

# SWINDON BUSINESS NEWS

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**Fuel for the future:**  
Swindon gets on the hydrogen highway

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**It's not just desks and chairs:**  
The latest trends in office design



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## News Brief

### Key appointment at SBN

Experienced marketing professional Anita Jaynes has joined Swindon Business News publisher County Business Publishing as business development manager. Anita's role is to develop the range of advertising and marketing opportunities across the company's expanding portfolio of publications, websites and events. Anita replaces advertising manager Ann Freegard, who recently left the company after more than 20 years.

### Accountants count charity success

A six-strong team from Swindon-based Banks Chartered Accountants raised more than £1,000 for Wiltshire Young Carers by running in the Swindon Half Marathon. The effort by the team – Neil Elsdon, Andy Barlow, Tracey Heath, Louise Rhoades, Travis Fowler and Abbie Paginton – was the second fundraiser held by Banks for Wiltshire Young Carers, its adopted charity for 2011. A golf day in June raised £500.

### Mini sales are mightier than ever

UK sales of Minis roared ahead by more than 16 per cent to 38,147 so far this year, helping owner BMW clock up a 10.5 per cent increase in total sales in a market that has declined by five per cent. BMW has recently launched the new Mini Coupé while the continued success of the Countryman range is also boosting sales. BMW makes most body panels for the Mini at its Swindon plant.

### Coming up next month...

In November Swindon Business News will focus on the rural economy, analysing the unique issues affecting businesses in non-urban areas. We will also look at Swindon's rail industry, investigate how innovation is boosting manufacturing and highlight the finance available for growing businesses.

November's issue will also feature our indispensable guide to Christmas parties and events.

# Council poised to approve large leisure centre plan at North Star

A major leisure centre is to be built on derelict land at North Star, Swindon – bringing to the town the first of a new generation of indoor sports destinations.

Swindon Borough Council is close to signing the deal with an unnamed operator which plans to build a string of similar centres across the UK.

The 14-acre site, which once housed the Clare's Equipment factory making supermarket check-outs and shelving, has been cleared and is ready for development.

Forward Swindon, the town's economic regeneration company, has spent two years working with the council on the ambitious project, which is expected to generate a large number of much-needed jobs.

While the new centre will be close to the Oasis leisure centre, it is unclear whether it would replace it or act as a complementary attraction.

Forward Swindon has been active in looking for

a developer or operator to build and run the largescale centre. Its marketing briefing for property consultants included the possibility of a regional-scale events arena, indoor snow facility and ice rink.

Such a venue would attract visitors to the town from a wide area, boosting the economy and potentially acting in parallel with the Designer Outlet Village and Steam museum at nearby Churchward.

Forward Swindon's marketing material says: "This exciting development opportunity will form part of the transformation of Swindon's central area and the town's objectives and aspirations for the future."

It comes as the first signs of progress are being made in upgrading the town centre for several years. Work has started on the forecourt area at Swindon railway station, which will create a new gateway to the town, while plans for the £350m

Union Square scheme are taking shape.

The scheme will develop a new quarter for the town with offices, homes and upmarket stores.

However, the former college building at Regent Circus remains a blot on the landscape with the council seeking ways to get the eyesore building demolished while construction work on the cinema scheme is stalled.



The Oasis Centre

## Top industrial disease lawyer gets key role at Swindon firm

Brigitte Chandler, the Swindon lawyer once dubbed the scourge of British Rail for her compensation fights for industrial disease sufferers, has been appointed head of office at law firm Charles Lucas & Marshall's base in the town.

An industrial disease lawyer of considerable reputation, Brigitte has spent all her professional life in Swindon. She joined Charles Lucas & Marshall eight years ago after working at Townsends.

She has successfully won

millions of pounds of compensation for victims of asbestos disease and deafness claims, many of them former workers at Swindon's rail works.

Brigitte has appeared in numerous Court of Appeal cases and established new law. She takes over from Hugh Ellins who will continue to develop the firm's commercial property, development and planning law practice as well as specialist dental practices panel work.



## Sink or Swim? Withy King to hold key business seminar

Swindon Business News and law firm Withy King have teamed up to develop a series of Business Life Cycle seminars to help owner-managers weigh up their options and make the right decisions at vital stages in their company's development.

The first takes place on October 19 at the National Self Build and Renovation Centre, Lydiard Fields, Swindon, when property, employment

and corporate partners from Withy King will provide practical advice and guidance to owner-managers in their first years of trading. Withy King advises owner-managers who have recently started a business or are in the early years of trading.

To book a place at this free event contact Anna Arakcheeva on 01225 352 833 or via email: anna.arakcheeva@withyking.co.uk

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# SWINDON BUSINESS NEWS

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## People

• Paul Knight has been appointed by EEF, the manufacturers' organisation, to head up the support it provides to industry across the South West. As the organisation's new region director, he will be responsible for the services delivered to member companies but will also represent the needs of manufacturing to regional policymakers, with the aim of helping to shape a business environment that creates a more balanced economy. There are an estimated 11,500 manufacturers in the South West employing around 265,000 people and contributing more than £12bn to the regional economy.



Paul Knight

• Lisa Keefe of Swindon solicitors Charles Lucas & Marshall has qualified as a graduate member of the Institute of Legal Executives. Lisa joined the firm's residential property team in March 2010 and is an experienced conveyancer. To achieve graduate membership, Lisa has spent years in home study, ultimately passing the Professional Higher Diploma in Law and



Lisa Keefe

Practice, which is assessed at honours degree level. In her final exams she specialised in conveyancing practice, land law, criminal law and the law of wills and succession.

• Swindon-based communications and PR agency Soaring Worldwide has welcomed Sarah Carless to its team as a reputation manager. Soaring Worldwide has doubled in size year-on-year since its foundation in 2006, and Sarah will be a part of the company's strategic growth plans. Adam Baggs, managing director of Soaring Worldwide, said: "We are confident that Sarah's background and experience will enable her to make a valuable contribution to the growth of the company. It's an exciting time for Soaring Worldwide, and we look forward to Sarah's influence and enthusiasm: in particular, her industry knowledge and experience of working across a range of sectors in PR and marketing."



Sarah Carless

• Banks Chartered Accountants has appointed Paula Forbes-Smith to the role of accounts manager. Paula studied at Liverpool



Paula Forbes-Smith

University and spent a further year in the city working for a firm of accountants before joining Swindon-based Banks 11 years ago. A Fellow of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, she has undergone all her training with the Old Town firm. Alongside fellow accounts managers Louise Rhoades and Ben Haines, Paula will oversee the team dealing with the accounts of business clients ranging from sole traders to limited companies.

• Julian Alexander has joined Santander Corporate Banking as regional director from Barclays, where he was the head of real estate in the Midlands with responsibility for the region's main property accounts. In his new role, Julian will be based at Santander's corporate business centre in Bristol, leading the bank's South West team of corporate and commercial banking experts. The team is responsible for managing existing customer relationships and sourcing new business to support the continued expansion of Santander Corporate Banking throughout the region. Julian is well-known in the corporate banking market, having also held key roles at HBOS. He has a very successful track record, spanning more than 17 years and brings a mix of leadership and relationship management experience to Santander Corporate Banking.



Julian Alexander

## Charity event for Olympic team

Chordiem Events, in conjunction with De Vere Village Hotel Swindon, is organising a great fun, yet tough fitness challenge with the aim of raising £3,000 for the Great Britain Rhythmic Gymnastics Group Squad including Swindon gymnastic star Jade Faulkner. The team are currently qualifying for the 2012 Olympics, but with very little funding available they are doing everything they can to raise funds themselves.

This special event takes place on Saturday November 19, starting at 7pm. Chordiem hopes 16 teams of two will start a 24-hour Duathlon Challenge at the De Vere Village's leisure club. Anyone interested in taking part should contact Chordiem on 01793 887632 or Jon@chordiem.com

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## Events

### Sink or Swim: Getting the Basics Right

When: October 19  
Where: National Self Build and Renovation Centre, Lydiard Fields, Swindon  
Contact: Anna Arakcheeva on 01225 352 833 or via email: anna.arakcheeva@withyking.co.uk

### The Networking Hub

When: November 10, 12pm-2pm  
Where: Basepoint, Swindon  
Contact: 01793 608800 or email swindon@basepoint.co.uk

### Corporate Taxation Reform Seminar

When: November 15, 8:30am-10:30am  
Where: De Vere Village, Swindon, Shaw Ridge Leisure Park, Whitehill Way, Swindon, SN5 7DW  
Contact: www.rsmttenon.com/events or email katie.gray@rsmttenon.com

### Domestic Violence and Abuse – What employers need to know

When: November 21 from 10am  
Where: Steam Museum, Churchward  
Contact: David Latham at david.latham@richmondfellowship.org.uk

### Swindon Chamber of Commerce Business Breakfast

When: October 21, 7:30am-9:30am  
Where: De Vere Village, Swindon, Shaw Ridge Leisure Park, Whitehill Way, Swindon, SN5 7DW  
Contact: www.thamesvalleychamber.co.uk  
Cost: £19.20 (members), £25.20 (non-members)

• Send your events to Swindon Business News to info@swindon-business.net

Visit [swindon-business.net](http://swindon-business.net) for all the latest news and events

## Contacts

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08458 505066

**Business Link**  
0845 600 9966

**SSEP**  
01793 429259

**Fast Forward**  
0808 178 3657

**First Great Western**  
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## Local businesses get to bank on lending clinics

Barclays is launching a series of business lending clinics designed to bolster business lending by getting small businesses to think about borrowing and give them the confidence to invest for growth.

The clinics launch as recent statistics show that only 15 per cent of businesses applied for borrowing in the last year, reflecting a crisis of confidence among businesses. The research also reveals that while 42 per cent of businesses think they will get a business loan before they apply, 75 per cent actually succeed, indicating that many businesses don't believe

they can get finance. The Swindon clinic will take place on November 10 at Barclays' branch in High Street, Old Town, between 08.30am and 10.00am and which will aim to reach around 30 local businesses.

Barclays business people will answer key questions on lending and walk businesses through the loan application process, with alternative finance providers on-hand to provide a fully rounded picture of all the financial options available.

For further information visit [www.barclays.co.uk/businesslendingclinics](http://www.barclays.co.uk/businesslendingclinics)

## GreenSquare builds for future with acquisition

Swindon pioneering housing and regeneration agency GreenSquare Group has acquired heating contractor and consultant G W Sparrow, also based in the town.

GreenSquare was formed in April 2008 and includes housing associations Oxford Citizens and Westlea, commercial subsidiary Oakus Estates and in-house construction firm Tidestone. It also works in partnership with designer Kevin McCloud's company Hab in the joint venture Hab Oakus.

Family-owned G W Sparrow was established in 1974 and provides plumbing and heating services across Wiltshire. Managing director Robert Sparrow will continue to head the business as it develops further as part of GreenSquare's Oakus subsidiary.

GreenSquare director of commercial management Tom Pritchard said: "GW Sparrow is already a company with firm foundations and a long-established customer base and we think that, under our ownership, the company has great scope to further develop and grow in the future."

Lead corporate finance adviser on the sale was accountants and business advisers Baker Tilly in Bristol with legal advice coming from Bond Pearce's office in the city.

## Vox PR expands into Bristol

PR and marketing specialists Vox have opened a new office in Bristol.

Director Sue Pycroft, who together with Julie Margerum opened the first Vox office in Swindon in 2002, said the expansion into Bristol reflects increased business in the South West, as well as on the national stage.

"Until a couple of years ago most of our clients tended to be either Wiltshire or London based," said Sue.

"But recently we have been

working with more clients from the Bristol, Bath and Gloucestershire areas as well. Having a base nearer the western end of the M4 corridor was the logical next step for us, and as Bristol is also such a major centre for creative industries it's an obvious choice for our second office."

Vox's new Bristol office is on Colston Avenue in the city centre. For more details go to:

[www.voxonline.co.uk](http://www.voxonline.co.uk)



The UK's first open access hydrogen vehicle refuelling station has been officially launched in Swindon – putting the town at the centre of innovation for what many believe will be the motoring technology of the future.

The station, at Honda's South Marston car manufacturing site, will be open to anyone developing or using hydrogen-powered cars, vans or trucks.

In a ceremony attended by local dignitaries, business people and the media, Honda senior engineer Thomas Brachmann used the filling station to refuel a Honda FCS Clarity hydrogen-powered car.

The facility is designed to look like, and operate in the same way as, a conventional filling station. Refuelling takes less than five minutes.

Built and operated by industrial gases company BOC, the project is the result of a partnership between Honda, BOC and Swindon's economic development company Forward Swindon.

BOC UK managing director Mike Huggon said: "This is not an experiment. It's a piece of the jigsaw that leads to the sustainable society we are all craving."

"This station is state of the art. It can fill hydrogen vehicles from scooters to passenger cars and buses." Pointing out that it works with swipe-card technology, he joked: "We even have a Nectar points scheme."

Experts say hydrogen has huge potential as a sustainable transport fuel, creating no emissions other than water vapour. Hydrogen-powered cars can travel around 270 miles on a full tank and are twice as efficient as a diesel car and three times more efficient than a petrol one.

Yet while all the major vehicle manufacturers are developing hydrogen-powered models, there are few refuelling facilities available to UK users meaning take-up is likely to remain low.

And in a catch-22, the major fuel companies will not invest in new facilities while there are very few hydrogen

vehicles on the road. The automotive and low-carbon industries are urging the Government to do more to promote the use of hydrogen-fueled vehicles.

The Swindon station can fill vehicles at both 350 bar and 700 bar – the two standard filling pressures adopted by the world's major vehicle manufacturers.

A range of hydrogen-powered vehicles including passenger cars, light commercial vehicles, an ambulance, a taxi and a London bus were on display at the unveiling – with the bus used to ferry guests between the Honda site's car park and the fuel station.

Richard Kemp-Harper, lead technologist for transport and energy at the Swindon-based Technology Strategy Board, said: "The change from



conventional transport systems to sustainable, low-carbon alternatives is one that can only be made through businesses and government working in partnership to develop innovative solutions.

"This new refuelling station gives a real glimpse of the role hydrogen can play in practice. It is a great example of the kind of collaboration and innovation we need."

*Pictured above: Thomas Brachmann, head of electrical power train R&D at Honda, Mike Huggon MD of BOC in the UK & Ireland, Ian Piper CEO Forward Swindon, Richard Kemp-Harper of the Technology Strategy Board, Mike Godfrey chief engineer at Honda UK in Swindon.*

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#### FACT FILE

Hydrogen-powered cars can be refuelled in minutes, unlike electric cars whose batteries take hours to recharge

They can travel about 270 miles on a full tank

They have no emissions - no carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide or any other gas, just water.

Hydrogen is the most abundant element in the universe and is extremely efficient as an energy carrier

Hydrogen for cars is mainly generated by steam reforming of natural gas

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CARTER JONAS

The Property People

# Profits and sales at SciSys increase but it remains cautious in tough markets

Major contract wins from the BBC, the Environment Agency and the European Space Agency helped push up half-year sales and profits at specialist IT services group SciSys.

The new business also helped the Chippenham-based group improve its margins at a time when public spending cuts are impacting on many of its markets.

Pre-tax profits rose by 83 per cent to £1.1m in the six months to June 30 against the same period last year with revenue up 5 per cent to £22m.

SciSys supplies high-end services and business-critical IT systems to the space, government, defence, environment and media/broadcast sectors.

While its clients are predominantly blue-chip companies, government and quasi-government organisations, the group has not been immune from tighter budgets and spending cuts.

But the contract success with media groups such as the BBC, for which it is working at the corporation's new Salford headquarters, with the European Space Agency on the Galileo test satellites and the Environment Agency on carbon reduction programmes proved, according to chairman and founder Mike Love, that the group was in good shape.

He said: "The group is moving forward positively, taking gradual but sustained steps to improve its margins."

So far this year SciSys has won contracts with an underlying value of more than £20m and its environment and government & defence divisions have completed a number of major projects.



# Basepoint to host networking event

Basepoint Swindon is to launch a quarterly networking event for local businesses and Basepoint Licensees.

Called The Networking Hub, it holds its inaugural meeting on Thursday November 10 and will provide the opportunity to network, meet new people, generate new business and also listen to a guest speaker.

Al Keck, managing director of Toinfinity, who is a recognised leader in e-commerce management and online marketing, will talk at the November event about how to achieve the best results from websites. The talk will be followed by an informal question-and-answer session.

Lyn Chapman, centre manager at Basepoint Swindon in Westlea, said: "The Networking Hub will be a fantastic way for local businesses to come together in an informal way to discuss their business ideas and issues." The event is from 12noon to 2pm. Attendees will also be provided with free lunch and refreshments. Basepoint Swindon has 88 unfurnished office and workshop units across three buildings.

# Swindon firms offered financial training

Kaplan Financial, the UK's leading provider of accountancy and financial training, is offering Swindon firms of all sizes a wide range of courses from its Bristol centre as well as home study and online learning facilities, along with onsite apprenticeship training.

Kaplan Financial's Bristol base is just behind Temple Meads train station in the new Temple Quay development, making it very convenient for Swindon firms.

The centre prepares students for professional accountancy (AAT, ACA, ACCA, CIMA) and tax exams (ATT, CTA). It offers a mixture of day, weekend and evening courses to be as flexible to student needs as possible.

Kaplan Bristol is an exam centre for all AAT, ACA, CIMA and ACCA computer-based assessments.

A spokesman said: "We aim to solve our clients' training needs through providing structured and supportive learning programmes for exam-based training, continuing professional development and/or delivery of internal development programmes."

"Whether you are interested in studying independently or looking to our organise training on behalf of your company trainees, contact our dedicated student and client services team on 0117 954 1377 or visit [www.kaplanfinancial.co.uk/bristol](http://www.kaplanfinancial.co.uk/bristol)."

Kaplan Financial combines 50 years of educational excellence, with leading on-line learning technologies, award-winning materials and the industry's most experienced and successful tutors.

# Learning the lessons of planning for school fees

Sharon Omer-Kaye of RSM Tenon looks at ways to prepare for the rising cost education



This year's new students are settling into university life knowing that the demand for a place was higher than usual, ahead of the introduction of the increased university fees next year. From September 2012, universities in England & Wales will be allowed to raise tuition fees to up to £9,000 per year and to date many have had plans to charge the full £9,000 approved.

The rising costs of tuition fees together with essential living expenses including rent, study materials, food and of course the obligatory social life that accompanies university life means that students could be spending anything in the region of £15,000 per annum whilst at university. As a result Graduates will not just be leaving university with a degree but will also have a mountain of debt to contend with as they begin working life.

In addition to rising incomes, families have also seen average school fees increase by more than 10 per cent a year over the past few years. Little help is available to parents as specific 'school fees funding products' can no longer keep up with this increase and have been withdrawn.

The consequences are that it is now more important than ever for parents to be considering the issue early and planning ahead if they intend to pay towards the costs of their children's education. Typically, most parents will do this out of their taxed income. In real terms, this means that university and school paid out of income that has already suffered a up to 51 per cent tax. If you earn in excess of £150,000, the tax charged could be in excess of 60 per cent!

If you own shares in a profitable company there may be an alternative

method of extracting your hard-earned cash in order to fund your children's university and school fees in a far more tax efficient manner.

Careful planning will make it possible to plan in such a way to fund the university fees without incurring significant income tax charges in the process. In order to use this planning you must be a shareholder of a company and your children must be aged 18 or over.

If you are grandparents and are shareholders in your own company then it may also be possible to fund your grandchildren's school fees. If the grandchildren are just embarking on their school life spending time now looking at how school fees are structured could save your family more than a decade's worth of tax charges.

Income tax charges have recently increased and whilst the personal allowances (a tax free allowance) has increased (although this is gradually withdrawn once your income hits £100,000), the amount of income subject to the higher rates of tax has also increased. Planning for university and school fees can be a good way to mitigate family tax burdens and also to give your children or grandchildren a much-needed good start in life.

For further information email: [sharon.omer-kaye@rsmtenon.com](mailto:sharon.omer-kaye@rsmtenon.com) T: 01793 603300

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# Group plans to make up for missing link

The Business Foundation and Enterprise Scheme, which aims to plug the gap left by the withdrawal of Business Link services, has been officially launched.

Spearheaded by former Business Link advisor Keith Farmer, and sponsored by Swindon-based chartered accountants Banks, the scheme plans to provide advice and assistance to new businesses and those seeking to grow.

Speaking at the official launch at the County Ground, Keith said: "The scheme aims to support start-ups and established businesses which have reached a point where they need some extra help and advice. We want to create wealth in the local economy and see it grow."

The scheme offers two levels of support for a nominal fee - half-day training courses, covering basics such as legal structures, marketing, finance, business planning and cash flow, and one-to-one sessions with Keith, offering bespoke business advice.

Businesses can opt for either or both sessions, which will be held at Banks' Old Town offices

The scheme will also work closely with the JobCentre, offering

free advice to unemployed people wanting to start a business.

Banks director Richard Mathews added: "There is a real need for business advice in Swindon. We're not doing this as a money-making exercise - the nominal fee for the advice sessions is just to cover the costs. Keith has all the expertise following his career in banking and Business Link and we wanted to offer that up to Swindon businesses and those just starting up." Representatives from a range of businesses, including managers from local branches of the major banks, were at the launch to lend their support. It is likely that banks will refer business clients to the scheme. Experts will also be drafted in to run specialist seminars on a variety of topics. For more information or to book for a course contact Shelly Hacker of Banks on 01793 616284.



Richard Mathews and Keith Farmer

# Halcrow staff in line for payouts as firm accepts £124m US takeover

Workers at major Swindon employer Halcrow who own shares in the business could receive cash windfalls worth thousands of pounds after its directors agreed to a £124m takeover.

Engineering consultancy Halcrow, which employs 500 staff at Burderop base, is being acquired by major US group CH2M Hill. The deal is subject to the approval of its shareholders and the High Court, but is expected to be completed next month.

Halcrow was founded in 1868 and specialises in major transport, environmental and other infrastructure projects across the globe.

It has worked on many of the world's largest construction projects from the Channel Tunnel rail link to London's Crossrail, to airports, sea ports and motorways in North America, China and the Middle East.

It employs 6,000 people in nearly 100 offices globally. Its long-standing Swindon office is the largest of its 20 regional offices and around the same size as its London HQ.

Originally a partnership, since 1990 the

business has been majority owned by the Halcrow Trust, a fund set up by its former partners.

Of the 20.7m shares in the company, the trust owns around 74 per cent with the balance held by more than 1,100 employees.

Once the takeover has been approved these staff will be able to sell their shares for cash or new shares in the enlarged business, potentially earning them thousands of pounds.

Staff were told of the acquisition through a video broadcast to all offices. Each then received an explanatory email and could find out more information on a dedicated intranet site.

In line with major engineering consultancies worldwide, Halcrow has been hit by a combination of the economic slowdown and increased rivalry in its major markets.

As a result, last year's £8.8m pre-tax profits were almost half of the previous year with sales slipping by nearly 8 per cent to £468m and the firm was forced to make 500 staff redundant.

Chief executive Peter Gammie admitted

that Halcrow had approached Denver, Colorado-based, CH2M Hill as the two businesses have worked together for many years on projects.

"The consolidation, which reflects an increasing trend in our industry, will create a very significant value proposition for clients. We are very complementary in terms of our skills and our markets so, where we share geographies, we are reinforcing one another rather than duplicating," he said.

CH2M Hill chairman and chief executive, Lee McIntire added: "This acquisition is a game changer for our clients."

"Our global footprint will be deeper and our bench strength will be even more robust. By combining our resources and leveraging our collective technical know-how, we will set a new standard for the marketplace. Best of all, our two firms are ideally suited in terms of cultures, markets, geographies, and we have a shared long-term vision for the future."

A Halcrow spokesman said it was "business as usual" at the Swindon site and staff would continue to be updated as the deal progressed.

# Kent team-building firm is taken into Planet Pursuits' orbit

Swindon event management company Planet Pursuits has acquired Mind Adrenaline Events, a Kent-based team-building business, in a move that will spur further growth and reduce the firms' running costs.

Planet Pursuits director Simon Maddison said: "We've had good operational links with Mind Adrenaline. The business has a great reputation and excellent client base but has primarily concentrated on team development events, whereas we offer a much wider range of event management services."

Mind Adrenaline was one of the first companies to buy a licence for Planet Pursuits' innovate Spy-based global team game Spy-Inc.

Planet Pursuits aims to extend the range of its events services to Mind Adrenaline's client base. Mind Adrenaline's range of team building programs will be incorporated into its existing portfolio of team development challenges.

Planet Pursuits was launched 10 years ago, at first offering basic stag and hen packages from its country house venue, Purton House, near Swindon. Within a year its diversified into the corporate market and began staging team-building events and then corporate fun days, theme parties and conference management services.

The firm's Swindon Christmas Parties, which started in 2005, have become very popular and its Spy game has enjoyed global success. More recently, the firm won the contract to host lingerie giant Triumph International's 125th anniversary event.

## Accountancy courses at Swindon College

As the top performing college in Wiltshire, Swindon College has been successfully providing accountancy courses to finance professionals in the South West for the past 25 years. Any company, no matter what products or services they provide, always needs a book-keeper, payroll staff or an accountant. Accountancy is not just about the work carried out by chartered accountants but embraces a broader spectrum of jobs, such as financial advisors and financial technicians. Now with its flexible pay-per-unit delivery style and courses ranging from manual book-keeping through to ACCA professional accountancy courses, studying for an accountancy qualification with Business First could not be easier and in many cases could be highly subsidised by Government funding\*. For further information on Accountancy and Financial qualifications and courses, contact the Business First Team on 01793 498404 or email: [businessfirst@swindon-college.ac.uk](mailto:businessfirst@swindon-college.ac.uk) \*Eligibility criteria applies

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Swindon College North Star Avenue, Swindon SN2 1DY

**Event to raise awareness of domestic violence**

A unique awareness event aimed at employers on the impact of domestic violence and abuse is attracting widespread support from key figures in Swindon.

The Mayor, Cllr Ray Ballman, pictured, has already accepted an invitation as has Swindon Council chief executive Gavin Jones.

BBC Wiltshire broadcaster Mark Jones will chair a discussion panel which includes campaigner and founder of AAFDA (Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse) Frank Mullane at the event - the result of a link up between AAFDA, Swindon Community Safety Partnership and the Swindon Mindful Employer Network, which is managed locally by Richmond Fellowship Wiltshire.

Among the speakers are Neil Blacklock, an expert on domestic violence with the national charity Respect, and Swindon Community Safety Partnership Domestic Violence Co-ordinator Lin Williams.

The event takes place on Monday 21 November at the Steam museum, Churchward.

To book contact David Latham at [smen@richmondfellowship.org.uk](mailto:smen@richmondfellowship.org.uk) or 01793 433571

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## Directors' Briefing

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**WITHY KING**

**T**he legal landscape is constantly changing, making it difficult for directors to keep up with a seemingly endless stream of new rules and regulations. Here, solicitors from Withy King's commercial teams in Swindon highlight a few of the most recent developments and signal changes to be aware of over the next few months.

### Facebook dismissal found to be unfair

Employers are being urged to tread carefully when taking action against employees who post comments about their workplace online. In a recent case, a Tribunal found a decision to dismiss an employee for posting comments on Facebook about her working day, was unfair. Employers are advised to take a common sense approach. In addition to a clearly drafted and well communicated policy, some attempt should be made to assess the potential damage that that the posted comments could cause.

### Mind your Ts & Cs

Recent cases involving contractual disputes serve as a timely reminder to be aware of key provisions within customer and supplier contracts. This is important to ensure the business does not inadvertently act in breach of contract, miss an opportunity to enforce a potentially valuable element of the contract or give notice to end the contract which may only be permitted at certain times.

### Protect your website from new .xxx domains

Domain names ending .xxx which are aimed specifically at the adult entertainment industry, are now available for registration, opening up many web addresses which were previously unavailable. Owners of existing trademarks have until 28th October to apply through one of the ICM Registry's accredited registrars to block registration of their trade mark as a .xxx domain.

### Expired leases pose risks to landlords and tenants

The period to negotiate a new lease between a landlord and a tenant can be extended by formal agreement but if it isn't, there are risks to both parties. Tenants may be pursued as trespassers while landlords may inadvertently grant a new protected lease to their tenants, making it much harder to get them to leave at the end of the term.

*For further information on these or any other business issues, please visit [www.withyking.co.uk](http://www.withyking.co.uk) or contact Alex Pyatt, head of the commercial team at Withy King Solicitors in Swindon on 01793 536 526 or email [alex.pyatt@withyking.co.uk](mailto:alex.pyatt@withyking.co.uk)*



Alex Pyatt

**Swindon**  
**01793 536526**

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**01225 425731**

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**01672 514781**

## Lawyer Paul selected as 2012 Olympics official

Swindon lawyer Paul Trincas has been chosen as one of the athletics officials for the London 2012 Olympic Games.

Paul, a partner and head of corporate services at Charles Lucas & Marshall, will be part of the Games' high-profile Athletics Team with responsibility for ensuring the track and field of play in the main Olympic Stadium are properly prepared, maintained, marshalled and supplied. Further, more specific details of his role will be notified to him shortly.

Paul said: "I thought my chances

were not that great given that some 250,000 people had applied to be part of the Olympic Games – and they needed less than 200 to be part of the Athletics Team. When I was told by email, I had to read it twice to reassure myself it was true."

Paul will need to be available for 11 days of the track and field events. He may also be contacted to officiate at the Paralympics Games.

"I love athletics and to be part of such a great occasion will be the experience of a lifetime," said Paul.



Paul Trincas

## Local heavyweights ranked in latest Legal 500 'bible'



**S**windon law firm Thrings has been ranked among the regional heavyweights of the legal sector with rivals Withy King and Clark Holt named as major players in the market.

The latest Legal 500, the legal market's annual 'bible', places Thrings, which also has offices in Bristol and Bath, as one of the top 14 firms in the South West in a table traditionally dominated by Bristol-based practices.

Legal 500 identifies the firms and individuals who are setting the pace in the region and, as such, has become an indispensable resource for anyone buying legal services. It is based entirely on research carried out among firms' clients and peers.

Things, which rebranded recently from its earlier name Thring Townsend Lee & Pemberton, shares equal billing with Clark Holt and Withy King as second-tier players in the corporate and commercial market (M4 corridor).

Legal 500 singles out John Davies at Thrings for leading the team which advises clients across sectors including aerospace, oil and manufacturing. "Highlights included acting for Dynamatic Technologies on restructuring to streamline its UK operations. The team maintains fruitful relationships with banks including

HSBC and NatWest," says the report.

John is named as one of the South West's 'leading individuals' along with Thrings colleagues Andrew Braithwaite and Peter Cusick.

"Clients say Withy King is 'more proactive and better networked' than many competitors," Legal 500 says. "David Cavaliero is highly rated and empathic, and Katharine Mortimer is also well regarded."

Highlights for the team included securing an equity investment, and acting for Homes Caring for Autism on a refinancing deal with RBS. The team also advised new client Hanfrageo on restructuring.

Withy King's head of clinical negligence Simon Elliman is named among the region's leading individuals.

Clark Holt advised the shareholders of Christchurch Court on the company's sale to Sovereign Capital, and acted for Kelway on its acquisition of managed services specialist ISC Computers. Richard Clark heads the team, which includes the 'extremely knowledgeable' Philip Humphreys, who 'goes above and beyond expectation', according to Legal 500. The report places Clark Holt partner Jeremy Holt among the region's leading individuals.

Across the region, Legal 500 says 2010 was a less turbulent year for law firms compared to 2009 with positive signs for 2011.

"Certainly, the region continues to benefit from the willingness of clients to move work out of the City as value for money remains a key driver in choosing legal services," it adds.

It identifies education as a strong growth area for many firms with conversions to academy status a substantial source of work.

Debt recovery work has also been on the increase, as the consequences of the economic downturn continue to make themselves felt.

"Renewable energy projects are an important area of work for agriculture and estates teams, as landowners realise the potential of turning land over for development; pensions remains a live area against a background of public sector cuts; and professional negligence claims are on the rise," says Legal 500.

While the region is less reliant on the public sector than some other areas of the UK, large-scale spending cuts hit many specialist practices across the region "as clients increasingly scrutinise the cost/performance ratio, and fund increasingly skilled in-house departments" the report says.



Key players: Richard Clark of Clark Holt, Katharine Mortimer of Withy King and John Davies of Thrings

# West accountants launch free small business advice service

Small businesses in Swindon are being offered free expert advice from chartered accountants as part of a recently-launched initiative.

The Business Advice Service (BAS) aims to help small companies and start-ups with business and financial advice to spur economic growth.

Small and medium business (SMEs) owners can contact accountants in their area on a variety of issues, both large and small, and there is no future obligation.

Some 200 Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) practices across the region have already signed up to offer the initial free consultation under the scheme.

ICAEW'S latest quarterly Business Confidence Monitor (BCM) showed regulatory requirements (36 per cent), access to capital (26 per cent) and late payment from customers (26 per cent) are now greater challenges to companies' performance than a year ago – all issues that an ICAEW chartered accountant can help with.

ICAEW executive director Robin Feith said: "Start-ups or growing small businesses need the best advice to succeed at a time of fragile recovery and limits on

## More than 200 accountants in England and Wales sign up to service that will allow SMEs to seek free financial advice

public spending. There is a clear need for expert business advice which helps SMEs and start-up businesses become engines of growth.

"In response, the Business Advice Service will offer SMEs the opportunity to discuss their business with a qualified chartered accountant through a free initial consultation. ICAEW Chartered Accountants will be able to offer expert advice on a whole range of issues facing them – from starting a business to turnaround, restructuring, financial management or taxation issues."

The scheme was launched in Bristol by the Lord Mayor Geoff Gollop, an accountant himself, who said: "Small firms are the bedrock of the UK economy but some also need financial management support. This service is an example of how businesses can work together and will hopefully lead to local economic growth and potential job creation."

Small businesses can find details of ICAEW chartered accountants in their local area at [www.businessadvice.com](http://www.businessadvice.com). Those participating

# 'Great success' for Charities conference

The Swindon office of Haines Watts, the national firm of accountants and business advisers, was delighted to be invited to be a sponsor and present at the first Thinking Ahead Conference in Bristol in September.

The conference was the brainchild of Mark Freeman, the chief executive of Charity Business and was put together by Mark and his team, which is also based in Swindon. With more than 150 attendees the event has been acclaimed as a great success in terms of the content and approach to the topics covered, the format of the day and the opportunity for delegates to meet sector experts and peers within the charity sector.

Mark Freeman said: "We wanted to provide an event specifically for the South West, focusing on the critical issues facing charities, not-for-profit organisations and social enterprises. Charity Business has developed the Thinking Ahead programme, which is a collaborative initiative that allows us to share our knowledge and give back to the sector through educational events and other collaborative activities. This conference was the first of a series of events that we are planning and will allow us the opportunity to inform, discuss and debate shared experiences with the third sector."

Sue Plumb, partner at Haines Watts Swindon, added: "The day was a great success with many representatives from charity organisations attending from across the South West. As a partner responsible for a portfolio of charity



Sue Plumb

and not-for-profit clients I think it is particularly important these organisations share experiences and ideas; this forum provided an excellent opportunity for this to happen."

Haines Watts provides audit services to more than 150 charities and advise many more on issues such as SORP compliance, public benefit, VAT, tax-effective giving, trading, Charity Commission guidance, internal controls, trustee responsibilities and governance matters.

For further information please contact Sue Plumb 01793 533838 ([splumb@hwca.com](mailto:splumb@hwca.com)).

The next Thinking Ahead Conference will take place in London on March 21, 2012. For more information contact: [marketing@charitybusiness.com](mailto:marketing@charitybusiness.com) or call: 01793 554 209.

# Monahans ranked in top three for innovation

Independent financial advisers Monahans Financial Services has been ranked among the UK's top three firms for innovation in using technology to provide excellence in customer service.

The firm, part of Monahans chartered accountants which has an office in Swindon, collected the accolade in the recent Aberdeen UK Platform Awards, which recognise businesses that have enhanced their client service and investment

proposition over and beyond that of their competitors. Monahans Financial Services recently changed the way it manages clients' investments, moving them onto a single – or wrap – platform.

This has saved investors' time and given them more control over their wealth. In a very short time, more than £80 million of assets have been moved into the Monahans Wealth Management Service and clients have benefited from the

enhanced levels of service provided. The sector-beating performance was recognised at the gala dinner at the Marriott Hotel in London's Grosvenor Square. Monahans Financial Services managing director Steve Missen said: "This is a fantastic reward for all the hard work the team have put into the introduction of our new look wealth management service and builds on our chartered status, which itself is a reflection of the quality of advice we provide."

# Inheritance Tax . . . The optional tax!

Inheritance Tax (IHT) is levied on a transfer of assets to other people or trusts. Elsa Littlewood of Monahans explains more.

IHT is most commonly paid in respect of an individual's estate on death. However, it is often perceived as a voluntary tax because with careful planning, it is possible to reduce or remove any liability.

### The Tax Liability

When you die, the size of your taxable estate is calculated as the total value of all of your possessions and assets, including cash, property, investments and business interests, less any available exemptions and reliefs. If the taxable estate exceeds the 'nil rate band' of £325,000 then the excess is taxed at 40 per cent.

Any unused 'nil rate band' may be transferred between spouses or civil

partners following the death of the surviving spouse or partner, potentially doubling the nil rate band for the survivor to £650,000.

Inheritance Tax is a complex subject, particularly for those with estates larger than the nil rate band, but there are many things that can be done to minimise your liability; particularly where there is a business or agricultural interest in the estate.

To help you understand if you have an issue, and to identify opportunities to reduce any potential IHT liability, Monahans have just introduced a fixed price IHT review and report. For £100 plus VAT, an estate planning specialist will meet you to review your assets and will provide a brief report on any opportunities to reduce your liability.

For more information on this

subject or to arrange for a fixed price IHT review, contact Elsa on 01793 818300 or email her at:

[elsa.littlewood@monahans.co.uk](mailto:elsa.littlewood@monahans.co.uk)



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# High-flying Easyjet launches Naples route from Bristol Airport

EasyJet is to introduce flights from Bristol to Naples, bringing to 43 its number of destinations from the airport.

The budget airline, which has raised its full-year profit guidance, said fares on the route would start at £31.99 (one-way, including taxes). The three-times-weekly service will operate from May 12 to September 1 next year.

Naples, Italy's third-largest city, is popular with visitors thanks to its lively atmosphere and proximity to some of Italy's most famous landmarks. Mount Vesuvius and Pompeii are easily accessible from the city as well as the islands of Capri and Ischia.

EasyJet, which has 10 aircraft based at Bristol, with an 11th operating during the peak summer season, carries around 3m passengers annually through the airport.

Shaun Browne, Bristol Airport's aviation director, said:

"A scheduled service to southern Italy is a welcome addition to easyJet's summer programme from Bristol. Not only does it open up exciting holiday options for South West travellers, it also provides an opportunity for the region's tourism industry to take advantage of growing interest from the Italian market." Meanwhile easyjet says more corporate passengers flew with it in the second half and it will now return around £190m to shareholders.

Second half revenue per seat rose six per cent — at the upper end of expectations — and it has already sold around a third of the seats for the first quarter of its next fiscal year.

The airline will pay a 9p dividend per share for the year and has decided to return a further 35p per share by way of a special dividend in light its strong recent performance. "Taken together this provides an estimated total cash return to shareholders of £190m or 44p per share," said EasyJet.

## Regional airline boosts services to Leeds and Aberdeen

Eastern Airways has increased flights from Bristol Airport to Aberdeen and Leeds-Bradford from two to three each weekday to meet rising demand.

Eastern Airways' commercial director Kay Ryan said: "Our conveniently timed services are by far the quickest way to get to Yorkshire and north east Scotland and save

valuable time compared to ground transport alternatives."

The airline has been operating from Bristol since 2004. Weekday flights to Leeds-Bradford and Aberdeen will now depart at 6.45am, 12.05pm (Mon-Wed), 1.45pm (Thu-Fri), and 5.15pm (Mon-Wed) and 6pm (Thu-Fri).

Flights from Aberdeen, Europe's oil capital, will depart at 6.50am, 11.30am (Mon-Wed), 3pm (Thu-Fri) and 5pm. Leeds Bradford flights to Bristol take off at 8.15am, 12.55pm (Mon-Wed), 4.20pm (Thu-Fri) and 6.35pm.

A Sunday service will continue to both Leeds-Bradford and Aberdeen.

# Breaking down

Swindon Business News continues its quarterly series of features on exporting by looking at the nuts and bolts of doing business overseas.

With the economy continuing to struggle, the government sees exporting as one of the few ways of generating growth for UK firms.

However, many companies consider exporting too difficult, costly or time-consuming to pursue, despite the potential rewards.

Research shows exporters tend to be more innovative and are able to overcome tough trading conditions.

The latest quarterly South West Export Barometer staged by Bristol law firm Osborne Clarke shows that exporters in the region are pretty resolute.

Partner Paul Killen said: "Over the summer we interviewed a number of

exporters in the region to find out how they had been impacted by the many global and domestic events that have occurred this year.

"With so many international and domestic events affecting the economy, you might expect these businesses to be experiencing problems related to them.

"Our survey shows that it's actually the traditional issues that are having an impact on the region's exporters. Oil prices, currency fluctuations and regulation have been bugbears for exporters for years and despite wars, revolutions and natural disasters they continue to cause major headaches for South West companies.

"Further, while many exporters feel

## Green export gets growing at environmental trade show

Green businesses looking to trade overseas received export advice at the recent Environmental Trade Show UK (ETS UK).

Expert advisors from UK Trade and Investment South West (UKTI), Business West and Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) were on hand in the International Trade Lounge at the event on October 13 at the University of the West of England Exhibition and Conference Centre in Bristol.

Organised by Low Carbon South West, ETS UK brought together the best in environmental and low carbon goods and services. The event had more than 100 exhibitors and drew around 2,000 visitors.

UKTI South West international

trade advisor Andrew Fraser said: "This event was the perfect platform for UK organisations to showcase the innovative products and technologies that lie at the heart of the country's emerging environmental sector.

"We provided one-to-one guidance to companies wanting to realise their overseas trade ambitions and gave advice on the best routes available to achieve their international objectives."

Low Carbon South West chairman Alan Bailey added: "Low carbon technologies are recognised as a key sector for economic growth in the South West and we have many businesses here that are not only thriving in the UK, but also enjoying international success.

## You're all set to export. But, how do you get paid?

It's a common issue for exporters. After all the hard work and effort building contacts, getting the price right and securing the order, you are all set to go ahead and do business. But how do you get paid?

A Letter of Credit can guarantee payment for export and provide considerable security for the exporter.

When you export your product or service, your buyer's bank opens a Letter of Credit and assumes the risk of paying for the goods specified. This contains details of the strict terms and conditions you need to adhere to for the bank to make payment. If your company meets all of the stated conditions, payment is guaranteed.

There are different types of Letter of Credit including Confirmed Irrevocable Letter of Credit, Irrevocable Letter of Credit, Transferable Letter of Credit, Back to Back Letter of Credit, Standby Letter of Credit. The cost to UK business through the presentation of non-compliant documents under Letters of Credit is estimated to run into hundreds of millions of pounds a year.

However these costs do not take into consideration the potential damage through loss of reputation and impact on future business.

It also does not take account the impact on cashflow and payment may be delayed for longer or at worst never received.

Preparation of all documents called for by a Letter of Credit requires meticulous care and attention to detail. Staff undertaking them need knowledge of both the shipping world and the banking industry. They also need ongoing update training.

Business West international trade services manager Catherine Stephens said: "Exporters are looking for the added security that a Letter of Credit can give them. Rather than just invoicing customers they are not leaving it to chance.

"A Letter of Credit is complex and interpretation of the rules can pose problems. On average exporters only get their paperwork correct 30 per cent of the time which can lead to delays. However, we have a 95 per cent success rate which explains why companies come to us from all over the country."

For further information visit [www.letters-of-credit.co.uk](http://www.letters-of-credit.co.uk) or call 01275 370 716 or email [exportoffice@businesswest.co.uk](mailto:exportoffice@businesswest.co.uk)

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Why not come along and get a taste of the Swindon Marriott Hotel's Festive Offerings. On the 27th October 18:00 - 20:00 the Hotel will be hosting an evening of all that is Christmas, including Menu Tasters, Hair Demonstrations, Christmas Games and much, much more. Entry is Free!

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To book please call the Christmas Co-Ordinator quoting BUSINESS on 01793 512 121 Monday - Friday 9am - 5.30pm



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All dates are subject to availability at the time of booking. All prices include VAT at the current rate. Complimentary organiser place applies to the specific party dates listed above. Offer only valid on bookings with a minimum of 10 guests. Offer only valid on bookings made after the 5th October.

# the barriers to exports

confident, the recent shock news about redundancies at BAE shows that even the largest companies are vulnerable to changes in their export order book.”

Key findings from the Barometer show:

- 60 per cent of exporters say the level of exports was not affected by the events of the last year.
- Small and medium-sized firms in the South West are uncertain but optimistic about exporting over the next two years, with three quarters expecting their exports to account for more of their sales over the next two years.
- Oil price rises affected more exporters than any other factor – this is expected to continue to have the most impact on exporting in future
- Compliance and regulation are increasingly an obstacle to export activity

If deciding whether to export in the first place is difficult enough, then researching markets, setting up agreements with agents and distributors and, finally, getting paid are all pretty daunting challenges regardless of the economic climate. UK Trade and Investment, the government’s export boosting agency, runs the Passport to Export Service which assesses a company’s readiness for international



Paul Killen

business, and helps it build international trade capacity

For more experienced exporters, UKTI’s Gateway to Global Growth service helps them diversify into new markets.

It recognises that international business is complex for even the most experienced of exporters.

Gateway to Global Growth is a free service to experienced exporters offering

a 12-month programme of strategic support tailored to their needs to help grow their business overseas.

It offers a strategic review with an experienced international trade adviser to construct a next-steps action plan; guidance and mentoring from export professionals and support on specialist subjects. It also includes access to UK Trade & Investment’s international network; assistance with market research, language and culture and networking opportunities to learn from other exporters.

A UKTI spokesman said: “Gateway helps firms maximise the opportunities and reduce the risks of entering new markets; overcome barriers to new and difficult markets; develop company skills and save time and money in achieving international trade goals.”

UKTI has partnered with British Airways to offer new and recent (from April ‘11) entrants to its Passport and Gateway to Global Growth schemes an enrolment bonus of 3,120 points when they join BA’s On Business loyalty programme. These points can be used for reward flights, cabin upgrades and hotel accommodation. To be eligible firms must have two to 10 years’ export experience or be an innovative company.

## Four things exporters should do this year to sustain business growth:

- Actively explore the opportunities presented by the newer growth markets
- Understand and plan for the challenges the next 12 months will bring
- As funding to government bodies is cut, seek out advice from professional and membership organisations and commercial sources
- Continue to lobby for initiatives that support exporters and reduce red tape

Source: The Osborne Clarke South West Export Barometer

## Illustration of associated costs

Presentation	£125,000
Discrepancy Fee	£75
Cost of Funds	£389 (based on 8% for 14 days and for - illustrative purposes only)
Telex Fees	£25
<b>Total</b>	<b>£489</b>

### Other Costs

- Damage to reputation
- Loss of Business
- Non payment
- Staff time

## Specialist support to help you trade overseas

By Dave Atkinson, area director for Lloyds TSB Commercial in Gloucester and Oxon



Dave Atkinson

Exporting offers a world of opportunity to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in the South West, but perceived barriers can stop businesses from exploring the potential opportunities that exist in other countries.

If trading in the domestic market can be difficult at times, then trading overseas – in different currencies, with different regulations and often in a different language – is going to be even more of a challenge. However, the rewards can be considerable.

Evidence from UK Trade and Industry has found that companies that export enjoy a jump in productivity of 34 per cent in the first year. Yet research commissioned by Lloyds TSB Commercial last year found that only a quarter of South West SMEs have caught onto the potential benefits of global export markets.

By far the biggest worry among firms is that there would not be demand for their product or service overseas. Other concerns include fears about possible late payments, a lack of resources to explore new markets and worries about potential bad debts.

### International specialists

Lloyds TSB Commercial has locally-based international specialists who can help businesses to address some of these challenges. For example, simply making and accepting payments in a foreign currency has associated risks as exchange rates can work against businesses expanding into foreign markets and can be costly.

Our international managers are dedicated to supporting business owners to ensure they maximise the opportunities as well as mitigate the risks. With extensive knowledge of the products and services businesses need to help them export, they can provide guidance that best suits your needs, from trade finance and letters of credit to international payments and exporting guarantees.

These specialist trade products can also be accessed online, allowing your business to monitor, operate and control international trading more closely and effectively on a day-to-day basis.

Foreign currency accounts, which are available to any business holding a Lloyds TSB Commercial sterling business current account, can make payment and collection of foreign currency easier as well.

We can also arrange overdrafts in most currencies as well as loans from over £25,000 and forward exchange contracts, all of which can help towards removing some of the risks of adverse exchange rate movements.

We can tailor repayments so they can be met from foreign currency earnings, so a business can use money received in a foreign currency

to repay a loan in the same currency, meaning there is no need to exchange it into sterling first.

### Financing exports

When your business is moving into international markets, your financing needs will increase, whether that’s for short-term cash flow requirements or longer-term investment.

Lloyds TSB Commercial provides a range of trade financing facilities to help finance export growth and manage these new risks when trading internationally. Finance can be tailored to a business’ trade pattern and structured so that sales can be turned into cash more effectively.

Getting the right finance in place is not only important for export success, it can also help you win new business. For example, improved cash flow may allow you to win further sales by enabling you to offer more generous credit terms.

### Help to export

Lloyds TSB Commercial can help you to manage your payment risks and funding needs when exporting. For example, using products such as documentary letters of credit can help an exporter to link delivery of goods directly to payment by the buyer’s bank.

### Making the switch easy

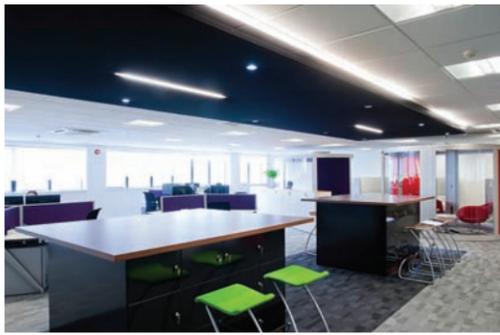
Perhaps you are already an exporter, but would like more support from your bank? Or maybe you want to start trading internationally but want some help and guidance? We understand how daunting changing banks can seem, but moving your account to Lloyds TSB Commercial is easier than you might expect.

If you want to tap into potential growth from overseas markets, please contact our local team based in Swindon - Tim Burden, International Manager on 07921 105 530 or Steve Clutterbuck, Relationship Manager on 07921 548 417. Or for more information visit:

[www.lloydstsb.com/exporting](http://www.lloydstsb.com/exporting)



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## CASE STUDY Fairchild gets the Abbey habit for its new look office

Office interiors specialists Abbey Business Equipment is making a mark on Swindon with its one-stop-shop approach.

From designing new office layouts to fitting, furnishing and old furniture disposal, the company has secured contracts with some of the town's largest businesses.

Among its recent projects was one for Fairchild Semiconductors, the leading global provider of semiconductor technologies formerly based in Wootton Bassett.

The three-month project utilised each of the Abbey Business Equipment specialist services, beginning with an extensive design brief for the new offices on Swindon's Windmill Hill Business Park.

Abbey Business Equipment sales director David Giles said: "The brief was very specific. The business required a new office design that would create a modern working environment with increased space.

"We were also tasked with relocating the client from its previous office, fitting their chosen furnishings and also disposing of their existing, unwanted furniture, which we ensure is done responsibly. The project was very successful in terms of both service and meeting the deadline."

Cheltenham-based Abbey Business Equipment specialises in relocation planning, space planning and CAD (computer-aided design), office interior design, cabling infrastructure design, furnishings and equipment.

It also offer a comprehensive business equipment department providing tailor-made digital printing and document management for businesses of all sizes.

Sheila Robison at Fairchild Semiconductors said: "The design and fit out of the new property was innovative and simple with full focus on function, cost and aesthetics both for the business and people populating the space. It has given us an office space which has boosted the well being and enthusiasm of the staff who are now benefiting from Abbey's efforts."

For more information, contact Abbey Business Equipment on 01242 263444 or visit: [www.abbeybusinessequipment.com](http://www.abbeybusinessequipment.com)

# The quiet revolution

*Creating a better office environment used to involve little more than a fresh coat of paint, some new desks and a potted plant or two. But to recruit, retain and inspire the right people, forward-thinking organisations know they need to look at all aspects of the workplace – from the soft furnishings and lighting to the type of coffee in its vending machines. Here we look at why every element of an office reflects the business using it.*

Step inside Plantronics recently refurbished office in Wootton Bassett and you enter a workplace like few others.

Library-quiet and vibrantly coloured, the atmosphere and décor are more the VIP lounge of a top international hotel than a working office.

Sound-proof pods allow staff to hold meetings without disturbing other employees and huge sofas and soft furnishings make break-out areas more like chill-out zones.

In stark contrast, and well away from the workspaces, a drum kit sits proudly in the staff relaxation area – proving that not everything at Plantronics is whisper quiet.

Of course, for a company at the leading edge of acoustic technology, Plantronics, which makes phone earpieces and headsets for the corporate market, has a vested interest in the office of the future.

So much so that the US firm decided to make its Wootton Bassett office – which is its main European base – a showpiece for how smarter

working can be achieved through design and acoustics.

Plantronics, whose global headquarters are in Santa Cruz, California, may not be shouting about its innovation in interior design – in true West Coast fashion – but it is proud.

Much of the work has been carried out by George Coffin, the firm's facilities manager for Europe, Middle East and Asia, who has become something of an expert in the acoustic properties of cushions, wall coverings and floor tiles – a far cry from his previous job in the Army's Royal Corps of Signals.

But, as he points out, they both involve communication. For Plantronics, communication in all its meanings is vital. To prove its products are the most technologically-advanced on the market, it needs to demonstrate them in action – which is why the offices are designed to take out most of the sound from staff voices, whether on the phone or talking, by using soft furnishings and absorbent wall coverings.

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# taking place in office design

“When I first came here it was a typical 1980s office,” says George, pulling a curtain around a sofa to create a sound-proof meeting area in the middle of the office.

“The first thing we looked at was introducing a wow factor. But everything - the chairs, the desks, the floor and wall coverings - are here for a reason, whether because of their acoustics or to improve the flexibility of way we work.”

Staff were engaged from the word go in helping design and equip the office - even the sort of coffee in the vending machines provided by Swindon’s Bespoke Coffee Company, which was only too happy to work alongside Plantronics to add to the flavour of the working environment.

Plantronics employs 120 people in the UK but flexible working - which is also part of demonstrating the flexibility of the technology, means only about 60 are based at Wootton Bassett.

Plantronics knows its customers

need them to talk the talk - albeit quietly.

A different take on interiors comes from Oaktree Interiors - one of the leading specialists in office design & build, project management, fit-out, refurbishment works and furniture supply.

The firm relishes the opportunities to create dynamic and inspiring work places for its customers throughout the UK.

Years of experience has resulted in the formation of a talented team who offer a full professional advice service.

Glenn Roberts at Reading-based Oaktree said: “Our dedicated teams of professionals have wide ranging expertise covering every aspect of our industry so that you can be assured that our solutions and proposals meet the demands and expectations of a 21st Century working environment. We have the ability to build stunning commercial interiors which earn praise from our clients and the respect of major manufacturers.”

The firm has recently been working with some of the area’s best-known companies on design and build projects, including Intel and Catalent Pharma Solutions as well Patheon UK in the recent past.

When Cirencester pharma supplies firm Vygon moved into Swindon’s iconic former Motorola building it took the opportunity to redesign the office and meetings areas of the on-time factory.

The firm brought in Cirencester-based 3Sphere to redesign the interiors after tripping out and completely refurbishing the existing 20,000 sq ft ground floor offices in the now renamed Pierre Simonet Building.






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# Meet and relax at Whatley Manor

Removed from the frantic pace of corporate life, the tranquillity of Whatley Manor Hotel & Spa is entirely conducive to productivity and efficiency and provides a delightfully different aspect to business life.

The business facilities are popular with organisations that have used the hotel and spa for board meetings, incentives for staff and team-building events, as well as product launches for the car industry.

The Conference Suite comprises a boardroom benefiting from natural daylight, which seats up to 24 boardroom-style and 60 theatre-style. Smaller meetings may also be accommodated in the Sitting Room. The private cinema seats 40 and is perfect for presentations and product launches. In addition, there are three gallery rooms used for breakout meetings, hospitality and exhibitions. There is also a business centre.

The hotel, just 20 minutes from junction 17 of the M4, is easily accessible from Swindon, Bath and Bristol.

Alongside the outstanding business facilities, Whatley Manor offers the very best in relaxation and gastronomy with two restaurants to choose from. Le Mazot, the informal brasserie, serves lunch and

dinner daily with set lunch menus from £19. The Michelin two-starred restaurant The Dining Room serves dinner Wednesday to Sunday. The Dining Room is featured in the Which? Good Food Guide 2012 with a score of 8 out of 10 and is the only establishment in Wiltshire to appear in this year's guide. The restaurant has moved up one place to 13th from last year in the guide's top 50 restaurants in the UK.

The hotel has 15 rooms and eight suites, all individually decorated. Guests can explore the 12 acres of beautiful English country gardens or relax in the spa, Aquarias; the perfect therapy after an intense meeting, and a treat for partners attending. Aquarias features a large hydrotherapy pool, thermal cabins, salt scrub showers and wave dream sensory room. There are excellent golf courses nearby and other outdoor activities may be arranged. Why not try a Polo lesson at nearby Beaufort Polo Club or an invigorating Tai Chi session. These group activities are great fun, effective in boosting morale and developing management skills. For further information and to book call events on 01666 834 026 or events@whatleymanor.com. Visit: www.whatleymanor.com for full details on Whatley Manor Hotel & Spa.



# Indian restaurant gets itself a stylish new look

The Biplob, Old Town's popular and long-standing Indian restaurant, has a new look ready for the Christmas season after an extensive refurbishment and expansion.

The restaurant, in Wood Street, can now seat another 70 guests following conversion of the former chemist's shop on the groundfloor into a modern dining room - adding to its traditional basement restaurant and introducing a more relaxed way of dining. More than 150 guests can now enjoy fine-dining in three separate party rooms as the refurbishment has also allowed the Biplob to open a small bar for around 15 guests to enjoy privacy away from the main dining areas - ideal for small Christmas gatherings.

The high standard of Bengali-based cuisine will continue with a third chef joining the Biplob's vastly-experienced team in the kitchen.

The refurbishment has introduced a more modern and relaxed environment to this highly-popular restaurants.

Each area of the new-look Biplob

has been given a name to reflect its different style, with the basement restaurant now called the Bilash Suite - meaning relaxation - the new groundfloor restaurant named the Balaka Lounge after this type of flamingo, reflecting the fact that the Biplob is not just confined to the lower floor but has also flown upstairs. The private bar is called the Berlotti - a place where you can take a break.

Co-owner Rokib Ali said: "We have been part of Old town life for many years and this refurbishment means we will continue to be so for a long time into the future."

"Our new look brings a new style of Indian dining to the area in time for the Christmas party season and we are already getting a lot of interest from businesses looking to host their Christmas parties in the Biplob."

The new-look restaurant recently held an opening party attended by the Mayor of Swindon Ray Ballman.

# All the latest Winter fashion at Juvals on Wood Street

Juvals, the ladies' fashion shop in Wood Street, Old Town, has a wonderful range of clothes and accessories now available as thoughts turn to Christmas.

One of the advantages of Juval's is the personal attention Val and her staff give to customers, while they browse in an relaxed way to find exactly what they want.

This year's winter collection includes a great range of fashionable knitwear, such as long cardigans in greys and blacks, often lifted by some bright colours such as fuchsia.

Overall, winter colours are navy, black and browns, and the range of evening wear at Juvals - including some very sparkly gowns - is ideal if there are some Christmas parties in your diary.

Call Juvals on 01793 513196



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*Juvals*

## CHRISTMAS PARTIES AT WHATLEY MANOR

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Festive à la carte menu served from 1st - 24th December

### STARTERS

Brussel sprout and bacon soup  
Served with toasted almonds

Winter game terrine  
Served with poached quince and mixed leaves bound with hazelnut dressing

Locally smoked salmon  
Dressed with caper berries, boiled egg and parsley

Deep fried goats cheese  
With pears poached in mulled wine and mixed leaves bound with walnut dressing

Traditional Swiss style cheese fondue  
Served as a starter or a main course with air dried beef, hot new potatoes and crusty bread

### MAINS

Braised beef blade  
Served with celeriac and potato purée and red wine jus infused with thyme

Venison and mushroom pie  
Served with brussel sprouts and toasted almonds

Fillet of salmon  
Pan fried and served with champagne sauce

Fillet of sea bream  
Poached, dressed with a Thai broth and steamed mussels

Moules Marinière  
Served as a starter or main course with French fries

Truffle and parsnip risotto  
Topped with sage foam

### DESSERTS

Christmas pudding  
Accompanied with clotted cream and brandy butter

Warm pear and pecan nut tart  
Served with maple syrup ice cream

Ginger crème brûlée  
Pain d'épice ice cream and ginger biscuits

Puff pastry tart  
Filled with mince meat Baked and topped with vanilla ice cream

Bûche de Noël  
Filled with candied chestnuts

Cheese plate  
A selection of various cheeses with grapes and biscuits

### CHRISTMAS PARTIES

£38 per person includes the three-course festive menu and coffee. Crackers are available on request.

Call Events on 01666 834 026 or email events@whatleymanor.com

### FESTIVE À LA CARTE MENU

£38 includes the three-course festive menu and coffee. The light lunch menu will not be served from the 1st December and will be available from the 3rd January 2012.

Call 01666 822 888 or email reservations@whatleymanor.com

### CHRISTMAS PARTY ROOM RATES

Special event room rate applies when booking three rooms or more in conjunction with a Christmas party taking place Sunday to Thursday. Rooms from £240 and Suites from £440 including full English breakfast, use of the spa Aquarias, vat and 10% discretionary service charge. Special Event Room Rate does not apply Christmas and New Year's Eve. Call Events on 01666 834 026 or email events@whatleymanor.com

## CHRISTMAS AND THE FESTIVE SEASON AT WHATLEY MANOR

### Christmas parties at Whatley Manor

To ensure the smooth running of your Christmas party, parties of ten guests and above place your order five days in advance. A set three-course festive menu will be served for sixteen guests and above.

Christmas wreath making and table decorations with Rachel Wilson  
16th November

Ego includes a three-course lunch, wine, festive refreshments and all materials to make your very own wreath or table decoration to take home.

Festive shopping at Whatley Manor  
28th November

Browse the Christmas gifts on offer whilst enjoying the festive atmosphere. You will be welcomed with mulled wine and Christmas biscuits. Afterwards why not join us for lunch, afternoon tea, make use of the spa facilities, or dine with us in one of our restaurants?

Set lunch menu from £19  
Festive afternoon tea £20  
Mulled wine and mince pies £8.50  
Spa use from £48

Call Events on 01666 834 026 or email events@whatleymanor.com to make your Christmas and party reservation. Early booking is recommended.

### Festive dining at Whatley Manor

Christmas Eve dinner - £83 per person  
Champagne and canapé reception, four-course menu in candlelit surroundings with coffee and petit-fours

Christmas Day lunch - £103 per person  
Glass of champagne with savoury pastries served at the table followed by a five-course traditional lunch with Christmas crackers and coffee

Boxing Day lunch - £39 per person  
Three course table d'hôte lunch including coffee

Bank Holiday lunch - £28 per person  
27th December and 2nd January  
A three course table d'hôte lunch will be served

New Year's Eve dinner - £150 per person  
Champagne and canapé reception, six-course gala dinner with live jazz

New Year's Day lunch - £39 per person  
Three course table d'hôte lunch including coffee



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**Unit 1 Radway Road**  
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**To Let**  
**17 Ash Industrial Estate, Kembrey Park**  
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**14,095 sq ft**



**To Let**  
**17 Techno Trading Estate**  
 Industrial/warehouse unit. Flexible terms.  
**3,387 sq ft**



**To Let**  
**9 Ash Industrial Estate, Kembrey Park**  
 Excellent starter unit. Flexible terms.  
**1,139 sq ft**



**To Let**  
**11 Birch Industrial Estate, Kembrey Park**  
 Modern warehouse. Excellent specification & location.  
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# Success at Pine Court development as new occupiers take space

Five new occupiers have moved into office units at Highcross's Pine Court development in Kembrey Park, including a nursery which is already providing a valuable service to businesses based in the area.

Pine Court is a new development of two-storey office units ranging in size from 1,130 sq ft to 2013 sq ft.

Highcross director Nick Turner said: "These latest lettings reflect the success of our new rent incentives at Pine Court, as well as the quality of the scheme, with its self-contained, well-specified office buildings."

"The units are ideal for occupiers who want to be part of a well-established, managed business environment with the added benefit of their own front door and identity."

The new occupiers include FCS Computer Systems, an international services provider to the hotel industry which has moved its Europe, Middle East and Africa division into Unit 3, Pine Court, from serviced offices in Swindon town centre, renaming it FCS House.

Regional head Eric Rogers said: "Our seven-strong team now has not only a peaceful place in which to do business, but also space to expand. These are offices we can be proud to invite both our hotel and reseller partners to, and reflect FCS's own commitment to growing our business here in EMEA."

Unit 2 has been let to Optima Defence & Security, which specialises in developing end-to-end capability, equipment and training for the military, police and counter-terrorism sectors. The company, which has moved to Kembrey Park from Bristol, was

attracted to Pine Court by the self-contained office, classroom and storage facilities, as well as its location between customer centres in Bristol and London.

Also new to Pine Court is Sandvine Consulting Services, a network policy control company, which has taken Unit 4 to give its Europe, Middle East, Africa and Asia-Pacific region consultants, support and sales staff an operational base for the first time.

Practice manager Mark Shaw, is delighted his team now all work out of the same building, which was a key driver behind the move. "I was very impressed with Highcross' professionalism, the help they gave, and how easy they were to do business with," he said.

Highcross has converted Unit 6 for Swindon nursery Oops-a-Daisy Childcare, providing a convenient, high-quality service for companies based on the park. The nursery, which provides childcare from birth to school age, and after school and holiday care up to 11, had been looking for larger premises and the unit at Pine Court provided the space needed.

Nursery head Deborah Baigent said: "Pine Court's location,



with a wide range of companies based on the doorstep, offers exciting potential for further growth of our business."

Highcross has also let Unit 9 to independent financial adviser Statehouse and its associated companies Nicholas Brown Consultants (accountants) and Purple Patch (business consultancy).

Commenting on Pine Court's appeal, managing director Nick Cowen said: "I can sum it up in one word – activity. The whole park is buzzing."

Joint agents for Kembrey Business Park are Keningtons and Loveday and Loveday.

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## Gazeley wins deal of the year for B&Q warehouse

Developer Gazeley's massive B&Q warehouse scheme at South Marston has won Deal of the Year (over 50,000 sq ft) at the Industrial Agents Society (IAS) annual awards.

The 800,000 sq ft distribution centre is the largest of three units on Gazeley's 98-acre G. Park Swindon site and was handed over to B&Q six weeks ahead of schedule in May 2011. The hotly-contested award recognised this early completion along with



Gazeley's ability to deliver the £70m project in just 32 weeks, part of which fell during one of the worst winters on record.

The prize was collected by

Gazeley's UK operations director Alex Verbeek at an awards ceremony in London's Park Lane Hotel. Alex said: "This was a tough category with some strong competition and we are delighted with the result. The project at G. Park Swindon was a key development for us in 2011 and this award is testament to the effort and dedication of the whole team involved."

The category was sponsored by Dowley Turner Real Estate.

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# Positive results and high demand to test drive new i40

The all-new Hyundai i40 Tourer is the latest addition to the ever expanding Hyundai range at local dealer, Pebley Beach in West Swindon Motor Park.

Since its launch in September, the response has been extremely positive. Demand to test drive the new model has been high, with customers pleasantly surprised by the finish and impressed with the quality of the car.

Stylish, spacious and efficient, the i40 has it all. Because of the benefit-in-kind and low

road fund license, it is proving particularly popular as a fleet model. With Blue Drive technologies the i40 can deliver 65.7 mpg and produces CO2 emissions from 113g/km – which is beneficial to both the company and end user.

The i40 also comes with a Five-Year Triple Care package, which includes a Five-Year Unlimited Mileage Warranty, Five-Year Roadside Assistance and Five Years of Annual Health Checks. Prices start from £17,395 on the

road. Every i40 Tourer incorporates high levels of equipment designed to help keep fleet drivers safe - ESP, seven airbags, ABS, Brake Assist and Vehicle Stability Management (VSM) - Bluetooth with voice recognition - and reassured - with Hyundai's Five-Year Triple Care package, the i40 Tourer boasts an unlimited mileage warranty (not available for taxi or private hire usage) and five years' roadside assistance.

Pebley Beach director Dominic Threlfall

said: "We can offer discerning fleet managers - and their drivers - a complete package with the i40 Tourer. Whatever the size of their fleet, they can enjoy the benefits.

"From driving down the cost of ownership and lowering the tax efficiency of our vehicles to improving the on-the-road experience - our aim is that both companies and drivers benefit." For more information or to book a test drive, call Pebley Beach Hyundai on 01793 644777 or visit [pebleybeachhyundai.co.uk](http://pebleybeachhyundai.co.uk)

## Saracen buys-up former NHS site

Specialist housing developer Saracen Housing Association has bought the site of a former NHS health clinic in Goldney Avenue, Chippenham, for development.

The 0.4-acre site, which had been cleared and made ready for redevelopment, was sold by property agents Alder King on behalf of the NHS subject to planning. Saracen has since secured planning consent and started construction on site.

The site, to the north west of Chippenham town centre, is in a predominantly residential area.

Saracen owns and manages around 6,000 homes for rent and shared ownership across the South West and has built nearly 2,000 homes in the region for residents since 1995.

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After more than a hundred years, chartered surveyors and property consultants Loveday and Loveday are now simply loveday.

The partnership, one of Swindon's longest established surveying firms, commissioned Swindon design and marketing consultancy, Obelisk Design, to design and implement a totally new corporate identity which would reflect Loveday's commitment to building on their success and expansion over recent years, and effectively represent them for the foreseeable future.

Bradley Forbes, partner at Loveday, says;

"We are proud of our heritage but recognise changes in the market and the way in which we now do business. We felt it time to review our brand with the view to creating a fresh image which shows a clear and determined focus on the future. We believe our recent success and the foundation for our future lies in our commitment to providing our clients, both local and national, with sound professional advice and service, and we are confident our new image reflects this belief."

Loveday is a firm of Chartered Surveyors practicing predominantly in the commercial property market. For further information contact **Bradley Forbes on 01793 438939 or [bradley@loveday.uk.com](mailto:bradley@loveday.uk.com)**

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## Beard building on its success with positive outlook for 2011

Construction company Beard's Swindon office has achieved record turnover and orders so far this year, putting the group on course for a strong annual performance despite the impact of the economic slowdown and government cut backs on the sector.

The office achieved turnover of £15m during the eight months to August – an increase of 125 per cent on the previous year – while it secured orders for new contracts worth more than £14m. Combined, these achievements will ensure the company exceeds its budgets this year.

The strong performance is due in part to a number of regional authority framework agreements in Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Berkshire which have added to Beard's traditional strengths. As well as winning a bid to build a £2m-plus arts and design centre at Cheam School, the Swindon team won three new MoD contracts under a

relationship with Aspire to improve facilities at Larkhill and Bulford Garrisons and has been selected as a supplier to projects under the Ministry of Justice framework.

Beard's Swindon construction director Marc Bayley said: "This is a really good performance from the team. Business remains difficult, but the 10 framework agreements we are involved with puts us in a good position."

"Not surprisingly alterations, renovation and improvement works represent a larger proportion of the business at the moment and our property services team is particularly busy. Accolades for health and safety from our work with the MoD and our recent Investors in People Gold Award – one of just a handful of construction companies to have achieved this level – shows we are getting the other things right too."

## Indian restaurant offers outside catering

Swindon's multi award-winning Indian restaurant, the Jewel in the Crown, is offering outside party catering for businesses for up to 400 people this Christmas.

Companies looking for something special for the festive season can simply book their order now with the restaurant from a choice of menus and leave the rest to the Jewel in the Crown's expert chefs who will produce a mouth-watering selection of dishes which will be delivered for their Christmas party. While outside

catering is becoming more popular for businesses this Christmas, the Jewel in the Crown's landmark 200-seat restaurant in Victoria Road is already strong receiving bookings for parties in December.

The restaurant, which has become a Swindon institution since it opened in 1987, is available to book outright for large gatherings or can be divided into four suites for smaller parties, each offering a self-contained venue, including the refurbished basement restaurant, which is now ready for the party

season. The Jewel in the Crown is offering value-for-money menus this Christmas to suit any budget. Owner Mr Muzammil Ali said: "Companies just need to tell us their budget and how many guests will be coming and we will produce a wonderful Christmas meal for them which they can enjoy in one of our private suites."

"We believe we are offering Swindon's best value Christmas parties this year for people to enjoy in wonderful surroundings."

For bookings and further information, contact the Jewel in the Crown on 01793 522687.

### Get moving with mobiles

Roger Goodwin of Digital Trading Creative will be the guest speaker at the next Swindon Chamber of Commerce business breakfast.

Roger will help delegates gain an understanding of how can benefit from the current revolution in mobile technology and capitalise on this ever-changing market.

The event is held at the De Vere Village on Friday, October 21 from 7:30am to 9:30am.

Attendance costs £19.20 for members and £25.20 for non-members. For more details visit: www.thamesvalleychamber.co.uk



## Jewel in the Crown

Winner of the Newby Tiffin Cup, beating 74 other Indian restaurants in a competition staged in the House of Commons

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