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February/March 2021

GREATER MANCHESTER LOOKING FORWARD

Great British Engineering

Interview with Rod Burton-Chambers, Managing Director of RLBC Limited - a fantastic example of a great British design and engineering business supplying innovative vehicle barrier systems globally.

Greater Manchester's resilient hospitality sector

Paul Walsh, Managing Director, Manchester Marriott Victoria & Albert Hotel, talks about the challenges of the sector during lockdown.

Don't let the past hold you back

David Child from SIS Insurance in Sale uncovers the issues surrounding getting Insurance with a problematic history.

Dealing with difficult decisions

KBL Advisory in Sale offer advice for businesses experiencing difficulty - and offer real alternatives to insolvency.

British and Irish Trade Alliance

Commentary from BITA Founder, Paul Whitnell, on the impact of the pandemic on the popular networking organisation.

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editorial

Here at GM Business Connect we are on the lookout for both news articles relating to business activity within Greater Manchester, and educational articles that can help businesses at any level.

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Paul Mirage

• 07708 987518



Jon Cheetham

• 07971 575977

Office • 0161 969 8632

welcome to the latest edition of GM Business Connect

and join the fastest growing business to business forum in Greater Manchester.

GM Business Connect is a dynamic business to business bi-monthly magazine that is crammed full of local and regional news, articles, interviews and regular columnists.

The magazine connects businesses across Greater Manchester, and is completely free.

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DESIGNED, EDITED AND PUBLISHED BY
Jon Cheetham, Paul Mirage.

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTORS
Strand Web Design

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news

Next steps and timescales for Greater Manchester-wide Clean Air Zone

Proposed daily charges

The following daily charges were proposed for non-compliant commercial vehicles during public consultation:

- Buses, coaches and Heavy Good Vehicles (HGV) – £60 (from spring 2022).
- Taxis and private hire vehicles - £7.50 (from spring 2022).
- Light Goods Vehicles (LGV) such as vans and minibuses – £10 (temporary exemption until 2023).

If the daily charge for a non-compliant vehicle isn't paid, a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) of £120 would be issued, in addition to the unpaid daily charge. This would be reduced to £60 if paid within 14 days.

- Work under way to assess and understand public consultation responses and impacts of COVID-19 on Clean Air Zone proposals and funding support packages.
- Final Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan to be put forward to decision makers as soon as possible and by summer 2021 at latest.
- Securing right level of government funding "absolutely critical" to support local businesses and organisations before the government-mandated Clean Air Zone is introduced.

Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) has now received

an update on the next steps to produce the final GM Clean Air Plan at its meeting on Friday 29 January.

A report confirms that the final plan - including proposals for a GM-wide charging Clean Air Zone - will be put before Greater Manchester councils as soon as possible, and by summer 2021.

The ten GM local authorities are under direction from government to introduce a category C charging Clean Air Zone - including commercial and passenger vehicles but not private vehicles - to secure compliance with nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) standards on local roads in the shortest possible time, and by 2024 at the latest.

As government minister Rebecca Pow explained late last year, "Only the most polluting older vehicles are charged in a Clean Air Zone, and it is not a congestion charge".

During an 8-week-long public consultation between 8 October and 3 December 2020, 4,765 responses were received from businesses, organisations and the general public. Feedback was given on key elements such as the proposed Clean Air Zone boundary, daily charges for affected vehicles, and how COVID-19 has affected businesses in Greater Manchester.

The consultation also sought feedback on a proposed £150m government funding support package to help

local people and businesses upgrade to cleaner, compliant vehicles that do not incur a daily charge, before the Zone is introduced.

This will be essential to support impacted vehicle owners to upgrade, while facing the economic impact of the pandemic. It includes a Hardship Fund, for those most in need. Government has committed £41m so far to the programme.

At the same time, a consultation was held on the closely linked Minimum Licensing Standards (MLS) for taxi and private hire services.

An independent research agency is now working to analyse and report the information gathered from the two consultations to help local authority decision makers make a fully informed decision on the final plans.

Further work is also taking place to understand the economic impact of COVID-19 on traders and businesses whose current business vehicles would not meet the mandated standards that the Clean Air Plan must enforce.

Greater Manchester's Green City-Region Lead, Councillor Andrew Western, said: "Poor air quality affects us all but particularly the most vulnerable members of our society, and we must act to clean up the air we all breathe.

"Government asked us to continue to



progress the Clean Air Zone proposals developed before the COVID-19 pandemic, and I'd like to thank everyone for the crucial feedback given during the consultation.

"We did see brief, short term improvements in air quality due to the pandemic, but as the economy opened again in the second half of 2020, road traffic levels grew quickly, almost reaching pre-pandemic levels by late 2020. Coupled with this, the economic uncertainty led to a significant reduction in the purchase of newer, cleaner vehicles.

"We recognise the importance of understanding what impact the pandemic has had on our air quality and businesses, so that these are reflected in the final plans.

"In particular, we want to ensure that the best possible funding support is in place to help vehicle owners to make the change. It's a very uncertain time for a lot of people, and getting the right level of funding to support local businesses and organisations before the Clean Air Zone is introduced is absolutely critical."

#ForgottenLtd campaign lobbies for proposed Director's Income Support Scheme (DISS)

In support of the estimated 2 million small businesses that have not benefitted from Government Covid support since March last year, lobbying group #ForgottenLtd have been campaigning for help for the struggling small limited businesses and their directors.

They are asking that the government extends Covid-19 support packages to small limited businesses that have now been left behind for 10 months. With this in mind a proposal for a Director's Income Support Scheme (DISS) has been written, and is currently being considered by treasury. The proposal was written by Rebecca Seely Harris, with input from ACCA, and on 9th December Rebecca, ForgottenLtd, the FSB and

ACCA presented the policy proposal directly to Jesse Norman and his HM Treasury team.

Running on the same parameters as the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS), the Director's Income Support Scheme (DISS) is based on the trading profits of the company, which are contained in the corporation tax return, and could be self-certified because unlike the self-employed, the director of a limited company has certain duties in law.

The director would only be able to claim for one directorship in the entity which they have the greatest income and must declare that they intend to continue to trade and either, are currently actively trading but have been impacted by reduced demand

due to coronavirus; or were previously trading but are temporarily unable to do so due to coronavirus.

#ForgottenLtd also work alongside the Gaps in Support All Party Parliamentary Group www.gapsinsupportappg.org who are

currently asking for individuals or businesses – whether self-employed, working as limited companies or any workers that have fallen through the gaps in the government's financial support packages – to get in touch. They are asking for evidence from those who have suffered as a result of the pandemic in order to inform its recommendations to the Government.

Gaps in Support All Party Parliamentary Group is the largest APPG in history. Their membership of 262 MPs covers

all political parties and parts of the UK.

Their aim is to find solutions for those who have been excluded from Government Support Schemes during the Coronavirus pandemic, as well as ensure that lessons are learned to improve the UK Government's response in the future.

All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) are informal cross-party groups that have no official status within Parliament. They are run by and for Members of the Commons and Lords, though many choose to involve individuals and organisations from outside Parliament in their administration and activities.

#ForgottenLtd

Greater Manchester Business Awards open for business!



Now in its fifth year, GM Business Connect are once again proud to be media sponsors of the Greater Manchester Business Awards.

Organised by the Rich Media Group based in Stockport, this year's event will come to a glittering black-tie winner's evening on Friday 3 September at the new Central Manchester-based Hotel Brooklyn.

The website is now open for all businesses across Greater Manchester to enter, with a closing date for entries of Friday 28 May. Once that date is reached initial judging will take place with a shortlist of finalists announced on Tuesday 1 June.

The judges this year are headed up by Andy Preston, International sales coach and motivational speaker. Supporting Andy is our very own Paul Mirage, Co-owner and Director of GM Business Connect, as well as Heather Baker, Founder of Baker Thompson Associates and a Prince's Trust business mentor, Gavin Redman, Business Development Partner at Express Solicitors and Carole Fossey, founder of Leading Women in Business and The Social Media Mentor.

Last year was the first occasion Rich Media Group took over as organisers, and they had to think quickly to replace the winners' evening black-tie event which had to be cancelled due to the pandemic.

Organiser Sophie Richardson (digital marketing manager, Rich Media Group) commented: "Like GM Business Connect we've been involved with the awards since the first event in 2017.

"When we took over as organiser last year we had to pull together a virtual awards ceremony to announce the winners, which turned out to be very well received. As we are a specialist video production company this was something we added real value to, and if by the time we get to September and restrictions are still in place, we are very well positioned to do the same again. I just hope that



won't be the case though as we've booked the venue already - the brand-new Hotel Brooklyn in Manchester which features amazing views over the Manchester skyline.

"Plus, we've also chosen our charity partner for 2021 - Pennine Care Charitable Foundation - who will benefit from fundraising at the live event."

We asked Sophie for a few more details about the shortlisted businesses: "Once the finalists are announced we will be visiting every business (observing social distancing of course) to make a video showcasing their entry and giving them the opportunity to say why they deserve to be winners. Edited versions of all the videos will be featured on the night of the awards. The videos will also form part of the final submission for the judges to vote on each category winner."

How many categories are there this year? "There are 12 in total, and a number of categories are directly related to the activities of businesses under lockdown. A full list can be found on our website."

If you wish to know more or would like to enter please visit the website: greatermanchesterawards.co.uk

Sophie is available on sophie@richmediagroup.co.uk for any further information.

City centre expansion for Manchester engineering firm



Adept Civil and Structural Consulting Engineers is significantly expanding its Manchester operation after relocating to new city centre offices on St James Square, in a move that will create several new jobs this year.

The new office covers 1,200 sq ft on the fourth floor of Number 7 St James Square, which sits between John Dalton Street and South King Street. Adept, which is headquartered in Leeds, was previously based at Sevendale House, in the city's Stevenson Square conservation area.

Since expanding into Manchester five years ago, the company has won numerous contracts throughout the North West, spanning all sectors including rail, education, industrial and residential projects.



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news

Bury makes active step forward with latest £1.3m commitment to walking and cycling



Greater Manchester's Bee Network plan to deliver the UK's first joined up cycling and walking network is set to see a boost in Bury, with £1.3m of funding released for new cycling and walking routes.

On Friday 29 January, GMCA approved £1.3m of the Mayor's Challenge Fund to progress four cycling and walking schemes in Bury. This funding will see these cycling and walking proposals developed further, as part of Bury's ambitions to deliver a network of safe cycling and walking routes and low traffic neighbourhoods. This takes the total number of Mayor's Challenge Fund packages at development stage to 63, with a committed delivery value of £34.6 million.

The schemes include Fishpool Active Neighbourhood, Elton Beeway, Radcliffe Bee Network and Pimhole Active Neighbourhood and mark a major step forward in delivering Bury's ambitions, providing key links across

communities. This includes delivering the new Gigg Mills bridge over the River Roch, a route that has been closed for two years.

In addition, Bury will start construction on its first CYCLOPS junction, of which the latest has recently been launched in Bolton, at the Market Street/Angouleme Way junction in the town centre which will tie in with the Fishpool route improvements.

Chris Boardman, Greater Manchester's Cycling and Walking Commissioner said: "This year marks a significant milestone for the Bee Network, as we see over 35 projects that have been in planning for the last couple of years, delivered.

"It's clear from Bury's plans that they are heavily invested in what we're aiming to achieve across the whole of Greater Manchester, and are moving forward at pace. These schemes will provide a genuine alternative to the car for local journeys, the school run or the work commute"

Recom wins places on two major public sector frameworks

Recom Solutions has won places on two frameworks which offer soft facilities management and construction services to the NHS and the wider public sector.

The Soft FM, Asset Compliance and Security Services Framework provides access to Recom's passive fire safety expertise, which is a growing area of business for the Trafford Park-based construction project management specialist.

The framework, launched by NHS Shared Business Services, is expected to save the public sector tens of millions of pounds compared with the cost of buying direct from suppliers. It will run until July 2022 with the possibility of an extension to 2024.

Recom has also secured a place on the new NHS SBS Public Sector Construction Works Framework, which was launched last week and runs until December 2023, with the option to extend it to 2027.

The company already has a place on the Construction Consultancy Services Framework, which was launched by NHS SBS in 2018.

Two thirds of UK companies see digital skills shortfall as biggest business challenge in 2021

Almost 65% of businesses see a digital skills shortfall as one of the most significant challenges facing their company in 2021. This is according to new research from the FTSE 250 professional services firm, FDM Group.

The data was obtained via a Censuwide poll of 200 business decision-makers in large and medium sized companies, which surveyed them on their attitude to hiring and improving IT and digital skills for 2021.

Interestingly, 77% of decision makers admitted that they already have plans to increase digital skills training budgets this year to support continued remote working. Additionally, 70% plan to offer existing workers reskilling or refresher tech and IT courses, to help improve digital skills over the course of this year.

68% also agreed that they will increase their IT headcount to support remote working, which appears to be a fitting investment, with nearly half (47%) of decision makers revealing that they have no plans to return to the office until at least 2022, even if it is deemed safe to do so later in the year.

Rod Flavell, CEO for FDM Group, commented: "The Covid-19 outbreak has wreaked havoc for businesses, with millions of workers missing out on vital digital skills development due to furlough and remote working constraints. With the added pressure of strict lockdown measures forcing many people to juggle childcare alongside their day job, companies need to move quickly to increase digital skills provision as a matter of urgency.

"With remote working now a key part of our daily lives, the need for every employee to be digitally adept, computer literate and cyber safe should be top of the boardroom agenda. That's why business should seek to hire in the latest IT talent, to boost technology skills within the workforce and help aid a speedy recovery in increasingly challenging times."

Peel L&P launches new natural resources and energy business



Regeneration business Peel L&P has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the UK to achieve a green post-pandemic recovery with the launch of a new division and a strengthened focus on its natural resources and energy development activity.

Peel NRE was officially launched at the end of January and brings together the skills of Peel Energy, Peel Environmental and Peel Water teams to help drive a national clean growth agenda.

Peel NRE builds on Peel L&P's 20 years' experience of delivering successful energy projects with plans

to secure 300MW of additional renewable energy through wind and solar over the next five years including taking forward proposals for its Beaw Field and Mossy Hill wind farms on the Shetland Islands.

Its flagship 54-hectare Protos resource and energy hub in Cheshire is developing a cluster of low carbon energy generation, supporting industry through local networks as well being at the heart of the Net Zero North West industrial decarbonisation cluster.

Protos will also be the home of pioneering technology to maximise the recycling and reuse of plastic.

Positive news for SMEs who stand to gain £1,000s in Pandemic Pay-outs

SMEs impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic now have an insurance lifeline thanks to a recent Supreme Court decision which could see a surge in pay-outs and may keep some businesses afloat.

The Financial Conduct Authority brought the test case against big name insurers to seek clarity on the interpretation of business interruption insurance (BI) policies. It is thought up to 370,000 policy holders could be affected.

Many business insurance policies have a BI clause relating to an outbreak of an 'infectious or notifiable disease' or 'denial of access' to business premises following public authority action in an emergency.

In this case BI policy was supposed to pay for any losses incurred by a business if it cannot remain open due to an 'infectious disease' or 'denial of access', but insurance companies

rejected these claims. They argued that the policies did not cover government-imposed lockdowns or that Coronavirus was not covered under a list of 'infections diseases'.

Hundreds of high street business who have been unable to remain open for business during the lockdowns such as hairdressers, beauty salons, guest houses and bars and restaurants, or remained partially open i.e. takeaway services only, now have some legal come back against their BI insurers thanks to the Supreme Court ruling.

"This is positive news for BI policy holders and those businesses impacted. Insurers have been held to account by the highest Court in England and Wales and insurers need to pay out, or face further legal action," said Usman Anwar, Litigation Solicitor at Pearson Solicitors. .

"We welcome the clarity brought about by the recent case. Small firms

pay insurance in good faith and some will have paid their BI insurance for years, and when the insurance companies were not paying out because of technicalities it could have meant some shutting down or making staff redundant. Now they have a legal claim to an insurance pay out and can legitimately pursue it."

In the recent case one of the Supreme Court judges, Lord Briggs, said the insurers lack of cover was "Clearly contrary to the spirit and intent of the relevant provisions of the policies in issue".

He added: "This was not, of course, a disease which anyone could have had specifically in mind when the policies in issue were written and marketed. But it is clear from the use of the definition of a 'notifiable disease' in most of the relevant clauses, and equivalent wording in the remainder, that Covid-19 (when it appeared) fell

squarely within the types of disease for which all the relevant disease and hybrid clauses provided cover."

It has taken some time for this case to come to fruition. Lockdown in 2020 shut the doors of small businesses in March and some have not reopened, but this latest case does give hope for the future.

The case was initially heard in the High Court against eight insurers, but six: Arch Insurance, Argenta, Hiscox, MS Amlin, QBE and RSA appealed and the FCA further appealed against some aspects of the High Court ruling to the higher Supreme Court, who then found in favour of the policyholders.

The nature of a BI claim and calculating losses will continue to be complex and inevitably the insurers will challenge the losses claimed by the policy holder.



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news

January blues for retailers

Retail sales volumes fell in the year to January, having been broadly stable in December, according to the latest monthly CBI Distributive Trades Survey.

The survey of 133 firms, including 66 retailers, was in field between 22 December and 14 January, a period in which restrictions across the UK gradually tightened, with the whole country in a full lockdown by 5 January.

The survey balances for both sales volumes and orders placed with suppliers were the weakest since May 2020 in the year to January. Sales were also seen as poor for the time of year to the greatest extent since last May.

Among the sub-sectors, grocers and furniture retailers reported flat sales, while the remaining sub-sectors (including clothing and recreational goods) registered sharp declines. Online sales eased slightly to around the long run average. Meanwhile, the ratio of stocks to expected sales rose but remained below its long run average.

Looking ahead, sales are expected to remain similarly weak for the time of year in February, with both sales and orders sharply down on levels next month.

Ben Jones, CBI Principal Economist, said:

"Today's data brings home the ongoing challenges of lockdown for the retail sector, as sales volumes weaken once again. On the upside, while the headline balance points to a fall in sales across many sub-sectors, the experience of the past few months suggests the decline won't be anything like as severe as in spring 2020.

"With the lockdown likely to remain in place in the near-term, retailers

expect this weakness to continue. It is therefore vital that government support continues in parallel to restrictions.

"To alleviate some of the stress on our struggling high streets, the business rates holiday should be extended for at least another three months to those businesses forced to close. In the longer-term there must be a fundamental review of business rates. A reformed system can play a key role in driving essential investment across the UK."

Key findings:

Retail

- Retail sales fell in the year to January, with the balance the weakest since May 2020 (-50%, from -3% in December and -50% in May). Sales are expected to fall at a broadly similar pace next month (-47%).

- The orders balance was also the weakest since May 2020 (balance of -45%, from -4% in December and -56% in May) with a similar drop expected next month (-44%).

- Online sales growth eased slightly to around the long run average (balance of +43% from +51%), where it is expected to remain in February (43%)

- The ratio of stocks to expected sales rose, but remained below its long-run average (balance of +12%, from +3%) is are expected to remain broadly similar next month (+11%).

Wholesalers and motor trade

- Wholesalers (-34% from +19%) and motor traders (-53% from -32%) also saw falls in sales volumes in the year to January.

- Both sectors expect a decline next month, with wholesale sales expected to drop at a slower pace (-11%).



Morson Group appoint new Non Exec Director

Eccles-based, Morson Group, has appointed

Joanne Lake as non-executive director as it looks to drive strategic growth within its core STEM markets – in particular, engineering, nuclear, aerospace and infrastructure – whilst capitalising on increasing demand

for talent in complementary sectors such as construction, IT & digital, professional services and more.

Joanne brings 30 years' financial and professional services experience, from senior positions with investment banks Panmure Gordon, Evolution Securities and Williams de Broe, and as a chartered accountant with PwC.

Social republic celebrate new account gains

Manchester-based social media agency, Social Republic, is celebrating a storming start to the New Year, with two new client wins.

The Black Mask Company and medino have both joined the agency's portfolio following extensive pitching processes.

Founded by former world champion boxer, David Haye, The Black Mask Company provides premium, reusable face masks. Social Republic will work alongside its internal teams to lead and manage its paid promotions across Facebook and Instagram.

The agency will also support medino, an online pharmaceutical site that provides a wide variety of products from medication to self-care through paid content on Instagram and Facebook.

Nicole Macdermott, COO of The Black Mask Company founder said: "Social Republic delivered

an extensive and well-researched proposal that conveyed their expertise, sector knowledge and creative abilities.

"We are looking forward to working with the team to further promote The Black Mask Company as the leading provider of high-quality face masks."

Rob Illidge, CEO of Social Republic added: *"It's a fantastic start to the New Year. We are delighted to welcome two incredibly ambitious brands, and look forward to utilising paid social strategies to drive sales.*

"Our flourishing client portfolio shows that, despite the current economic uncertainty, brands understand the importance of social media campaigns and are looking for new and innovative ways to reach target audiences.

"The continued growth of our business is testament to the hard work of everyone at the agency."

Lucid Outdoor launch second large format screen in Stockport



Digital advertising specialist Lucid Outdoor has unveiled its newest giant LED screen within the heart of Stockport's £1bn redevelopment.

The hi-resolution screens are unique to the region for their full-motion capabilities, meaning that both video and animated content can be displayed, and feature self-brightening technology to counteract increasing sunlight.

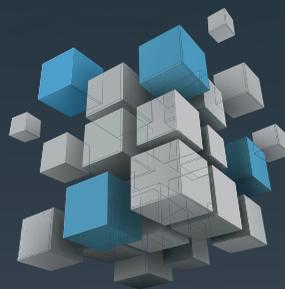
The new large format HD display hangs permanently at the entrance to Merseyway shopping centre as part of Stockport Council's ambitious regeneration plan. Measuring 6m x

3m, its addition is part of an initiative to promote and animate Stockport town centre and increase dwell time in its public areas. The screen operates from 6am to midnight each day, allowing advertisers to pitch brand messages, flash sales and adaptive offers to the town centre's high volume of visitors.

Stockport town centre is home to a number of well-known high street brands. Outlets for Primark, Office, Tessuti, and Claire's Accessories are among the highest performers in the North West for each company. They benefit from a weekly visitor footfall of over 150,000 in Merseyway, with approximately 23,000 shoppers visiting the shopping centre every Saturday.

A contract has been signed with Stockport Council to sell advertising packages on the displays. Initially, ads are scheduled to run for ten seconds of every minute, for two week durations, with Stockport's local businesses and public sector bodies receiving discounted rates and first refusal on screen slots.

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news

Two Manchester scaleups selected for Upscale programme

Two Manchester companies have been selected in Tech Nation's latest cohort of its Upscale programme - which represents 33 of the UK's best performing tech companies.

Tech Nation, the scaleup network for entrepreneurs, launches its inaugural Scale Ratio, which compares the number of seed stage, early growth and late growth companies in the UK's tech ecosystems.

Tech Nation reveals that a 50:30:20 ratio of seed (50%), early growth (30%), late growth (20%) companies in a UK regional tech hub is indicative of a mature, balanced ecosystem, well placed to benefit from the accelerated growth of late stage companies while creating the next wave of tech scaleups.

Tech Nation's newly launched 'Scale Ratio' suggests the 50:30:20 ratio results in the highest performing hubs - areas with the largest number of scaleups attracting the most significant VC investment. London, Manchester and Cambridge generally exhibit the 50:30:20 ratio and attracted the most investment in the UK in 2020, with 70% of investments made into late stage companies.

As a whole, the North West region exhibits an ideal balance of companies, indicating a well-balanced ecosystem.

Dr. George Windsor, Head of Insights, Tech Nation, commented: "Crucially, the Scale Ratio tells us about the growth potential of the UK's tech hubs and provides the levelling up agenda with new evidence to boost regional ecosystem development. It highlights exactly where scaleups are not receiving the support they need to grow from seed stage upwards to ensure these gaps are plugged. Despite the challenges of the past 12 months, the growth and potential of homegrown tech pioneers gives us something to celebrate.

"Tech scaleups hold the key to the UK's competitiveness in the next decade through job creation and investment. Scaleups are already driving investment into UK tech, representing 81% of the UK total

and creating employment. From established firms to startups, it's important to remember that companies at all stages make up the local and regional economies that give UK tech its global reputation."

The Upscale programme supports the growth of leading scaleups, exploring the fundamental growth challenges between peers and established tech founders.

The programme has been able to increase participation from across the UK, with 48% of finalists coming from outside London. Two of the 33 companies joining the programme are from Manchester:

Orka builds products designed specifically for hourly workers, solving challenges around high-turnover, high-volumes and high-velocity employment within traditional industries, and unlocking full workforces' potential.

Tom Pickersgill, cofounder, Orka, commented: "We're incredibly excited to be chosen to join the 2021 Tech Nation Upscale programme. The last year, although unusual, has presented a huge opportunity for us and the wider tech market, with digital adoption skyrocketing. We're looking forward to working with the programme's coaches to take our products to the next level!"

Total Processing is pioneering a payment strategy for local and multinational businesses, through access to the world's leading payment gateway and acquiring options, with built-in risk management and data analytics. Their accredited network of strategic partners provides businesses of all sizes with a fully integrated omnichannel software solution called Total Control.

Cameron Lee, Director, commented: "We're excited to be networking amongst peers who have grown at a similar rate to ourselves, sharing in that incredible ambition that drives our own company objectives. Our team is not only looking forward to contributing with other members of the Upscale programme, but to share and learn from fellow businesses".

Rochdale karting entrepreneur defies pandemic with launch of fifth business

A young entrepreneur from Rochdale has announced his fifth business with the launch of 'X-Kart'.

23-year-old Matty Street is the owner of 'TeamKarting' in Rochdale, and has now launched X-Kart, importing and selling Italian-made 'TB-Karts' - high-end racing go-karts, re-branded as 'X-Kart' for the UK market.

For the first time, UK racers can now own the X-Kart, renowned internationally for its innovation and performance.

Matty raised investment to buy out the TeamKarting business in 2017 when he was just 19. Having struggled through school with diagnoses of dyslexia, dyspraxia and Asperger's, he discovered karting when he was 12. He won a £30k scholarship to go racing at the age of 14 which opened doors to the expensive world of motorsport.



Despite his difficulties he studied motorsport engineering then went on to secure a degree, working at TeamKarting throughout. It is now the UK's highest rated karting track and has won an award for being Autism Friendly. Matty is also a driver for all-disabled Team BRIT.

He launched TK-Xtra in 2019, an in-house kart race team that offers a full progression route from indoor karting to outdoor racing.

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Middleton prepares for BID proposal

The Stakehill Industrial Estate BID Development Steering Group launched its BID Proposal and Business Plan recently in readiness for a ballot in February.

The consultation across all potential levy paying businesses included a detailed four-page survey, and numerous open events and business forums, culminating in an event with Mayor Andy Burnham and leader of Rochdale Council Cllr Allen Brett as keynote speakers.

Businesses identified three key project areas that they consider would support them and improve the over-all operational effectiveness of the estate as a whole. The activities within each of the project areas have been specifically designed to address and take advantage of the challenges businesses face on a day to day basis, and opportunities which could really make a difference in their ability to operate cost effectively on Stakehill.

Martyn Burrow of MID Communications and Chair of the Stakehill BID Steering Group, said, *"The business community in Stakehill is facing challenges and uncertainties due to Brexit, and 2020 brought significant change to how businesses operate as of result of COVID-19. Stakehill Industrial Estate will also be facing local challenges in the near future with the planned residential development and extension of the industrial estate to the east and south of the existing industrial area.*

"This BID Proposal and Business Plan will provide a business-driven focus to ensure essential improvements to Stakehill Industrial Estate, a means to ensure that our businesses not only survive, but prosper in these uncertain times. This investment, with a budget over the five-year BID lifetime of £800,000, will set standards which reflect our own aspirations as Stakehill businesses."

Inc & Co announce launch of new retail arm

Manchester founded Inc & Co has announced the launch of its retail arm, with the acquisition of luxury bag & accessories brand, KNOMO, and high street healthy eatery, Chop'd. These acquisitions signify the launch of Inc Retail Group, which will add 90 employees to the growing Inc Retail brand.

With 13 stores on the UK high street, including Manchester City Centre's Cross Street, Chop'd will now form part of its retail offering which will grow unique and innovative brands. This includes KNOMO, with four partner retailers in Manchester alone.

Founder Jack Mason commented: *"The acquisition of Chop'd & KNOMO marks a significant step for us into the retail arena, and I'm proud that both brands have a strong Manchester presence. As a customer of Chop'd, I'm looking forward to once again being able*

to eat out with friends and work colleagues."

Inc Retail Group will be headed up by newly appointed, experienced industry expert Dan Shaw, who has been brought on board as Managing Director of the retail group. *"Dan and I have a unique shared vision for how we believe we can reimagine the high street and he brings with him a wealth of knowledge and experience to make that vision come to life,"* says Jack.

Dan Shaw, a former board director at Jones Bootmaker, most recently headed up retail innovation at intu shopping centres. Dan brings extensive experience in wholesale, franchise, and retail operations, and is looking to bring several brands to sit within the retail group that complement Inc & Co's vision.

Inc Retail Group will soon be announcing further acquisitions in the pipeline.

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interview

Great British En with a **stin**

GM Business Connect were very pleased to recently interview Rod Burton-Chambers, Managing Director of RLBC Limited. The company is a fantastic example of great British design and engineering, and supplies innovative vehicle barrier systems all over the UK and across the world featuring their unique designs and craftsmanship.

Their current range of products feature a unique system for stopping vehicles called the Scorpion, and this has now been re-engineered as a portable unit, which opens up a fantastic range of new applications in a worldwide marketplace.

The West Yorkshire based business is a great example of Northern engineering innovation, and has global plans moving forward.

Rod – please tell us about the history and development of RLBC?

"I started the business in 1993 and now run it with my daughter Jynayer.

"As a family company we've enjoyed steady growth, and have had some excellent high-profile clients, including the Manchester Commonwealth Games in 2002, the London Olympics in 2012, plus many national organisations like Network Rail, HM Prison Service and the MOD. We're also featured in the UK Government's catalogue for security equipment published by the

Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI). In fact, all our systems are either accredited or in the process of Government accreditation to BSI pas 68 level for impact testing and rating for hostile vehicle mitigation products.

"We're a specialist designer and manufacturer of what we call 'Hostile Vehicle Mitigation Systems', providing static and portable solutions across both the public and private sectors.

"For over 30 years I've been designing, developing and producing these systems working with a range of specialist manufacturers to create vehicle arrest/blocking systems that are practical, tactical and commercially viable for the changing world we all share.

"Also, since Jynayer has come on board with her background of sales and marketing, the business has taken a more concise direction.

"She also knows the products and processes very well which puts us in excellent shape for growing the business, particularly towards the International marketplace."

The business has produced some ground-breaking security solutions over the years, can you share how these ideas have come about?

"I would describe myself as a really good 'scribbler'! My starting point would always firstly be a doodle which would then go to our engineers. From there, initial prototypes are then fabricated, followed by testing by CPNI, which is the Government body providing protective security advice to business and organisations, both in the public and private sector.

"For the next stage, if it works of course, and is still a viable product to sell, we'll draft production drawings and register the IP rights and patents on the product, and then start gearing up for manufacture and marketing."

One of your most exciting recent developments has been the Scorpion Portable Barrier. Can you tell us how this anti-terrorism device came about?

"When I first came up with the concept, we didn't have a specific terrorism requirement for a vehicle stopping system. The original Scorpion system was a static device that worked exceptionally well, and

applications at the time tended to be the protection of commercial premises against criminal activity or trespass.

"It wasn't until post 9/11 that the need for these as anti-terrorism devices became apparent, and increasingly over recent years one of the requirements was for large events where the general public were unfortunately the target of vehicle terrorism.

"With the development of our MK20 portable Scorpion barrier we can fulfil part of the need for this type of protective measure.

"The device weighs 320Kg which makes it portable enough for event organisers to move quickly, also heavy enough to remain in place without the risk of accidentally being moved.

"The portable system isn't just for counter-terrorism purposes, it does in fact have many more applications. The types of areas it is ideal for are Sea and Airports, Highways and Infrastructure projects.

"One particularly useful application is when work is being done on the infrastructure of Airports, where constantly changing road and site works create rapidly changing vehicle access points. These still all need protection due to security issues, and easily moveable barriers are perfect for this.

"The static barriers we do can also perfectly suit Industrial, Retail and



Scorpion MK1 original system



Engineering in the tail



Jynayer Burton-Chambers

Rod Burton-Chambers



Commercial sites, Pedestrian pathway protection plus a host of public and private uses."

Where are your barriers currently being manufactured?

"Previously we've worked with a range of external manufacturers, always trying to keep the work local. This has worked very well for us in the past, as we have chosen to work with the very finest precision engineers (always certified to ISO 9001 accreditation).

"However, we have recently brought the manufacturing process in-house, and we are currently looking for larger premises. This has resulted in reduced costs for our end users and crucially a higher level of control over reliability and turnaround."

Where are you looking to market your barriers?

"Currently we're looking to export, and for the types of International application we are targeting public areas, stadiums, airports, anywhere where there is a need for protection against vehicular

based terrorism threats.

"The other advantage with our portable Scorpion system is that when they are not deployed they can act as speed bumps, creating an opportunity for traffic calming in sensitive public areas.

"Another marketplace we are looking at developing is the private sector, specifically private driveways and roads, protecting against crime involving vehicles, parking issues, and criminal trespass using vehicles."

What are your plans for growing the business?

"In the years to come I'd like to see us 'well placed' in not just the domestic security marketplace but also the International sector. I'd also like us to grow large enough to make our products even more competitive in pricing.

"Alongside this we are always looking at new developments and products and I look forward to see

many more 'scribbles' come to life!

"With reference to International growth, in 2014 we were invited by Homeland Security in the US to have our system listed as one of their preferred products.

"This was a fantastic opportunity for us, as it meant we were the only product of its type featured in the catalogue, and as such opened us up to not just the US, but Canada, Australia and Israel. The listing also cleared our products for use by the American Army of Engineers.

"So, we're now looking to build on that momentum and export specifically further into those marketplaces assisted by the Department for International Trade, who have shown a great understanding of ourselves as a business and what we'd like to achieve by exporting.

"We're also going to be exhibiting with our new products at the International Security Expo at stand A82 at Olympia in London on the 28 and 29 September."



Contact Rod to find out more about the Scorpion MK20 or any other innovative products from RLBC Limited: 07436 815411 • roderick@rlbclimited.com www.rlbclimited.com

interview

Hospitality



Paul Walsh, Managing Director, Manchester Marriott Victoria & Albert Hotel

It's been no big surprise that our friends in the hospitality sector have been severely impacted over the last year due to Covid-19. GM Business Connect caught up with Paul Walsh, General Manager of Manchester Marriott Victoria & Albert Hotel to find out how they are coping through the current crisis.

Paul - you have worked in hospitality for 21 years, working for brands like City Inn, Doubletree by Hilton, Hotel Football and now the Marriott. Please tell us what your role is in one of Manchester's finest hotels...

"As General Manager, my work involves leading and developing my team to exceed expectations from our guests, owners and the Marriott Brand. I touch each area of the business over the course of a normal week, Finance, Revenue, HR, Operations and Sales. Continual development of our operation is essential so that I can put plans

into place to make things better every day."

How have you had to adapt to the pandemic, and what advice can you give to other hoteliers at this time?

"2020 was a very challenging year, we had to close the hotel for 3 months and have had to adapt every day since March. Both myself and my team have had to develop new skills, work in areas outside of our comfort zone and amend our procedures to meet official guidelines and keep everyone safe.

"My advice would be that communication is key, ensure that your team are aware of what is happening as changes are made, often on a daily basis. Keep close to your team, ensure that they know how important they are and be honest with them.

"There is no point spending time reflecting on what has happened and how your business has been affected - use your energy to look to the future."

You have 150 rooms - how many can you now offer guests during the lockdown?

"We are open for essential travel only at the moment and will react to any restriction changes over the coming months. Guests are staying but they are on government and other essential business."

What has been the biggest impact to the hotel and conference rooms?

"Our business has been dramatically affected since February, we have amended our conference capacities by over 50% to allow for social distancing.



Our Bar and Restaurant has not been open since March 2020."

How have you managed to reassure your staffs' safety at the present time, and how difficult has it been to motivate them?

"We have added lots of controls within the hotel to ensure that our team feel safe. We completed training with every member of the team before we re-opened in July, highlighting the importance of hand washing, social distancing, enhanced cleaning and sanitisation, changes to the way we work, the way we clean, the way we serve, the way we communicate and the importance of wearing masks.

"We have added protection screens



during lockdown

at reception, put in an electromagnetic spraying/disinfectant programme and added hand sanitiser stations in all areas.

"I think if you have the right people in the right place with the right information and attitude, remain positive and lead by example then your team will remain motivated."

You mention leading by example? Can you go into details?

"Probably the biggest example of the last 12 months is the need to be operational. Due to limited staff at times we have all had to club together to achieve what we need to.

"Everyone has had to work in different areas, I have cleaned bedrooms, cooked and served breakfast, worked on reception, maintenance, if something needs doing, just do it."

Have you had to furlough staff and are they still on furlough?



"Yes, we have had to use the furlough scheme and many of our team are still working part time."

You are part of a huge organisation - what support was given to the hotel by the group?

"Our owners and Marriott have been a huge support over the last 12 months, keeping in contact on a weekly basis to ensure that we are ok and know what is expected of us during each change to our business. Marriott implemented 'Commitment to Clean' which has been a huge support in training my team."

What do you hope to achieve once lockdown is over both with yourself and the hotel?

"We have been very busy refreshing our product over the last 12 months.



We have refurbished our bedrooms, bathrooms, public areas and Restaurant and Bar. We are currently planning a rebrand of our Food & Beverage area with a very exciting concept which I am looking forward to seeing executed."

When do you see the new normal coming into fruition?

"It is hard to say, however I can see some light at the end of the tunnel with the vaccine being rolled out and hope that we can slowly start getting back to normality in the second half of 2021."



Find out more - 0161 832 1188 or visit: [marriott.co.uk/hotels/travel/manva-manchester-marriott-victoria-and-albert-hotel/](https://www.marriott.co.uk/hotels/travel/manva-manchester-marriott-victoria-and-albert-hotel/)

insurance



Don't let the past hold you back



David Child,
Managing
Director,
SIS Insurance

Insolvency can have a massive impact on any business owner, both financially and from a wellbeing perspective. This is particularly poignant during the current pandemic where many thousands of businesses will become insolvent through no fault of their owners.

One of the most overlooked aspects of a business failure though is the issue of insurance.

Most business owners will have the tenacity to start afresh, showing the 'Entrepreneurial Spirit' that is needed to look forward and to build anew.

Unfortunately many different insurance products will become either unaffordable or simply unavailable to new businesses or their owners due to the issue of insolvency.

GM Business Connect caught up with David Child, Managing Director of SIS Insurance in Sale, who for the past 35 years has been dealing with non-standard insurance, and for the last 18 years has been helping businesses and their owners find affordable insurance.

David commented: "Currently the main issue is that when applying for a new policy all insurers will ask for any adverse financial history. This could be either a CVA, IVA, CCJ, bankruptcy or any form of insolvency. More than likely they will then refuse to quote for your shop, office, building or any other area of insurance - liability, commercial combined, home or fleet, because

most insurers view this so called 'moral hazard' as reason to decline cover.

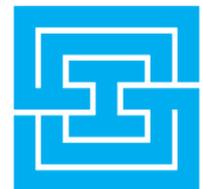
"Many new business owners in this position may feel pressured into not disclosing insolvency in their financial history, however, insurance companies are spending millions on data enrichment so they already know most of your personal and business history. So by not disclosing any previous insolvency to your insurer at inception enables them to repudiate any future claim, and possibly void your policy.

"As we are one of the UK's leading non-standard brokers, with underwriting authority to price and issue policies independently, we can look at any policy proposal and make a personal judgment on each and every case. We can look past insolvencies and make our decisions based on a much more personal approach, helping get you and your

business back on your feet.

"Our premiums are often not as expensive as you may think, and we are even able to provide finance agreements to help spread the cost over the policy period.

"As brokers we only deal with UK rated insurers and Lloyd's of London."



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insolvency

Dealing with difficult decisions

KBL
ADVISORY

No matter how well you run your business, there is always a risk of something going wrong. When business owners are faced with either a bad debt, rising costs or an unforeseen event, it is easy to miss the onset of insolvency.

The Covid-19 pandemic has intensified this, with many company directors busy ensuring processes are in place to comply with the ever-changing government guidelines whilst trying to maintain turnover.

It is more important than ever to recognise the 'signs of trouble' early and prepare accordingly as survival can depend on it.

At KBL Advisory, we can help you spot the triggers that could lead to insolvency and advise you on how to plan for the best outcome.

Warning Signs to look out for

- Year on year trading losses.
- Cash flow issues or no headroom in banking facilities.
- Increasing bank debt and question marks over serviceability - a common feature with the Government rollout of CBILS loans.
- Your bank or lender asking for additional information/security or requesting you seek professional advice.

- A build-up of trade creditor and HMRC arrears.
- Increase in debtor days/bad debts.
- Worsening credit status.
- Adverse action for example, 7-day letters from suppliers or CCJs.
- Bounced payments or the need to negotiate extended payment terms from suppliers.
- Short term unsecured loans (with high interest rates).

Top Tips

Spotting these warning signs early is key. Given the right expert guidance many businesses can adjust quickly, coping with new scenarios and maximising the opportunities presented in challenging times.

With the heightened financial pressure facing companies as a result of Covid-19, here are some top tips owner-managers must consider to survive the pandemic:

1. Don't bury your head in the sand

Business owners that bury their head in the sand only further increase the probability of insolvency.

Cheap borrowing has supported many UK SMEs through the pandemic, but with government loan repayments due to kick in from Spring '21 together with protection measures implemented - suspension of winding up orders and commercial

lease forfeiture - coming to an end, it's important for business owners to have a strategy for survival.

Facing up to financial difficulty as soon as you can and talking to a professional advisor early will increase the options available to you and can help you stabilise your company before it is too late.

We are all quick to ring a mechanic should our car start playing up. A director's attitude towards their business should be no different.

2. Act quickly

Be on the front foot by knowing what to look out for and what steps to take.

Acknowledging difficulties quickly gives business owners more time to react, reducing risk and increasing the chance of a positive alternative to business closure.

Currently, the government support available together with creditors sympathetic attitude to the trading climate has created 'breathing space' for many SMEs. Now is the time for directors to think about how they move forward and take readily available advice from a qualified specialist as soon as they spot signs of struggle.

3. Forecasts – equip yourself with reliable financial information

Every business owner needs visibility of the financial movements within

their company. Without an in-depth understanding of the figures, it is impossible to know how well the business is really doing.

Having robust trading and cash flow forecasts in place is crucial if you want to avoid insolvency.

This will give you a solid understanding of where the business is heading in the future and therefore it will be better equipped for any potential costs that come with growth and expansion.

Even if your business is excelling and generating large profits, it is vital to keep reliable financial information. Forecasting regularly is an effective tool in planning for both best and worst-case scenarios.

4. Do not fear external advice - business rescue is the priority

There is often a misunderstanding that speaking to an Insolvency Practitioner (IP) for assistance will automatically result in the closure of your business. This is not the case.

When we are asked to advise early, we can usually work with you to implement a practical strategy to return your company to a stable trading position.

Closing your company doesn't have to mean the end of your business. We can help you to understand your goals and find the best way forward.

KBL Advisory are a Northern based independent insolvency practice, supporting SMEs facing financial challenges through a range of business solutions including:

- Cash flow management
- Debt advisory
- Business turnaround
- Corporate restructuring
- Accelerated mergers and acquisitions
- Commercial funding solutions
- Reviewing and benchmarking of current funding facilities

If you or your company are experiencing financial difficulty, it is crucial that you seek expert advice as soon as possible.

Hope for the best, plan for the worst, and remember, nothing beats a chat...

Steve Kenny
Director



m: 07585 640711
e: Steve@kbl-advisory.com

Sarah Bates
Business Development Manager



m: 07414 932581
e: Sarah@kbl-advisory.com

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debt support

Managing your cashflow during the pandemic

GM Business Connect spoke with Paul Daine, Managing Director of Premium Collections, about the cashflow issues of businesses affected by the pandemic.

Paul commented: "As we now enter what hopefully should be the final phase of lockdown and the end of the Furlough scheme in April, many small business owners will have some very difficult decisions to make about their future and that of their business.

"If you run a business in the retail and hospitality sectors, you would probably have benefited from one or more of the Government schemes that have been available, but may still be struggling financially.

"However, if you don't trade in the retail and hospitality sectors there has been little, if any, financial support to get you through the harsh times of the pandemic.

"One way to ensure a healthy return to normal is to keep on top of your credit control activity. Make sure you are contacting your clients regularly to chase payment of overdue invoices by letter, telephone, text and email. If they say they can't pay

ask them to prove it or ask them to make a token payment as a gesture of goodwill. By paying even £1.00 the debtor is acknowledging that they are liable for payment of the whole debt.

"If you still don't receive payment then consider third party help from a debt collection agency or a firm of solicitors. They will help you recover the debt or issue a County Court Claim and, if you still don't receive payment, they will also assist with enforcement of the Judgment.

"There was a significant increase in the number of County Court Judgments (CCJ's) against both individuals and businesses in 2020 with 194,203 judgments registered against individuals in the final quarter of 2020 alone.

"The Government has introduced a number of changes to the Insolvency Act to create a low cost alternative to declaring Bankruptcy.

"If you have up to £30,000 of debts and up to £2,000 in assets you can

apply for a Debt Relief Order, which will mean your debts (with some exceptions) will be written off after 12 months, although the DRO will show on your credit file for 6 years.

"If your debts are greater than £30,000 then Bankruptcy or an Individual Voluntary Arrangement may be the only options if you operate as a sole trader or partnership.

"If you operate as a Limited Company then Liquidation, Administration or a Company Voluntary Arrangement may be the answer to your financial problems.

"Whichever you decide, make the decision quickly as continuing to trade whilst knowing your business is insolvent could lead to prosecution.

"It's crucial to seek professional advice before it's too late."



Paul Daine, Managing Director, Premium Collections

Don't allow long-standing debts to adversely affect your business

For all your credit management requirements Premium Collections Limited have the solution. Staffed by dedicated professionals with over 50 years combined experience handling virtually every type of debt issue, and operating on a national and international basis, we can tailor a package of services to meet your requirements.

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- Insolvency book debts collection
- Vehicle repossessions

For a detailed discussion on how we can help your business or for a quotation for any of our services, please contact **Paul Daine, Managing Director** on:

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workplace



Pay attention

The biggest asset of any business are their people, and it's crucial they are ready for a future of business evolution using smart tech. Throw in a pandemic for good measure and it's never been more important to ensure those people have the skillsets to not just manage but thrive in the current uncertain environment.

Kirsty Allan, Managing Director of KLA Creative, offers an insightful and intriguing new set of coaching options with her 'WorkWell' programmes. Here she discusses some of the underpinning aspects of those courses:

We are all immersed in a sea of radical change and to keep afloat, our businesses require a radical shift in attention - in the clear direction of upgrading consciousness.

There is a big conversation that we all need to have, right now. People's values, lifestyles, spirituality and ethics are rapidly evolving with new technology, new situations and new ideas. The world of business has been levelling-up at an exponential rate with AI and SMART technologies, equipment, analytics and communications.

These two concurrent streams of personal and professional evolution are largely missing one essential coherent, unifying element - the level of expanded consciousness required to fully harness, sustain and to grow with the flow. Upgrading the consciousness of you and your people in a practical, adaptive style is the only way to ensure sustainable growth in the rapidly changing culture of business.

The combining effects of multi-faceted societal change and the unfolding advancement of Industry 4.0 means that everything we are each building in our businesses no longer rests on solid foundations of the familiar, the trusted and expected. The pandemic has been a further catalyst to this turbulent sea.

"A rising tide lifts all boats"
J.F. Kennedy

Standing on our new shorelines of uncertainty, if we look out to

the horizon we can see a strange phenomenon occurring. All at once, those long-suppressed anxieties (that were hitherto anchored to the ocean floor by cultural attitudes of stoicism, by beliefs in career stability and through promises of job safety) have all been dislodged and are freely bobbing up to the surface, rising from the depths of unconsciousness into waking consciousness - en masse - and it is time to pay attention. Deep, focused attention on what this means and how to navigate them; because after great change comes a dawning of new insight.

Anxiety itself, is of course a huge human conundrum which affects our happiness, wellbeing and productivity - but here is where I want to offer you a surprising new observation. Anxiety can be resolved when we recognise that it is the echo of our hearts, our true values and needs. It is an opportunity to expand and to grow personally, collectively, globally, holistically.

"One must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star."
Friedrich Nietzsche

The deep irony is that all this uncertainty which we worry about and fixate on, is actually the key to all our potential. This is because uncertainty marks a threshold, a place of uncharted territory with no map, unknown seas with no rules and therefore limitless exploration. We are collectively in a liminal state of becoming and with insight and awareness we can act to resolve the fears and worries of the past, rather than continue to 'manage' them (and avoid bringing them with us as cultural baggage).

The fleeting nature of job sustainability, the increasingly personal and psychic interaction with Smart technology represent very real existential fears of human redundancy. So how do we resolve this? It's surprisingly simple when you know the science. It's all about a radical mindset shift regarding well... our minds.

Are you ready to rise with the tide?

There is a scientific paradigm and worldview shift occurring. Cutting edge scientific and transpersonal research is leading the vanguard for a post-materialist model of expanded consciousness.

Understanding the truly expansive nature of human consciousness will lead us not just to support personal growth but collective growth. Our employees and customers will realise their creative and productive potential within themselves and as a team. That the culture of business itself is one that increasingly values the growing bigger picture - a picture that is designed and painted by the people. That working with AI and Smart technology is not a 'thin edge of a redundancy wedge' or an affront to privacy, that these systems instead will work for us and with us, if we put our attention on what we want to achieve, not what we fear.

Enhance the being and we enhance the doing!

How can you ensure your business will meet the needs, the demands and the challenges that this global paradigm shift is bringing?

With a matching full systemic mindset shift. To build resilience and creativity that integrates personal and cultural development. You need to upgrade the consciousness of your workforce now, not as a future afterthought to fix a problem of submerged anxieties and sunken apathy.

Perhaps your business demands a variety of skills from your people. We are all human beings - even when we are humans doing. Expanding the understanding, appreciation and application of conscious potential could quickly

serve you in the following ways:

- Heightened sensory awareness in a workplace that calls for stringent health and safety rules
- AI and human minds as complementary time and efficiency resources to one another
- Team building through aligned values and coherent action
- The 'present' world of Mindfulness meditation techniques that can be learned and adopted quickly to enhance wellbeing
- Balance of both mind and body where multi-tasking is essential to timely productivity
- Greater appreciation of and utility of gender roles, differences, identities and social inclusion
- Accessing deeper levels of empathy where the strength of customer bonds and/or inter-staff relationships are key to sales and retention
- Sheer confidence and big-picture thinking (Who couldn't use more of that!?)

How do we sure up and ready each other to set sail again?

Attention.

The uncertainty of right now is a sure sign of the certainty of a different tomorrow. This is a journey of resilience, of expansion, of growth for all of us. Pay attention to the changes that have occurred and are still occurring. Pay attention to the direction of the flow change. Pay attention to your people and their calls for leadership, support and opportunity - because this is a singular moment in our history, for conscious choice.

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on **07764 558803** or email **kla@kirstylucindaallan.com**

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news



Passion, Integrity and Delivery

GM Business Connect talked with Paul Whitnell, Founder of the British and Irish Trading Alliance (BITA), which is a non-profit networking organisation operating across the UK and Ireland, about the impact of the pandemic on their organisation and their membership.

Paul commented: "Like many of our members, we found that last year was almost like pressing a reset, or at least a pause, button.

"We have all examined ourselves over the last few months and many of us have found a resilience and adaptability that we didn't know we had.

"A side-effect of reducing the number of face-to-face meetings and

opportunities for socialising is that we have all had to slow down.

"Work may be busier than usual, but most of us have a lot more down-time. A by-product of this, for myself anyway, is that I've become more aware of the opportunities and people around me.

"Many businesses have tunnel-vision and only focus purely on their businesses and what they can do, but this slowing down has allowed people the luxury of time.

"Time to look around and see how those around them can help, and to realise that there are different ways of doing things.

"As an organisation we have always preached the virtues of face-to-face meetings and lively events, so had to pivot quickly to ensure we were offering what our members needed, not what we thought they wanted.

"By approaching it in this way, we made the most of a unique opportunity. We took the time to review our member benefits, operations, policies, and processes; building a new platform for members to share work and access training.

"Our values:

passion, integrity, and delivery, remain the same as they embody how we operate, and what it means to be a part of our community.

"We also closely examined where our passions lie and why we exist, so reviewing our mission statement and future goals was essential. The updated mission statement sums up how we work and what we do in one short sentence:

"At BITA we 'help more people, and influence further, as a collective.'

"This simple and concise statement encapsulates us as an organisation with three main points: helping people, influencing change, and acting as one.

"We help people by giving our time and expertise to work closely with our members to see where potential synergies lie, always encouraging collaboration over competition.

"BITA has spent years working with the UK and Irish Embassies, and building relationships with other governments, trading bodies and lobbying groups. Because of this we are in an excellent position to make sure that the voices of our members are heard, and their views given weight.

"BITA is a community, and we are growing stronger all the time. Our friendly members, engaged boards, and expanding chapters mean that we are exceptionally well positioned to make a genuine difference to businesses. Our small team means we are nimble enough to act quickly when circumstances change.

"This served us very well in 2020 when, in a few short months, we transformed from an organisation that focused on face-to-face interactions, to one that offered all the benefits of membership online.

"We have been carrying out targeted introductions and

using technology to offer online networking events that are as close to the real thing as possible.

"In addition, we have constructed a new training platform that offers accredited online courses and launched a procurement hub so that our members can directly benefit from the incredible companies that make up our community.

"As a result of this work, and the time we put into solidifying our relationships, we have grown globally in 2020, gaining valuable access to different people and cultures. We are quickly realising that the innovative trailblazers from across the world can offer exciting solutions for difficult challenges here at home.

"To capitalise on this, we are conducting intensive strategic discussions with members, to find out where our new contacts and experience can help drive success."

Online

"We have now temporarily taken our meetings online - linking our nationwide groups together. We're using a new platform that businesses may not be familiar with 'Remo', which means members and guests can move around the virtual room and network at tables of up to 6 of their choice, and connect with contacts by webcam speaking, messaging and connecting through their loaded profile through their LinkedIn account in seconds. We're finding this increases everyone's profile on a national basis, linking to all our members in Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, London, Ireland, Devon and The Isle of Man."

If you would like to learn more about BITA and the advantages of membership, please find out more at: www.bitai.ie

Also email me: paulw@bitai.ie

BITA Founder, Paul Whitnell



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exporting

It's a New World it's a New

The new year has arrived and with it ushered in a new era for the UK.

The protracted flurry of activity towards the end of last year that led to the free trade agreement with the EU, came more with a whimper than with a bang.

So, it is a new world, it is a new day, but are we feeling good?

My sense is that we have been suffering a national hangover that will take time to clear.

We are under lockdown again,

which is mentally exhausting, there are major stresses for importers and exporters at the borders with the EU, there are issues and niggles with interpretations of the new rules and all of these things take time to work through.

Overlaid on all this is the difficulty caused by Covid, and exacerbated by winter weather.

Where does this leave us?

Firstly, we need to put the EU frictions, excluding the vaccines debacle, into perspective: the biggest opportunities for exporters still lie outside the EU.

Exports to the EU as a percentage of the total have been falling for many years and in 2019 were less

than 45% of UK exports.

The fastest growing economies in the world are not in the EU!

As an independent country we have forged over 60 free trade agreements, with our application for accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and more major agreements in the pipeline. (The CPTPP is a trade agreement between Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam, making the CPTPP the third largest free-trade area in the world by GDP).

This provides a real chance for expansion of opportunities across the world.

**EXPORTING
IS
GREAT**

BRITAIN & NORTHERN IRELAND

Id, Day...



In many ways global export expansion is much easier for SMEs now than it was pre Covid; virtual operation means there is no longer an expectation of physically visiting a market.

Trade missions and events have become virtual, customer meetings are virtual. Not only does this save an enormous amount of money, but perhaps more importantly it dramatically widens bandwidth to speak to customers and prospects through time saving.

This could be a critical factor for smaller companies without the benefit of phalanxes of export managers.

Freight to and from the far east has been facing issues recently with sky high costs and shortages of available container slots. However, this is

predominantly East-West with vastly more imports into the UK and Europe than the other way round.

This is leaving empty containers stranded in the West, whilst badly needed back in China. I believe that this is a short to medium term problem that market economics will resolve, however in the short term it creates an opportunity in exporting to the Far East.

British goods, especially with the Union Jack on, have a premium reputation and desire across the world.

Our food hygiene standards are highly respected, as are our fashion, engineering, and many other sectors.



That desire for British products, combined with the universality of the English language, create a tremendous opportunity for United Kingdom companies to export their products worldwide.

Which brings me back round to the EU, our closest neighbours. There is very real political friction over the new rules and the deliberate awkwardness of some of those neighbours at the border.

The health sanitary rules are also getting in the way of some trade.

The Cheshire Cheese Company has been in all the press over the problems they have been having. This multi award-winning North-West producer has been expanding internationally, but their online sales to the EU have ground to a halt.

Laurence Bass, one of the owners of the company told us: *"We are now required by the EU to provide full Health Certification for all sales of dairy products, though frustratingly, this is not required for EU products coming into the UK."*

"It isn't viable for us to pay for the Vet certification (ca.£180) for our online consumer sales, given an average order of £35-£40."

"We don't have these problems with other countries, for instance the USA, as there is an allowance for sales for personal consumption not given by the EU."

This problem is not simply for consumer sales, as their wholesale business has additional bureaucracy and costs, although their wholesale exports are continuing.

There are solutions as Laurence informs us: "We are looking to use distributors in each territory to fulfil our online orders, or possibly set up our own fulfilment centre in the EU."

"Either way we are working hard to arrange something so we can keep

all our customers happy".

The UK Government say they are working closely with UK companies and the EU to resolve these teething issues and help companies to meet the new requirements.

There are growing opportunities for UK companies to use export opportunities to expand turnover and thrive in the post Brexit, post Covid world, and there is a lot of help available including potential grants towards developing the strategy and tactics to enter markets.

It is also worth remembering that the UK has a very strong services sector and there are a multitude of opportunities to sell overseas - without any of the freight or import bureaucracy.

There are many markets around the world that are similar to home markets.

Find these and you will be feeling good.



Tony Goodman MBE

is a successful exporter and has been doing so through a variety of different businesses. He is currently Marketing Advisor at Forest and Co who specialise in offering guidance on branding, exporting and sales:

www.forestandco.com



Exporting continues on next page



Continued from
previous page

exporting

Exporters need help, and the government needs to step up...



Marie Boyer, Managing
Director of France Line
International
Transport Ltd

...says the Anglo-French and European Road Freight Specialist France Line

The queues at customs and at Britain's key ports have been lengthening since the 2nd week of January 2021, with chaos building

and its authorities need to do more to resolve deeper issues, says France Line's Managing Director Marie Boyer from their HQ in Trafford Park.

"Cross-channel traffic was relatively light early January, but that was largely a result of depressed demand, businesses stockpiling at the end of 2020 or delaying deliveries as anticipating teething problems.

"The main problem is in correct information for the customs declarations now required as the UK has left the Single Market and Customs Union. It is no longer just trucks that move goods; data is just as vital, as customs are all about accurate data.

"Our activity has reduced by around 50% on this time last year. Some freight forwarders are down 85% on

usual levels as many exporters are not prepared, as the practicalities of the deal were only released during the festive period.

"Other businesses thought they would not need any new paperwork to ship onto the continent, because the free-trade deal meant they could continue as normal.

"Most of our customers understood our warning of the past few years that this would not be the case, and followed our advice to prepare for the worst, hoping for the best, and prepared using our checklists.

"Others are taking the conscious decision to defer deliveries until they have got all the correct data for the paperwork.

"But having the correct paperwork is

not enough. Britain urgently need more customs agents. IT is a problem too. As activity levels increase, the waiting time for customs clearance is increasing, and parking and lack of facilities at the customs lorry parks are big issues.

"Many of the European hauliers the UK haulage industry rely on for their exports into Europe are scaling back their services due to these issues. This will result in a shortage of trailers, and higher haulage prices for UK manufacturers. This could mean UK goods becoming too expensive, EU importers sourcing these products elsewhere and a risk to many UK jobs.

"It is time the government at last understood this and did something about it, starting with the recruitment and training of more customs agents."



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Brexit 2021 - reality and moving forward

Steve Swinburn, General Manager of Harbour International Freight based in Manchester, looks at more issues brought to light in the aftermath of Brexit.

"The Government have spent many millions on various TV ads, Radio ads, and Motorway Matrix signs advising UK Business to get ready for change. What it has not mentioned is it has been hard to prepare and adapt for the unknown.

"Whilst preparing my own customers and clients for the unknown has been challenging and at times quite fraught, it has shown that the government have been out of touch with UK plc and the realities and complexity of International Trade, and how the UK supply chain and industry has changed, adapted, and

embraced global outsourcing and manufacturing.

"The 'Fretrade' deal in place with the European Union has the potential to decimate companies over something that was hidden and glossed over in the small print. The Zero Customs Tariff & Duties only relates to goods that are of UK or EU origin.

"An important point here is that Origin, for customs purposes, means the country from where it is being shipped. If you bear in mind the UK is a nett importer of finished and manufactured goods from all parts of the globe, all these goods are instantly charged VAT and Duty if they are sent from the UK to anywhere in Europe and therein is the

problem, these are conversations I am personally having daily.

"Mid-January we have customers frantically trying to absorb major changes which the government landed on their desks in between Christmas and New Year - and also moving into a nationwide lockdown.

"At Harbour we have spent the last few weeks and months guiding and advising, explaining the rules for shipping to Ireland, Northern Ireland, and the European mainland in a clear, concise and thorough manner,

"We do feel when we listen to current feedback from customers old and new that we have provided an invaluable source for navigating the current issues.

However, the Government should



Steve Swinburn,
General Manager,
Harbour
International
Freight

have listened to the wheels of industry and embraced their views so that we could have avoided any issues that we now have.

It will get better; business can adapt, but we all need to work together to keep the exporting routes into and out of Europe open and easily accessible.

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apprenticeships

The most important **National Apprenticeship Week** ever

We have recently celebrated **National Apprenticeship Week (8 - 14 February).**

It was very different this year, like so many other events and celebrations.

Many innovative digital events were held across the country to celebrate all that is great about apprenticeships. From recognising apprentices themselves and celebrating their successes as they develop great careers, to highlighting the vital contributions made by the thousands of employers who commit finance, time and resource into developing great apprentices. Also, it is important not to forget the many organisations and businesses within the apprenticeship sector, the colleges, training providers

and many other supporting agencies, who particularly over the last 12 months have gone above and beyond in unprecedented circumstances.

Although different, this National Apprenticeship Week was undoubtedly the most important one the sector will experience.

The theme **#BuildTheFuture** summarised perfectly the very positive impact that apprenticeships can have, and the week acted as a catalyst to reinvigorate and re-energise the apprenticeship landscape.

The pandemic has been tough for the sector, and the number of apprenticeship opportunities created, particularly for the younger working cohort, has reduced significantly.

As we slowly begin to navigate a path out of this extraordinarily challenging period in our nation's recent history, undoubtedly, apprenticeships can be one of the many positive beacons of hope that can help drive forward career opportunities, economic prosperity and social mobility.

#BuildTheFuture

It is vital for both the social and economic wellbeing of the nation that the whole of our population have access to not only the best educational experiences but also a wide range of high-quality employment and apprenticeship opportunities. We must allow this generation to build their futures, to develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours they need to thrive in their chosen career. Equally, we must ensure those in work can

access high quality learning that ensures they can drive forward and maximise their potential in their chosen sector. Apprenticeships are vital to this.

It is not only apprentices who can benefit. As businesses and organisations across the region and country begin sticking their heads above the pandemic parapet, re-focusing corporate goals and objectives, working out the best way of building their futures - apprenticeships and skills development must be a vital part of their plans.

Many businesses have stagnated during the last twelve months, some have gone and a few have thrived. However, all should be looking to the future with a hope and optimism.

To ensure this hope turns into success, businesses will need to change and adapt, not only to the post-Covid world, but also the post-Brexit period and the new digital age. What better way to adapt that by ensuring your business has the best people, highly motivated by investment in their skills, knowledge and behaviours, to drive your business forward.

Apprenticeships at Salford City College work with over 500 different businesses, supporting around 1,500 apprentices per year.

Employer satisfaction is very strong, with just under 95% of employer partners rating their service as good or better.

If you want to build the future of your business around skills development, please call us on **0161 631 5555** or email apprenticeships@salfordcc.ac.uk

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economy

A tale of **two economies...**



...recovery expected at a 'rate of knots' in 2021

Analysis from Dr John Ashcroft on the economic impact of Covid-19

Andy Haldane, Chief Economist at the Bank of England, expects Britain's economy to recover 'at a rate of knots', from the beginning of the second quarter this year.

It should not be too difficult. The comparative figures for last year, are not much to beat. The economy collapsed by just over 20% in Q2 last year. The recovery in the economy will appear to be pretty dramatic, from April onwards.

Growth of over 15% in the second quarter is probable. This will change the mood and outlook for the year as a whole. We assume an easing of lockdown as Easter approaches, and a successful rollout of the vaccine, as the year progresses.

Despite the setback to the start of the year as lockdown was imposed once again, growth of 5% for the year as a whole seems a likely outcome.

The unemployment rate is expected to peak at around 6.5% in Q2, with some 2 million out of work. The extension of the furlough scheme into the second quarter is set to mitigate the increase in job losses.

Rishi Sunak and Treasury stepped into the breach once again. Government borrowing is set to increase to around £375 billion this year. The covid bill will rise to £300 billion. The Bank of England will continue the 'monetary financing of

the fiscal deficit'. The Old Lady will boost her balance sheet to meet the increase in spending.

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times..."

As we returned from our winter break, our headline in the Saturday Economist was 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, and that was just week one...'

The famous opening lines from Charles Dickens' Novel 'A Tale of Two Cities' were most apposite in our 'Tale of Two Economies'.

Sector losers during the pandemic have been clothing and retail, travel and tourism, food and accommodation, leisure and entertainment. Sector winners have been, food, home entertainment, online retail and logistics.

Online food sales have doubled. The share of online sales overall has increased to over 30%. Digital acceleration online and into cloud, has become the 'modus operandi' for all. Boohoo have recently announced the acquisition of the Debenhams brand. ASOS emerged as the front runner for Topshop and Miss Selfridge.

The old order changes. Online sales were up by 60% in December. Excluding fuel, retail sales were up by 6.5% in the final quarter of the year. Food sales were up by

5%. Gardening products up 9%. Household products were up by 15%. DIY goods were up over 35%.

Consumers are spending on retail, especially online. They cannot spend in pubs, restaurants, hotels and travel, for the moment. They will spend on homes and households. Housing activity in December, was the highest end of year performance since 2006. House prices ended the year up 7.5%.

Non-food online sales now account for almost 40% of overall transactions. Brands with a strong retail franchise were the victims in 2020. A record number of shops closed in the year. This was an acceleration of a trend over the past five years.

New car sales were down by 30% in 2020. Diesel sales were down by over 60%. Hybrid sales, on the other hand, were up by almost 90%.

The charge for battery capacity is the main challenge now for the car industry. Four mega battery plants are required within a five year time frame if the future of domestic car manufacturing is to be secured.

10,000 pubs and restaurants 'called time' permanently last year, a 15% increase on the previous year. There were 4,000 new site openings, a net 6,000 loss for the year as a whole and a 5% reduction in capacity.

Of the 2.4 million on furlough at the end of October, approximately one million were from the retail, accommodation and food sectors. A further 200,000 were involved in arts and entertainment.

We would expect a swift bounce back in the leisure sector as the

economy recovers. Structural problems in the retail sector will present more of a challenge.

In travel and tourism, staycations will provide a boost to the domestic holiday market. Some 80 million annual visits abroad will not be made anytime soon. International travel will be slow to recover.

According to the head of IATA, the International Air Transport Association, the world's airlines have need of a further \$80 billion to survive the crisis caused by the pandemic. Central bankers may be obliged to heed the call.

In our 'Tale of Two Economies', we no longer need to worry about Boris and Brexit, Trump and Tariffs.

The UK readjusts to life outside the EU. In the US, adult supervision is back in the White House...

Dr John Ashcroft specialises in economics, strategy and financial markets.

He is author of *The Saturday Economist*, great updates every week on the UK and World Economy. *The Saturday Economist Live* is now available as a podcast and on Zoom.

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gdpr

Care needed for **working from home**

Two thirds of home workers could be putting employers at risk by printing confidential documents at home.

- New research reveals 66% of home workers in the UK are potentially breaching GDPR regulations by printing work related documents at home.
- Meeting notes, contracts, commercial documents, payroll and CV's among documents workers are printing at home.

Currently in the UK, all companies that store or process personal information about EU citizens within EU states must comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which requires them to have an effective, documented, auditable process in place for the collection, storage and destruction of personal information.

But with many staff now working from home due to government restrictions, how many home workers are potentially breaking confidentiality rules by printing documents at home?

A new study conducted by confidential shredding and records management company Go Shred reveals a staggering 66% of home workers have printed work related documents since they began working from home, averaging at 5 documents every week.

That means that since the government first advised against all unnecessary social contact in March 2020, home workers have potentially printed an average of 2,202 confidential documents to date.

But what are workers printing at home to potentially risk a breach of GDPR rules?

The top five items are:

1. Meeting notes/agendas (42%)
2. Internal documents including procedure manuals (32%)
3. Contracts and commercial documents (30%)
4. Receipts/expense forms (27%)

5. Industry related copy (e.g. press release/brochure copy/articles/student work to proof) (24%)

Shockingly, 20% of home workers that have printed at home admit to printing confidential employee information including payroll, addresses, medical information and 13% have even printed CVs or application forms. Printing this type of information is a high risk activity and any documentation which includes these details need to be handled and most importantly disposed of correctly.

Delving into the places and professions with the highest number of home workers opting to print work related documents at home, Liverpool leads the way with 80% admitting to the act and those working in Law (86%) are surprisingly the most likely occupation to commit this breach.

When asked whether they have disposed of any printed documents since working from home, nearly a quarter (24%) said they haven't disposed of them yet, as they plan to take them back to the office. A further 24% say they used a home shredding machine but then disposed the documents in their own waste. This method of disposal is not recommended due to personal waste bins not providing enough security for confidential waste and therefore still leaving employers open to a data breach and potential fine.

A further 9% of home workers who have printed work related documents at home say they haven't disposed of them yet but they do plan to in some way, with 8% saying they have no plans at all to dispose of the work related documents they have printed. Interestingly, 7% of home workers admit they haven't disposed of any work related documents as they don't know how to.

With this in mind, Go Shred



also asked workers about their knowledge of GDPR regulations. Surprisingly, 41% of home workers say they are aware of the GDPR rules and regulations around printing confidential documents related to work outside the workplace, but they have no choice other than to print at home

36% told Go Shred they are aware of the GDPR rules, so never print at home and a further 19% admit they have some knowledge of the regulations but would like to know more. Shockingly, 12% of those polled admitted they have absolutely no knowledge of the regulations, with 9% saying their employer has not reinforced rules around GDPR and sensitive information while they've been working from home.

Mike Cluskey, Managing Director at Go Shred said: "Printing any documentation which includes personal information about employees or potential employees

is a high risk activity. Should this information get into the wrong hands, it could be used to impersonate someone.

"It's quite shocking to see that so many home workers are printing items such as payroll and personal information like addresses. This indicates that there is definitely work to be done when it comes to highlighting the risks of printing documents at home. Even internal documents such as meeting notes and agendas can be risky, so extra precautions should be taken in order to dispose of these properly.

"It's vital that business leaders review their current processes and educate their staff on the current guidelines, as working from home demands a different security standard than being in the office, especially with data security and disposing of confidential information."

wellbeing

When you need to take a break

These past few months have been an exhausting, emotionally draining time for many of us.

Whether we're working longer hours, worried because we're not working, uncertain about the future, staying indoors with fractious children or a partner, concerned about elderly relatives, no-one's had it easy.

The amount of tolerance and forbearance required, the mental agility to cope with new, unfamiliar ways, compounded with the challenge of emotionally supporting people devastated at the situation they find themselves in during this unprecedented pandemic has taken its toll on everyone involved.

Coping in the midst of tragedy whilst trying to remain positive, upbeat and maybe professional has been a massive ask of everyone.

There are times when you need to take a break.

Not a holiday, or a night out with pals, but a simple time out, recharging break.

Sometimes, after a busy, stressful day it's tempting to flop into an armchair with a drink and the remote control. This might be fine occasionally, but done long-term it's counter-productive and can result in you feeling lethargic and flat.

When you need to take a break here are some positive suggestions;

- **Take your lunch somewhere 'nice'**, maybe in a nearby beauty spot, rather than quickly eating it on the run, at your desk or in the car.

Is there a local park, nature trail, garden or beach where you could enjoy a thirty-minute break?

Make something tasty and nutritious and savour every bite, and know that everyone around you benefits from your having had some time to step back.

- **Go for a walk, run or bike ride** and allow yourself personal space each day.

Some people like to combine that with listening to music, podcasts or making calls, but why not use this

valuable opportunity to clear your thoughts and engage fully in your activity.

Notice the colours, sounds and changes each day; focus on the here and now.

- **Stay hydrated.** Feeling tired and irritable may be because you're drinking too much coffee or too little water and have become dehydrated.

Drink more water and clear the toxins from your body; your fluid levels will soon readjust.

- **Dedicate some time to music**, maybe revisiting those old favourites you've not heard in a while. Or play some quiet, relaxing music to help you chill out.

- **Book a zoom call with friends** and have a party night, dancing, being energetic, reconnecting and having fun.

- **Make a brew and phone a friend** for a leisurely chat. Settle down and exchange updates, laughs and mutual support.

- **Make time early evening to escape** by reading a good book. Perhaps read whilst your evening meal is cooking.

- **Be creative.** Many people have been baking bread and cakes with enthusiasm over lockdown, stirring and kneading, creating wonderful smells in their homes. Even if your efforts are inedible it can still be a therapeutic way to pass the time!

- **Get out the crafts**, your painting or handiwork and enjoy being absorbed for a while. Or spend a little time in your garden, tending your plants, maybe growing herbs or vegetables.

- **Do something you're good at**, that you've maybe forgotten about; DIY, a musical instrument, something that gives pleasure for its own sake. Feel proud at revisiting a positive achievement.

- **Enjoy family downtime together.** If your children are mostly at home not every moment has to be spent in formal education. Get outside and go for walks, a nature trail, bird-watching, kick a ball about. Or if indoors, play board games, crafts, invent games.

- **Take a break with your partner.** Lockdown may have unearthed some irritations in your relationship due to spending more time together, each nursing individual worries and concerns. Do things separately but also have regular fun together; walking, talking, cooking, playing. Invest in some positive us time.

- **Ask your partner for a massage.** No talking, just a wonderful way to ease your muscles and let go of tensions in your body. Maybe alternate turns, but really enjoy the benefits of having your body soothed and massaged.

- **Ensure your bedroom is a cosy haven**, a place where you retreat and relax. Clean sheets are always a bonus. And if you're going through an especially busy, tough time it's good to commit to going to bed a little earlier to wind down.

- **Immerse yourself in the sensory indulgence of a bath.** Candles, bubbles, your favourite music and a thirty-minute soak could be a great way to relax and feel thoroughly cleansed and chilled after a long stressful day. Warm the towels and go for the full spa experience.

- **Take a mental break and practise daily gratitude.** Appreciating what you have can raise your spirits, improve your mood and give you a break from tense situations.

- **Meditate and clear your mind.** Some great free meditations are available online. Even if you simply use them for relaxation it's a lovely daily break.

- **Make the effort to look up.** Raising your line of vision from the ground to the trees and sky can improve your mood, open your eyes to sunshine and reconnect you to the wider world out there.

Every one of these suggestions is free and could require very little of your time.

But taking a break recharges your batteries, allows your thinking to clear and helps you better manage the daily stresses you're experiencing.

And if you've more suggestions be sure to add them to this list.



Susan Leigh MNCH (ACC)

Altrincham, Cheshire and South Manchester counsellor, hypnotherapist, relationship counsellor, writer and media contributor offers help with relationship issues, stress management, assertiveness and confidence. She works with individual clients, couples and provides corporate workshops and support.

She's author of 3 books, all on Amazon and with easy to read sections, tips and ideas to help you feel more positive about your life.

To order a copy or for more information, help and free articles visit www.lifestyletherapy.net

For more articles, information or to make contact please call **0161 928 7880** or visit www.lifestyletherapy.net

Virtual diary dates

Due to the exceptional circumstances we find ourselves in, many business networking events, shows, expos and 'face to face' events have been cancelled, postponed or reworked as virtual events until further notice.

Rest assured the Greater Manchester business networking community will be back as soon as the current crises fades and we get clear advice from government that all is well, but in the meantime we are presenting a series of 'virtual' solutions available to the business community to keep networking but stay safe. We're also listing a number of events that are pencilled in for later in this year and next in the hope that the situation has changed by then, and we're also featuring some re-arranged events that have recently moved.

Regular readers will also note our 'places to meet' page has been omitted.

Again, once the situation changes we'll be re-introducing this.

4 Networking

Online networking

Cost £5+VAT per meeting.
Membership £19.99+VAT per month.
Contact www.4networking.biz

page 20 BITA (British and Irish Trading Alliance)

Online networking using Zoom

BITA Manchester every fortnight
19 Feb, 5 Mar 4.00pm - 5.00pm

BITA Liverpool every week
18 Feb, 25 Feb, 4 Mar 11.00am - 12.00pm

BITA London every week
19 Feb, 26 Feb, 5 Mar 8.00am - 9.00am

BITA Irish Networking every month
11 Mar, 8 Apr 8.00am - 9.00am

Seminar - Changes to IR35, VAT and the Brexit impact on labour
16 Feb 2.00pm - 3.00pm

Seminar - Revisiting Payment Terms and Getting Paid 25 Feb 4.00pm - 6.00pm

Cost FREE until further notice
Contact Paul Whitnell paulw@bita.ie
www.bita.ie

BNI Alchemy Didsbury

Online networking using Zoom

Weekly every Thurs 6.30am - 9.00am

Cost FREE until further notice

Contact Andy Walsh 0161 250 5040

Notes Please contact Andy Walsh to arrange joining as a guest

BNI Graphene Manchester

Online networking using Zoom

Weekly every Weds 10.00am - 12.30pm

Cost FREE until further notice

Contact John Galloway 07971 161621

Notes Please contact John Galloway to arrange joining as a guest

ConnectWorking Breakfast

Virtual business breakfast

Next event TBC 9.30am - 11.00am

Cost FREE

Contact Paul Mirage 07708 987518
paul@businessconnectpublishing.co.uk

Notes Check gmbusinessconnect.co.uk for future events. Live networking at the Belmore Hotel, 143 Brooklands Road, Sale M33 3QN once restrictions are eased.

Digital Transformation Expo 2021 Manchester

2 Day Expo and Conference

19 May 9am-5pm **20 May** 9am-4pm

Venue Manchester Central, Windmill Street, Manchester M2 3GX

Cost FREE (please pre-register)

Contact dt-x.io/manchester

Notes GM Business Connect are media partners.

Dynamic Networking

Zoom Networking

Cost FREE

Contact natalie@dynamicnetworking.biz
www.dynamicnetworking.biz

www.facebook.com/groups/DynamicNetworkOnline/

First Friday ConnectWorking

Online networking using Zoom

Next event TBC 4.00pm - 6.00pm

Cost £5 (Forever Manchester contribution)

Contact Paul Mirage 07708 987518
paul@businessconnectpublishing.co.uk

Notes Tickets available through Eventbrite. Entry covers a tombola ticket for Forever Manchester.

High Peak Business Club

Regular monthly breakfast networking + high calibre speakers - all events via Zoom

Contact Edwina Currie for further information
7.40am - 9.00am

Cost £5

Contact edwinacurrie@sky.com
www.highpeakbusinessclub.co.uk

K-Club

Entrepreneur's networking events

Virtual Lunch - Speaker + networking

26 Feb, 26 Mar 12.30pm - 2.00pm

Cost TBC

Keep an eye on the website and social media for upcoming event details. For further details please contact Amanda Manson.

Contact Amanda Manson 07754 069 829
www.k-club.co.uk

Manchester Business Expo

1 Day Expo and Conference

**** Postponed ****

Notes Originally scheduled for 2020 at Event City. GM Business Connect are media partners and will publicise updated information as soon as it is available.

Contact 01772 935930
www.shoutexpo.com

page 9 The Northern Business Expo 2022

2 Day Expo and Conference

15 + 16 March 2022 10.00am - 4.00pm

Venue Manchester Central, Windmill Street, Manchester M2 3GX

Contact northexpo.biz

Notes GM Business Connect are media partners.

Northern Restaurant and Bar

2 Day Expo and Conference

29 + 30 June 2021 10am-5pm

Venue Manchester Central, Windmill Street, Manchester M2 3GX

Cost FREE (Trade only)

Contact www.northernrestaurantandbar.co.uk

pro-manchester

Hot topic breakfasts, Sector lunches, Economic Updates, Panel debates

- all face to face events postponed or cancelled.

Weekly webinar supporting businesses available every wednesday 4 - 4.30pm

Full programme of webinar-based events available

Contact Nicola McCormick
07929 671755
nicola.mccormick@pro-manchester.co.uk

Full listings of online and offline events can be found on: www.pro-manchester.co.uk

Stockport Expo

1 Day Expo and Conference

**** Postponed **** 10am - 4pm

Venue Stockport County FC, Edgeley Park Hardcastle Road, Stockport SK3 9DD

Cost FREE

Notes Originally scheduled for 2020 at Stockport County. GM Business Connect are media partners and will publicise updated information as soon as it is available.

Contact Organised by The Business Bible
www.stockportexpo.co.uk

The Business Network Manchester

Online networking to replace monthly face to face networking

25 Feb, 25 Mar, 28 Apr, 20 May, 23 Jun
11.50am - 1.30pm

Cost £15

Contact Helen Bennett
0161 823 1384
helen@business-network.co.uk
www.business-network.co.uk

The Business Network South Manchester

Mix of online networking running with face to face networking.

18 Feb, 18 Mar, 1 Apr, 18 Apr

Contact Simon Edmondson for timings

Cost £12

Contact Simon Edmondson 07766 493428
Simon.Edmondson@business-network.co.uk
www.business-network.co.uk

Please note If you plan to link to any of the above events please ensure all details are correct in advance. Whilst every effort has been made to confirm accuracy some details may be subject to change.

Some of the following organisations may be active with online networking.

Please check their websites regularly for more up to date information:

Altrincham & Sale Chamber

Contact 0161 941 3250
www.altrinchamchamber.co.uk

Bowdon Business Club

Contact Members@BowdonBusinessClub.co.uk
www.BowdonBusinessClub.co.uk

Business for Breakfast

Contact centralservices@bforb.co.uk
www.bforb.co.uk

Business over Breakfast

Contact Tracy Heatley 07812 076946
www.bobclubs.com

Carrington Business Park

Contact 0161 776 4000
lisa.graham@cbpl.co.uk
www.cbpl.co.uk

FSB - Federation of Small Businesses

Contact Rose McAteer 07917 628916
rose.mcateer@fsb.org.uk
www.fsb.org.uk

Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce

Contact 0161 393 4321
www.gmchamber.co.uk

Manchester Business Breakfast Club

Contact info@manchester-bbc.co.uk
www.manchester-bbc.co.uk

Manchester Business Catalyst Club Lunch

Contact Graham Shiers 07818 675 310
www.businesscatalystclub.co.uk

M62 Connections

Contact Bill Dove 07932 044 743
www.m62connections.co.uk

Shout! Network

Contact 01772 935930
info@shoutnetwork.co.uk
www.shoutnetwork.co.uk

SK8 Networking

Contact Chris Jones
0161 437 5999 / 07757 710199
www.sk8networking.co.uk

The South Manchester Business Association

Contact 0161 962 5195
smba.org.uk

Trafford Business Club

Contact David Lawton 07973 502595
www.traffordbusinessclub.co.uk

Women's 20/20

Contact Catherine Sandland
enquiries@2020network.co.uk
www.2020network.co.uk



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