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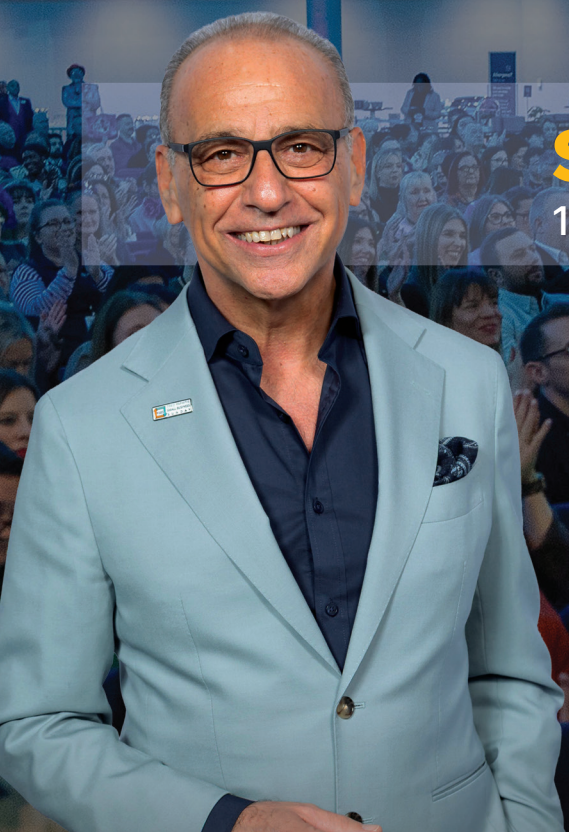
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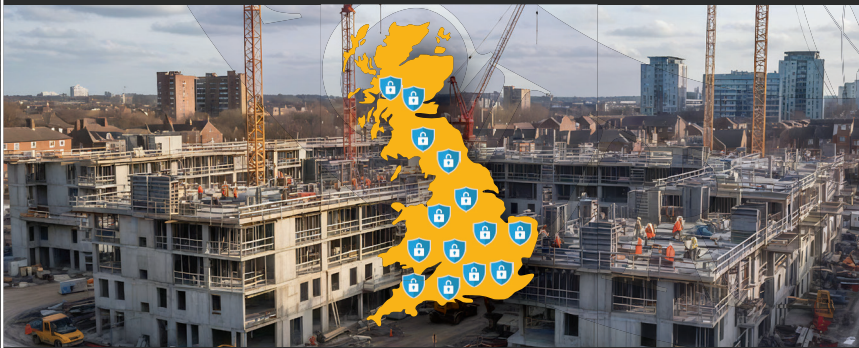
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# BUSINESS connect MAGAZINE

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**Paul Mirage**  
07708 987518

# welcome

to the latest edition of **Business Connect Magazine**

and join a fantastic forum for connecting businesses across all sectors and regions.

Business Connect Magazine is a dynamic independent business to business quarterly magazine that is crammed full of business news, articles, interviews and

regular columnists. The magazine connects businesses across the UK and beyond, both in print and online, and is completely free.

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# news

## Reviewing your inheritance tax strategy ahead of imminent reforms



Significant changes to the UK Inheritance Tax (IHT) regime are coming into effect from April 2026, and individuals with business or

agricultural assets must act now to safeguard reliefs and avoid unintended tax consequences. The reforms will restrict long standing reliefs, impact succession planning, and place renewed focus on lifetime gifting opportunities.

This insight explains what is changing, how it may affect business owners, farmers, and families, and the practical steps to consider now.

**1. Major changes to Business Property Relief (BPR) and Agricultural Property Relief (APR)**

From April 2026, both Business Property Relief (BPR) and Agricultural

Property Relief (APR) will become subject to a new cap:

The first £2.5 million per person of qualifying assets will continue to benefit from 100% relief.

- Any value above £2.5 million will only qualify for 50% relief.

Importantly:

- AIM listed shares will no longer receive 100% relief at all – they will be restricted to 50% relief under the new rules listed shares will no longer receive 100% relief
- These caps could significantly increase IHT exposure for individuals with valuable trading businesses, farmland, or diversified portfolios including AIM investments.

For many families, the current unlimited 100% relief has formed the backbone of long standing

succession strategies. The upcoming changes mean existing plans must be revisited.

**2. Consider lifetime gifting before the rules change**

With relief becoming restricted from April 2026, there is a limited window to:

- Gift business or farming assets into trust under the more generous current regime.
- Transfer assets to the next generation while maximising 100% relief where available.
- Lock in existing reliefs before the new caps take effect.

Gifting now may also reduce the size of your estate for future IHT purposes, provided that you survive seven years from the date of gift. However, planning must carefully consider control, family dynamics, and commercial implications.

**3. Review Wills and succession plans**

The upcoming restrictions mean that existing Wills may no longer achieve their intended tax outcome. Key actions include:

- Ensuring business or farming assets still pass to the intended beneficiaries tax efficiently.
- Reassessing whether assets should be left directly to family members or via trust.
- Reviewing shareholder agreements, partnership agreements, or cross-option arrangements.

A full estate planning review is strongly recommended for business owners and agricultural families.

**4. Make use of annual and small gift exemptions**

Alongside larger strategic planning, individuals should not overlook the ongoing exemptions available for lifetime gifting:

- £3,000 annual exemption – with carry forward of unused allowance from the previous tax year.
- Small gifts exemption – up to £250 per person, per tax year.
- Wedding gift allowances – up to £5,000 from a parent, £2,500 from another relative, or £1,000 from anyone else.

Regular gifting can gradually reduce the value of an estate without triggering immediate IHT charges.

**5. Consider regular gifts out of surplus income**

One of the most valuable – yet often under used – exemptions allows individuals to make regular gifts out of surplus income. These:

- Do not fall into the “seven-year rule”
- Must be part of a pattern of gifting, not one-off transfers
- Must not reduce the donor’s standard of living

For high-income individuals, this can be a powerful tool for long term estate reduction.

**John Kean, Partner Azets**

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## Pall-Ex Group reports profit growth amid economic pressures

Despite inflation, rising employment costs, and a tight labour market, Pall-Ex Group (including Fortec) posted strong financial results for the year ending July 2025. Turnover rose from £150.1m to £155.8m, with pre-tax profits increasing from £937,000 to £1.4m. The logistics firm credits operational efficiencies, investment in IT infrastructure, and strategic use of its northern and

southern hubs. Strengthening its membership network and launching new services have also supported performance. Pall-Ex continues to invest in frontline staff and service excellence, positioning the group for future growth. The company recently received approval for an £80m national HQ, reinforcing its long-term commitment to UK and international logistics.

# From crying cafés to Rent-A-Friends: The world’s weirdest businesses reveal where consumer demand is heading

As entrepreneurs and buyers look beyond traditional cafés, retail and service models, a growing number of unconventional businesses around the world are thriving, not because they are novel, but because they solve modern problems.

From paid companionship to emotional release spaces, these “weird” business concepts reflect deeper shifts in consumer behaviour around loneliness, burnout, time scarcity and experience-led spending — trends Australian and US buyers are increasingly paying attention to.

According to Mary Tamvakologos, Director of Operations at

AnyBusiness, the rise of these models highlights how value is being redefined in the business-for-sale market.

“Buyers are no longer just asking what a business sells, they’re asking why it exists and whether it aligns with how people live now,” Mary Tamvakologos says. “Some of the fastest-growing concepts globally are built around emotional needs, convenience and experience, not physical products.”

### Why “weird” businesses are becoming serious opportunities

While these models may appear

niche, Tamvakologos says they mirror trends already influencing business demand in Australia and the United States.

“We’re seeing growing interest in experiential, lifestyle-driven and service-based businesses — particularly those that tap into wellness, companionship, pet care and convenience,” she explains. “What looks unconventional today often becomes tomorrow’s mainstream category.”

Key forces driving demand include:

- Emotional outsourcing — paying for connection, relief or support

- Time scarcity — convenience as a premium commodity

- Experience-first spending — services people feel, not just use

### What this means for buyers

For prospective buyers, the takeaway is not to replicate novelty for novelty’s sake, but to understand the consumer insight behind it.

“Successful buyers are the ones who recognise why these ideas work,” Mary adds. “When a business aligns with real behavioural shifts, it becomes far more resilient — even if the concept initially seems unconventional.”

**Trend Table: The weirdest business models — and what they reveal**

Business concept	Where it operates	What it offers	Consumer insight
Professional Cuddling Services	Japan, UK, USA	Paid platonic cuddling with trained practitioners	Reflects loneliness and emotional wellbeing gaps
Rent-A-Friend Services	Japan	Companionship for events, outings, conversation	Social stress and desire for connection
Crying Cafés / Emotional Rooms	Japan, South Korea	Safe spaces to cry with curated support	Stress accumulation and emotional release demand
Death Cafés	UK, Europe, Japan	Open conversations about death over tea	Cultural shift in attitudes to mortality
Goat Yoga Studios	USA, Europe	Yoga with goats to add fun and stress relief	Wellness culture meets entertainment
Luxury Dog Hotels	Global	Five-star hospitality for pets	Pet humanisation and premium spending
Professional Queueing Services	UK, Japan	Paid queue stand-ins for high-demand drops	Time scarcity and convenience prioritisation
Fake Wedding Guest Agencies	China	Hire guests to boost event appearance	Social status performance and ceremonial pressure

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# news

## Millennials aren't afraid of change

Millennials are the most adaptable generation in today's workforce, according to research among more than 500 change management experts. Almost two thirds (61%) say Millennials handle change well — more than any other age group. In comparison, just 21% believe Baby Boomers are equally adaptable.

The study, led by Melanie Franklin, founder of ChangeabilityPro®, suggests Millennials' resilience stems from growing up during constant disruption. From education reforms and the 2008 financial crisis to the rise of the gig economy and rapid technological change, this generation has navigated uncertainty throughout their early careers.

Gen Z, however, is viewed as less equipped to manage workplace change. Nearly half (46%) of experts rate them as only fair at coping with disruption, while 16% consider them poor. This may reflect limited workplace experience and a stronger emphasis on wellbeing,



which can feel threatened during periods of upheaval.

Baby Boomers are perceived as the least adaptable, with 47% rated poor at handling change. The report concludes that while all generations can adapt, each requires different support.

## The Fair Work Agency: What employers should be doing now

April 2026 marks the launch of the Fair Work Agency (FWA), a national body responsible for enforcing workplace rights across Great Britain. Established under the Employment Rights Act 2025, it consolidates previously fragmented enforcement powers into a single authority, signalling a shift towards more visible and proactive regulation.

The Agency brings together oversight of National Minimum Wage compliance, statutory sick pay, employment agency standards and protections against labour exploitation. Crucially, enforcement will no longer rely primarily on individual tribunal claims. The FWA can initiate investigations, require documentation, enter workplaces where appropriate and issue compliance notices or financial penalties.

Rebecca Gale, who leads HR Advisory at Lomarton, said: "The creation of the Fair Work Agency changes the risk landscape for

employers. Compliance can no longer be viewed as reactive; it demands a proactive approach and a clear understanding of responsibilities."

She added: "In practical terms, businesses should review payroll accuracy, holiday pay calculations, worker status determinations and record-keeping processes. Contracts and policies must be current and consistently applied. Informal practices that may have gone unchallenged previously are far more likely to attract scrutiny."

For organisations that have grown rapidly or operate with limited HR infrastructure, reactive approaches will no longer suffice. Clear governance, consistent processes and documented compliance are now central to operational risk management.

Businesses that ensure HR foundations are structured, accurate and consistently applied will be best placed to navigate this new regulatory environment.

## Fighting prostate cancer with seaweed

Ulva Sea Farms, a leading innovator in sustainable marine biotechnology, has announced significant progress in using seaweed extracts to combat prostate cancer and develop natural alternatives to synthetic antibiotics.

The company, based in Plymouth and led by founder Alec Watt, is exploring the powerful bioactive properties found in Ulva seaweed (commonly known as sea lettuce) and other macroalgae. Early research has shown significant potential for these natural compounds to support new approaches in healthcare.

"Over the last few decades, many of the bacteria and fungi that infect humans have evolved to become resistant to conventional antimicrobial medicines," said Watt. "We're now at the point where certain antimicrobials no longer work. This antimicrobial resistance makes it far more difficult to treat infections. Superbugs, for example, are bacteria that can survive almost all current antimicrobials and pose a

serious threat to human health. Our seaweed extract has reduced the growth of prostate cancer cells and decreased levels of prostate-specific antigen (PSA), a protein that is often elevated in prostate cancer patients," he explained.

Ulva Sea Farms' research focuses on the naturally occurring metabolites and bioactive compounds found in seaweed, including polysaccharides, polyunsaturated fatty acids, phlorotannins, phenolic compounds and carotenoids. These compounds are known for their antimicrobial properties and may offer a sustainable, nature-based alternative to synthetic antibiotics.

"There is still a long journey ahead, but the potential to use seaweed to support prostate cancer research and to develop new, natural antimicrobial solutions is extremely promising."

Ulva Sea Farms continues to expand its research efforts, positioning Plymouth as a hub for marine-based scientific innovation.

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## New Acas survey highlights key employment law changes employers must prepare for



Workplace expert Acas has commissioned YouGov to examine which reforms in the Employment Rights Act 2025 will have the greatest impact on employers and workers. The findings show that changes to sick pay and unfair dismissal rights are at the forefront of concern — particularly for businesses.

### Sick pay reform tops employer concerns

The most significant change for

employers is the extension of Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) from day one of absence. Currently payable from the fourth consecutive day of sickness, the reform means staff will qualify from the first day of illness.

In the survey, 43% of employers said this would have the biggest impact on their organisation. Employers should prepare for increased short-term absence costs, review sickness absence policies, update payroll systems, and ensure managers

are trained to handle absence consistently and fairly.

### Unfair dismissal protection reduced to six months

From 1 January 2027, employees will gain protection from unfair dismissal after six months' service, instead of the current two-year qualifying period.

Thirty-one per cent of employers identified this as a major impact. Businesses should review recruitment processes, strengthen probation procedures, ensure clear documentation of performance management, and confirm that fair reasons and procedures are followed before dismissal decisions are made.

### Day-one paternity leave rights

From 6 April 2026, employees will be entitled to paternity leave from their first day of employment, removing the current 26-week qualifying period.

Twenty-eight per cent of employers ranked this as a key change. Employers should update family leave policies, contracts, and workforce planning arrangements to reflect the new entitlement.

### Flexible working reforms ahead

Further reforms in 2027 will improve access to flexible working arrangements. Employers must continue to follow the Acas Code of Practice when handling requests and ensure decisions are evidence-based and properly documented.

Niall Mackenzie, Chief Executive of Acas, said the reforms represent “the biggest shake-up to employment law in a generation,” and confirmed that Acas will update its guidance, training and support to help employers implement the changes effectively.

Employers are encouraged to review policies now and plan ahead for staged implementation dates.

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# property & construction

## No fault evictions axed

### But are rents about to skyrocket?



#### Renters' Rights Act 2025

The Renters' Rights Act delivers the government's manifesto commitment to reform private renting in England, including abolishing Section 21 'no fault' evictions. The Act received Royal Assent on 27 October 2025, with a single commencement date to be confirmed. Some measures are not yet in force.

The reforms aim to improve outcomes for 11 million private renters and 2.3 million landlords by increasing fairness, stability and accountability across the sector.

#### Key reforms

All assured tenancies will convert to periodic agreements, ending fixed terms. Tenants can remain in their home until they choose to leave, giving two months' notice. This removes the risk of arbitrary eviction and increases flexibility.

Section 21 is abolished. Landlords must rely on strengthened statutory possession grounds and apply to court if a tenant does not leave. Mandatory grounds require possession if proven; discretionary grounds allow judges to consider reasonableness.

Tenants are protected during the first 12 months of a tenancy from eviction where a landlord intends to sell or move in. In such cases, landlords must provide four months' notice and cannot re-let or market the property for 12 months after regaining possession, subject to limited exceptions.

For rent arrears, the mandatory eviction threshold increases from two to three months' arrears, and notice periods rise from two weeks to four, giving tenants more time to recover while protecting landlords from unsustainable loss.

#### Rent increases and tribunal challenges

Landlords may increase rent once per year to market rate — defined as the rent the property would achieve if newly advertised. Increases must be

made using a formal Section 13 notice, giving at least two months' notice.

Tenants who believe an increase exceeds market value can apply to the First-tier Tribunal for determination. The Tribunal will independently assess the lawful market rent.

Key implications if tenants contest:

- The Tribunal cannot set rent higher than the landlord's proposed increase.
- Rent increases are not backdated; any revised rent applies from the Tribunal decision date.
- The Tribunal may delay implementation by up to two months in cases of financial hardship.
- While proceedings are ongoing, tenants continue paying the existing rent.
- If the proposed rent reflects market level, it will be upheld.
- If a lower figure is set, only that lower rent becomes payable.

### The Act marks a significant shift in private renting

This removes the historic risk of tenants facing higher rents after challenge and prevents excessive increases being used as a "backdoor eviction".

Rent review clauses and informal increases will no longer be permitted. All increases must follow the statutory route.

#### Additional measures

The Act establishes a Private Rented Sector Landlord Ombudsman for binding dispute resolution and a Private Rented Sector Database to support enforcement. Landlords must register to use certain possession grounds.

Tenants gain strengthened rights to request pets, protection from discrimination based on benefits or

children, and protection from rental bidding above advertised rent. The Decent Homes Standard and Awaab's Law will extend to the private rented sector.

Overall, the Act marks a significant shift in private renting — increasing tenant security while maintaining structured, court-based routes for landlords to recover property and adjust rent in line with the market.

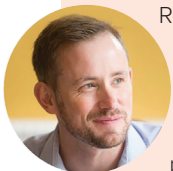
#### National Residential Landlords Association (NRLA)

Two-thirds of landlords planning rent rises say forthcoming tax increases are a key reason, according to new polling of NRLA members.

In her recent Budget, the Chancellor announced that income tax on rental income will increase by two percentage points from 2027. The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) warned the move would push up rents — a concern now reflected in new research by Pegasus Insight. Among landlords intending to increase rents in the next year, 65% cited the tax hike as a driving factor, second only to the 68% who pointed to rising property running costs.

With the Government set to end 'no explanation' repossessions from 1 May, landlords say court delays are their leading concern. According to the survey, 91% are worried about court wait times. Government data shows it now takes over seven months on average for courts to process and enforce possession cases under the system replacing Section 21 — the longest timeframe since early 2022.

Market pressures remain strong, with 61% reporting high tenant demand. However, 24% said they had sold property in the past year, compared with just 5% who purchased. The 19-point gap between sales and purchases is more than double the level at the start of 2024. Of those who sold, 27% did so with tenants in situ. NRLA Chief Executive Ben Beadle said higher taxes risk driving rents up further and warned that ministers must ensure courts can process legitimate possession cases far more quickly.



Renters Rights Act is a big change for renting in England and will test landlords and agents. With section 21 going, possession for antisocial behaviour will be tricky, so the only way to evict will need a clear Section 8 reason and clean paperwork.

For landlords, the play is simple. Screen harder, reference properly, document everything, and price in risk. If you rely on the rent to pay the mortgage, look at rent guarantee insurance and keep a cash buffer. Also look out for purchase opportunities.

I like the idea of the Ombudsman and the Property Portal. If they work, they'll cut the nonsense and raise standards. If they work!

My caution sits with the courts. If arrears build or behaviour turns ugly, the process must move fast. Final thoughts, make sure your rents are at market value now, as changes post 1 May 26 will be stricter.

**Nick Thorpe**  
PropertyCatalystClub.co.uk

## BCS Electrics: Celebrating 80 years of powering what matters

BCS Electrics is proud to celebrate 80 years of powering what's important across Yorkshire. Founded in 1946, the business has grown from a traditional electrical contractor into a modern, forward thinking company, while staying true to its original values of reliability, craftsmanship and customer care.

Over the decades, BCS Electrics has embraced new technologies and energy efficient solutions to meet the changing needs of the communities it serves. Their work spans a broad range of sectors, including schools and academies, hospitals, West Yorkshire Fire Service, Harewood House and countless organisations across manufacturing, retail and facilities management.

Community involvement remains at the heart of BCS. Partnering with Red Line Performance Cars to create a



unique experience for children and families at Martin House, bringing excitement, smiles and unforgettable moments.

Clair Holdsworth, CEO, Martin House Children's Hospice "Experiences like this mean so much. Seeing and sitting in the performance cars brings real joy and a welcome distraction. We're truly grateful for such a special day." As BCS Electrics marks this milestone anniversary, they remain focused on what has always mattered most: delivering dependable electrical expertise and making a positive impact across the region they proudly serve.

## E-bike fire risk prompts safety alert for UK employers

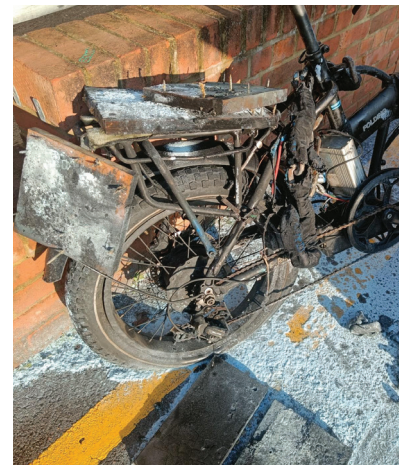
UK businesses are being urged to review workplace safety procedures after a sharp rise in fires linked to electric bikes and scooters.

Safety training provider Astutis has warned that lithium-ion batteries used in e-bikes and e-scooters present a growing fire risk in workplaces and communal areas.

New research shows 171 e-bike fires occurred in 2025, rising to 206 incidents when e-scooters are included, compared with 142 fires in 2024 – a 20% increase year-on-year.

Brenig Moore, Technical Director at Astutis, said organisations should urgently review storage and charging arrangements, particularly in bike sheds, corridors and communal areas.

Employers are advised to limit workplace charging of personal devices, ensure chargers undergo



regular PAT testing, and update fire risk assessments.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards also advises users to buy batteries from reputable retailers, use manufacturer-approved chargers and never modify lithium-ion batteries.

## Construction industry join UK16

Construction industry leaders have strengthened the UK's drive to champion homegrown timber, as the C16 Campaign secures formal backing from leading professional bodies across architecture and engineering.

Originally launched by the country's three largest sawmillers – **BSW Timber, James Jones & Sons** and **Glennon Brothers** – the initiative is now working in partnership with the **Royal Institute of British Architects**, the **Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland** and the **Institution of Structural Engineers**.

Targeting architects and structural engineers, the campaign promotes the specification of UK-grown C16 structural timber to reduce reliance on imports and strengthen domestic supply chains. Despite a world-class sawmilling sector, the UK remains the world's second-largest net importer of forest products, with around 80% of timber demand – worth £9 billion annually – sourced from overseas.

C16 graded timber, grown and manufactured in the UK, is suitable for most standard

structural applications. Advocates argue it offers comparable performance for many projects while delivering lower embodied carbon and supporting rural employment and forestry expansion. The built environment accounts for approximately 25% of UK carbon emissions, placing material choice firmly in the spotlight for developers and specifiers.

The campaign aligns with the Government's Timber in Construction Roadmap and is backed by **Confor** and **Timber Development UK**. Industry engagement will include educational events, roundtables and a landmark report aimed at embedding UK timber specification from design through to build.

For property developers and commercial clients, the message is clear: greater adoption of domestically sourced structural timber presents both a sustainability opportunity and a strategic move towards supply chain resilience in an increasingly carbon-conscious construction market.



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# UKREiif

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## 2026: What's new, what to expect, and what's making a comeback

UKREiif is returning to Leeds in 2026 - bigger, better, and more ambitious than ever before. With an expanded site, exciting, themed days, a revamped programme, and improved facilities, next year's event is set to deliver the most dynamic experience in its history.

Whether you're joining as an investor, occupier, developer, local authority, or partner, here's your first look at what's new, what's returning, and what you can expect at UKREiif 2026.

### What's new, and what's returning

#### A larger, more accessible site

2026 brings a major expansion of the event footprint, with brand-new areas opening across the venue to create fresh opportunities to explore, exhibit, and connect. To maximise space, registration and luggage storage are moving to dedicated zones, unlocking additional areas in the Holiday Inn and the former registration site.

Accessibility improvements are also front and centre, with new ramps and lower desks to ensure the event is welcoming and easy to navigate for all.

#### Boosted networking spaces

Connections are at the heart of UKREiif, and for 2026, networking facilities are being upgraded across the board. Indoor spaces on the Boulevard are being expanded to give attendees more room for conversations, drop-ins, and spontaneous meetings.

For the first time ever, the exhibition hall and courtyard will also be connected, opening the flow of energy and footfall throughout the entire site.

#### Water pavilions return

After a hugely successful debut, the



iconic water pavilions are back for a second year. These striking spaces (set directly on top of the water!) offer unique environments for meetings, events, and brand activations.

#### An improved mobile app

The highly rated UKREiif app returns with new refinements based on user feedback.

You'll be able to:

- Build a personalised programme using a smart search and filtering system
- Access the delegate directory to connect and message other attendees ahead of the event
- Quick access to the UKREiif 2026 zone map for easy wayfinding

More updates will be revealed closer to launch, but expect a cleaner, more intuitive experience designed to help you make the most of your time onsite.

#### A new colour-coded site map

Navigating a growing event just got easier. A refreshed, colour-coded site map will help attendees orient themselves quickly while moving between pavilions, stages, and networking areas.

#### Water stations return

Sustainability remains a priority, and refill water stations will again be available



across the site so attendees can top up reusable bottles throughout the week.

#### New pavilions for 2026

The UKREiif landscape continues to evolve with a range of new pavilions joining the event, including:

- McDonald's
- Welsh Government
- Bedford College
- Capsticks Solicitors
- Future Homes Hub
- Invest Hull & East Yorkshire
- Kier
- Landscape Institute
- West of England Combined Authority

#### What to expect at UKREiif 2026

#### A record-breaking audience

UKREiif 2026 is set to welcome:

- 16,000+ attendees
- 1,750+ investors
- 1,000+ occupiers
- 1,750+ developers
- 275+ local authorities
- 2,200+ speakers across 60+ stages
- £300bn+ in opportunities
- 150+ exhibitors
- 150+ fringe events

The scale speaks for itself, this is



where the future of UK regeneration, investment, and development is being shaped.

#### Big discussions, big names

Expect the same high-quality debates and insights you've come to trust from UKREiif, featuring leaders and decision-makers from across the built environment. From housing and net zero to infrastructure, planning, and inclusive growth, the most important industry conversations will take centre stage.

#### A festival-style experience

Part conference, part festival, UKREiif continues to offer a vibrant programme designed to spark connections and inspire ideas. Attendees can look forward to:

- Breakfast briefings
- Networking lunches
- Curated walking tours of Leeds
- Live music at one of the city's landmark venues

#### Exceptional customer service

The much-loved 'red top' staff will be back, ready to help, support, and guide attendees with the same friendly, proactive customer service UKREiif is known for.

#### See you in Leeds

With new spaces, better facilities, smarter tech, expanded networking, and a buzzing programme of events, UKREiif 2026 promises to be its biggest and most exciting edition yet.

Stay tuned for further updates and get ready to experience UKREiif like never before.

Find out more about UKREiif:

[2026.ukreiiif.com](https://2026.ukreiiif.com)

Pick up the next issue of Business Connect Magazine at UKREiif 2026 in Leeds  
To promote your business in the publication at the event - Get in touch  
Contact: [Paul@BusinessConnectPublishing.co.uk](mailto:Paul@BusinessConnectPublishing.co.uk) – [businessconnectmagazine.co.uk](https://businessconnectmagazine.co.uk)

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# The Transpennine Route Upgrade and its most transformative year yet

**The Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU) is one of the biggest rail investments in the North of England, modernising and electrifying the railway between Manchester, Huddersfield, Leeds and York. TRU improvements will reduce journey times, increase passenger capacity by 30%, enhance reliability through new digital signalling, and provide step-free access across 23 stations.**

On the back of a breakthrough year that saw the £11bn programme electrify 25% of the route and deliver major engineering projects up and down its 70-mile footprint, the momentum powers forward this year.

TRU's success and the capability of its 5000-strong workforce was recognised in January when the government committed to Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR). NPR unlocks a range of benefits for rail users from the 2030s, and as plans for the programme move forward, it is TRU - already two-thirds funded - that is delivering the infrastructure, skills and jobs for NPR to build upon.

By early next year, TRU aims to

have delivered major improvements benefiting thousands of passengers at four stations along the route in West Yorkshire.

The first of those is Mirfield, which in January became the latest TRU station to reopen with a brand-new look, following Morley in 2024. The occasion was marked by local MP, Kim Leadbeater, and Zach Eagling, award-winning disability rights advocate, cutting the ribbon on a new step-free station with longer platforms and improved facilities.

Dewsbury and Batley stations are next, as 28 days of work this summer enables step-free transformations, like Mirfield, plus extended platforms and enhanced customer facilities.

Come the end of June, TRU will have transformed and reopened five back-to-back stations on the Transpennine route, with the exception of one: Ravensthorpe.

Looming large on the route in an expanse of engineering activity, this station, sat in what is known as the Ravensthorpe triangle, has been closed since December 2025 and is

at the heart of one of the biggest civil engineering sites in the country. The station will be relocated 200m west of its current site and will be modernised and support thousands of new homes nearby, while unlocking two new tracks.

Major engineering work is well underway at the adjacent Calder Road bridge and nearby Baker Viaduct, also vital in enabling the number of tracks through the area to be doubled from two to four. The two structures will be connected by a new, grade-separated flyover, formed using a series of giant earthwork structures, including embankments and retaining walls. In 2025 approximately 130,000m<sup>3</sup> of material was placed across Ravensthorpe triangle, with a similar volume planned this year.

Doubling the number of tracks through this stretch of railway is fundamental to TRU, because it means direct services will be able to overtake stopping services, reducing journey times and boosting capacity.

These direct services will primarily be operated by TransPennine Express (TPE), and this summer, TPE is due to procure 29 new trains through support from the TRU programme. These will enter service in phases as the upgraded route becomes ready in the early to mid-2030s.

Heading back closer to the eastern edge of the Pennines, Huddersfield station is in the midst of a generational transformation. Its current state of progress was accelerated by a mammoth 30-day closure in September last year, which included demolishing the old platforms and building new ones, strengthening Huddersfield viaduct, replacing John William Street bridge, installing nearly 2.4km of new track and completing

signalling upgrades.

The Grade I listed Huddersfield station will be the fifth station and the fourth inside a year to be upgraded by the programme, with its reopening set for early 2027. The final touches will be made during a 31-day station closure beginning in this year's festive period, unveiling a modernised rail hub with its rich heritage preserved.

More major milestones are only around the corner for 2027, as the programme aims to have electrified 40% of the line by the end of next year. Deighton station will be reopened with step-free access and improved facilities, and the huge Baker Viaduct works will come to a close, standing proud on the West Yorkshire landscape.

With over 450 apprentices now and almost £1bn already spent with local businesses, TRU is making epic strides transforming train travel in the North, leaving a transport and economic growth legacy, while delivering the capability for major programmes of the future.



## TRANSPENNINE ROUTE UPGRADE

Find out more about the Transpennine Route Upgrade project.

Visit the dedicated website for the latest updates and further in-depth analysis:

[theTRUUpgrade.co.uk](https://theTRUUpgrade.co.uk)

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# exporting & logistics

## Temporary suspension of cargo operations due to airspace closure

### Qatar Airways Cargo scheduled flight operations remain temporarily suspended due to the closure of Qatari airspace.

Qatar Airways Cargo will resume operations once the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority announces the safe full reopening of Qatari airspace by the relevant authorities. A further update will be provided on 10 March. We continue to operate some limited Qatar Airways Cargo freighters that are not routed through Doha. Shipments that have been rebooked on these flights can be tracked via [qrcargo.com](http://qrcargo.com) all remaining flights are suspended until further notice. As a result, temporary restrictions remain in place on the booking and

acceptance of new shipments until the new operational schedule is available following the official re-opening of the airspace. Customers and partners are advised to regularly check shipment status, review the latest operational updates on [qrcargo.com](http://qrcargo.com),

### Air freight rates set to rise amid escalating Iran conflict

The escalating conflict involving Iran is expected to create significant volatility across global logistics markets. Air freight rates are likely to rise as cargo capacity tightens and airlines adjust or reroute flights to avoid affected airspace.

At the same time, sea freight and project logistics operations are facing

mounting pressure, with vessels potentially forced to divert from key shipping lanes. This could lead to increased war-risk surcharges, longer transit times and higher operational costs for businesses moving goods internationally.

As geopolitical tensions continue to reshape global supply chains, companies will need to monitor freight markets closely and remain agile in their logistics planning. Those reliant on time-sensitive cargo in particular may face higher costs and limited capacity in the weeks ahead, reinforcing the importance of resilient and flexible supply chain strategies.

### Road freight steps in as Middle East

### air cargo disruptions intensify

As of early March 2026, escalating geopolitical instability in the Middle East has triggered a temporary but significant shift in freight transport patterns. With airspace restrictions, disrupted flight schedules and reduced cargo capacity across key Gulf hubs, logistics providers are increasingly turning to road transport as an alternative solution.

Freight forwarders and supply chain operators are scrambling to secure trucking capacity across regional corridors, using road networks to maintain cargo flows and connect with unaffected airports and ports. While not a long-term replacement for air

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cargo, road freight is proving to be a vital contingency measure in the short term.

The sudden modal shift highlights the importance of flexibility in modern supply chains. Businesses reliant on time-sensitive deliveries are being forced to reassess their logistics strategies, with many adopting multimodal solutions to mitigate delays and maintain operational continuity during a period of heightened geopolitical risk.

**What the Middle East disruption could mean for the British public**

Escalating instability in the Middle East and the resulting disruption to air cargo routes could have several

knock-on effects for UK consumers and businesses. While the UK is geographically distant from the conflict, global supply chains are highly interconnected, meaning disruption in one region can quickly ripple across international trade.

**Higher prices on imported goods**

Air freight is often used for high-value, time-sensitive products such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, luxury goods and fresh food. If air cargo capacity tightens and transport shifts to slower or more expensive routes, import costs may rise. Businesses often pass some of these costs onto consumers, potentially increasing retail prices.

**Delays in product availability**

Goods that normally arrive quickly by air could take longer to reach the UK if companies switch to sea or road transport via alternative hubs. This could lead to temporary shortages or delays in sectors such as technology, fashion and specialist components used in manufacturing.

**Pressure on UK businesses and supply chains**

British manufacturers and retailers that rely on global supply networks may face higher logistics costs and longer lead times. Industries dependent on "just-in-time" supply models may need to hold more stock or seek alternative suppliers.

**Potential impact on travel and fuel costs**

If airspace restrictions affect commercial flight routes, airlines may face longer journey times and higher fuel consumption. In the longer term, this could contribute to higher airfares or operational costs within the aviation sector.

Overall, while the UK is unlikely to face immediate shortages of essential goods, the public may experience **slightly higher prices, longer delivery times and increased volatility in certain imported products** if disruptions continue.



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# women in business

## Leading the next area of growth

**Across every sector of the economy, one truth is becoming impossible to ignore, women are not simply participating in business they are redefining it.**

The modern business landscape is being shaped by leaders who bring fresh perspectives, challenge long-standing assumptions, and build organisations that are more resilient, more innovative, and more attuned to the world around them. This feature celebrates those women, but more importantly, it examines the mindset and momentum driving this shift.

Today's female leaders are navigating a business

environment marked by rapid technological change, global uncertainty, and evolving expectations around purpose and responsibility. Yet they are doing so with a clarity and confidence that is setting new benchmarks for leadership. They are founders scaling high-growth ventures, executives steering multinational organisations, and innovators transforming industries that once felt impenetrable. Their success is not a trend it is a structural change in how leadership itself is defined.

What distinguishes many of these women is not only their commercial acumen but their commitment to building cultures where people thrive. They champion collaboration over hierarchy, long-term value over short-term wins, and authenticity over

convention. In doing so, they are creating workplaces that attract talent, inspire loyalty, and deliver sustainable performance.

But progress does not happen in isolation. It requires platforms that amplify voices, networks that open doors, and ecosystems that recognise potential wherever it emerges. Business Connect Magazine is proud to contribute to that ecosystem by spotlighting the women who are shaping the future of business and by sharing the insights that can help others follow in their footsteps.

This feature is not just a celebration it is a call to action. The next generation of leaders is already here. The question is whether the rest of the business world is ready to keep pace.

## Value is not set by the market — It is built before the deal

**For many UK entrepreneurs, the business is the pension.**

It represents years of risk, reinvestment and personal commitment. Yet one of the most persistent misconceptions in the SME market is the belief that "the market decides" what a business is worth at the point of sale - as if value appears from somewhere external and impartial.

According to Christiane Hutchinson, CEO of Manchester-based Wealth Teck, that thinking overlooks a fundamental commercial truth.

**"Value isn't revealed at sale - it is engineered long before the deal begins."**

With over 20 years' experience working alongside business owners, advisers and investors, Christiane has seen first-hand how preparation and transaction are often confused.

Corporate finance advisers and

brokers play an essential role in executing deals. However, by the time a business enters a formal sale or funding process, much of its value trajectory has already been shaped. Operational inefficiencies, weak capital productivity, unmanaged risk or over-reliance on the founder can quietly constrain valuation and reduce deal certainty long before buyers are engaged.

**Wealth Teck positions itself upstream of the transaction.**

Rather than focusing on selling businesses, the firm concentrates on strengthening them - improving operational performance, capital efficiency and resilience so that companies become genuinely investable. Its independence from the transaction allows it to prioritise long-term enterprise value rather than deal momentum.

This distinction matters commercially.

Many businesses are brought to market at the value they currently justify, rather than the value they could have achieved with structured preparation. When value engineering comes first, transaction outcomes tend to improve - not only in price, but in negotiating strength and certainty of execution.

**Enterprise value, Christiane argues, is rarely accidental.**

For business owners, preparation brings greater control and credible optionality. For advisers, it means stronger businesses entering the pipeline. For investors, it means clearer value drivers, stronger fundamentals and reduced execution risk. If better

market outcomes are the goal, better-prepared businesses must come first.



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# Leading with impact

## ABC+ warranty

**In an industry that is still largely male dominated, leadership is often defined by visibility rather than impact. Adele Reid, Managing Director of ABC+ Warranty, challenges that expectation. She doesn't lead by emphasising her gender; she leads by delivering results. By building a high-performing business in a technically complex market, she sets a powerful example for women across the property and construction sector.**

ABC+ Warranty has been supporting homeowners, developers and builders across the UK since 1989, providing structural warranties. The company is a cornerstone of confidence for those investing in new builds, renovations, and developments, ensuring that the quality of construction is backed by a credible safety net.

Under Adele's leadership, the company has solidified its reputation for trust, transparency, and excellence. ABC+ achieved Approved Code Scheme status with the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI), demonstrating a commitment to rigorous consumer protection and ethical business practice. This achievement was further recognised after winning the Business Award at the CTSI Hero Awards, a national accolade that highlights the company's dedication to raising standards and protecting consumers.

The company's progress has also

been strengthened through strategic partnerships that reinforce long-term stability and client confidence. ABC+'s latent defects policy is now underwritten by AXA Insurance UK, one of the country's leading insurers and A+ rated by AM Best. This agreement not only increases the credibility of the company's offering, but also delivers reassurance to clients that their investment is protected by an internationally respected insurer.

Adele's approach is defined by a people-first culture, built on the belief that potential and dedication matter just as much as experience. She has created a team that is both capable

**Adele doesn't lead by emphasising her gender; she leads by delivering results**

and customer-focused, with a strong culture of support, advancement and excellence, allowing the business to deliver consistently high standards of service. Her open-door approach and hands-on support help to create a workplace where people feel encouraged to ask questions and continuously improve.

A key focus of her impact has been nurturing early-career talent. ABC+ actively supports apprenticeships

and professional development, helping young people to build careers in a sector where routes to qualification can be limited. Adele has personally supported employees working towards trade and surveying qualifications, including team members completing five-year degree programmes while working full time. These achievements demonstrate the company's investment in future talent and that opportunity should be accessible to those who are willing to work for it.

Adele has always believed that success should be shared, and that thriving communities are built through

collaboration and local enterprise. Her support within local communities reflects this intent, with festivals such as The Brit Fest in Cheshire, which is growing

into a major regional event and has previously featured top acts such as Razorlight and UB40. By becoming a headline sponsor, she helped strengthen the festival's roots and reinforce the importance of culture, connection, and regional growth. The festival has become a clear example of how business can support community spirit while helping to build a stronger local economy.

The strength of ABC+ today lies in its

ability to combine technical expertise with a customer-first approach, shaping the future of warranty provision and building confidence across the market. Adele Reid's leadership has proven that a company can be commercially successful while also building standards, supporting talent, and giving back to the community. In a profession where trust is everything, ABC+ Warranty has become a benchmark for excellence, and under her direction, it continues to raise the bar.



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# women in business

**As conversations around International Women's Day focus on leadership, resilience and progress, it is worth reflecting on what sustainable leadership really looks like inside growing organisations.**

It is rarely loud. More often, it shows up in trust, clarity of decision-making and the confidence to handle people challenges well.

Lomarton was founded in 2015 by Donna Morton, an HR and payroll transformation specialist with more than two decades of operational experience. The business was built on a clear principle: organisations thrive when People, Process and Technology are aligned.

Today, Lomarton operates across two



Donna Morton & Rebecca Gale

## Building stronger businesses: Structure, support and sustainable leadership

complementary areas: HR & Payroll Transformation and HR Advisory, bringing together strategic structure and practical people support.

### The power of strong foundations.

Strong organisations rarely separate HR and Payroll in practice, even if they sit in different departments.

HR shapes the employee journey — recruitment, contracts, performance, absence and development. Payroll ensures that journey is reflected accurately and fairly in pay. When these functions operate in isolation, friction appears. When they are aligned, the business feels steady.

In many organisations, payroll teams quietly protect the employee experience. They chase late approvals. They correct incomplete data. They resolve inconsistencies before pay day. While this dedication safeguards employees, it can also conceal underlying process gaps.

Over time, reliance on individuals to “catch” issues places pressure on teams and introduces avoidable risk.

Stronger foundations come from connecting policy, behaviour and execution. Clear ownership across the employee lifecycle, defined deadlines and consistent data standards reduce ambiguity and last-minute pressure.

The impact extends well beyond administration.

Managers understand expectations, HR gains insight, payroll moves from correction to assurance, and employees experience fairness.

And when processes feel fair and predictable, trust follows.

That trust in pay accuracy, in decision-making and in leadership is often what differentiates organisations that feel stable from those that feel constantly under pressure.

### Practical support for real-world leadership

Alongside transformation sits Lomarton's HR Advisory practice, led by Rebecca Gale.

Rebecca works closely with SMEs and growing businesses navigating the everyday realities of leadership, performance management, absence challenges, restructures, grievances and compliance responsibilities.

For many founders and business owners, people issues are the least intuitive part of leadership. Balancing empathy with commercial discipline requires a different skill set from building the business itself.

Strong advisory support provides clarity and confidence. It ensures policies are protective yet practical, supports early and constructive conversations, and balances compliance with commercial reality.

And importantly, it reinforces that

leadership does not mean having to manage every challenge alone.

### Why both perspectives matter

Strategic systems without grounded people support can feel disconnected from daily operations. Advisory support without structural discipline can become reactive.

When the two work together, organisations move from firefighting to stability.

Across sectors, similar challenges emerge:

- Payroll teams repeatedly correcting preventable errors
- Managers unsure of deadlines or approval responsibilities
- Performance concerns avoided until they escalate
- Policies written but inconsistently applied
- Workforce data collected but rarely analysed

These are not failures of intent. They are signs that growth has outpaced structure.

### Leadership lessons worth reflecting on

In the spirit of International Women's Day, a few principles consistently strengthen organisations:

- Clarity builds confidence

Clear roles and expectations improve accountability.

- **Consistency protects culture**  
Fair application of standards builds trust.
- **Act early**  
Small issues are easier to resolve than large disputes.
- **Use your data**  
Workforce trends are commercial insight.
- **Structure supports growth**  
Process discipline protects long-term performance.

With both Donna Morton and Rebecca Gale leading distinct but interconnected disciplines, Lomarton reflects a broader shift in modern leadership, one that values both strategic rigour and practical people expertise.

Sustainable success is not built on reactive fixes. It comes from alignment between strategy and execution, consistent standards and leadership supported by the right structure.



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## Kelly Jackson: Championing straight-talking accountancy for growing businesses



For many business owners, accountancy can feel complicated, time-consuming and, at times,

overwhelming. At Jackson Accounts Limited, the mission is simple: make finances clear, accessible and supportive for entrepreneurs who want to focus on growing their business.

Led by founder Kelly Jackson, the practice specialises in providing straightforward, practical financial support for small businesses, sole traders and landlords. By combining professional expertise with modern technology, Jackson Accounts helps clients stay on top of their finances with real-time information and efficient systems that simplify day-to-day

financial management.

Kelly and her team are experienced in a range of widely used accounting software packages, including Xero, Sage, FreeAgent, LEAP and Proclaim. This expertise allows them to integrate

year. Instead, the team works closely with clients to understand their goals, support forward planning, improve cash flow and help them make informed financial decisions as their businesses grow.



for the upcoming changes. The firm is offering guidance and training on suitable accounting software to ensure clients feel confident and compliant when the new rules come into effect.

Over the coming months, Kelly and her team will also be running courses to explain how MTD will work and what businesses need to know ahead of the transition.

To find out more about upcoming events, follow Jackson Accounts Limited on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok or LinkedIn, or email [info@jackson-accounts.com](mailto:info@jackson-accounts.com) for further information.

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**[www.jackson-accounts.com](http://www.jackson-accounts.com)**

### Jackson Accounts Limited is already helping sole traders and landlords prepare for upcoming changes

seamlessly with clients' existing systems or guide new businesses in choosing the right software from the very beginning.

However, what truly sets Jackson Accounts apart is its commitment to building strong relationships with clients. Kelly believes that a great accountant should be more than someone who submits figures once a

As a successful female business owner, Kelly is also passionate about supporting entrepreneurs at the start of their journey, providing the clarity and confidence they need to move forward.

With Making Tax Digital (MTD) for Income Tax on the horizon, Jackson Accounts Limited is already helping sole traders and landlords prepare

## It is better connected: Intentional introductions with professionals up and down the UK



**The Business Network, led by Helen Bennett, has grown into a dynamic community with groups across England.**

**Built on the belief that meaningful relationships drive sustainable success, the Network delivers focused, monthly lunchtime events designed specifically for business owners and directors.**

In a world where digital noise can dilute genuine connection, these face-to-face lunches provide an effective forum for purposeful conversation. Here, leaders share insight, explore opportunities and build trusted professional relationships.

Beyond the room, members gain access to a national database of like-minded professionals, extending opportunity far beyond their local group. This 'extended reach' is also

achieved from the connections Helen is able to make from the extensive network of contacts she has forged over the years. Helen explains,

"An important part of my job is to help make our member's working lives easier, having the ability to act as a 'problem solver' when members ask if I know anyone who can help with a particular issue they, or a client, are experiencing, is extremely rewarding".

Introductions are intentional, collaboration is encouraged and accountability underpins every interaction. Why not attend a lunch, experience the difference and unlock the power of connected leadership.



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## Designing success: Scaling a commercial architectural practice in a changing market



**I am a chartered architect with over thirty years experience working in the construction industry. In 2012**

**I co-founded KITSON Architecture Ltd and since then, we have matured into a busy commercial practice based in Altrincham, South Manchester.**

Since lockdown we have seen huge growth in the Dilapidations and Data Centre/Critical Infrastructure sectors and we continue to expand our work in the Retail, Commercial Offices, Heritage, Residential, Healthcare and Education sectors as well.

I have recently become a mentor supporting the Construction For Women Programme based in the North West, something that I find very rewarding. I served for four years on The Women in Property

North West Committee and you will often find me on the Manchester networking circuit. With 2026 racing ahead I am particularly looking forward to celebrating International Women's Day in March, attending UKREiIF in Leeds in May and enjoying a family holiday in the sunshine in June.

At KITSON Architecture Ltd we offer a free 60-minute initial consultation, so if you have a property, land, brief, ambition or simply a dream please don't hesitate to get in touch with us!



**Ellen Kitson RIBA**  
**0161 637 2764**  
**[ellen@kitsonarchitecture.co.uk](mailto:ellen@kitsonarchitecture.co.uk)**  
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# women in business



## Empowering minds, transforming workplaces

**I help people and organisations have real, honest conversations about mental health, race, and inclusion. Not box-ticking. Not theory alone. Real life. Real impact.**



I bring lived experience as well as professional training. I know what it feels like to be “the only one in the room,” to

carry stress quietly, and to navigate systems that don't work for everyone. That understanding shapes how I teach and how I create spaces where people can speak openly.

At Apoyo Courses, we deliver practical, interactive training in Mental Health First Aid, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and Anti-Racism. Our sessions are human and engaging, using group work, discussions, and active participation so people learn with each other, not just from slides.

I explain complex topics in clear, simple language—no jargon, no one-size-fits-all. Every session is adapted to the people in the room and their organisational reality. This learning continues beyond the day, shaping conversations, behaviours, and culture.

I help organisations turn wellbeing and inclusion values into everyday actions. Real change. Lasting impact.

[faby@apoyocourses.co.uk](mailto:faby@apoyocourses.co.uk)

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



## 2026 sees new brand for networking host



**I am delighted to be featured once again in this Women in Business segment. Since our previous feature, we have experienced several notable developments.**

**The Profile Club**  
CONNECTING BUSINESSES. BUILDING NETWORKS.

In December, we announced our rebranding to The Profile Club, which has been met with a positive response. This transition required the development of a new website and the implementation of a new CRM system. We are fortunate to have members whose expertise and support have contributed significantly to this successful change.

Our Colony Networking brand continues to grow, now hosting seven meetings each month across central Manchester, down to Wrexham, and over to Liverpool. These sessions offer structured networking opportunities, including

two guaranteed one-to-one meetings during the last half hour—which has led to new business connections. Thanks to Simon's collaboration with The Federation of Businesses, these events are organised together with the UK's leading business organisation.

So what is next? We are now looking to expand our reach, and we are speaking to potential partners to work with across the UK to bring our style of networking to the UK business community.

We are fortunate that The Profile Club and Colony Networking offer all the connections necessary for achieving our goals. This focus on collaboration forms the foundation of our groups, as working together is essential for any successful networking organisation.

[win@theprofileclub.co.uk](mailto:win@theprofileclub.co.uk)

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

## Leading with purpose: Helen Spencer, Managing Partner, WR Partners



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**When Helen Spencer joined WR Partners 20 years ago as an HR Manager, she wasn't following a traditional path into accountancy. She was drawn to professional services by something she believed in deeply, that people are the real engine of any successful business. With a background in Human Resources spanning more than 30 years, it's exactly that experience of recognising excellence in people that has set her apart as a leader. What she couldn't have predicted was that she would one day be appointed Managing Partner.**

“I never could have imagined becoming Managing Partner,” she admits. “Walking into a traditional accountancy firm without an accountancy qualification, I knew I'd have to prove myself differently. Credibility isn't handed to you, you earn it.”

Under Helen's leadership since 2019, WR Partners has navigated significant change. Steering an established, traditional firm with over 100 years of history through a full rebrand and acquisitions, while protecting everything that makes it special, has been one of her defining achievements. That progress is now tangible, with a growing presence across Cheshire and the recent opening of a new Northwich office designed to deliver a better experience for both clients and the team who support them.

That people-first thinking extends to how Helen approaches leadership. “I aim to create an outstanding employee experience and attract and retain talented individuals within WR Partners,” she says. “My role is to develop and implement strategies that maximise the achievement of business and personal goals.” It's her HR background that sets her apart, and it's

exactly that experience of recognising excellence in people that has driven WR Partners forward.

For Helen, her proudest moment isn't a single milestone, it's seeing what WR Partners has grown into. “Surround yourself with great people. That's the most important thing I've learned.”

Looking ahead, Helen has defined a clear roadmap for the firm's future, with a strong focus on digitalisation and the opportunities and challenges shaping the world their clients operate in.

“We are committed to protecting the future of our clients and our people,” Helen says. It's a belief she's held since the day she joined the firm, and one that, twenty years on, continues to shape everything WR Partners stands for.

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# #SBS



## Celebrating 15 years of Small with the theme Resilience Rocks, winners



**On Friday 20th February, the ICC Birmingham opened its doors to more than 1,000 small business owners for the annual #SBS Small Business Sunday Event, the theme this year: Resilience Rocks. Founded and hosted by Theo Paphitis, the event is a key date out of the office for entrepreneurs seeking to learn, share ideas and build meaningful connections.**

**TV Dragon and Small Business Advocate, Theo Paphitis, said:** “#SBS Small Business Sunday is about more than recognition - it’s about belief: belief in ideas, entrepreneurs and the power of community. With over 4,500 members, and thanks to our incredible

partners who share that belief, #SBS has spent 15 years helping small businesses grow. When you back small businesses, you’re backing people, families and futures.”

Theo opened the day with a series of updates and new opportunities for #SBS members.

Among them was the launch of a new #SBS Award at the Enterprise Vision Awards, offering members

the chance to take part in the UK’s largest celebration of female entrepreneurship, and the returning opportunity to win one of 12 free stands at Spring Fair 2027, one of the country’s biggest trade shows. He also confirmed the continued rollout of the #SBS x Lifestyle Gift Card, created to help consumers support small businesses directly, and announced plans for the #SBS Regional Business Bootcamps in partnership with NatWest Business, which will take

**#SBS is about more than recognition - it’s about belief**



# Business Sunday

## gather at Birmingham ICC

place across the UK throughout the next year.

A highlight of the day was the #SBS x NatWest Accelerator Live Pitch Competition. Three entrepreneurs - Kate Taylor (Evenly, Dorset), Charlotte Giddings (Brownie and the Bean, Suffolk), and Sarah Howick & Georgina Hammond (A Noble Gift, Kent) - took to the main stage to pitch for a share of £10,000, kindly donated by NatWest Accelerator, and mentoring support. The competition highlighted the drive, creativity and resilience that define the #SBS community.

The event also featured an impressive line-up of speakers and panels. Delegates heard a thought-provoking

discussion on resilience from a panel of small business owners, gained practical insights from TikTok Shop and enjoyed an inspiring fireside chat between Theo Paphitis and Katie Piper OBE, who shared her powerful story of recovery and determination.

Free to attend and packed with insight, #SBSEvent2026 once again showed why Small Business Sunday is a key date in the UK's entrepreneurial calendar. Now more than 15 years strong, #SBS continues to provide a genuine platform for small business growth, collaboration and inspiration.

To enter your business simply visit [www.theopaphitissbs.com](http://www.theopaphitissbs.com)

**Business Connect Magazine** was proud to once again support the #SBS community as an official media supporter for the third consecutive year. The event brought together an inspiring group of entrepreneurs, many of whom started their businesses from their kitchen tables and have grown them through passion, resilience and determination.

Paul Mirage, Owner and Director of Business Connect Magazine, said: "It has been an honour to be selected as an independent

publisher to work alongside my favourite Dragon Theo Paphitis.

Special thanks to Jess Littlewood, Thea Carter of the incredible #SBS team. Their support over the past several years has meant a great deal to both me personally and to Business Connect Magazine. We are proud to continue championing the small business community across the country."



# gmcc news



Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce

## Chamber names No.3 Circle Square Building of the Year

Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce has announced No.3 Circle Square as the winner of Building of the Year 2025.

The aim of the Building of the Year Award is to recognise a building's contribution to Greater Manchester in terms of construction and development. No.3 Circle Square is a new build, 15-storey, environmentally sustainable office building, complemented by a new public realm space located in the heart of Circle Square, Manchester.

Andrew Turner, the incoming

Chair of the Chamber's Property & Construction Group, said: "Why did this building win? As we say each year, this is not an architectural or design award. This award is about recognising the building or development that the judges believe makes the greatest sustainable contribution to Greater Manchester - socially, culturally, economically, visually, or environmentally.

"This winning building demonstrated to the judges how important it is for Manchester to compete globally and

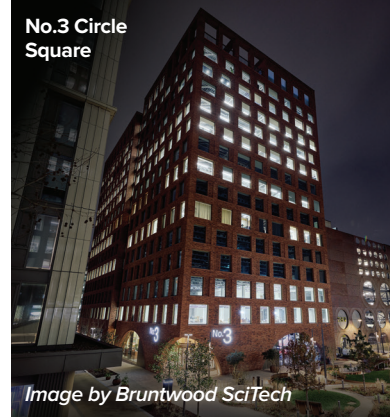
to attract and retain talent, particularly in the technology and digital sectors, reflecting the development's appeal to high-growth, knowledge-driven businesses.

"No.3 Circle Square benefits from its position within a strong innovation ecosystem that includes access to world-class university talent, research partnerships and support infrastructure, building on the success of the earlier phases. It really does deliver quality jobs and inward investment from major companies including AutoTrader and Puma."

The other projects shortlisted for the Building of the Year Award were:

- Ancoats Mobility Hub
- Campfield
- Civic
- J R Clynes Building
- Power Hall

Diane Elebert-Morgan, Property & Construction Group Manager, Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, said: "The fact the judges chose to



have a highly commended award this time reflects the quality of buildings that were shortlisted. The projects are based across Greater Manchester from Ancoats to Wigan and include everything from new build to the restoration of historic buildings. Each one makes a great contribution to the local community and will be a landmark for years to come."

The awards were announced at the Property & Construction Annual

Dinner, sponsored by D+H UK, at Manchester Hall on 5th March. The evening also saw the Steve Burne Apprentice of the Year Award 2025 presented to Alysia Rigg, an apprentice at Shift PM.

The other finalists for Apprentice of the Year Award were Will Cooper of Arup and Emily Watson of Laing O'Rourke.

To find out more about GM Chamber and about membership contact [communicate@gmchamber.co.uk](mailto:communicate@gmchamber.co.uk)

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# exporting & logistics

## From cybersecurity to customs, mental health to net zero

The first wave of Multimodal 2026 conference sessions are announced

If you're looking for something to love this February, Multimodal 2026 has delivered. The UK's leading freight transport, logistics and supply chain management exhibition has announced the first six speakers for its conference programme – and the line-up promises to be worth falling for.

Taking place from 30th June to 2nd July 2026 at the NEC Birmingham, Multimodal 2026 will feature a comprehensive conference programme across four theatres over three days. With free registration now open, industry professionals can secure their place at sessions tackling the most pressing challenges facing the sector today.

### First six speakers announced

The initial speaker announcement showcases the breadth and depth of content delegates can expect:

**Lyll Cresswell, Founder & CEO, TEG** will challenge conventional wisdom with *Logistics is Built for Control. But Can We Trust What Happens?* This session examines why most risk in logistics exists before a vehicle leaves the yard, not when something goes wrong, and how systematic verification can shift trust to where it matters.

**Mark Murray, Founder, Whysup** will lead a vital discussion on *Mental Wellbeing in Logistics: Real Voices, Real Challenges, Real Change.* This panel brings together voices from the road, the warehouse, and the boardroom to explore how companies can build healthier, safer, and more supportive working environments.

**Samantha Brocklehurst, Managing Partner, NovaChain** will cut through the hype in *Visibility Isn't Value: How AI Drives Real Results in Multimodal Logistics* – examining how artificial intelligence can deliver genuine operational improvements rather than just technology for technology's sake.

**Chris Ashley, Senior Policy Lead, Road Haulage Association (RHA)** will present *Delivering Decarbonisation: Turning Net Zero Ambition into Action.* Drawing on real-world operator experiences and data, this session will share lessons from fleets making the transition and highlight the policy support needed to accelerate the shift to cleaner transport.

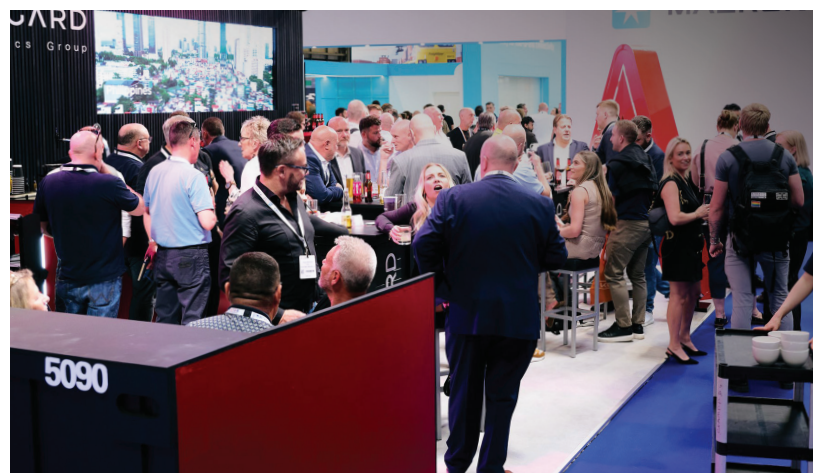
**Nico Collart, Chief Trade Operations & Compliance Officer and Nico Urien, Head of Global Trade Advisory (Brussels), both from Customs Support Group** will navigate Europe's New Customs Playbook: Compliance, Data & Decarbonisation in 2026. From CBAM's definitive phase to EUDR obligations and digital product passports, this session provides a clear roadmap for shippers, manufacturers and logistics providers.

**Caroline Chester, Principal Associate, Shoosmiths** will explore *From Contracts to Continuity: Building Legally Resilient Supply Chains in 2026 and Beyond.* This session examines how forward-thinking businesses can use smart commercial contracting and clear risk allocation to build supply chains that don't just survive shocks but continue to perform under them.

### Free registration now open

Following a record-breaking 2025 event that saw a 4% increase in visitor numbers, Multimodal 2026 is set to be bigger and better. Registration is completely free and now open at <https://forms.reg.buzz/multimodal-2026>

The event will feature extensive networking opportunities, including the popular Multimodal Mixer drinks reception open to all attendees.



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**MULTIMODAL 2026**  
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# exporting & logistics

## Landmark deal paves way for return of regular cross-Channel rail freight



A landmark

Government-backed deal has paved the way for the return of regular cross-Channel rail freight services – opening up new, direct export opportunities for British businesses looking to trade with Europe.

Under the agreement, Network Rail and its property development company Platform4 will take long-term control of the Barking Eurohub site in east London from Legal & General. Backed by around £15 million of private investment, the site will be transformed into a major international logistics hub.

For UK exporters, this could be a game changer. Regular intermodal freight trains running through the Channel Tunnel would enable businesses to move goods directly by rail to key European markets including France, Germany, Italy and Spain. Containers can be seamlessly transferred between rail, road and sea, offering flexibility alongside speed and reliability.

Sectors such as food and drink, manufacturing and consumer goods stand to benefit significantly. Scottish whisky producers, white goods manufacturers and FMCG brands could access European customers more efficiently, while London's wholesale

food markets could receive fresh continental produce directly by rail.

Currently, only a small proportion of UK-EU rail freight passes through the Tunnel and is largely limited to bulk, single-customer contracts. The majority of goods travel by sea and then onward by lorry, adding cost, congestion and carbon emissions. A revitalised Barking Eurohub would provide a viable alternative, shifting freight from road to rail and easing pressure on key routes such as the M20, M2 and Dartford Crossing.

The move also aligns with the Government's wider rail reform agenda. Once established, Great British Railways will have a statutory duty to promote rail freight growth, with formal targets set by the Transport Secretary.

With nearly 100,000 UK businesses exporting to the EU, the development strengthens supply chains, improves resilience and provides a more sustainable, competitive route to market. For companies looking to expand their European footprint, direct cross-Channel rail freight could soon offer a faster, greener and commercially attractive export solution.



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## Maersk signs agreement with New Times Shipbuilding for eight large vessels

Copenhagen, Denmark – Maersk has signed an order of eight large vessels with New Times Shipbuilding Co. Ltd. in China. All eight ships will have the same characteristics and make up a new series of 18,600 TEU vessels with delivery in 2029 and 2030.

“We are pleased to have signed this agreement for eight large vessels. The order is part of our ongoing fleet renewal and helps maintain our fleet’s competitive edge.

At 366 meters in length and 58.6 meters in breadth, these vessels are more compact than the current

maximum container vessel length of 400 meters.

Deployment flexibility has been a key factor in our decision-making. Although these vessels are large, they offer greater flexibility than the largest ships currently being built in our industry. This provides us with multiple deployment options across both our current and future network.”



## Global logistics faces fresh strain from Middle East escalation

The increasing escalation of conflict in the Middle East is creating immediate disruption across global logistics networks. Both air and ocean freight services are being affected, with consequences extending beyond the region into major international trade corridors.

Should instability persist, additional strain on global supply chains is expected and further operational challenges remain likely. The situation continues to evolve rapidly. A summary of the current impact is outlined below.

### Air Freight

- Extensive airspace closures across parts of the Middle East have

significantly limited flight operations to and from the region.

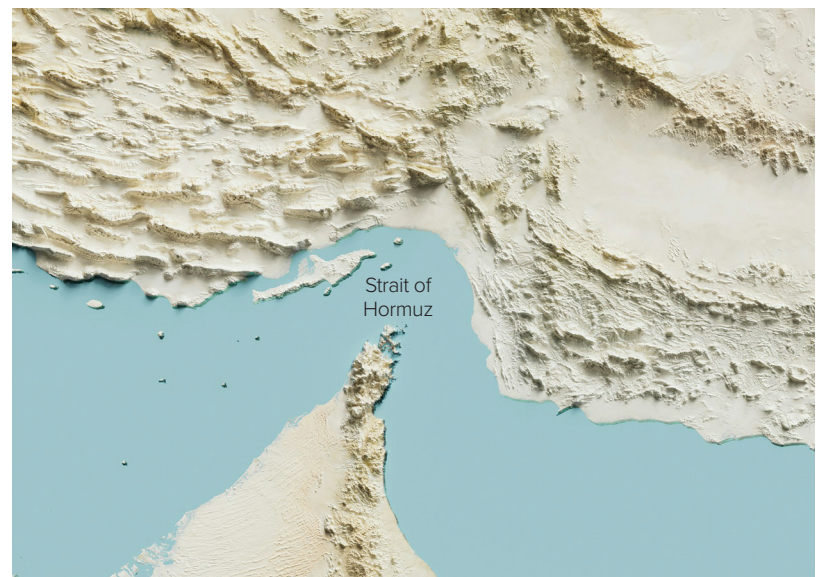
- Long-haul routes that typically pass through Middle Eastern airspace are also being rerouted or cancelled. This has led to congestion at alternative hubs, extended transit times, reduced global cargo capacity, and schedule disruptions across multiple trade lanes.
- Several carriers have suspended flights to key regional gateways, mainly affecting connections to Bahrain, Iran, Israel, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

- As long as airspace restrictions remain in effect, delays and backlogs are expected to continue.
- Air freight rates are rising rapidly, particularly on Asia–Europe and Asia–Middle East routes. Additional cost pressures may emerge through expanded fuel surcharges and the introduction or increase of war risk premiums.

### Ocean Freight

- Most ocean carriers have suspended passage through the Strait of Hormuz. Cargo currently in transit will likely be delayed, and some carriers have halted services to and from the broader Middle East altogether.

- Carriers have already implemented additional surcharges on regional shipments, including war risk premiums and general rate increases.
- Lines that had recently resumed limited transits via the Suez Canal have begun diverting vessels around the Cape of Good Hope once again.
- The resulting disruption is expected to have knock-on effects across adjacent trade lanes, particularly Asia–Europe services, while global ocean freight rates may rise if the conflict persists and fuel prices remain elevated.



# out & about...

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# Digital

# DTX

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## Digital Transformation Expo (DTX) sits at the intersection of technology, people, and process

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As the flagship event of Manchester Tech Week, DTX brings together the region's largest gathering of technology, digital, and innovation leaders. Manchester Tech Week celebrates the ideas, tools, and strategies shaping the future of business, through a city-wide programme of meetups, exhibitions, pitch events, and experiences.

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#### • Purpose-driven technology sourcing

Discover smart solutions, bold innovation, and practical insights designed to drive growth, improve

efficiency, and deliver measurable value.

#### • Connecting teams and breaking silos

Collaborate across functions, align technology with business goals, and unlock the full potential of your people and platforms.

#### • Meaningful networking that matters

Engage with senior leaders, peers, and technology pioneers to share ideas, challenge thinking, and accelerate transformation.

#### • Real-world impact, not hype

Turn technology investment into tangible outcomes - streamline operations, enhance experiences, and build sustainable growth.

Whether you're optimising your IT or

cyber estate, improving data access and governance, or exploring the latest in automation and AI, DTX Manchester is where meaningful connections are made and practical solutions are found.

DTX Manchester is co-located with Unified Communications EXPO (UCX) Manchester, the North's only event dedicated to colleague and customer communications. Together, DTX + UCX delivers a comprehensive experience for everyone from senior leaders and functional heads to architects, engineers, developers, and data scientists.

From executing digital and business strategy, to preparing for the next cyber threat, to cutting through the noise around AI - we promise your time away from the desk will be well spent.

Explore case studies, panels, live demos, workshops, and roundtables, and take part in thought-provoking conversations and high-value networking, all centred around this year's theme:

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# wellbeing

## Your **business** and **self care**

Women in Business Special



### When you're new to business, maybe starting out as a small enterprise or sole trader it's easy to not appreciate your biggest asset.

You may have put in the effort, have the necessary qualifications, agreed the finance, secured premises, devised a great offering, but have you overlooked the biggest contributor to your future success? That it's you who are the most important resource in your business.

At the outset you'll have ample enthusiasm, determination, knowledge and dedication. But those attributes will only take you so far. Over time setbacks, a lack of income, recognition and success can dilute your commitment. How you respond to those obstacles and how well you care for yourself, your health and wellbeing is a significant factor in your resilience and ultimate business longevity.

As a woman in business this can be an especially tough negotiation, as responsibility for home, childcare and domestic arrangements are often a serious consideration too, even if they're delegated to cleaners, parents and online delivery services.

Recent published research reveals that approximately 60% of new UK businesses fail within their first three years whilst the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows only 42.5% still trading in their fifth year.

With a high percentage of businesses regularly closing down there's a definite requirement for

good habits from the outset to help you maintain a positive approach. Self-care includes protecting both your physical and mental health and wellbeing.

### Here are a few straightforward steps to support better self-care and improve your health and work-life balance.

Starting a new job or working in your own business is an exciting and optimistic time, motivated to do a good job, establish a reputation for excellence and demonstrate a readiness to work long and hard, often initially for little reward. At the outset, self-care can seem an out of reach luxury, gradually eroding the joy in what you're doing, ultimately becoming stressed, overtired and unwell.

Avoid life becoming a relentless slog by using solutions and remedies to keep you positive. Are there ways you could sometimes work from home or introduce flexible hours to ease the load? When you're more in control, problems become less insurmountable and solutions appear more readily accessible.

Thinking about the service you provide and your customer's experience is crucial when nurturing and treating those relationships well. Often people say they don't read emails, reply to texts and delete incoming calls. But how do they share information, keep in touch, learn what's going on?

Sure, it takes time to read and reply to messages, but being successful in business is about relationships and taking time to communicate effectively with each other. A loyal, respectful relationship can sustain you through tough times. And remember, it works both ways. Few

things are more frustrating than waiting for a reply that never comes!

Supporting good physical health is crucial, with a regular diet of healthy food cooked from scratch, perhaps batch-cooked at weekends, rather than take-aways and pre-chilled supermarket dinners. Try to take even a short break for lunch and include some time outside, even if it's 'just' a walk in the park. Good self-care includes quality time with family.

Winding down each evening helps support your wellbeing. Treat sleep as important and maintain a good sleep routine, with a regular cut-off point, unless there's an urgent or emergency situation. Try to avoid working all hours. Add it to your commitment to yourself. Maybe listen to music, spend time in nature, do some stretching or yoga (YouTube can help), turn off your tech devices for an hour or two pre-bed as the day comes to a close.

Good mental health needs a little planning too. Taking a short break from work every couple of hours allows you to switch off, have a drink of water, a piece of fruit and maybe enjoy light conversation with co-workers. You'll feel better upon your return.

Plan some fun time with family or friends. Board games, walks, football, rounders or sports, bike rides, picnics, barbecues where everyone contributes some food or drink can be inexpensive yet fun ways of taking time out from work-related duties whilst enjoying positive time with the people in your life. It's always good to have some fun times planned.

Personal me time can be therapeutic too. Spending time alone to read a

good book, have a quiet run, walk or hike, enjoy a few hours fishing can all be life-enhancing ways to recharge your batteries.

Remember, when you're well, are feeling good and happy with life everyone in your orbit benefits from your mood, energy and positivity. Good self-care is hugely important, not just for yourself and your business, but also for your relationships with others and your general quality of daily life.



**Susan Leigh MNCH (ACC)**

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, 'Dealing with Stress, Managing its Impact', '101 Days of Inspiration #tipoftheday' and 'Dealing with Death, Coping with the Pain', all on Amazon and with easy to read sections, tips and ideas to help you feel more positive about your life.

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Contact: Paul  
07708 987 518  
paul@businessconnectpublishing.co.uk  
www.businessconnectmagazine.co.uk

## In our next issue we feature...

### UKREiIF 2026

Pick up a copy at the 3-day event  
Promote your business in our review of this huge expo of 16,000 attendees!

### Multimodal

Freight forwarding Expo at NEC Birmingham  
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### Construction Expo North

A review of the inaugural event in Bolton,  
Pick up a copy from display areas around the event



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**BUSINESS connect MAGAZINE**

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**MULTIMODAL**  
NEC BIRMINGHAM UK 30 JUNE-2 JULY

**CONSTRUCTION EXPO NORTH**  
Supported by Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce

# diary dates

Don't forget your business cards!

## BITA (British and Irish Trading Alliance)

Monthly social networking / lunches.

### London

### Liverpool

### Manchester

Cost FREE for all monthly social events

Contact bita.ie

## BNI Vision Stockport

Weekly every Weds 9.15am

Venue Bramhall Park Golf Club, 20 Manor Road, Bramhall, Stockport, SK7 3LY

Cost Please enquire

Contact Stephen Gomes 0161 956 2656

## BUSINESS FAIRS 2026

Annual fairs across Northern venues.

Free to visit, all sectors welcome to exhibit.

### Liverpool Business Fair 2026

18 Mar 10.30am - 3.00pm

Venue St George's Hall, St George's Place, Liverpool, L1 1JJ

### Greater Manchester Business Fair 2026

15 Jul 10.30am - 3.00pm

Venue Mercure Bolton Georgian House Hotel, Manchester Rd, Blackrod, Bolton, BL6 5RU

### Wirral & Chester Business Fair 2026

24 Sept 10.30am - 3.00pm

Venue New Brighton Floral Pavillion, CH45 2JS

### Bradford Business Fair 2026

15 Oct 10.30am - 3.00pm

Venue Mercure Bradford Bankfield Hotel, Bradford Road, Bingley, BD16 1TU

### Halton & Warrington Business Fair 2026

19 Nov 10.30am - 3.00pm

Venue DCBL Stadium Halton, Lower House Lane, Widnes, WA8 7DZ

Cost FREE to visit (pre-registration required)

Contact Tony Haines tony@liverpoolba.com 0151 709 8932

## Business Catalyst Club 2026

Manchester and Leeds networking lunches.

Manchester – 23 Apr, 9 Jul, 22 Oct

Venue Box, 125 Deansgate, Manchester, M3 2BY

Leeds – 21 May, 17 Sep, 26 Nov

Venue Box, 15 Infirmary Street, Leeds, LS1 2JS

Timings and booking details - contact organisers below (invitation only):

Contact Graham Shiers 07818 675 310

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

## Carlisle Ambassadors

Regular showcase and networking events.

Topic - Skills (Attraction & Retention).

Venue Carlisle Racecourse, Durdar Road, Carlisle, CA2 4TS

Cost Ask organisers

Contact Michelle Masters 07810 224 735

[carlisleambassadors.co.uk](http://carlisleambassadors.co.uk)

## CHESHIRE BUSINESS EXHIBITIONS 2026

Business fairs across Cheshire venues. Business Connect Magazine are media partners.

**Chester 27 Mar** 10.00am - 3.00pm  
Venue Chester Racecourse

**Manchester 10 Jun**  
Venue Concorde Conference Centre

**Crewe 9 Sept**  
Venue Mornflake Stadium

**Stockport 9 Dec**  
Venue Edgeley Park

Cost FREE to visit (pre-registration required)  
Contact Leon Broster 01270 919 500  
[leon.broster@cheshirebusinessexpos.co.uk](mailto:leon.broster@cheshirebusinessexpos.co.uk)

## Digital Transformation Expo 2026

2-Day Expos in Manchester and London.

### DTX Manchester 2026

29 Apr 9.30am - 5.30pm

30 Apr 9.30am - 4.30pm

Venue Manchester Central, Petersfield Manchester, M2 3GX

### DTX London 2026

14 Oct 9.30am - 5.30pm

15 Oct 9.30am - 4.30pm

Venue ExCeL London, Royal Victoria Dock, 1 Western Gateway, London, E16 1XL

Cost FREE (pre-registration required).  
Manchester Contact [dtxevents.io](http://dtxevents.io)

## FM North

Networking event for professionals in the FM, Cleaning and Construction Sector fourth Wednesday of each month.

19 Mar 4.00pm - 9.00pm

Venue Banyan Bar & Kitchen, Manchester Corn Exchange, Manchester, M3 3HG  
Cost £38 Includes first drink and food  
Contact ian.perton@affinity.com  
[janice@steroplast.co.uk](mailto:janice@steroplast.co.uk)  
See Eventbrite for more details

## Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce

Events, support, updates, reviews, networking Visit the GMCC website for listings and events.

Contact [communicate@gmchamber.co.uk](mailto:communicate@gmchamber.co.uk)  
[gmchamber.co.uk](http://gmchamber.co.uk)

## High Peak Business Club

Regular monthly breakfast networking.

All meetings - Fridays 7.30am - 9.30am

2026 announcements to come.

Venue Disley Golf Club, Stanley Hall Lane, Disley, Stockport SK12 2JX

Cost £25

Share Club meets monthly on Thursdays.  
Contact [edwinacurrie@sky.com](mailto:edwinacurrie@sky.com)  
[highpeakbusinessclub.co.uk](http://highpeakbusinessclub.co.uk)

## K-Club

Entrepreneurs networking - Manchester based.

Contact Amanda Manson 07754 069 829  
[k-club.co.uk](http://k-club.co.uk)

## MBH Business Networking

Business networking.

Venue Manchester based

Cost FREE

Contact [kyle@mpostcode.co.uk](mailto:kyle@mpostcode.co.uk)  
[manchesterevents.mpostcode.co.uk](http://manchesterevents.mpostcode.co.uk)

## Small Business Sunday #SBS

Competition every Sunday for Small Businesses to raise their profiles on X and Instagram

5.00pm - 7.30pm

Info [www.theopaphitissbs.com/about/](http://www.theopaphitissbs.com/about/)

Visit us here

## Multimodal 2026

3-Day supply chain expo. Business Connect Magazine are media partners.

30 Jun 10.00am - 5.00pm

1 Jul 10.00am - 7.00pm

2 Jul 10.00am - 3.00pm

Venue Hall 4, NEC, Marston Green Birmingham, B40 1NT

Cost FREE (pre-registration required, tickets available soon from website).

Contact [multimodal.org.uk](http://multimodal.org.uk)

## pro-manchester

Full programme of events available online.

Contact Nicola McCormick 07929 671755  
[nicola.mccormick@pro-manchester.co.uk](mailto:nicola.mccormick@pro-manchester.co.uk)  
[pro-manchester.co.uk](http://pro-manchester.co.uk)

## Property Catalyst Club 2026

Leeds networking lunches for the property sector.

26 Mar, 25 Jun, 8 Oct

Venue Box, 15 Infirmary Street, Leeds LS1 2JS

Timings and booking details - contact organisers below (invitation only):

Contact Graham Shiers 07818 675 310

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

## The Profile Club

Business networking lunch.

South Manchester

2 Apr 10.00am - 2.00pm

Venue The Pinewood on Wilmslow, 180 Wilmslow Road, Handforth SK9 3LF

14 May 10.00am - 2.00pm

Venue The Pinewood on Wilmslow, 180 Wilmslow Road, Handforth SK9 3LF

Cost for all events Contact the organiser

Contact Simon Edmondson 07766 493428

[simon@theprofileclub.co.uk](mailto:simon@theprofileclub.co.uk)

[theprofileclub.co.uk](http://theprofileclub.co.uk)

## The Heath Networking

Monthly Informal Networking for SMEs.

26 Mar, 30 Apr, 28 May 11.45am - 1.30pm

Venue The Heath Business & Technical Park

Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 4QX

Cost £10

Contact Anthony Stonebanks 01928 513368

[anthony.stonebanks@sog.ltd.uk](mailto:anthony.stonebanks@sog.ltd.uk)

[theheath.com/events/](http://theheath.com/events/)

## SHOUT BUSINESS EXPOS 2026

Annual business fairs across Northern venues.

Free to visit, all sectors welcome to exhibit.

Business Connect Magazine are media partners and supporters.

### Lancashire Business Expo 2026

27 Mar 9.00am - 3.00pm

Venue Sir Tom Finney Sports Centre, Marsh Lane, Preston PR1 2YF

### Cumbria Business Expo 2026

5 Jun 9.00am - 3.00pm

Venue Carlisle Racecourse, Durdar Road, Carlisle CA2 4TS

### Liverpool Business Expo 2026

18 Sep 9.00am - 3.00pm

Venue Aintree Racecourse, Ormskirk Road, Aintree L9 5AS

### North West Business Expo 2026

23 Oct 9.00am - 3.00pm

Venue Bolton Stadium Hotel, De Havilland Way, Bolton BL6 6SF

Cost FREE to visit (pre-registration required)

Contact [shoutexpo.com](http://shoutexpo.com)

Visit us here

## Shout Network

Fortnightly networking. Breakfast or lunch included. Venues across the Northwest.

Accrington, Blackburn, Blackpool, Bolton, Bolton, Burnley, Bury, Chorley, Clitheroe, Leyland, Liverpool, Manchester, Preston, Rossendale, Southport, South Ribble, and Wrea Green.

Fortnightly networking is on a sector lock-out basis. Costs also vary.

Contact 01772 935930 [info@shoutnetwork.co.uk](mailto:info@shoutnetwork.co.uk)  
[shoutnetwork.co.uk](http://shoutnetwork.co.uk)

## The Business Network Manchester

Business networking lunch

- inc seminars (all optional 10.00am start).

Network events also held in Birmingham, Canary Wharf, Exeter, London Central, Manchester, Peterborough and South Herts.

24 Mar Noon - 2.00pm

Venue Lowry Hotel, 50 Dearmans Place, Salford M3 5LH

Cost £62.50

29 Apr Noon - 2.00pm

Venue Hyatt Regency Manchester, 5 Booth St W, Manchester M15 6PQ

Cost £59.50

Contact Helen Bennett 0161 823 1384

[helen@business-network.co.uk](mailto:helen@business-network.co.uk)

[business-network.co.uk](http://business-network.co.uk)

## The Business Network South Humberside

Business networking lunch

- inc seminars (all optional 10.15am start).

1 Oct 11.45am - 2.00pm

Venue The Ashbourne Hotel, Garden Vlg, North Killingholme, Immingham DN40 3JL

Cost for all events £40.00

Contact Amy Heward 07908 258 354

[amy@business-network.co.uk](mailto:amy@business-network.co.uk)

[business-network-south-humberside.co.uk](http://business-network-south-humberside.co.uk)

[theprofileclub.co.uk](http://theprofileclub.co.uk)

## The Original Manchester Curry Club

Monthly Informal Networking lunches for SMEs.

Arrivals from 1.30pm. Contact organisers for more details.

Venue Rajdoot Tandoori, Carlton House, Albert Square, Manchester M2 5PE

Cost £30 for 3 courses

Contact Kerry Bland 07966 275454

[kerry@debtcollect.co.uk](mailto:kerry@debtcollect.co.uk)

## UKREiIF 2026

The UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum.

3-Day conference - 19 May, 20 May, 21 May. Business Connect are Media Partners.

Venue Royal Armouries, New Dock, Armouries Drive, Leeds LS10 1LT

Cost From £975+VAT (early release only)

Contact Sales Enquiries: [opportunities@built-environment-networking.com](mailto:opportunities@built-environment-networking.com)

Media & Marketing Enquiries: [nathan.spencer@ukreiff.com](mailto:nathan.spencer@ukreiff.com)

[nathan.spencer@ukreiff.com](http://nathan.spencer@ukreiff.com)

## Construction Expo North

Annual trade event for the construction industry in the north of England.

30 Apr 9.00am-5.00pm

Business Connect are Media Partners.

Venue Bolton Stadium Hotel

Cost FREE (via registration on the website)

Contact [www.constructionexpnorth.com](http://www.constructionexpnorth.com)

Visit us here

## Please note

If you plan to attend 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.



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**27/03** Preston,  
9am - 3pm  
Sir Tom Finney Sports Centre

LANCASHIRE  
BUSINESS  
EXP 2026

**05/06** Cumbria,  
9am - 3pm  
Carlisle Racecourse

CUMBRIA  
BUSINESS  
EXP 2026

**18/09** Liverpool,  
9am - 3pm  
Aintree Racecourse

LIVERPOOL  
BUSINESS  
EXP 2026

**21/10** Bolton,  
12noon - 7pm  
Bolton Wanderers Football Club

THE NORTH WEST  
APPRENTICESHIP  
& CAREERS EXPO

**23/10** Bolton,  
9am - 3pm  
Bolton Wanderers Football Club

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