

Insight magazine

October / November 2026



Retired police superintendent launches new approach to leadership

Sustainable Warrington takes centre stage at annual Business Conference

Made Smarter expands team to support Cheshire and Warrington manufacturers

**Warrington
Chamber Plus**



Connect, Collaborate & Grow

Go Earth launches new software division to help Warrington businesses solve real problems

Warrington-based Go Earth Ltd has launched a new division to help local businesses use modern software and artificial intelligence to solve practical business problems more quickly and affordably than ever before.

The new service, operating through www.bestsoftware.earth, is aimed at businesses of all sizes across Warrington and the surrounding area, from established companies with complex systems to smaller firms that know something in the business could work better, but are not sure where to start.

Go Earth believes that many local businesses are still held back by outdated processes, duplicated admin, manual spreadsheets, disconnected systems and software that does not quite fit the way the business actually works. Until recently, solving these problems with bespoke software could be expensive, slow and difficult to justify. A system that may once have cost £50,000 to specify, build and test can now, in suitable cases, be developed for a fraction of that cost.

The reason is the rapid development of artificial intelligence and modern software tools. AI does not remove the need for experience, judgement or proper business analysis, but it can dramatically reduce the time needed to design, code, test and improve useful systems. This makes bespoke software realistic for businesses and other organisations that would previously have assumed it was only for large organisations with very substantial budgets.

The new division is headed by Martin Berman, who brings extensive experience in software, business analysis, artificial intelligence and the practical use of technology to improve business performance. His approach is deliberately business-led rather than technology-led. The starting point is not "what software can we sell?" but "what problem are you trying to solve, what is it costing

you, and what would a better process look like?"

Typical projects might include replacing spreadsheets with a proper database, automating repetitive office tasks, improving customer enquiry handling, linking existing systems together, creating internal dashboards, building simple customer portals, using AI to process information more quickly, or developing bespoke tools that give staff the information they need without wasting time.

Martin Berman said: "A lot of business owners know that software could help them, but they are understandably cautious. They may have had poor experiences in the past, or they may fear that a software project will become complicated, expensive and difficult to control. Our message is that things have changed. With the right advice, modern AI-assisted development can make bespoke software far more affordable, and the process can be much more practical and down to earth."

"We are not interested in technology for its own sake. We want to sit down with local businesses, understand the real commercial issue, and then work out whether software or AI can provide a sensible, cost-effective answer. Sometimes the best answer may be a small system that saves a few hours every week. Sometimes it may be a larger project that changes how the whole business operates. Either way, the focus has to be on business value."

They provide a completely free, no obligation, 1 hour consultancy at <https://bestsoftware.earth/free-initial-consultancy/>

Go Earth's aim is to reduce the fear and uncertainty that many companies feel when considering a software project. The service is designed to be approachable, clear and commercially realistic. Businesses do not need to know technical language or have a detailed specification before making contact. In many cases, the first stage is simply a conversation about what is frustrating, slow, expensive or difficult in the business.

The company is particularly keen to speak to Warrington businesses that have grown around informal systems and now need something more robust. That could include manufacturers, professional firms, service businesses, distributors, property businesses, marine businesses, trades, consultants, training providers, charities or any organisation where better software could save time, reduce errors or improve customer service.

Martin added: "Local businesses should not be frightened of bespoke software. They should see it as a practical tool, just like taking on the right member of

staff, buying better equipment or improving their premises. The difference now is that AI means the cost and speed of development can be very different from what many people remember from a few years ago."

Businesses interested in exploring how bespoke software or AI could help them can visit www.bestsoftware.earth or contact Go Earth Ltd to arrange an initial conversation.



TAKING YOUR BUSINESS TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Innovative solutions to help your business thrive. Our expert team is ready to partner with you to achieve extraordinary results.

Artificial Intelligence, intelligently applied, enables us to, very cost-effectively, achieve incredible business results for your business.

- 01 Free 1 Hour Initial Consultancy**
Understand where there are opportunities to lower costs, increase revenue, resolve business issues
- 02 Business Analysis**
A full analysis of an individual challenge to resolve, and how technology, especially software, can resolve this
- 03 Business Use of Artificial Intelligence**
Most businesses can benefit very substantially from AI. Most businesses are not yet using AI effectively



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■ Martin Berman.

From the Chief Executive

Stephen Fitzsimons

A big thank you to everyone who participated in our 7th Warrington Business Conference.

The theme was sustainability and we heard from several different viewpoints, including Liverpool Airport and can recycler, Novelis. The representative from Avanti West Coast was very sporting, considering that most people wanted to ask him about punctuality!

The conference is the largest business event in Warrington, or at least it will be until the awards in October. Good luck to all entries and thanks to our generous sponsors.

It's also a big month for our members as we await details of

Andy Burnham's first Budget. We are still experiencing the fallout from the government's Living Wage and National Insurance requirements. They were both honourable ambitions, however let's implement things like that when the country can afford it. Trump continues to cause global economic chaos and UK borrowing costs have gone through the roof. I don't envy the new Chancellor's position!

You'll be aware that the economic and political environment is changing across Cheshire & Warrington ahead of an elected Mayor next May. The Conservative candidate Ben Fletcher spoke at our conference and Labour's Dan Price is already close to us as Police & Crime Commissioner.

The new Combined Authority is now operational and we welcomed one of the team to Warrington this month. She is exploring how best to support businesses in the future so we worked with Warrington & Co to take her to visit some companies in key sectors. These included nuclear, logistics and business services. We never want to sound arrogant, however Warrington is the strongest economy in Cheshire and it's important that this is recognised.

The Chamber likes to promote all business events in and around Warrington so if you are organising something relevant then do let us know. We've been supporting Sue Richards with her KCC network and Tony Longmore with Knekt. Indeed, Tony and Kirsty James will



once again host the Warrington Business Conference next year and we're proud to be the headline sponsor.

Keep an eye on our events page on the new website and we look forward to seeing you soon.

Stephen

Local business network conquers Snowdon to raise £2,000 for charity

A team from Warrington's business community has conquered Snowdon, raising almost £2,000 for Warrington-based national social care charity Making Space.

Fourteen fundraisers aged from just 13 to 67 took on the challenge on Sunday 20 September after PACT Networking Warrington chose Making Space as its charity of choice.

The group included local business people and PACT Warrington members Mark Beech, Steve Butler, Claudia Price, Nina Street, Ian Barker and Elliot McQuillan, who were joined by family members and Making Space Corporate Fundraising Lead Natalie Bargery.

After a 4am start, the team climbed Snowdon via the Pyg Track before descending along the Llanberis Path, clocking up around 25.5km and 26,000 steps on their trackers.

Their efforts have so far raised around £2,000, with donations still being accepted.

The money will go to Making Space's Kind Hearts Fund, which helps create special experiences, moments of joy and lasting memories for people who draw on the charity's support.

Mark Beech, founder of PACT Networking, said: "I'm incredibly proud of everyone who took on Snowdon with us. We had PACT Warrington members, friends and family ranging all getting up at 4am and taking on the challenge together.

"What made the day so special was the sense of togetherness. PACT has always been about building genuine relationships and supporting the communities we're part of, not just doing business. Seeing everyone encourage each other all the way up and down the mountain really summed that up.

"Making Space does fantastic work, so to be able to raise money and awareness for such a worthwhile cause while bringing our members and their families together made the whole experience even more meaningful. It was a brilliant effort from an amazing group of people, and I couldn't be prouder of them."

Making Space's Corporate Fundraising Lead Natalie Bargery also completed the challenge – despite taking a tumble along the route.

Natalie said: "My legs are definitely still reminding me that we climbed a mountain, and taking a tumble along the way wasn't quite part

of the plan! But there was no way I wasn't carrying on, and crossing the finish with everyone made it all worthwhile. I want to say a huge well done and thank you to every single person who took part. It was a tough challenge, but everyone supported and encouraged each other throughout the day.

"Fundraising like this means so much to Making Space. The money raised will go into our Kind Hearts Fund, helping us create special experiences, moments of joy and

lasting memories for the people who draw on our support.

"We're incredibly grateful to PACT Warrington, everyone who took part and every person who has donated."

Making Space supports people with a range of needs, including older people, people living with dementia, mental health conditions or learning disabilities, and unpaid carers, to live happy, fulfilling and independent lives.



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Stephen Fitzsimons, Chief Executive

Birchwood Park welcomes Green Earth Developments as it continues to attract new businesses

Birchwood Park, the North West's largest out-of-town business destination, has welcomed Green Earth Developments as its latest occupier, further strengthening the park's growing business community and established cluster of house builders and property businesses.

Green Earth Developments, a UK company specialising in the transformation of brownfield sites, will move into a 3,193 sq ft office at 104 Dalton Avenue.

The move reflects Green Earth Developments' continued growth and its decision to establish a new base within a well-connected business community, alongside organisations working across the property, construction, and house-building sectors.

The arrival of Green Earth Developments adds to Birchwood Park's diverse occupier mix, with organisations from a wide range of industries choosing the Park for its high-quality workspace, strong business community and extensive on-site amenities.

Linda Welsby, Leasing Manager

at Birchwood Park, said: "We're delighted to welcome Green Earth Developments to Birchwood Park and to see another growing business choose the Park as its new home.

"Over recent years, we've seen a strong cluster of businesses emerge across the house-building and property sector, creating opportunities for organisations to connect with others working in complementary areas. Green Earth Developments is a great addition to that community, and we look forward to seeing the team settle in and make the most of everything Birchwood Park has to offer."

Simon Towers, co-founder of Green Earth Developments Group, comments, "Moving to Birchwood Park feels like a natural next step for Green Earth Developments Group. Our work is centred on bringing underused land back to life, creating space for nature, supporting renewable energy and delivering long-term benefits for local communities, so it was important to find a new home that reflected how we think and work.

Birchwood Park's focus on sustainability, wellbeing and building a positive working community really resonated with us, especially within the house builder sector. We share the belief that businesses can grow while also having a positive impact on people and the environment. We're looking forward to settling in, getting to know the other businesses on the park and becoming part of the wider community."

Home to more than 165 organisations, Birchwood Park has a diverse and established business community spanning sectors including nuclear, engineering,

technology, construction, property, and professional services.

Alongside flexible workspace and a wide range of on-site amenities, the Park provides businesses with an environment designed to support collaboration, attract talent and enable long-term growth.

To find out about the range of office spaces available at Birchwood Park, please visit: <https://www.birchwoodpark.co.uk/space-to-let/>

For more information about Green Earth Developments visit: <https://greenearthgroup.co.uk>



EMR unveils new global brand identity

EMR, a global leader in circular materials, has unveiled a new global brand identity built around a simple belief: 'Everything Must Recycle'.

Headquartered in Warrington, EMR has grown from its roots in metal recycling into a global leader in circular materials, recovering and transforming the metals, plastics and other materials found in everything from cars and buildings to household products and major infrastructure.

The new identity marks an important moment in that journey, giving clearer meaning to the EMR name and the work its people do every day turning today's materials into tomorrow's products.

For more than 70 years, EMR has been finding value in materials others no longer need and putting those materials back to work.

An old car is more than something that has reached the end of the road. A building being demolished is more than rubble. A redundant railway, wind turbine or piece of machinery still contains materials with value – steel, aluminium, copper, plastics and more that can become part of something new.

Across its global operations, EMR recovers those materials from products and infrastructure at the end of their first life, separates and processes them, and supplies them back to industry as raw materials for new products.

As demand for materials continues to grow, building tomorrow means

making better use of what we already have today.

Many of tomorrow's raw materials already exist around us – in the products we use, the buildings we occupy, the vehicles we drive and the infrastructure that supports our lives.

Recovering those materials, and putting them back to work, will become increasingly important as manufacturers seek to strengthen supply chains, reduce carbon emissions and secure the resources needed for the future.

For EMR, that is not an abstract ambition. It is what more than 4,000 people make happen every day.

It means buying, collecting, sorting, grading, processing and transporting millions of tonnes of material. It means finding new ways to recover more value from increasingly complex products. And it means doing that safely and economically, while meeting the quality, environmental standards and scale modern industry needs.

That belief sits at the heart of EMR's new brand identity: Everything Must Recycle.

While the company will continue to be known simply as EMR, the new identity reflects a business that now operates globally and across a broader range of circular materials.

The identity itself has been inspired by the people who make that work happen every day.

From the colours and textures found

across EMR's sites to the practical, hands-on nature of the work itself, the new brand draws directly from the working environment familiar to more than 4,000 colleagues around the world.

Chris Sheppard, Group CEO at EMR says: "This isn't about EMR suddenly becoming a different business. We are proud of the EMR name because it carries more than 70 years of history. The yards, the trucks, the heavy machinery, the ships, our customers and, most importantly, the people who built this business are all part of who we are.

What we are doing is telling that story more clearly. Most people see an old car, a demolished building or a redundant piece of machinery and think its useful life has ended. We see steel, aluminium, copper, plastics and other materials that industry will need again.

Recovering those materials safely, economically and at scale is difficult work. It takes experience, technology and thousands of people doing their jobs well every day. That is what EMR

has been built on.

Everything Must Recycle says something very simple about what we believe: tomorrow's products depend on the materials we recover and transform today.

The new look matters, but only if we live up to it. That means better sites, higher standards, safer ways of working, better service and people taking pride in doing the job properly. That's what will make the brand real."

The rollout of the new identity will take place gradually across EMR's global network, following the same principles that guide the business itself: making the most of what already exists, extending the life of assets wherever possible and avoiding unnecessary waste.

Existing equipment, vehicles, containers and site infrastructure will therefore be updated as part of normal replacement and refurbishment programmes rather than being discarded simply to introduce the new identity.



Made Smarter expands team to support Cheshire and Warrington manufacturers

Made Smarter has bolstered its North West team with four new specialists to help manufacturers across Cheshire invest in technology and skills.

Mike Richards-Brown and Tabs Khojani will help firms find practical ways to digitalise their operations, while Jane Duffy and Mike Connolly will help businesses prepare their people and develop the leadership needed to deliver change.

Together they bring decades of experience from some of the region's leading manufacturing, technology and business support organisations.

Richards-Brown joins following roles at the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre North West (AMRC NW) and the North of England Robotics Innovation Centre (NERIC).

Khojani brings 20 years of experience in Greater Manchester's innovation and business support sector and also joins from NERIC at the University of Salford.

Duffy previously supported businesses through the Business Growth Hub across Greater Manchester, while Connolly, a Mechanical Engineer, has spent more than three decades with global manufacturer Hubbell, working across engineering, quality, operations and HR.

Their recruitment to the Government-backed adoption programme comes as manufacturers face growing pressure to become more productive, overcome skills challenges and keep pace with rapidly evolving technologies.

New registrations rose 49% last year, with a further 128 manufacturers coming forward in the first five months of 2026/27.

The new recruits will work alongside Made Smarter's existing team to help companies develop a digital roadmap and decide where and how to invest, including accessing match-funded grants of up to £20,000.

They will also help businesses build the leadership and workforce skills needed to make those investments work, through the Leading Digital Transformation and Leading Change for Digital Champions programmes, and Digital Technology Internships.

Donna Edwards, Programme Director for Made Smarter North West, said: "Manufacturers know they need to change, and the appetite to embrace digital transformation continues to grow.

"Technology can unlock huge gains in productivity, efficiency and competitiveness, but businesses need the right expertise and the right people to make it work. These four appointments bring an

incredible breadth of experience and will help us meet that growing demand and support even more manufacturers to turn their ambitions into action."

Tabs Khojani, Technology Adoption Specialist, said: "I'm excited to join Made Smarter and work directly with manufacturers to help them unlock their potential. Technology can feel overwhelming, so my role is to help businesses understand where it can make a practical difference. It's not about technology for technology's sake, it's about solving genuine business challenges and creating lasting value."

Mike Connolly, Organisational Development and Skills Specialist, said: "I've spent my career in manufacturing and experienced many of the challenges businesses face, from engineering and operations to skills and people development.

"Made Smarter gives me the opportunity to use that experience to help SME manufacturers develop their people, navigate change and build the skills and capability they need for the future."

Launched in 2019, Made Smarter North West has engaged with 2,500 manufacturers, created 705 digital roadmaps and supported 451 technology projects. The programme has provided £8.3m in funding, helping unlock £28m of investment from manufacturers, while 282 businesses have received skills or leadership training and 105 digital interns have been placed with businesses.

Technology projects supported by the programme are forecast to generate £336m in additional gross GVA, create 2,231 new jobs and upskill 4,036 roles, delivering an estimated £8 return for every £1 of government investment.

To learn more visit madesmarter.uk



Food hygiene firm invests in new re-use centre

Specialist hygiene solution provider Christeys Food Hygiene has invested in a new facility on its site in Warrington.

Based at Winwick Quay, Christeys Food Hygiene (CFH) recently opened its new Re-Use Centre, a dedicated facility designed to reduce waste and cut carbon impact. The 9000 sq.ft. centre is used to professionally wash used Intermediate Bulk Containers, IBCs, putting them back into circulation and extending the life of each container.

Over the last 12 months the firm has reviewed its operational site plan taking into consideration expected growth over the coming five years, part of this review covered its re-use programme.

For over 20 years CFH has collected its customer's used IBCs and 200 litre drums, washed and circulated them back into the system for further use. But recent growth in demand for the programme has prompted investment in a larger, dedicated facility.

The firm acquired a brand-new warehouse at their Winwick Quay base and developed this into an industry-leading Re-Use facility which incorporates a complete

re-design of the entire operation, expanding capacity by 50% and building in room for future growth.

Where possible, existing equipment has been used alongside state-of-the-art technology, data capture and analytics, all meeting the latest industry standards.

CFH has also added solar panel units to the roof of the centre. Power generated from these panels, as well as those on one other of their units, will fully power the electric vehicle charging stations across the whole site.

"We are delighted with the new Re-Use Centre, which will have a huge impact on our operations," states Delme Tudor, Engineering Manager at CFH. "By extending the life of every container, we're minimising single-use plastics and helping our customers operate more sustainably."

Christeys Food Hygiene is highly regarded in the industry for the design, manufacture and installation of cleaning and disinfection systems and the formulation of detergents and disinfectants for the Food, Dairy and Beverage industries. CFH is part of the Belgian family owned Christeys group.





Warrington biomethane station to expand Gasrec's growing network

Gasrec is to open its first high-capacity, public-access biomethane refuelling facility in the North West, with planning permission secured for a new station in Warrington.

The station, at Omega Business Park, is expected to begin construction in the next three months with refuelling capacity for 1,000 gas trucks per day once fully operational.

Gasrec currently has 18 refuelling stations in operation and its growth in recent years – driven by a huge surge in demand – has seen its total refuelling capacity rise significantly. The company's 2027 ambition is to have infrastructure across the UK capable of refuelling approximately 6,000 trucks per day. That would represent a three-fold increase in capacity

within roughly 18 months for the business, further strengthening Gasrec's position as the UK's largest supplier of Bio-LNG for heavy transport.

James Westcott, Chief Commercial Officer at Gasrec, says: "The new station at Warrington forms the next step of our strategy to build a national refuelling backbone of state-of-the-art, open-access biomethane refuelling stations. By building these facilities in strategically located sites we are providing more road transport operators the infrastructure they need to transition to this cleaner, low-carbon fuel.

"Fleets are under ever increasing pressure to decarbonise now and by switching to Bio-LNG they can cut CO2 emissions by up to 80 per cent in comparison to diesel.*

Plus, it's cheaper to run, and as the refuelling process and truck performance is so similar to diesel it allows operators to change without compromise."

Omega Business Park is a 775-acre major distribution hub on the M62, with close access to the M6 and links towards Liverpool and the wider Merseyside logistics cluster. As part of the design, on-site truck parking will be included at the new station to support local fleet deployments across the region.

At the end of 2025, Gasrec opened its latest high-capacity public facility at Hams Hall which complements its flagship site at Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal (DIRFT) – Europe's largest gas refuelling station. The business is pushing ahead with plans to open a similar facility in

Avonmouth, expected to open its doors in 2027, and also operates numerous other accessible Bio-LNG facilities across the country.

In addition, Gasrec continues to assess opportunities to develop new Bio-CNG offerings in line with local demand.

"Gas truck registrations are on the rise as operators know they can trust the technology and it's not hampered by issues such as range-limitation, like other alternative fuels. We know the demand is there and our longer-term plan is to bolster our UK-wide network to have infrastructure in place to refuel 15,000 gas trucks per day by 2030 which would save the UK 650,000 tonnes of carbon a year," adds Westcott.

FuelHub to bring premium, chef-prepared meal bundles to Holland & Barrett online marketplace

FuelHub, the Warrington-based meal prep company built for everyday high-performers, has announced it has become the first meal prep business to feature on Holland & Barrett's online marketplace.

Holland & Barrett will feature a selection of pre-set FuelHub bundles within its Health & Wellbeing categories. Home-delivered directly by FuelHub, this will make it easier for customers to access nutritionist-designed meals with clear calorie and macro information without the friction of planning, shopping or cooking.

Customers can choose from two pre-set bundles, designed to cater to different needs and dietary requirements, including a FuelHub

Lite version with a lower calorie count. Bundles are available to customers as a one-time purchase, providing a flexible and accessible way to enjoy optimally nutritious, chef-prepared meals.

Michelle Laithwaite, Co-Founder and CEO at FuelHub, said: "Holland & Barrett is a household name in health and wellbeing, so being the first meal prep company on its marketplace reinforces what we've built: premium, precise nutrition that fits real life and tastes exceptional. The development marks another step forward in making optimal nutrition effortless for those who are balancing healthy eating with work life, home life and everything in between."

Guy Farmer, Chief Commercial Officer at Holland and Barrett, said: "As more people take a proactive approach to their health, they're looking for trusted partners who can support them in ways that fit their lives. Bringing FuelHub to our digital Marketplace broadens the range of high-quality nutrition solutions available to our customers and reflects our ambition to make health and wellness more accessible, personalised and relevant."

The announcement follows a record year for FuelHub, with turnover reaching £6.5 million for the financial year ending April 2026, representing 89% year-on-year growth and an eightfold increase over the past three years. The business was ranked 39th in

The Sunday Times 100 2026 and has received Men's Health Reader Recommendation accreditation, further strengthening FuelHub's position as one of the UK's fastest-growing premium meal prep brands.



Team trade head office for a hands-on day for local hospice

A landscaping firm welcomed two additional helping hands after securing the winning bid at Redrow's annual charity ball.

Landstruction made a winning bid back in November for Redrow NW's managing director Phil Reeves and construction director Ian Robertson to join them on site working at Alderbrook Manor in Grappenhall Heys.

The pair spent the day planting trees and shrubs, arranging landscape features and adding the finishing touches to flower beds at the Redrow developments show home gardens.

Overall, Redrow's annual charity ball raised £85,000 for Claire House Children's Hospice. The hospice helps seriously and terminally ill children and young adults to live life to the full by creating wonderful experiences and bringing back a sense of normality to family life. By providing specialist nursing and end of life care, as well as emotional support, Claire House

helps families through some of the toughest times of their lives.

David Binks, managing director at Landstruction, said: "Claire House is an incredible charity, so supporting Redrow's fundraising efforts was something we were really proud to be part of.

"Spending the day on site with Phil and Ian was a great experience, it gave us the chance to showcase the work our team delivers every day and to share the challenges and rewards of creating high-quality landscaping that enhances these new communities."

Phil added: "We swapped our usual day for a day working alongside the team at Landstruction. It was a great experience and gave us a real appreciation for the effort that goes into delivering high-quality landscaping projects, whilst also raising such a great amount for the hospice."

Once complete, Alderbrook Manor will include 237 new homes across

30 acres of land with a range of three, four and five-bedroom bespoke designs based on the homebuilder's Heritage Collection.

All will feature air source heat pumps to provide heating and hot water, reducing homeowners' energy use, plus underfloor heating to the ground floors and EV charging points.

The development will also feature extensive areas of green open space, mature trees, two new play areas and footpaths to connect to local walking routes.

For further information on the homes at Alderbrook Manor visit www.redrow.co.uk/new-homes/devr022854-alderbrook-manor-grappenhall



Locker Heatshielding wire mesh company celebrating 50 years in business

Warrington wire mesh company Locker Heatshielding, which supplies safety equipment to industries all over the world, is celebrating 50 years in business.

Locker Heatshielding, based on Farrell Street, was established in 1976 to design and manufacture Heatshields that protect workers from extreme heat, wind and weather in the oil, gas and petrochemical industries.

The shields are made in Warrington and installed on offshore platforms, refineries and industrial sites around the world, protecting walkways, staircases and lifeboat stations.

Dominic Stott, Director and General Manager at Locker Heatshielding, said: "Locker Heatshielding has provided highly skilled jobs in the town for half a century, and put Warrington on the map when it comes to innovation, making flexible and versatile shields using wire mesh.

"A Heatshield is a woven wire mesh barrier that blocks radiant heat, making otherwise inaccessible onshore and offshore areas safe to work in, while still giving people a vital escape route if there's an emergency.

"Heatshields have no moving parts and need very little maintenance, so people working in dangerous environments can rely on them to keep doing their job safely."

Each Heatshield is designed by the Warrington team using specialist software before moving into fabrication. Every stage, apart from acid cleaning, is carried out on site in Warrington and 120,000 square metres of Heatshields have been supplied to the industry.

Customers include Samsung, Shell and Petrobras and, over the last five decades, engineers have worked on projects all over the world, from the North Sea to South America, West Africa, South East Asia and Australasia.

Locker Heatshielding is part of the Locker Group, established in the town in 1878 by Thomas Locker. His father, James Locker had invented the first wire cloth weaving machine in 1811, and the company began manufacturing on a steam-powered loom in 1886.

This revolutionised the wire industry and by the 1950s, Locker was Warrington's biggest employer. Now the firm sponsor The Locker Cup, are part of the Cheshire Community Foundation and sponsored the Warrington Borough Council Heritage exhibition.

Andrew Campbell, Chairman of the Locker Group, says continuing to innovate as well as giving back to the town, via jobs and support for community projects, is something the company is committed to.

Andrew added: "Locker's roots go back to the early 1800s, it's been part of the fabric of the town ever since - involved in local

government, the rugby team, and raising awareness of the town's wire history.

"From its origins in 1976, Locker Heatshielding has developed a reputation as the world's leading and most experienced provider of radiant heatshields, supplied to our international client base and all manufactured here in Warrington.

"Celebrating the 50th anniversary is a huge achievement, as the company has navigated some challenging times for the oil and gas sector, which continues today.

"I congratulate the current team and everyone who has contributed to the business over the last 50 years, and we very much look forward to our centenary celebrations."

Learn more about Locker Heatshielding at www.heatshielding.com



Charity Focus

Creating Adventures calls on businesses to help build its forever home

A Warrington charity supporting more than 110 adults with learning disabilities, autism and additional needs is calling on the town's business community to help turn an ambitious vision into a permanent reality.

Creating Adventures is launching a £500,000 stepping-stone campaign to secure a permanent building in Warrington and establish the Creating Adventures Community Hub – its Forever Home.

The charity currently operates from Orford Community Hub, providing a wide range of activities including music, drama, dance, creative arts, cookery, wellbeing, life skills and social activities.

For many of its members and their families, the charity has become an important part of their lives, providing opportunities to build confidence, develop independence, learn new skills and form friendships.

However, as the organisation has grown, so too has the need for a dedicated and permanent base.

The current premises are also used as a Driving Test Centre, with the DVSA planning to significantly increase testing capacity at the site.

This is expected to bring additional demand for parking and increased numbers of learner drivers around the building, creating accessibility and safeguarding challenges for a charity supporting adults with additional needs.

More importantly, the existing space limits Creating Adventures' ability to expand its services and support more people across Warrington and surrounding areas.

The proposed Community Hub would provide a dedicated, accessible environment on a good bus route, helping members to travel as independently as possible.

It would bring together facilities for creative activities, training, cookery, wellbeing, life skills and social programmes, while also creating opportunities for volunteering, employability development, community events and partnerships with local organisations.

For the charity, however, the campaign is about much more than securing a building.

It is about creating opportunities for people and strengthening links with the wider Warrington community.

Creating Adventures is inviting

local businesses to become part of the campaign and is keen to hear from companies that could provide financial support, fundraising, professional expertise, equipment, materials, volunteering opportunities or introductions to potential supporters.

There could also be opportunities for businesses to help identify a suitable property.

The charity is particularly interested in hearing from property owners, developers and businesses with construction, property, legal, financial, marketing, IT and design expertise.

Corporate teams could also support the campaign through fundraising challenges or become campaign partners helping to reach the £500,000 target.

Creating Adventures is also keen to develop longer-term relationships with businesses through work experience, volunteering, training and employment pathways for its members.

Such partnerships could help members gain valuable workplace experience, develop confidence and demonstrate the contribution that adults with learning disabilities and autism can make to businesses and the wider community.

Jenny Allcock, CEO and Founder of Creating Adventures, said the planned Hub would provide a foundation for the charity's next stage of development.

"A building is so much more than four walls. For our members, it would mean belonging, independence, opportunity and hope," she said.

"Every week we see adults achieve things they never believed were possible. They discover new talents, make lifelong friendships and become active members of their community.

"But there are many more people who need this support, and without a permanent home our ability to grow is restricted.

"Our Forever Home would allow us

to expand our programmes, develop employability and life skills, improve health and wellbeing, and provide a safe place where people feel valued, accepted and empowered to reach their potential.

"We are asking Warrington's business community to come on this journey with us and help us make this dream a reality."

Creating Adventures recently worked with Danny at Dark Shadow Productions, alongside members, parents and carers, to produce a campaign video highlighting why securing a permanent home matters to the charity's community.

The organisation now wants to build on that message by developing partnerships with businesses across Warrington.

Its ambition is for the Community Hub to become more than a charity facility – instead becoming a community asset where businesses, volunteers, families, organisations and members can work together, share expertise and create opportunities.

Creating Adventures is looking to connect with businesses and organisations that could help to:

- Identify a suitable building or potential site in Warrington
- Support the purchase or development of the new Hub
- Become a corporate sponsor or campaign partner
- Organise workplace fundraising or challenges
- Donate professional skills, equipment, materials or services
- Provide volunteering and work-experience opportunities
- Create employment and training pathways for members
- Introduce the charity to potential funders, property owners or supporters

Businesses interested in supporting the campaign, making an introduction or exploring sponsorship, fundraising, volunteering or partnership opportunities can contact Creating Adventures on 01925 500136 or visit www.creatingadventures.org.uk

CREATING ADVENTURES COMMUNITY HUB CROWDFUNDING APPEAL

Building a vibrant, welcoming space where everyone belongs and potentially grow.

At the HEART of inclusion, friendship, creativity and opportunity.

Proudly creating opportunities in WARRINGTON

EVERY DONATION MAKES A DIFFERENCE | TOGETHER, WE CAN CHANGE LIVES | DONATE TODAY AND HELP BUILD A LEGACY AND INCLUSIVE HUB FOR TOMORROW

www.creatingadventures.org.uk | <https://crowdfunder.co.uk/p/our-ca-community-hub> | @CreatingAdventures | Registered Charity No. 1167842

COMMUNITY HUB... THE SPACE WE NEED... Our Forever Home

Location As central to Warrington town centre as possible and on a good bus route. To help all members access us, from across all areas of Warrington.	Accessible For wheelchair users to access all areas, in and out of the building. Accessible toilet and changing space (this can also be achieved with a grant).	Toilets Male, female and changing places accessible toilet	Parking Enough for 10 cars and 2 minibuses
Offices 2 minimum + 1 meeting space	Activity Spaces Minimum 3 1 room to accommodate 50/60 people 1 room to accommodate 20-30 people Room for decompression/sensory	Kitchen This can be developed with a grant but needs to be accessible	Storage Inside storage required and outdoor space for a shed
Front Door Waiting area, reception (we can make this a secure space)		Outdoor Space To develop gardening projects, woodwork and upcycling workshops/projects.	



Jenny Allcock, CEO and Founder of Creating Adventures

CARE UK Charity raises more than £22,000 through popular community sale events

CARE UK Charity's Jumble Sales and Fill-a-Bag events have raised more than £22,000 so far in 2026, helping to fund the charity's work supporting people experiencing poverty and hardship across Warrington and Halton.

Through its stores and wider community work, the charity provides essential furniture, clothing and household support to people who need it.

Regular Jumble Sales, held at community centres across Warrington with the support of Warrington Borough Council, have become a firm fixture in the charity's calendar, with most items priced at just 50p.

Alongside the Jumble Sales, CARE UK Charity's Fill-a-Bag events have attracted hundreds of shoppers to its Warrington and Runcorn stores. The concept is simple: shoppers purchase a bag for a set price and fill it with as much preloved clothing as they can fit inside.

The events are now some of the charity's busiest sale days, with queues regularly forming outside the stores before the doors open.

As well as raising funds, Fill-a-Bag gives CARE UK Charity an opportunity to give something back to the customers who support its stores throughout the year, offering an affordable way to shop while helping large volumes of donated clothing find new homes.

This year has already seen some impressive results, with the Warrington store raising £3,000 at its Fill-a-Bag event for the third consecutive time, while Runcorn

set a new store record of £1,776 at its most recent event.

And there is more to come, with Fill-a-Bag returning to CARE UK Charity's Runcorn store on Saturday 3 October, followed by Warrington Home Store & More on Saturday 10 October.

Sophie Baker, Communications & Engagement Executive at CARE UK Charity, said: "Our Fill-a-Bag days are some of our favourite events. There's always such a brilliant atmosphere, and seeing a queue outside before we've even opened the doors still amazes us.

"They're a great way for us to give something back to the customers who support us throughout the year, while raising funds that allow us to continue supporting people across Warrington and Halton."

CARE UK Charity is also encouraging more of Warrington's business community to get involved by joining the team for a corporate volunteering day.

Corporate volunteering days give local businesses the opportunity to bring their teams together while providing much-needed extra hands across the charity's operations. Teams can spend a day working alongside CARE UK Charity staff and volunteers, helping to sort and prepare donations and supporting the day-to-day work that keeps the charity moving.

Sophie added: "Quite simply, without our volunteers, CARE UK Charity wouldn't be able to do what we do. It's the generosity of people giving their time that keeps the charity going, and we're

incredibly grateful for every hour they give us.

"We'd love to see more local businesses get involved through our corporate volunteering days. Having an extra team with us for the day means we can get through more donations and ultimately get more support back out into the community."

Businesses can also support CARE UK Charity through fundraising, donating surplus stock or exploring other opportunities to work with the charity.

To find out more about upcoming events or corporate volunteering opportunities, visit www.careukcharity.org.uk, email info@careukcharity.org.uk or follow @careukcharity on Facebook.



Connect • Collaborate • Grow

Warrington
Chamber Plus

Warrington Business Awards Plus 2026

Celebrating the people, businesses and organisations making a difference across Warrington

The Warrington Chamber Business Awards are bringing the local business community together for an evening of celebration, recognition and connection.

From outstanding businesses and talented individuals to charities making a real difference, the awards are a chance to shine a light on the people and organisations helping our community grow.

What to expect:

- 🏆 Award categories celebrating local achievement
- 🤝 Businesses and organisations coming together
- 🌟 Inspiring stories and achievements
- 🎉 An evening of celebration

Date: Thursday 15 October 2026

Venue: The Halliwell Jones Stadium, Warrington

Book your place scan the QR code →



www.warringtonchamberplus.com [in](#) [f](#) [@](#)



United Utilities opens applications for 2027 graduate and internship programme

The North West's water company, United Utilities, has opened applications for its 2027 graduate and intern programme.

There are 50 graduate roles and 15 internship opportunities available across several business areas including roles in engineering, environmental, commercial, as well as data and analytics.

Graduates who join the three-year scheme receive career development and support, along with an understanding of their chosen business area.

Graduate salaries start at £32,250 plus a £2,000 welcome bonus.

As part of the scheme,

graduates achieve accreditation, qualifications or charterhip and work towards recognised professional standards in their respective disciplines.

Interns at United Utilities will be given the chance to experience on-the-job training and hands-on work experience as part of their undergraduate studies with the opportunity to fast track into graduate roles in the following year.

Over the next five years, the company is investing more than £13 billion to protect and enhance more than 500km of rivers, lakes, and bathing waters, while safeguarding drinking water supplies for millions of customers.

By creating more graduate and intern placements, United Utilities is helping to develop the future workforce that will deliver these improvements and support communities in the North West for years to come.

Laura Spyrou, Head of Talent Acquisition at United Utilities, said: "Our graduate and internship programmes play a vital role in building the skills and capabilities that United Utilities needs for the future.

"As we continue to invest in our people and our business, we're excited to offer a broad range of opportunities, including new roles, for those looking to start their careers with an organisation

that is committed to learning, development and making a positive impact across the North West."

The deadline for applications is 21 October but may close sooner if a high number of applications is received, so candidates are encouraged to apply as soon as possible.

Details on available roles and career opportunities at United Utilities can be found on the United Utilities website www.unitedutilities.com/corporate/careers

Interns need to be in the penultimate year of a relevant degree to apply.

Consistency: The quiet advantage keeping small businesses standing

Ask any small business owner what this year has felt like, and you'll hear the same story. A recent survey found that 82% of small businesses have seen operating costs rise over the past year, driven by materials, overheads and utility bills.

Energy standing charges for small businesses rose by an average of 40% from April 2026, and research from Enterprise Nation shows that 69% of small firms have delayed or cancelled growth plans, while 27% have considered closing altogether. With the Autumn Budget approaching, uncertainty is the one thing every owner can count on.

In a climate like this, most businesses look for savings in the obvious places. Few look at the money they lose quietly, every week, through inconsistency. That is the gap Warrington based HiQMA Consultancy was set up to close.

Founder Hikmat Adamu spent 14 years in pharmaceutical manufacturing and life sciences, where getting it right every time is not optional. She saw first hand what happens when processes live in people's heads rather than in a system: repeated mistakes, jobs done twice, customers who quietly stop coming back.

"Consistency is the most underrated asset a small business has," says Hikmat. "Customers come back when they know exactly what they'll get. Suppliers and partners

trust you when you can show how you work. Without it, you're relying on luck and on whoever happens to be in that day."

The signs are familiar across every sector. A cleaning company where the standard depends on which cleaner turns up. A tutor who tracks progress differently for every student. An events business that relearns the same lessons at every event. A manufacturer reworking the same fault month after month. None of these feel like a crisis, but they add up.

Quality professionals have long estimated that poor quality can cost businesses between 15 and 20% of their revenue. Even taking a far more cautious view, a business turning over £250,000 that loses just 5% to rework, complaints, refunds and customers who don't return is losing £12,500 a year. For many small firms, that is the difference between a difficult year and a sustainable one.

"When margins are this tight, keeping a customer is worth far more than chasing a new one," Hikmat explains. "Consistency protects the customers you already have, and it gives your suppliers confidence that you're a business worth backing."

HiQMA's approach is built on one belief: quality systems should be practical, clear and actually used. Not binders on a shelf, and not something reserved for large corporations.

Over recent months, HiQMA has

delivered its Founders Reality Check live training series, helping business owners understand where they stand and what consistency looks like in their own operations. This September, HiQMA launched the QMS Launchpad, a six week programme that guides small businesses through building their quality management system, the everyday framework of processes, records and checks that allows a business to deliver the same standard every time.

The founding cohort brought together businesses from tutoring, cleaning, events, wellbeing and professional services. It's a clear sign that consistency is no longer just a manufacturing concern. Any business that serves customers, relies on a team or wants to grow beyond its founder needs a system that works without them.

"I wanted to strip away the jargon," says Hikmat. "Most owners already know what good looks like in their business. We help them write it

down, make it repeatable and build it into how the business runs day to day."

For businesses wondering where they stand, HiQMA offers a free Reality Check assessment on its website: a straightforward diagnostic showing where a business is strong and where the gaps are, with no obligation. A waitlist is now open for the second QMS Launchpad cohort, with dates to be confirmed.

"In a year when every pound has to earn its place," Hikmat says, "the businesses that come through strongest won't be the ones who cut the most. They'll be the ones who deliver the same way, every time."

Visit www.hiqmaconsultancy.com to find out more or take the free Reality Check.

Follow Hikmat on LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/hikmatadamu](https://www.linkedin.com/in/hikmatadamu)



New Healthwatch Warrington report highlights strengths and challenges in home care services

Healthwatch Warrington has published a major new report examining the experiences of people receiving domiciliary (home) care across the borough.

The survey was open to all home care providers in Warrington, including Warrington Borough Council Providers. The report provides valuable insight into what is working well and where improvements are needed to ensure residents receive safe, reliable, and person-centred care in their own homes.

Local residents identified home care as a key priority, leading Healthwatch Warrington to work alongside Warrington Borough Council's Adult Social Care Commissioning Team to gather feedback from care recipients, family members, and carers. The findings are based on survey responses, one-to-one conversations and analysis of local care data.

The report reveals that many people have positive experiences of home care. More than three-quarters of respondents described carers as friendly (79.4%) and respectful (77.1%), while 60.2% rated their overall care and support as good or very good. Many participants praised carers for their kindness, professionalism and willingness to provide emotional support alongside practical assistance.

However, the report also highlights

significant concerns raised by service users and their families. Common themes included carers arriving late, visits ending early, inconsistent staffing, communication issues and a lack of continuity of care. Only 32.8% of respondents reported that carers always arrived on time, while just 38.2% said carers consistently stayed for the full length of their allocated visits. Additionally, 45% of respondents reported not being informed when carers were running late.

Particular concerns were raised regarding the impact of frequent changes in carers, especially for people living with dementia, sensory impairments or those requiring intimate personal care. Respondents said continuity of care was essential for building trust, dignity and confidence in services.

The report makes a series of recommendations aimed at improving home care services, including strengthening continuity of care, improving punctuality and visit duration monitoring, enhancing communication standards, increasing staff training and supervision, strengthening complaints processes, and improving quality assurance across providers.

In a statement, Healthwatch CEO, Lydia Hughes said: "At Healthwatch Warrington, our role is to ensure that the voices and experiences of local people are heard and

used to drive improvement. This report highlights both positive experiences of home care and areas where people told us improvements are needed, particularly around communication, continuity of care, punctuality and visit duration. The survey report was open to all Care providers, including the Care providers who are on the Local Authority Framework.

We are grateful to everyone who took the time to share their experiences. Our aim is not to criticise services, but to provide an independent evidence base that supports better outcomes for people who rely on care at home. We welcome the response from Warrington Borough Council and look forward to working with partners across the system to ensure the findings lead to meaningful improvements for residents."

The report acknowledges the growing demand for domiciliary care in Warrington and recognises the positive impact high-quality care can have on helping people remain independent in their own homes. It also emphasises the importance of listening to lived experience and using feedback to drive continuous improvement across the care sector.

Warrington Borough Council has welcomed the findings and outlined actions already underway to improve punctuality, communication and continuity of care with commissioned providers. The council stated that the themes identified in the report align with its own improvement priorities and monitoring work.

The full report, Time, Trust & Care: Exploring Home Care Support in Warrington, is available on the Healthwatch Warrington website.



Inspiring the next generation through STEM

Specialist chemical distribution and manufacturer 2M is investing in the next generation of scientists and industry professionals through an extensive STEM initiative designed to inspire young people and open the door to future careers.

Social responsibility is an important part of the 2M Group's approach, with its STEM Initiative providing opportunities for young people to develop confidence, gain practical experience and discover the career possibilities available within science and industry.

The programme includes two key initiatives: Atom2Molecule, for children aged six to 14, and Molecule2Market, aimed at young people aged 15 through to university. The company also offers work experience programmes and year-in-industry placements for college and university students.

Dr Maggie Kessler OBE said the initiative reflected the values of the 2M Group and its commitment to supporting education and developing future talent.

"At 2M, we are passionate about giving back to our communities and creating opportunities for young people," she said.

"Our STEM Initiative reflects the values of the 2M Group: supporting education, opening doors and investing in the next generation. We are incredibly proud of what our teams and STEM Ambassadors have achieved and excited to continue inspiring young people about the opportunities available in science and industry."

At the heart of the programme is Molecule2Market, a flagship week-long work experience programme for students aged 15-19, hosted at 2M House in Runcorn.

The programme gives students an insight into how a scientific idea can progress from the laboratory through to the marketplace. Working alongside experienced 2M employees, participants gain practical laboratory experience while developing a broader understanding of the chemical industry and the careers available within it.

2M's STEM Ambassadors also play an important role, volunteering their time to mentor students, share their own experiences and provide an insight into what a career in science and industry can offer.

For younger students, the annual Atom2Molecule™ Junior Science Day

provides an introduction to STEM through hands-on experiments, practical challenges and problem-solving activities.

Together, the programmes are helping to raise aspirations, develop skills and give young people a clearer understanding of the opportunities available within the scientific and

chemical sectors.

By engaging with students at different stages of their education, 2M is helping to develop the skills and talent that will be needed by the UK's science and chemical industries in the years ahead.

Find out more: www.2m-holdings.com/stem



Retired police superintendent launches new approach to leadership

Former senior police officer Jon Betts is using his own dramatic health experience to challenge the way organisations think about leadership performance.

The retired Warrington-based police superintendent, who spent 30 years in policing, has launched a new business aimed at helping leaders improve not only their skills – but their capacity to perform under pressure.

Jon Betts, who spent much of his career in senior leadership roles and was at one stage responsible for more than 1,200 people, has founded Virtusium Performance Health.

His approach has been shaped by an experience which dramatically changed his own understanding of performance. In January 2025, Jon underwent major heart surgery to repair his mitral valve.

Having spent years leading large teams in demanding and often high-pressure environments, his circumstances suddenly changed dramatically. Instead of leading more than 1,200 people, he found himself dependent on two nurses to help him take just three steps from his hospital bed to a chair.

It gave him time to reflect on the demands routinely placed on leaders – and whether enough attention is given to the physical and mental capacity required to meet those demands.

Jon said: “We spend years developing leaders’ capacity. We send them on courses, give them more experience and help them develop new skills. But we spend remarkably little time thinking about the capacity they need to consistently access that capacity.”

He believes organisations routinely consider issues such as capacity, resources, risk and resilience when managing their operations, but leaders can sometimes fail to apply the same thinking to themselves. His own recovery, combined with his leadership experience and qualifications as a health coach, led to the creation of Virtusium.

The Warrington-based business works with individual leaders and leadership teams through executive coaching, workshops and diagnostic programmes. The aim is to identify where capacity is being lost and what practical changes can make the biggest difference.

Jon believes leadership development and health should not be viewed as completely separate issues. He argues that sleep, recovery, nutrition and the ability to manage sustained demands can directly influence how leaders think, make decisions, manage emotions and ultimately lead their teams.

But he stresses that his approach is not simply about telling busy executives to exercise more or follow generic wellbeing advice. Instead, he wants to help leaders build the physical and mental capacity required to perform consistently over the longer term.

One example involved a senior leader who approached him wanting to lose weight while maintaining muscle. Jon worked with him on nutrition and developed a 30-minute exercise programme designed around his busy working life.

The client achieved his original goals – but it was an unexpected

consequence which made the biggest impression on Jon. The leader told him that his relationship with his son had changed.

He had not previously realised how tired, angry and irritable he had become. After making changes to his lifestyle, he found himself going into his son’s room simply to talk.

For Jon, that experience demonstrates that leadership performance is not just about what happens in the workplace. He wants to build Virtusium into a business which challenges the traditional separation between leadership development and personal health.

His central message is summed up in a simple distinction: “Capability

gets you the role. Capacity determines how much of that capability you can access when it matters.”

Jon’s ambition is to help organisations recognise that building and protecting that capacity is fundamental to sustained leadership performance.

More information about Jon’s Warrington-based business, Virtusium Performance Health, can be found at www.virtusiumperformancehealth.co.uk

Jon Betts can also be contacted through LinkedIn.

Jon was able to get support for his new venture via the Warrington Chamber Plus Accelerator programme.



Public health news

Stay well this winter

The colder months can bring challenges for the workforce, including seasonal illnesses, icy mornings and shorter, darker days. However, there are plenty of ways you can help keep yourself and your colleagues healthy and well this winter:

Get vaccinated

Winter vaccinations, including the flu and COVID-19 vaccines, remain some of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of serious illness and hospital admission from seasonal respiratory infections. Some people may also be eligible for the pneumococcal and RSV vaccines. Vaccination is one of the best ways to protect yourself and those around you. Find out more by visiting the NHS website: nhs.uk/live-well/seasonal-health/keep-warm-keep-well/

Help prevent the spread of illness

Wash your hands regularly, keep your workstation clean, and cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. If you are unwell, stay at home to help prevent the spread of infection. Flexible

and hybrid working arrangements can also help reduce the risk of transmission where appropriate.

Look after your mental wellbeing
Winter can sometimes feel isolating, so it is important to prioritise your mental wellbeing. Regular wellbeing conversations between managers and staff can help. If you or a colleague need support, visit Warrington’s mental health support directory: warrington.gov.uk/happy-ok-sad

Take extra care when travelling

Prepare for winter journeys by ensuring your vehicle is serviced, fully defrosted before setting off, and driven according to the conditions. Leave extra space between vehicles and travel more slowly when roads are icy or wet. Where possible, consider working from home during periods of severe weather.

For more advice on staying well this winter, including information on cost of living support, visit: warrington.gov.uk/winter

Stay well this winter

Find out more at warrington.gov.uk/winter

WARRINGTON
Borough Council

Helping you live well in Warrington this winter

Sustainable Warrington takes centre stage at annual Business Conference

More than 200 business leaders, entrepreneurs and key decision-makers came together at Cineworld in Time Square for the seventh annual Warrington Business Conference.

Organised by Warrington Chamber Plus, this year's conference focused on 'Sustainable Warrington', exploring how businesses, public sector organisations and communities can work together to build a more resilient and sustainable local economy.

Hosted by award-winning journalist Chris Maguire, the event brought together a wide range of speakers and organisations, with presentations, business spotlights and panel discussions providing delegates with plenty of opportunities to share ideas and make new connections.

The conference opened with Nick Walkley, Chief Executive of the Cheshire & Warrington Combined Authority, who outlined the opportunities presented by the new combined authority, including greater local control over areas such as transport, housing, skills and economic growth.

One of the key messages from the morning was that sustainability is about more than simply reducing carbon emissions.

Dave Thompson MBE, Chief Executive of Warrington Disability Partnership, demonstrated how sustainability can also create social and economic value.

He highlighted the organisation's work to improve efficiency, including solar panels and LED lighting,

alongside its Phoenix Project, which gives unwanted or pre-owned mobility and independent living equipment a second life by sending it to communities overseas.

The presentation provided a strong example of how sustainability can be incorporated into an organisation's everyday operations while also delivering wider community benefits.

Jane Gaston, Chief Executive of Net Zero North West, gave delegates an insight into the region's industrial decarbonisation ambitions and the role businesses can play in delivering clean growth.

Among the examples highlighted was a new hybrid furnace at a glass factory in Elton, which is expected to operate using hydrogen and green electricity and reduce carbon emissions by around 90 per cent once operational in 2027.

Vivek Mathur, Environmental Manager at the University of Chester, also outlined the work taking place across the university, highlighting the role students are playing in sustainability initiatives and the importance of education in supporting long-term behavioural change.

Two panel discussions brought the morning to a close, focusing on Sustainable Travel and Sustainable Manufacturing.

The Sustainable Travel panel featured Mark Osborne, Regional Growth Manager at Avanti West Coast, John Irving, Chief Executive of Liverpool John Lennon Airport, and Ben Fletcher, Mayoral Candidate for Cheshire and Warrington

Discussion centred on how transport and connectivity can evolve while supporting wider sustainability objectives.

The Sustainable Manufacturing panel brought together Sarah Hall MP, Michelle Lewis from Essar Energy and Robert Madden of Novelis, with delegates having the opportunity to put questions directly to the panel.

The conference also provided an opportunity to showcase the breadth of businesses operating across Warrington.

Business spotlights included family-owned Bents Garden & Home, which has operated in Glazebury since 1937 and employs up to 500 people, as well as Warrington-based Barrow Electrical.

The event also provided a platform for organisations to demonstrate how sustainability is already influencing investment, operations, technology and business strategy.

While sustainability provided the central theme, networking remained a key part of the conference.

Delegates had the opportunity to meet businesses from across Warrington and the wider region, exchange ideas and explore potential collaborations.

The formal conference was followed by a networking lunch at Zeytin on Bridge Street, giving attendees the chance to continue conversations from the morning in a more informal setting.

Closing the conference, Cllr Hitesh Patel, responsible for Economy, Growth & Quality at Warrington Borough Council, reflected on the key themes from the morning.

For Warrington Chamber Plus, the conference once again demonstrated the value of bringing the business community together to share knowledge, showcase local success and consider the opportunities ahead.

Chief Executive Stephen Fitzsimons said the event had provided a positive platform for businesses to look ahead, while recognising the challenges facing companies in the current economic environment.



Shaping tomorrow's workforce, together

Ensuring Cheshire and Warrington has the skills needed to support future economic growth is at the heart of a new three-year Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).

The plan has been developed through direct engagement with employers and businesses, identifying the key sectors driving the regional economy and setting out what employers need from the skills and training system.

Cheshire and Warrington is recognised as the most productive economy in the North of England, with established strengths in

advanced manufacturing, life sciences, clean energy, and business and professional services.

The LSIP aims to ensure that the region's skills provision keeps pace with those opportunities, while helping more people access employment and share in the benefits of economic growth.

Rather than being a fixed strategy, the plan is designed as a 'living, evolving blueprint' for the next three years, with partners working together to deliver its priorities and track progress.

Six key workstreams will shape activity:

- Strengthening the employer voice
- Simplifying navigation for SMEs
- Scaling technical pathways
- Embedding digital and sustainability skills
- Connecting people to employment
- Improving provider quality and teaching capacity

The emphasis is on closer collaboration between businesses, training providers and other partners, ensuring that skills development responds directly to the needs of the local economy.

For businesses, the LSIP provides an opportunity to help shape the workforce of today and tomorrow – ensuring that skills, training and economic ambitions remain closely aligned.

Find out more: www.cheshireandwarringtonlsip.co.uk

Email: LSIP@sccci.co.uk

Warrington Scoop celebrates two years and 16,000 subscribers

What started as a small local newsletter sent to a few hundred inboxes has grown into a twice-weekly publication reaching more than 16,000 people across Warrington.

The Warrington Scoop celebrated its second birthday in July, marking a significant milestone for founder Mike Payton, who launched the newsletter after seeing the success of similar community-focused publications in the US.

Today, the Scoop reaches the equivalent of around one in every

13 people in the borough, providing a regular digest of local news, events, businesses and positive stories.

A key part of its appeal is its deliberately different approach. Rather than focusing on crime or politics, the Scoop concentrates on the positive things happening across Warrington.

"When we sent that first edition, it went to a couple of hundred people, mostly friends, family, and some people who signed up via Reddit," said Mike.

"To be reaching one in thirteen people in the town two years later is amazing, really. It tells you how much people still care about where they live."

The Scoop has built its audience by providing readers with a concise round-up of what is happening locally, designed to be read quickly with a morning coffee.

The newsletters are sent at 7am, when Mike says many people are checking their phones at the start of the day.

"People want to know what is going on down the road – which road is shut, what is on this weekend, and which new place has opened in the town," he said.

"We mix in the odd article of our own, but most of it is articles or features we have come across on the internet – hence the name 'The Scoop', as we scoop up the best bits across Warrington."

Facebook advertising has played an important role in growing the subscriber base, allowing potential readers to sign up directly from their phones.

The growing audience has also created opportunities for Warrington businesses looking to reach an engaged local market.

The Warrington Scoop now works with businesses across the borough, offering advertising through its newsletters and social media channels.

Its commercial reach has also extended to national brands,

with recent clients including Big Motoring World.

"We started out helping small local firms get in front of the town, but this past year we have worked with big national brands like Big Motoring World too," said Mike.

"It shows what a properly engaged local audience is worth. If people trust the emails, they trust the businesses we put in front of them."

The business has continued to develop beyond the newsletter, with the launch of a monthly podcast hosted by Mike alongside fellow Warrington Chamber Plus member Charles Commins.

The podcast features interviews with people helping to shape Warrington's business and community landscape.

The Scoop's wider social media presence now has a combined following of around 35,000, extending its reach across multiple platforms.

For Mike, the growth demonstrates the appetite for positive, locally focused content – as well as the potential for businesses to connect with highly engaged audiences within their own communities.

And with the second anniversary now behind him, attention has already turned to the next target.

"Here is to the next two years," said Mike. "If one in fourteen of you are reading now, we would quite like to make it one in ten, with a goal of 25,000 by the end of 2027."



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- Certification of EUR1 movement certificates
- Certification of EUR-MED movement certificates
- Certification of GSP Form A preference certificates
- Advice on import and export procedures

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November 18th

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info@warrington-chamber.co.uk

Bathgate deal supports groundbreaking lithium battery recycling plant

A six-figure deal brokered by Chamber members, Bathgate Business Finance, has supported the purchase of a two-acre industrial complex in Widnes, housing one of the country's first Lithium Battery Recycling facilities.

The deal was brokered through HSBC for waste management and recycling firm Ecoshred UK, which has operated for more than 15 years. The business began in confidential waste and shredding before moving into IT and electronics recycling, including the disposal of various types of batteries and eventually lithium battery recycling.

Ecoshred UK's Lithium Battery Recyclers (LBR) project was launched in 2025 following a successful Innovate UK grant award. The company won round five of the Faraday Battery Challenge, part of the UKRI Challenge Fund, which supports research and innovation into more efficient, cost-effective and durable batteries.

The grant enabled the business to commission a new lithium-ion battery recycling plant on rented premises at Teal Business Park in Widnes. The firm believes it is one of very few specialist lithium-ion battery recyclers in the UK, with many other companies sending

batteries abroad for recycling.

Bathgate worked with directors Ben Dawbarn and Anthony Hulmes to broker a six-figure commercial 25-year mortgage over a five-year term through HSBC's Charley Hudson.

Anthony Hulmes, Director at Ecoshred UK, said: "Being able to afford to purchase and moving away from the rent trap is always difficult, however, the legal process and building reporting adds an extra layer of complexity unless expert guidance and assistance is available.

"Having used Bathgate to finance our residential properties in the past, we felt confident working with Gary after he was recommended to us, knowing that he had the right knowledge of the commercial property sector to help us get the right deal.

"The purchase of the complex that houses the battery plant has ensured a secure future for the project and enabled us to fully commit to this new and exciting market without external factors influencing our progress. We also anticipate that the plant will create five to ten new jobs within the next couple of years, as well as at least five postgraduate roles with the University of Leicester."

Ecoshred UK is also working with the University of Leicester to prove a new technology that could revolutionise the refining process for lithium-ion batteries in the UK. If successful, it will be the first company in the country to demonstrate the technology and close the loop for UK supply of critical minerals, keeping their value within the UK.

Gary Beggs, BDM at Bathgate, said: "This was an exciting and challenging deal to broker. Due to large income from grant funding in previous years for the LBR project and the fact that it lies in a very new sector, we had to provide detailed forecasts and business plans to demonstrate sustainability beyond grant income.

"This required significant collaboration between client, funder and commercial solicitor DTM, who we introduced to the client to support the legal aspects of the deal. The business is now fast heading to become one of the most successful waste recycling businesses in the North West and leaders in lithium-ion battery recycling. We look forward to continuing to support Ecoshred UK on its journey."

For more information about property finance, visit bathgatebf.co.uk or contact Gary Beggs at Bathgate Business Finance on gary@bathgatebf.co.uk or 07496 423803.



Intern programme success as students secure jobs at Gulliver's World

Two interns from the first intake of students on a joint programme between Gulliver's World, Bridge College and DFN Project Search have secured jobs at the Warrington theme park.

The Supported Internship Programme was launched in September 2025, with Noah Clowes and Rana Jamal part of the initial group and now celebrating earning themselves permanent positions at the resort.

The initiative, which is about to welcome its second cohort of interns, is aimed at bridging the gap between education and paid work, supporting young people aged 16-24 from Manchester, Warrington and Cheshire with additional needs and who have an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) in place.

The internships at family-owned Gulliver's World offer the opportunity to develop individual skills in various areas of the park, including retail and stores, catering, rides, park care, hotel, upkeep and grounds.

For Noah, a rollercoaster enthusiast, his job as a ride operator is something he has had his heart set on for some time.

Noah, 19 from Salford said: "As interns, we did a range of jobs, including cleaning ride operation, litter picking, painting, sweeping leaves, helping in shops. Working in the grotto - all sorts around the park to add that little bit of extra help. To now have a job as a ride

operator, it's a dream come true. Thank you to everyone involved with the internship programme for their help and support over the last year."

Rana Jamal, 21, from Manchester, works in the theme park's stores area. He said: "It's a huge opportunity for me, I have learnt lots of different skills, gained lots of knowledge and made lots of friends. It can be hard work sometimes, but I love the environment and team that I'm working with. If I do struggle or need help, they are there to support me. I am so grateful to the Gulliver's team, especially Mel and Jemma from Bridge College, their support, dedication, encouragement and commitment have been amazing."

Melanie Burrows-Carr, group talent, training and people manager at Gulliver's World in Warrington, said: "After months of hard work, determination, training, assessments and observations, we are proud of how far Noah and Jamal have come and what they have achieved. Their new roles within the Gulliver's team are a reward for all their efforts.

"Every morning, Noah attends his team briefing and finds out which ride he'll be operating that day, puts on his uniform with pride, and gets to work doing a job he absolutely loves. Noah was nonverbal when he started this programme and his confidence has gone from strength to strength. He felt nobody was going to give him a chance of work because of

his initial struggles, but he says that it's the best thing he has ever done."

"Jamal says that previously he has not always been given the correct opportunities but at Gulliver's he has and he feels very much part of the family. Every day is different, exciting and busy and it has been a life changing experience for him."

The internship programme is delivered by Bridge College and has already been recognised as Employment Provider of the Year at this year's DFN Project Search Awards.

Jemma Golden, supported internship lead at Bridge College, said: "Every so often, a moment comes along that reminds me exactly why Supported Internships change lives... and this is one of those moments. Noah and Jamal's commitment, resilience, positivity and determination have

been inspiring to watch, and they have shown exactly what can happen when someone is given the opportunity to shine."

Bridge College, run by the charity Together Trust, offers specialist education for students aged 16 to 25 with learning difficulties, disabilities, complex health needs and autism, providing personalised support, tailored learning and hands-on life skills to give young people the confidence to exceed their aspirations.

DFN Project SEARCH is a national charity that enables young adults who have a learning disability or autism spectrum condition to secure meaningful permanent employment.

For more details about the internship programme, visit: togethertrust.org.uk/schools/supported-internships





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