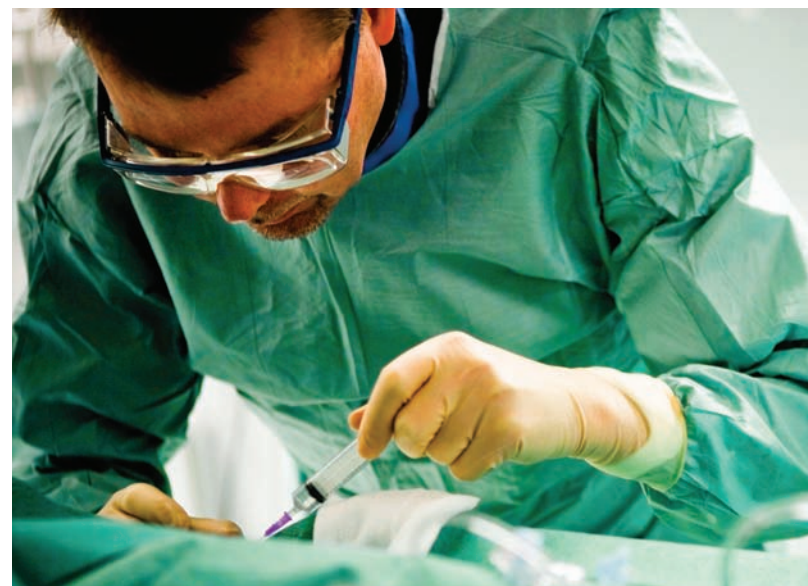
Ridgeway Hospital gets £3.2m upgrade

The Ridgeway Hospital has begun work on a £3.2 million development programme that will enhance its position as one of the leading providers of healthcare in Swindon.

The upgrade, which began last month, will provide the hospital with a third operating theatre, an extension to the main hospital reception, a refurbishment of the existing pharmacy and new consultation rooms. The project is due for completion in June.

The investment from owners BMI Healthcare will fund the state-of-the-art operating theatre for a wide variety of medical and surgical procedures including orthopaedic surgery, endoscopic and laparoscopic procedures. The theatre is equipped with laminar flow ventilation, which increases infection prevention, and is particularly beneficial in joint prosthesis surgery such as knee or hip replacement.

Tony Yates, executive director at



Surgery: The Ridgeway Hospital's plans include a third operating theatre

The Ridgeway, said: "We are committed to the continuous improvement of our clinical facilities and services, and the investment and development of the new units will be

vital in helping us to maintain the high quality of care we provide to Swindon. This development will also benefit the local community generating up to 30 jobs."

WH Smith feels the chill

Newsagent group WH Smith blamed December's big freeze for a bigger-than-expected fall in sales over Christmas. But profits at the Swindon-based newspaper, books and stationery seller, met forecasts and its gross margin was higher than analysts had pencilled in.

In what it called a "resilient" performance, Smith's total sales for the 21 weeks to 22 January fell four per cent and were down five per cent on a like-for-like basis.

However it was hit hard by the pre-Christmas snow with like-for-like sales slipping a bigger-than-expected seven per cent during the eight weeks to January 22 and six per cent since the end of August.

Steady growth for Synergy

A string of major contract wins last year boosted revenues at Synergy, the Swindon-based healthcare services specialist.

The group, which includes sterilisation business Isotron, achieved underlying revenue growth of 4.4 per cent in the nine months to January 2, it said in an update statement to shareholders.

The group provides outsourced support services to health-related markets in the UK and Ireland, Europe and Middle East and Asia and Africa. Growth in its decontamination division in the UK and Ireland was 12.4 per cent and it secured two 15-year health service contracts in Lincolnshire with combined revenues of around £4m a year.



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