

# LONDON

Business Matters

## Inside

Michael Mainelli's modern industrial strategy for London

Further education and business

Nightlife in the capital

Employment law update

# Bringing the capital's voices together

Pages 10-11

# UK Construction Week

12 – 14 May 2026  
ExCel, London

[ukconstructionweek.com](http://ukconstructionweek.com)

UK Construction Week  
futurebuild STONE & SURFACES SHOW

THREE SHOWS, ONE SUPER EVENT

Solving in-building connectivity. Meet the robot behind the WAVETHRU solution at stand **R58**



## WAVETHRU

Simply connected through glazing



partner with

INCOROBOTICS

[incorobotics.com](http://incorobotics.com)

Improving mobile connectivity one building at a time

Front cover photo: Laura Citron OBE of London & Partners photographed at the London Eye



## Letter from the editor

**L**aura Citron OBE, London & Partners' chief executive, describes how it is necessary to bring the capital's voices together in our front cover feature on page 10. This plays to the development of the London Growth Plan and the role of 'Team London' to shape how we are viewed by the world. Combine this feature with Professor Michael Mainelli's piece – *A modern industrial strategy for London* – on page 8 and you have cause for future optimism. As Mainelli points out: "When London thrives as a platform for the whole country, growth travels well beyond the capital, and might even arrive ahead of schedule."

### No escape

It seems there is no escape from AI. In *A Smarter City* section (p 34) Andre Reitenbach gives his insights into recent developments, Kirstin McKnight analyses the risks, and John McLoughlin argues that artificial intelligence is fast becoming the biggest cyber risk. Peter Juhasz also contributes his opinion that AI won't replace sales teams – and suggests what will.

### Classic

In the previous issue of *LBM* we reviewed just one

book – *These Divided Isles*, a masterly examination of Britain and Ireland's past relations. In this issue, in advance of the London Book Fair, we feature four works. *The CEO Mirage* and *WHAT TO DO IF ...* are classic business books (p 32) which help spot the illusions, blind spots and ego traps that can take leaders down, and guide readers through difficult situations in the workplace to achieve successful outcomes.

### Blueprint

*Clean Winners* (p 43) focuses on turning the drive for sustainability into a competitive advantage for business. On page 7, Igor Bartkiv reviews *Mismanaged Decline* by Vicky Pryce, a regular commentator for LCCI, and Andy Ross. Subtitled 'what politicians won't tell you about the economy', the book is a blueprint for a stronger, fairer and more resilient economy.

In our next issue we will be reporting on the London Book Fair, held annually at Olympia – the 'go-to' experience for those in UK publishing, a sector reportedly worth £11 billion to the economy.

**Peter Bishop**

[editor@londonbusinessmatters.co.uk](mailto:editor@londonbusinessmatters.co.uk)

LONDON CHAMBER  
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

CONNECT. CHAMPION. SUPPORT.

Official Publication of  
London Chamber of Commerce

33 Queen Street, London EC4R 1AP

Tel: 020 7248 4444

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

Membership, partnership and  
media enquiries

[membersupport@londonchamber.co.uk](mailto:membersupport@londonchamber.co.uk)

020 7203 1713

*London Business Matters* is published on behalf of London Chamber of Commerce and Industry by



**Crosby Associates Media Limited**

632 / 634 Birchwood Boulevard

Birchwood, WA3 7QU

Tel: 0330 124 3780

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

### PUBLISHING CONTACTS

#### Advertising sales

Gina Forshaw – 020 7846 4809

[gina.forshaw@crosbyassociates.co.uk](mailto:gina.forshaw@crosbyassociates.co.uk)

#### Production/design

Coral Sheekey

[coral.sheekey@crosbyassociates.co.uk](mailto:coral.sheekey@crosbyassociates.co.uk)

ISSN 1469-5162 (Print)

ISSN 2051-9524 (Online)



Recycle

When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.



Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of information contained in *London Business Matters*, the publisher cannot accept responsibility for any omissions or inaccuracies it contains. The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Publisher.

*London Business Matters* is printed and distributed by Buxton Press. ©2026 Crosby Associates Media Limited

# Inside this issue...

16

## Regulars

### 10 Cover story

#### Team London Assemble

Bringing the capital's voices together

### 08 As I see it ...

A modern industrial strategy for London

### 12 LCCI in the news

Business confidence and London's future growth

### 18 100 years ago in London

The future Queen Elizabeth II is born

### 21 The Knowledge

What do you know about London?

### 59 LCCI Member News

Offers  
Noticeboard

### 60 Events

Coming up – what to get in your diary for networking and business development

### 62 Two minute interviews

David Keane of Giftcard

Jonny Duggan of AnnexusPartners

### 66 New Members

What companies have joined LCCI in the last two months?



55



22



58



41



# Features

## 06 Top stories

Business confidence at record low

A modern industrial strategy for London

The skills productivity puzzle

## 16 London Life

When art is more than decoration

Legend in Leicester Square

London by night

## 20 Connected London

Best for business expansion

Bright start for the hospitality sector

Third act for Hammersmith Bridge

## 26 International

Border permissions

EU reset to reverse trade slump

Service exports in the doldrums

Overseas business opportunities

## 32 Book reviews

Turning workplace stress into success

Preparation for when reality hits

## 34 A Smarter City

Making tax digital

Shaping the future of business through tech

AI and cyber security

## 41 Sustainability

Moving from corn to cassava

Shaping everyday urban life

Sustainability strategy that puts customers first

## 44 Skills and Entrepreneurship

London's skills crunch

UK employment law overhaul

Spotlight on Hair Development

When a 'director' is not a director

Apprenticeships

## 55 Diversity and Inclusion

Empowering Her

Asian business

## 56 The Big Read

Preventing work-related stress



# Business confidence at record low

**A punitive Employment Rights Act and Autumn Budget have seen London's business confidence drop to its lowest level under the Labour government, according to the LCCI's latest quarterly economic survey of the capital's business leaders.**

## Declining

Just a quarter of London businesses surveyed expect the capital's economy to improve in 2026, with favourable expectations for the UK's economy even lower at 23 per cent. These figures represent the weakest economic outlook under Sir Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeve's stewardship of the economy and the lowest levels since 2023, indicating businesses' declining confidence in the government's ability to deliver growth.

## Well-intentioned

Falling economic and business confidence has been matched by a growing reluctance to hire new staff. Just a quarter of London's businesses engaged in recruitment activity in Q4 2025. This more cautious approach to hiring comes amidst tighter regulation from the Government's Employment Rights Act. Guaranteed hours contracts, though well-intentioned, threaten to undermine the flexibility that some firms and workers rely on, and expanded sick pay and unfair dismissal rights making employers less willing to take a chance

on new employees for fear of increased costs and potential litigation.

## Pressure

Over half of business owners expect to have to raise prices to meet rising business costs, with 53 per cent of London businesses anticipating a rise in the price of their goods and services over the next quarter. These anticipated rises are adding further pressure to London's businesses which are already threatened by planned increases to the national living wage and national minimum wage and proposals for a new tourist tax on the capital's competitiveness.

Investment shows a similarly concerning picture. The share of London businesses reporting increased plant and equipment investment fell sharply in Q4 to 18 per cent. This decline has been driven primarily by London's micro businesses, 15 per cent of which reported decreased investment, pointing to ongoing vulnerabilities for smaller firms operating the capital.

## Silver lining

Against this backdrop of concern, strengthened export activity offers a thin silver lining. The percentage of London businesses reporting an increase in export sales revenue rose to

17 per cent in Q4. However, the share of firms reporting an increase in export orders remained unchanged from last quarter at 12 per cent, indicating that this growth in revenue may simply reflect the fulfilment of existing contracts rather than any sustained expansion in demand.

## Bad news

Commenting on the findings of the report, LCCI chief executive Karim Fatehi OBE said: "Record low business confidence under this government is bad news for the Prime Minister, bad news for the economy, and bad news for the country. There is no economic growth unless businesses have the stability and confidence they need to take risks, invest, hire and expand.

"At the end of a tough year, London businesses needed certainty from the Budget after last year's tax rises but the only certainty they received was higher costs. Rather than making tough decisions on public spending, the Chancellor shifted the burden onto businesses and the public.

"The government's new year's resolution for 2026 must be to listen to businesses – the job-creators, taxpayers and innovators we're relying on to rebuild the economy. Stop weighing them down with increased costs and regulation and give them the confidence they need to grow."



Images by Lauren Hurley / No 10 Downing Street - Number 10 Flickr page, OGL 3

## Puttin' on the Ritz

**LCCI launched the latest Quarterly Economic Survey (Capital 500) report in January in the historic HQ of Capital City College in Vincent Square – historic not least because of its link with the world-famous chef and restaurateur Auguste Escoffier. Together with hotelier Cesar Ritz, he supported the establishment of the college in 1920.**

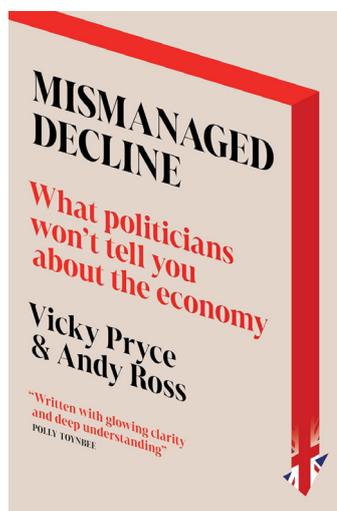
In a session chaired by LCCI interim director of external affairs Ben Anderson-Tuffnell, delegates heard analysis from Angela Joyce, chief executive of Capital City College, Olly Wright, head of public & corporate at Savanta, and Vicky Pryce, chief economic



adviser to CEBR and co-author of *Mismanaged Decline*, reviewed on page 7.

[www.capitalccg.ac.uk](http://www.capitalccg.ac.uk)  
[www.savanta.com](http://www.savanta.com)

# Better economic choices are open



***Mismanaged Decline* arrives at a time when the furnace of war has heated up again, trade tensions have become a routine feature of global news, and warnings of an impending economic downturn increasingly dominate headlines writes Igor Bartkiv.**

Against this backdrop, the search for simple answers to complex challenges has only intensified. In an increasingly digital political environment, where reactions unfold in real time, and electoral incentives reward immediacy over strategy, public debate is often reduced to instant fixes rather than long-term thinking.

## Causes

This book is for readers interested in understanding causes rather than symptoms. Pryce and Ross look beyond recent shocks and short-term events, arguing that many of today's economic troubles have been decades in the making. Some arguments may feel uncomfortable for readers with strong political views, while others may seem obvious to those with an academic or professional background in economics. It

is a rather deliberate choice, underlining the authors' belief that understanding the past requires structure more than shock.

## Misjudgements

Looking back over several decades, the book traces a series of misjudgements and missed opportunities across governments of different political traditions. Responsibility is not placed on a single party or period. Instead, the book shows how repeated policy choices, shaped by short political horizons, gradually weakened economic capacity and resilience.

## Purpose

*Mismanaged Decline* does not frame decline as inevitable. While critical, it remains forward-looking. The authors suggest that alternative outcomes remain possible, provided that policy shifts away from immediate responses at the expense of strategic direction. The emphasis is less on offering solutions than on restoring a sense of long-term purpose.

## Coherent

The book works best as a guide rather than a manifesto. It offers a coherent account of how current economic challenges emerged and why they persist. It leaves the reader with a restrained yet optimistic message: that economic trajectories are shaped by choices and that better ones remain open.

**Igor Bartkiv is head of policy and research at LCCI**

***Mismanaged Decline: what politicians won't tell you about the economy***

**Authors: Vicky Pryce and Andy Ross**

**Publisher: Biteback Publishing  
www.bitebackpublishing.com**

# The "Mansion Tax" – What you need to know about this landmark shift in Council Tax

By Andrew Noton, Partner



From April 2028, owners of homes in England valued at more than £2 million will face a new annual charge known as the High Value Council Tax Surcharge, often dubbed the "mansion tax". The levy will sit on top of existing council tax and is expected to affect fewer than one per cent of properties, around 100,000 homes, roughly half of which are in London, with most of the remainder in the southeast.

The surcharge will be based on property revaluations carried out in 2026. Annual charges will follow a tiered structure, starting at £2,500 for homes just above £2 million and rising to around £7,500 for properties valued at £5 million or more. The Valuation Office Agency will consult on a targeted valuation approach, likely using publicly available data rather than physical inspections. Properties will be revalued periodically to reflect market movements.

Unlike standard council tax bands, which are still based on 1991 values, the surcharge is aimed specifically at the top

end of the market, where significant price growth has not resulted in proportionately higher local tax contributions. The charge will be collected by local authorities on behalf of central government and will not replace existing council tax.

Financial modelling suggests the measure could raise around £400 million annually by 2029/30, with an average additional bill of about £4,500. For high value homeowners and landlords, this represents a new recurring cost that may influence decisions on holding, letting or selling property. Some landlords may seek to pass on part of the cost through higher rents, while second-home owners could face particularly high combined charges.

Early evidence suggests buyer hesitation in the prime market, with a fall in sales agreed above £2 million and potential pricing just below the threshold to avoid the surcharge.

**Andrew Noton, Partner  
andrewnoton@lubbockfine.co.uk**

**Lubbock Fine LLP**  
Paternoster House  
65 St Paul's Churchyard  
London EC4M 8AB  
t +44(0)20 7490 7766  
www.lubbockfine.co.uk

**LF LUBBOCK FINE**

# A modern industrial strategy for London

by Michael Mainelli

“The UK’s Modern Industrial Strategy (Invest 2035) names eight high-growth priority sectors – advanced manufacturing, clean energy, creative industries, defence, digital/technologies, financial services, life sciences, and professional/business services (the ‘IS-8’) – to power prosperity, security, and net-zero transition. It’s a coherent list – but it misses some key London elements. By focusing on sectors rather than places, the strategy risks underplaying the strategic role of London – not merely as one contributor among many but as a national platform where multiple sectors converge, scale, and export influence.

## National engine

London is the rare economic ecosystem where finance funds innovation at speed, creative talent markets it globally, and professional services package it for export. The city’s density of capital, skills, infrastructure, and global connectivity gives it an outsized multiplier effect. If Invest 2035 is about national growth, the place that most consistently converts ideas into investment and exports deserves explicit treatment – not as a special case, but as a national engine.

## World-class

To be fair, the eight sectors do suit London. Financial services cluster around the historic core of the City of London and the modern skyline of Canary Wharf, where capital formation is as routine as morning coffee. Digital and life sciences draw from world-class universities and venture ecosystems. Creative industries thrive from studios to stages. Clean energy innovation finds partners and investors quickly. Professional services – legal, consulting, design – bind everything together.

## National levers

In London, even your sandwich comes with a business model and a seed round. Yet if London is the place where the IS-8 sectors interlock, three additional sectors deserve recognition in a London supplement: property and construction, hospitality and tourism, and education. These are not mere local conveniences; they are national levers.

## Property & Construction

London’s built environment is the staging ground for productivity. Housing



availability affects labour mobility; commercial space shapes firm formation; infrastructure underpins decarbonisation. Construction in London is also a testing bed for modern methods – low-carbon materials, retrofit at scale, and digital twins. What happens in London’s planning, financing, and delivery models cascades across the country. If the UK wants to master green retrofit and urban densification, London is the laboratory and showroom.

## Hospitality & Tourism

London’s cultural magnetism is a foreign-earnings machine. Visitors come for heritage, theatre, sport, cuisine, and retail – and venture onward to the regions later, as is happening at scale with return Asian visitors. The city’s global brand amplifies national soft power and export demand. From the galleries of the British Museum to the stages of the West End, tourism is an industry of ideas and impressions that converts into trade and investment. Airport connectivity makes London the UK’s front door.

## Education

London’s universities and colleges attract global talent, generate research, and supply the skilled workforce that feeds every IS-8 sector. International students are a major export; graduates power start-ups and public services alike. Education in London is also a policy testbed for lifelong learning, reskilling, and industry partnerships that the rest of the country can adapt.

## Power strip

Think of London as the UK’s economic power strip: everything plugs in there, though we still argue about who trips the switch. What should London be doing – for the nation and for itself?

- Scale green urban transformation. London can lead the UK’s net-zero transition by accelerating whole-district retrofits, electrified transport, and circular construction. Publishing open standards and procurement models would let other cities replicate what works. A capital that proves decarbonisation can coincide with growth gives the entire country a template.
- Mobilise capital beyond the M25. London’s financial depth should more

deliberately fund regional innovation – through co-investment platforms, place-based funds, and streamlined listing pathways for scale-ups nationwide. If London is the UK’s balance sheet, it should also be its balancing-up place.

- Export services as systems. London excels at packaging complex offerings – legal frameworks, design, engineering, finance – into turnkey exports. Bundling expertise for infrastructure, health, and digital government abroad supports national trade objectives while sustaining high-value jobs at home.
- Build and house the workforce. A credible growth strategy requires homes people can afford and transport that connects opportunity. Planning reform, reusing brownfield land, faster approvals for transit-oriented development, and modern construction pipelines would ease constraints that currently impede productivity.
- Double down on skills and inclusion. London can expand technical education pathways aligned to the IS-8 and the three supplemental sectors – construction technology, hospitality management, and applied research. Inclusive growth is not just fair; it enlarges the talent pool that fuels national competitiveness.
- Act as a national convenor. London should host mission-driven coalitions that bring together regions, investors, and universities to solve shared challenges – retrofit at scale, life-sciences translation, AI adoption in SMEs so breakthroughs diffuse quickly across the UK.

The IS-8 provide a strong sectoral backbone. Recognising London’s integrative role – and explicitly adding property and construction, hospitality and tourism, and education in a London supplement – would turn a good strategy into a place-powered one.

When London thrives as a platform for the whole country, growth travels well beyond the capital, and might even arrive ahead of schedule. ”

**Professor Michael Mainelli, president of LCCI, served as Lord Mayor of London 2023-24 and remains an international ambassador for the City. He is chair of Z/Yen, the City of London’s leading commercial think-tank, known for its work in economics and finance, and science and technology.**

# Cloud outages: a wake up call for businesses

Over the last decade, organisations have moved more of their critical services into the cloud. In practice, that means using third party online platforms rather than running everything on your own servers.

That shift has real benefits. Cloud services can be cheaper to run, easier to scale, and quicker to update. They also reduce the need for on site kit and specialist maintenance.

But the large outages across well known providers in late 2025 were a useful reminder of a simple point: when the cloud has a bad day, your business can too.

If the platforms behind your software are disrupted, the tools your teams rely on can slow down, partially fail, or stop altogether – often with little warning.

So how do you keep serving customers and operating safely when key systems are temporarily unavailable?

## Why this matters

Most organisations now depend on online systems for everyday tasks, including:

- Customer service (contact centres, chat, customer portals)
- Finance (invoicing, payments, approvals)
- People services (HR systems, payroll, recruitment)
- Operations (job scheduling, field teams, stock or asset records)
- Compliance (training records, audits, evidence and reporting)
- Communication (email, messaging, online meetings)

When these tools go down, it's rarely 'just an IT problem'. It quickly



becomes a practical issue for frontline teams and managers.

## What an outage can look like

When a major online service is disrupted, you typically see:

- Slower customer response times
- Delayed work and missed deadlines
- Stalled finance and administration
- Increased compliance risk

Even a short disruption can create a backlog that takes days to clear, especially if it hits during a busy period.

## What you can do

You can't stop a major provider from having an incident, but you can reduce the impact it has on your organisation.

The aim isn't perfection, but being able to operate safely and communicate clearly when disruption happens.

### 1) Know what you rely on

#### Maintain a simple list of your most important systems, including:

- what each system is used for
- which teams depend on it
- what happens if it's unavailable for a day

Include the smaller tools used by individual departments, not just the 'big' corporate platforms.

### 2) Ask better questions of suppliers

When you buy or renew services, ask

practical questions like:

- What support is available during major incidents?
- What's a realistic recovery time after an outage?
- How will we be kept informed, and how often?
- Can you show evidence that recovery plans are tested?

### 3) Put basic fallbacks in place

For the most critical activities, agree offline ways of working, for example:

- a simple process for recording urgent requests
- a shared contact list and escalation route
- pre prepared customer communication templates
- a plan for prioritising the most critical work first

### 4) Keep essential information accessible

Where appropriate (and permitted), make sure key information is available even if systems are down - for example contact lists, operational runbooks, or priority customer details stored securely.

### 5) Practise a short disruption scenario

Run a simple exercise: "What would we do if our core customer system was unavailable tomorrow?"

It quickly exposes gaps, and it's usually straightforward to improve what you find.

Cloud services bring real value, but resilience doesn't happen by accident. A small amount of planning now can prevent confusion, delays, and reputational damage later.

To talk through cloud resilience and practical fallbacks for your business, [email info@waterstons.com](mailto:email.info@waterstons.com).

 **Waterstons**  
we're with you



# Team London assemble!

## I Laura Citron on why the capital needs its voices to come together

“Trying to sum up London in a single phrase or even sentence is harder than you might think. It never quite works. Frankly, London is too interesting.

Yet when you strip everything back, a consistent thread appears. London is shaped by a way of thinking. A mix of resilience, creativity, and the ability to reinvent itself again and again.

### Spirit

Danny Boyle's 2012 Olympics opening ceremony captured that perfectly. Rather than 'selling' London, he showed, through his brilliant staging of the Industrial



By Matt Lancashire - Flickr: 17212708, CC BY 2.0

Revolution, what our city does best – reinvent itself as the world changes, and in doing so, changes the world. His latest project, the revival of the post-war Festival of Britain, taps into that same spirit. Even when times feel uncertain, London still stands together and leads with hope.

### Narratives

Uncertainty, of course, isn't unique to us. Every global city is navigating new pressures. Today, the challenge isn't only about infrastructure, investment, or visitor numbers/spend. It's about the stories people believe. Narratives travel faster than facts, which means we need to tell London's story more confidently and more clearly than ever before.

### Perception

We saw this last year with the rise of the 'lawless London' narrative. Overall crime is falling, yet misleading posts online saying the opposite

spread incredibly quickly. For many international audiences, those snippets became the whole picture. And the perception of London matters. It can influence whether students choose to study here, businesses choose to grow here, and people choose to visit - decisions that impact our economic growth.

That's why *how* we tell London's story is also so important. It's not just about rebutting misinformation, disinformation, or malinformation (facts removed from context), important as that is. It's about putting forward a confident, evidence-led, full picture of the city we live, work, and play in every day.

### Authenticity

When we talk to international audiences – something my team does daily – what cuts through is



authenticity. This may seem obvious, but in an age of mistrust, people want to hear about the real London - the city of nine million people - not an airbrushed one.

### Team London

This thinking sits at the heart of our work to bring more connection and coherence to the voices already advocating for London around the world – corporates, universities, cultural institutions, sports clubs, political leaders, innovators, influencers, and everyone who cares about our city's global reputation. Together, this group – what I call 'Team London' – holds real power to shape how the world sees us.

This applies whether you're speaking to a founder in Mumbai about the city's next innovation district, an investor in New York about our booming experience economy, or a student in Beijing about our hundreds of museums and galleries. It's another 'channel' if you like – one that really adds weight to London's message. And one that doesn't rely on algorithms that might change overnight.

### London Growth Plan

The London Growth Plan, which was launched last year, is already giving us shared stories about the city's growth. But Team London builds on that, equipping you with what you need to tell London's whole story, brilliantly, and with confidence.

The point is, our global appeal remains strong. London was recently named the world's best city for the eleventh year running. And rankings help – they're a useful signal – but they're not the thing that builds reputation. Stories do that. And the most powerful ones get shared, repeated, and acted upon.

The world is only going to get noisier, more complex, and more emotionally charged. Which makes this exactly the right moment for us to come together – Team London assemble – to speak clearly, confidently, and with a unified voice about the city we love. ”

**Laura Citron OBE is chief executive of London & Partners and Growth Mission Lead**  
[www.londonandpartners.com/london-growth-plan.pdf](http://www.londonandpartners.com/london-growth-plan.pdf)  
**World's 100 Best Cities | World's Best Cities**



## SPONSORED COLUMN

# Low-cost Environmental Certification for your business

Achieve internationally recognised environmental credibility with ISO 14001 certification from isoassured.



ISO 14001 is the global standard for **Environmental Management Systems (EMS)**, designed to help businesses reduce environmental impact, improve compliance, and operate more sustainably.

Whether you're a small business looking to win new contracts or a growing organisation aiming to strengthen your ESG credentials, ISO 14001 demonstrates your commitment to responsible environmental management.

### ISO 14001 certification benefits;

- ISO 14001 certified logo for use in marketing
- Enhanced reputation and advantage over competitors
- Ongoing independent review of environmental performance and legal compliance
- Effective systems in place to achieve continual improvement
- Access to useful business resources and updates
- Better performance with tenders and compliance schemes

isoassured Ltd offers a cost-effective path to ISO 14001 certification which can be achieved in a matter of weeks and for only **£590+vat**.

### Our approach is simple:

- Gap analysis to identify what's needed
- Practical system development and documentation support
- Staff training and awareness guidance
- Internal audit preparation
- Ongoing support through the certification audit process

Our approach is to make achieving ISO certification a simple and beneficial process to provide all the benefits of being ISO certified with a simple, low cost and streamlined process.

### Free resources and support

If you already have management systems in place and simply require a certification audit, you can apply for certification at [isoassured.co.uk](http://isoassured.co.uk) to also get free access to our comprehensive document resource library at [isomanaged.com/alphaZdocuments/](http://isomanaged.com/alphaZdocuments/) - your central resource base for all things ISO.

As well as **alphaZ documents**, where you can download thousands of useful document templates and resources, you can also access our **ISO and legal update service** to ensure you are kept up to date with current legislation, ISO standard requirements and other relevant news.

We pride ourselves on clear advice, responsive support, and a no-nonsense route to certification and adding measurable value to your business. Take control of your environmental responsibilities and turn sustainability into a competitive advantage.

Contact isoassured today and start your journey to ISO 14001 certification with confidence.

Please visit us at [isomanaged.com](http://isomanaged.com) for an overview of our consultancy and support services for implementing ISO compliant management systems.

If you are already certified or looking for cost effective ISO certification, please visit [isoassured.co.uk](http://isoassured.co.uk)

To enquire contact:  
[sales@isomanaged.com](mailto:sales@isomanaged.com)  
 Tel: 0333 355 0860

# Why employers are the key to solving the skills productivity puzzle

by Keith Smith

**The current government shares the ambition of governments before it – to solve the UK's stubborn problem of low productivity and growth. At the heart of this puzzle is how we as a country solve the growing skills gaps that exist and the challenges employers face in hiring experienced and qualified people into their business. Whilst London benefits from the strength of its dynamic economy and strong financial services sector, there remains the same skills gaps and hard to recruit vacancies which is holding many employers back.**

## Core purpose

Harrow, Richmond and Uxbridge Colleges (HRUC) is one of the largest groups of further education colleges in the UK and like all colleges, has at its core a purpose to provide the qualified people needed by employers in today's rapidly evolving jobs market.

Our challenge is how do we do we bridge the gap between the thousands of people studying every year in colleges into the jobs and careers that will drive personal and economic wealth. Every year at HRUC, we train over 15,000 students, all eager to progress and get the job of their dreams. Meanwhile, employers stand isolated and confused about why people are not applying for their roles or why they are not coming with the skills and personal skills they really need.

## Solving the puzzle

What if we could solve this puzzle by



bridging the gap that exists between education and work?

To build stronger connections between industry and colleges, we should create a framework that enables employers to support teaching – either by allowing staff to teach in colleges or by hosting students in real-world business settings. This goes beyond traditional work experience, which is often short-term and difficult for some employers to deliver effectively.

Industry professionals bring current knowledge, practical insights, and real case studies that enrich learning, helping students bridge the gap between theory and practice. By involving employers directly in education, students gain relevant, up-to-date skills that better prepare them for their careers.

## Authentic

For example, a software engineer teaching a course on coding can share firsthand knowledge about current coding languages and the ever-changing tech landscape, which may not be fully covered in textbooks or academic lectures. This authentic, real-world context helps bridge the gap between classroom theory and professional practice.

## Valuable

Allowing staff to teach in colleges promotes stronger relationships between educational institutions and industries. These partnerships foster mutual understanding and collaboration, helping to align academic programmes with the evolving needs of the workforce. As industries continue to innovate, they often require a new set of skills that may not be adequately covered in traditional academic programmes. HRUC knows

that when employees teach in colleges, they become valuable contributors to curriculum development, ensuring that academic courses reflect the realities of the job market.

## Ecosystem

Furthermore, fostering strong ties between employers and academic institutions creates an ecosystem in which both parties benefit. Students gain access to internships, mentorships, and networking opportunities, while employers can tap into a pipeline of well-prepared graduates equipped with the latest industry-relevant knowledge.

## Expertise

When employees teach, they strengthen communication, leadership, and presentation skills while deepening their own expertise. Breaking down complex ideas and engaging with students encourages reflection, critical thinking, and creativity – skills they bring back to their primary roles to better solve problems and lead teams.

Teaching also fosters innovation. Exposure to diverse students and fresh perspectives can inspire new ideas for products, processes, and strategy, creating value for both the organisation and the wider industry.

## Talent pipeline

Closer collaboration between industry and colleges prepares students for real-world careers while supporting employee development and workforce innovation. Employers who enable staff to teach help shape a more skilled, future-ready talent pipeline.

**Keith Smith is chief executive of Harrow, Richmond and Uxbridge Colleges**

[www.hruc.ac.uk](http://www.hruc.ac.uk)

**If you are an employer that feels you can play your part, visit the website or contact Liam Plumridge - assistant director - Enhanced Skills and Employability at [liam.plumridge@hruc.ac.uk](mailto:liam.plumridge@hruc.ac.uk)**





## Business rates support for pubs welcomed

LCCI chief executive Karim Fatehi OBE said that the government's January announcement of a support package to back British pubs was a step in the right direction and showed they recognised the impact that anticipated business rate rises would have on businesses.

### Pressure

"However," he said "it does not go far enough. Global volatility, weak consumer sentiment and rising operating costs continue to place significant pressure on businesses. Many London businesses will be hit by huge rate rises in April which could force some of them to close.

### Certainty

"Our latest survey of LCCI's 11,000 members found that only a quarter of London businesses expect the capital's economy to improve in 2026. Retailers, hotels and restaurants need reassurance that they too will receive the support required to rebuild confidence and operate with greater certainty."



## Off the scale

A full sized JCB digger dressed up like a collector's scale model stopped Londoners in their tracks outside King's Cross railway station in February.

The JCB Backhoe in a Box – a full-sized digger presented as though it were a scale model – was dismantled in Staffordshire and transported south before being reassembled and unveiled on Valentine's Day outside the station.

### Appeal

The model's appearance in London marked the start of a UK-wide tour celebrating JCB

innovation and the enduring appeal of one of Britain's best known machines – invented by JCB in 1953.

[www.jcb.com](http://www.jcb.com)



### SPONSORED COLUMN

## Where precision meets protection.

At Wynne-Jones IP, we protect intellectual property behind breakthrough innovation, helping businesses secure advantage, scale with confidence and stay ahead.



[www.wynne-jones.com](http://www.wynne-jones.com)  
Own Thinking

WYNNE  
JONES<sup>IP</sup>

# Business confidence and London's future growth

by Vittoria Zerbini

Since the start of 2026, LCCI's media engagement has centered on the state of business confidence in the capital and the policy choices shaping London's economic outlook. Coverage in *CityAM* and *The Standard* has spotlighted findings from the Chamber's Quarterly Economic Survey (QES), which revealed record low confidence among London firms, alongside wider commentary from chief executive Karim Fatehi OBE on the conditions needed to restore growth. As government reforms to employment law, business taxation and public spending frameworks take shape, LCCI has consistently emphasised the importance of stability, fairness and competitiveness. From hiring intentions and cost pressures to debates around the Treasury's Green Book, the message has been clear: supporting balanced national growth must go hand in hand with unlocking London's full potential as the UK's economic engine.



to improve in 2026, with optimism about the national outlook even lower. Hiring intentions have also declined: just one in four businesses planned to recruit in the final quarter of 2025, down from over a third in the previous quarter. Many respondents pointed to rising costs and uncertainty surrounding the government's proposed Employment Rights Bill as factors weighing on recruitment decisions. Karim Fatehi commented: "Employment protections are vital, but businesses need the right balance to grow with confidence. Without stability, firms will hesitate to invest and hire."



## Record low

*CityAM* featured LCCI's latest QES, based on responses from 500 London business leaders and which recorded the lowest level of confidence since the survey began. Only a quarter of firms expect the London economy

## Fragility

In a recent comment piece for *The Standard*, LCCI Chief Executive Karim Fatehi highlighted the fragility of business confidence in London at the start of 2026. Drawing on LCCI's data, he noted that firms do not expect either the London or UK economy to improve in the year ahead, with rising costs and regulatory uncertainty shaping decisions around hiring and investment. Measures such as the Employment Rights Act, Autumn Budget changes and forthcoming business rate increases are adding further pressure, particularly for high street firms.

## Export performance

Despite this, London's global strengths remain significant. Strong export performance, access to capital and international connectivity continue to underpin resilience. To unlock the capital's next phase of growth long-term policy stability, investment in skills and infrastructure, planning reform, and careful consideration of proposals such as a tourist levy are required.



## Fairness

LCCI was cited in *The Standard* following the government's decision to reform the Treasury's Green Book, the framework used to assess public spending. The changes aim to channel greater investment towards the North and Midlands by placing less emphasis on traditional value-for-money criteria and more on addressing regional inequality. Responding to the announcement, Fatehi welcomed efforts to support growth across the UK but cautioned against disadvantaging the capital in the process. "A fairer Green Book is welcome, but fairness must work for London too," he said. "Investment for the wider UK must not come at the expense of the capital."

**Vittoria Zerbini is media and policy assistant at LCCI**

By Niccolò Caranti - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0

# 2026 – year of delivery

**“UK must shift from strategies to action, with policymakers backing businesses to deliver growth.”**

So said Andy Haldane when he assumed his role as president of the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC). He succeeds Baroness Martha Lane-Fox who will continue working with the Chamber network in an ambassadorial role.

## Critical time

As president, Haldane will work alongside director general, Shevaun Haviland, to represent the interests of businesses, of all sizes, in all sectors, all over the country at a critical time for the UK economy.

Haldane is a former chief economist at the Bank of England and former chief executive of the Royal Society for Arts. He was a member of the BoE’s Monetary Policy Committee, and Permanent Secretary for Levelling Up at the Cabinet Office.

## International trade

His first major engagement in the new role will be speaking at the BCC’s *Driving International Trade* conference at the QEII Centre on Thursday 26 March.

The BCC’s latest economic survey shows less than

half of responding firms are expecting to increase turnover in the next 12 months. Over half of firms are expecting to raise their prices in the next three months.

## Warning lights

Haldane commented: “The UK’s economic warning lights continue to flash, and business confidence remains low. 2026 must be the year of delivering growth. Growth won’t come from slogans; it will come from backing businesses to get on and grow.

**“The UK doesn’t have a shortage of ideas and ambition; it has a shortage of delivery.”**

“The UK doesn’t have a shortage of ideas and ambition; it has a shortage of delivery. Chambers of commerce are where ambition meets reality. If we’re serious about boosting productivity, investment and trade - we need fewer strategies and more spades in the ground, more deals done, and more businesses scaling in every part of the country.”

[www.britishchambers.org.uk](http://www.britishchambers.org.uk)

## SPONSORED COLUMN

# RED CARPET OR MORE RED FLAG?



BY GARETH REES

**If you were to ignore the Oscars, the news engulfing the entertainment industry has been the battle between Netflix and Paramount for the takeover of Warner Bros, the studio responsible for Harry Potter and the Dark Knight trilogy (certainly a favourite of mine).**

Yet despite the eye-watering amounts being discussed for the Warner Bros deal, it appears to mask the reality within the film and tv industry, especially in the UK, which has faced a hard battle with significant financial pressures that has threatened its long-term sustainability.

The streaming platforms are a key factor in the industry’s success. Since the start of the ‘streaming wars’ during the pandemic when subscriber numbers surged, platforms went big, funding major projects. Amazon splurged \$1 billion on the tv series *Rings of Power*, albeit this so far has not been money well spent. Fast forward and subscriber growth has slowed due to tougher conditions for the consumer meaning some platforms have been cutting content budgets. This resulted in a significant reduction in revenue for UK production companies which fell by £392 million in 2023.

The industry employs a huge number of staff which helps boost the economy of which almost half are freelancers. The Hollywood strikes in 2023 caused a huge impact as film and TV productions were put on hold which resulted in a significant loss of income for workers. This caused some to

move away from the industry entirely, losing key talent.

The dominance of larger studios has also impacted those creating independent films. There is a shortage of studio space for these smaller productions which have been booked up by larger studios for the long-term. In addition, raising capital for these productions is now more expensive and there’s a real risk independents lose more of their share of the market.

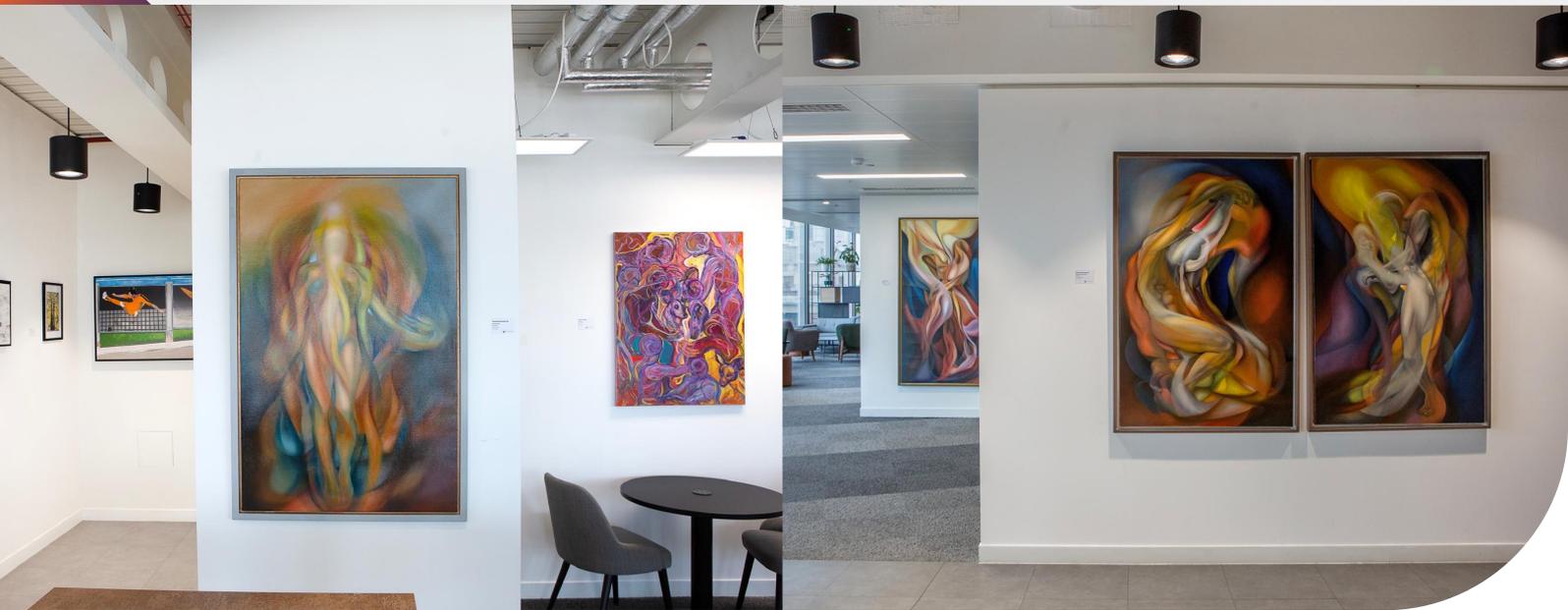
It’s not all doom and gloom however. Recent figures from the British Film Institute show the industry has rebounded. In 2025, production spend reached £6.8 billion, a decisive bounce back from 2023 and demonstrating the industries’ strengthening performance. The UK should be proud of the TV and film it delivers to the world and there certainly remains an appetite, with almost £1 billion generated at the box office in 2025.

So, here’s to looking forward to more of our never-ending soap operas and the next James Bond film although by the time it comes out, Bond won’t need a licence to kill - he’ll need a bus pass.

**Gareth Rees is a Senior Manager in the Restructuring and Insolvency team at Menzies LLP.**

[grees@menzies.co.uk](mailto:grees@menzies.co.uk)  
+44 (0)3309 129 864  
[www.menzies.co.uk](http://www.menzies.co.uk)

**MENZIES**  
BRIGHTER THINKING



# When art is more than decoration

| **Assa O'Connor** on what cultural activation looks like inside a live workplace

**As organisations rethink workplace culture, more attention is being given to the environments people work in every day. Beyond policies and wellbeing programmes, there is growing interest in how physical spaces themselves can support connection, creativity and a sense of identity in simple, practical ways.**

Last summer's *Creative Currents* was created with this in mind, not as a traditional exhibition, but as a pilot project to explore how curated contemporary art could function inside a live working environment rather than a gallery. Delivered at 22 Bishopsgate in the heart of the City on the XCHG workspace floor, the project offered a real opportunity to observe how people experience culture within the rhythm of daily work.



## Realities

One of the clearest lessons was that art in workplaces needs to adapt to the space, not the other way around. In a busy environment, movement patterns, sightlines and routines already exist. For art to feel natural, it has to work within these realities, supporting how the space is used rather than interrupting it.

The project also highlighted the importance of simplicity. Fewer artworks, thoughtful placement and minimal explanation made engagement feel easy and unforced. People could notice the work naturally as they moved through the space, without feeling they needed to stop, attend something formal, or set aside time.

## Connection

Because *Creative Currents* was designed as a temporary pilot, it felt low risk for the host environment. This was important. Short term, flexible projects allow organisations to explore cultural initiatives without committing to permanent changes, while creating space for observation, feedback and learning.

Engagement unfolded differently from a gallery setting. Rather than one focused moment of attention, artworks were encountered in small moments, between meetings, while passing through shared areas, or

over several days. This showed that in workplaces, connection often builds gradually through familiarity rather than through a single visit.

## Depth and character

Ultimately, the pilot showed that what mattered most was not doing something big or spectacular, but how well the art fitted the space and the people using it. When cultural initiatives respect how a workplace functions, they can add depth and character without disrupting daily work.

*Creative Currents* was designed as a flexible programme rather than a one-off exhibition, a way to test how art can work in real business environments. The learning from the pilot is now shaping how my company develops future cultural activations tailored to the needs and character of each organisation.

## Valuable

Delivering *Creative Currents* showed me that art in professional spaces isn't a 'nice to have' wellbeing extra. It can actively drive connection and engagement, with clear lessons for cultural initiatives in corporate environments. As businesses continue to explore how culture fits into working life, this experience suggests that small, thoughtful experiments can be just as valuable as large scale projects.

**Assa O'Connor is founder/director of Anomali Art**

[www.anomali-art.com](http://www.anomali-art.com)



# Frost over London

**Better Bankside, the business improvement district (BID), covers an area south of the Thames from Blackfriars to Borough. It was there in the 17th and 18th centuries that the river froze on multiple occasions, bringing much trade to a standstill.**

## Revelry

History records that the 'banksiders' responded with characteristic creativity and entrepreneurialism. An impromptu 'Frost Fair' was born on the ice, allowing traders to continue making money through a range of activities featuring markets, pubs, entertainment and general revelry. It is even rumoured that an elephant

was marched across the river alongside Blackfriars Bridge.

## Themed

This January, for the second time, the BID bought back a re-imagined fair to the area with street performances, traditional games, music, and art and craft workshops – with themed food and drink on offer too. The Golden Hinde ship – a replica of the vessel in which Sir Francis Drake circumnavigated the world – also got in on the act with creative sessions and a band on board.

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



# Wizard

In the last issue of *LBM*, we featured the new statue of Bridget Jones which has joined the series of classic film characters or props which feature in

**Leicester Square, so closely associated with the British film industry.**

## Best-selling

No surprise that Harry Potter has been in place since 2020. The bronze statue of Daniel Radcliffe shows the boy wizard on his broom stick close to where the film adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* premiered in 2001. The eight films, adapted from JK Rowling's best-selling novels, have grossed over £10 billion globally, making it one of the highest-earning film franchises of all time.



SPONSORED COLUMN

# Cyber Resilience: From IT Issue to Boardroom Priority

The era of delegating cyber security solely to technical staff is over. The National Cyber Security Centre's Annual Review 2025 reveals a volatile landscape where highly significant cyber incidents have surged by 50%. Cyber incidents disrupt operations, damage reputations, and lead to serious financial consequences. The warning is clear: cyber security is now critical to business longevity and success.

Worried about these escalating threats but lack executive security leadership? Cyber attackers target vulnerabilities, not sectors, meaning every organisation is a potential target. Our Fractional CISO service provides the strategic foresight to prepare for, respond to, and recover from cyber attacks. We bridge the gap between technical operations and boardroom strategy. Our expert team makes securing your business simple, handling everything from quick health checks to driving cultural change, so you stay protected whilst focusing on what matters most.

The NCSC found that organisations with Cyber Essentials are 92% less likely to make a claim on their insurance. Implementing foundational controls reduces risk and gives stakeholders verified assurance that your organisation meets

minimum standards. This is not just about ticking a box; we make you insurable and compliant. We help you set up the right hardware, software, processes, and documentation tailored for your business.

With ransomware remaining an acute threat to UK organisations, resilience is the new gold standard. Furthermore, the danger extends beyond your own walls. Shockingly, just 14% of UK businesses reviewed the cyber risk of their immediate suppliers in the last 12 months. We help you close this gap. As your security partner, we are always by your side to spot risks, block threats, respond fast, and bounce back if the worst happens. When done well, cyber security becomes a catalyst for innovation and an enabler of growth.

Are you part of the 86% ignoring supply chain risk? Stop waiting for a breach to force your hand. Partner with us to take control of your resilience today.

Visit [foresightcyber.com](http://foresightcyber.com) to schedule your consultation and secure your business operations.

**Vladimir Jirasek**  
Founder & CEO,  
Foresight Cyber

Email:  
[Vladimir@foresightcyber.com](mailto:Vladimir@foresightcyber.com)  
Time zone: London/Europe  
[www.foresightcyber.com](http://www.foresightcyber.com)

**FORESIGHT**<sup>®</sup>  
CYBER

# A legend is born

The future Queen Elizabeth II was born at 2.40am on 21 April 1926 at 17 Bruton Street in Mayfair, London, home of her maternal grandparents, the Earl and Countess of Strathmore. On 29 May, she was christened Elizabeth Alexandra Mary at Buckingham Palace

Princess Elizabeth was then third in line to the throne, after her uncle Edward, Prince of Wales and her father George, Duke of York. It seemed unlikely she would ever be monarch.

The Princess spent her early years at 145 Piccadilly and at White Lodge in Richmond Park. She would also visit her paternal grandparents King George V and Queen Mary at Windsor Castle, Balmoral Castle and Sandringham House, as well as Glamis Castle in Scotland where her mother's parents lived.

In 1930, Princess Elizabeth's only sibling, Princess Margaret Rose, was born. Two years later, the family moved into Royal Lodge in Windsor Great Park which became their country home.

## Heir

In 1936, King George V died and the Prince of Wales ascended the throne as King Edward VIII. However, he was forced to abdicate later that year when he married Mrs Wallis Simpson, an American divorcée. The Duke of York succeeded his brother as King George VI. Princess Elizabeth was now heir to the throne.

Like many upper-class girls at that time, Princess Elizabeth and her sister did not attend school but were taught at home. After her father became King in 1936, Princess Elizabeth began to study constitutional history and law to prepare her for her future role as



Princess Elizabeth of York — the future Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom — when she was seven years old.

Queen. The Archbishop of Canterbury tutored her in religion and she learned to speak fluent French.

## Military service

The Princess also learned to ride horses and excelled at swimming.

At 11, she joined the Girl Guides and became a Sea Ranger.

In 1944, she competed in the first Royal Windsor Horse Show where she won the Single Private Driving Class.

During the Blitz in 1940, both Princesses were moved to Windsor Castle for their safety where they spent the war years. In the same year, 14-year-old Princess Elizabeth made her first radio broadcast during BBC Children's Hour where she

addressed other children in Britain and its overseas territories who had also been evacuated.

Late in World War II, Princess Elizabeth, then 19, undertook six weeks' training to become a mechanic and driver with the Women's Auxiliary Territory Service. The role involved fixing and refitting car engines and tyres. Her military service ended when Japan surrendered in August 1945.

## Public duty

Princess Elizabeth was the first female British royal to become an active member of the British Armed Forces, known as 'Princess Auto Mechanic'. Her wartime service helped to instil in her the remarkable sense of public duty that characterised her reign.

In 1947, Princess Elizabeth made her first overseas tour with her parents to southern Africa. While there, she made a broadcast to the British Commonwealth on her twenty first



birthday. "I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong."

On 20 November 1947, Princess Elizabeth married Philip

Mountbatten (created Duke of Edinburgh) in Westminster Abbey in front of 2,000 guests. They had four children and were married for over 73 years until the Duke's death in 2021.

## 70 year reign

King George VI's health deteriorated rapidly and on 6 February 1952 he died at Sandringham aged only 56. At 25, Princess Elizabeth became

Queen Elizabeth II while staying at Treetops Hotel on a tour of Kenya. Her reign was to last 70 years, the longest in British history, ending with her death in 2022 at the age of 96.

**100 years ago in London is researched and written by Alexa Michael**



This is the official wedding picture of Princess Elizabeth and her new husband Prince Philip





## London by night

London has always been as alive during the night as it is during the day. From Elizabethan playhouses onwards, people from all around the world have been drawn to London and stayed because of the infinite possibilities the city offers after dark. In 2026, the question of how to preserve that legacy, and strengthen London's position as a global leader in late-night culture, remains as vital as ever.

### Realities

In February 2025, the Mayor of London appointed an independent Nightlife Taskforce to look into the present-day realities of London's nightlife and to make a set of recommendations for protecting, supporting and strengthening the sector. The report, now published, is the culmination of that process.

Over the course of 2025, the Taskforce carried out research, collated evidence, hosted round tables, interviewed experts, discussed countless different ideas, and ultimately agreed on the ten recommendation areas.

### Complex

None of the issues facing London's nightlife have straightforward solutions. It is under pressure from a combination of factors including the cost of living and doing business crisis, prohibitively complex licensing and regulatory processes and competing demands for urban

space. The recommendations are not a magic bullet but a path towards better supporting and sustaining nightlife in the capital.

### Recommendations

- Support a new Nightlife Commission
- Recognise nightlife as culture
- Support nightlife small businesses: venues and beyond
- Seed-fund the evolution of nightlife
- Strengthen access to space for nightlife
- Plan for a 24-hour city
- Align night-time transport with nightlife demand
- Rethink approaches to night-time sound
- Create safer nights through collaboration and harm reduction
- Update licensing for nightlife

### Critical

Michael Kill, Task Force member and chief executive of Night Time Industries Association commented: "By developing practical reforms across planning, licensing, transport and safety, the report directly addresses long-standing structural barriers, including outdated and inconsistent licensing systems that have become a real burden for businesses. The focus on supporting new and emerging operators through funding, channelling creative talent and driving the next generation of nightlife businesses is critical to securing the sector's future."

[www.nightlife-research.london](http://www.nightlife-research.london)

SPONSORED COLUMN



**MILFORD RESEARCH**  
& CONSULTANCY LIMITED

## Leadership and Management Training and Consultancy

### Our Services:

- Research Projects
- Advice and Consultancy
- Development Workshops
- Governance, Risk Management and Control
- External Quality Assessments

*"The tools were also useful for internal projects...a useful workshop that was thought provoking...every board member should attend."  
Wyre Forest District Council*

*"At Milford Research, we grasp the subtleties of these shared services, identifying the blockers and devising bespoke solutions."*

Contact us via:  
[Info@milfordresearch.co.uk](mailto:Info@milfordresearch.co.uk)  
01386 335878  
Find out more:  
[www.milfordresearch.uk](http://www.milfordresearch.uk)



# London best for business expansion

New research from *Capital on Tap* has analysed the UK's 30 most populous cities to identify where entrepreneurs currently have the strongest conditions for business expansion, and where growth may be more challenging.

The UK Business Expansion Report ranks cities using economic indicators, including five-year business survival rates, GDP per head, employment rates, start-up density, and Gross Disposable Household Income (GDHI), highlighting the locations offering the most resilient foundations for growth.



Rank	City	5-Year Business Survival Rate	Gross domestic product per head	Employment rate per city	GDHI per head of population at current basic prices	Start-ups per 10,000 residents
1	London	38.2%	£69,077	74.6%	£35,361	82.1
2	Edinburgh	39.6%	£69,809	82.1%	£29,109	39.7
3	Bournemouth	43.0%	£37,048	77.6%	£25,259	46.7
4	Norwich	40.8%	£35,182	82.7%	£21,327	44.2
5	Bristol	38.9%	£47,148	76.1%	£24,696	45.7
6	Swindon	35.0%	£57,253	80.3%	£22,214	38.1
7	Leeds	41.8%	£47,411	74.7%	£21,694	45.0
8	Brighton & Hove	30.0%	£47,461	75.7%	£28,857	56.7
9	Manchester	33.9%	£65,591	71.4%	£18,945	61.6
10	Glasgow	40.2%	£50,250	71.2%	£20,006	42.4

## Key findings

- **London** ranks first overall, driven by the UK's highest disposable income and strongest start-up activity, giving businesses access to higher spending power and a large, active consumer base.
- **Edinburgh** records the highest GDP per head in the UK alongside one of the strongest employment rates, supporting stable demand and a financially confident workforce.
- **Bournemouth** leads the country for five-year business survival highlighting long-term resilience outside major commercial hubs.
- In contrast, cities including **Leicester, Birmingham and Liverpool** face tougher conditions, with lower disposable income and weaker survival rates, which can limit long-term growth and consistent demand.

## Achievable

The report also explores what UK entrepreneurs should expect in 2026, with Capital on Tap's chief commercial officer Hugh Acland detecting a shift towards more financially disciplined expansion. He comments: "The current economic climate may feel challenging, but growth is absolutely achievable. It requires deliberate, informed decisions and the confidence to adjust as conditions change, meaning there are opportunities for founders who understand their numbers and plan carefully."

*Capital on Tap is a small business credit card provider*

[www.capitalontap.com](http://www.capitalontap.com)

# The Knowledge

LBM's test of what readers know about London

- 1 Which legendary film director was born in Leytonstone, East London in 1899?
- 2 The world's largest annual one-day fundraising event takes place in London. What is it?
- 3 Where in London will you find a statue of the ornithologist, conservationist and artist Sir Peter Scott?
- 4 Which global rock star spent his formative years at 4 Plaistow Grove, Bromley?
- 5 How many squares does a traditional London Monopoly board have?
- 6 Which author threatened to sue any reviewer that dared "hint that I live in South Kensington" when "the correct postal address is Bloomsbury WC1"?
- 7 Which sports team are currently sharing AFC Wimbledon's Cherry Red Records stadium?
- 8 Who designed the Cenotaph in Whitehall?
- 9 Where would you find a veterinary hospital named after the late drag queen and comedian Paul O'Grady?
- 10 Which London stadium has 2,618 toilets, reputedly more than any other building in the world?



Find the answers on page 65

## SPONSORED COLUMN

### When reduced performance is more than just a dip – recognising early burnout

In my last article, I wrote about the employee who is still turning up but is clearly not themselves. Often, when businesses pause and look more closely at that situation, a pattern emerges. What initially appears to be a temporary dip in performance can, in some cases, be the early stages of burnout.

Burnout doesn't usually begin with someone declaring they are overwhelmed. It tends to build gradually. Output may remain acceptable for a time, but it takes longer and costs the individual more effort. There may be increasing cynicism, reduced patience with colleagues, difficulty concentrating or uncharacteristic mistakes. Some employees begin reporting physical symptoms — headaches, gastrointestinal problems, poor sleep, recurrent minor illnesses. These are often the body's early warning signs of sustained stress.

From a clinical perspective, untreated burnout can evolve into more significant mental health difficulties, including anxiety disorders and depressive episodes. Once someone reaches that stage, recovery is slower and absence becomes more likely. The earlier phase, however, is usually much more responsive to proportionate intervention.

From a business standpoint, the impact extends beyond the individual. A burnt-out employee often affects team morale. Colleagues may absorb additional workload or feel the tension created by irritability and reduced engagement. Productivity falls not only because of reduced output, but because of the subtle erosion of team cohesion. In smaller organisations, this effect can be particularly pronounced.

The difficulty for many managers is knowing when normal workplace pressure

has crossed into something more concerning. There is understandable hesitation about raising the issue, for fear of being intrusive or over-medicalising performance.

This is where early occupational health input can be valuable. A structured, confidential assessment helps clarify whether someone is experiencing manageable work-related stress, emerging burnout, or a more significant mental health condition. Just as importantly, it provides clear guidance for the employer: what adjustments are reasonable, what risks need monitoring, and how to support recovery while maintaining business stability.

Addressing burnout early is rarely dramatic or expensive. Ignoring it, however, often is. For London businesses operating in demanding environments, recognising and responding to early warning signs can prevent months of disruption later.



*Dr Christopher Levy is an occupational health doctor and founder of Artensia Medical Services, providing constructive workplace health support for London businesses.*

[www.artensiamedical.com](http://www.artensiamedical.com)



**ARTENSIA**  
MEDICAL SERVICES



# Eating and drinking in the capital

**I Vincent Burke detects a bright start to the year for London's hospitality sector**

Despite ongoing worries especially around increased business costs from November's budget, London's hospitality sector has started 2026 brightly with new restaurants, bars and bakeries launching in the first few months of the year. A number of London pubs have also reopened after major refurbishment or a change of ownership.



## Traditional

At the time of writing, a new *Tamila* restaurant was due to open on Poland Street in Soho, following the chain's success in Clapham Junction and King's Cross. The new branch will follow the model of a traditional south Indian curry house and

will be the largest *Tamila* yet as it will spread across two floors, with a restaurant and bar on the ground floor and a private dining space in the basement.

One of the co-founders, Prince Durairaj, said: "Soho has always felt like a playground for some of London's most exciting and much-loved restaurants, so opening here has been a real dream of mine. It's such a special and energetic part of the city for hospitality, and I feel incredibly grateful to be bringing *Tamila* into the mix and rubbing shoulders with places I've admired for years."

## Expanded

*Alley Cats*, the cult New York-style pizzeria launched its fourth restaurant



in London recently, with the opening of a brand-new two-floor restaurant in Portobello Road. New dishes such as their new Fat Cat Squares (*Alley Cats*' own interpretation of Sicilian square pizza) have been created for the opening by Sicilian-born head chef Francesco Macrì, who has expanded *Alley Cats*' offering while staying true to its New York spirit.

A second *Fred Bakery* recently opened near Oxford Circus following the success of its flagship branch in Holborn. It features a split-level layout with seating on both floors, designed to welcome both quick drop-ins and





longer stays. The brand was co-founded by Burak Demirelli, the experienced restaurateur and hospitality entrepreneur behind successful concepts such as Faros London and Lokal restaurant.

**Landmark**

On the pub front, *Shepherd Neame* has reopened the landmark Hoop and Grapes in Farringdon following a £1.8 million transformation. It is located just minutes from Fleet Street and dates back to 1721. Built on land that was once part of St Bride’s Church burial ground, the pub is famously associated with illicit ‘Fleet marriages’ linked to nearby Fleet Prison. Its colourful past is reflected in a bespoke swing sign depicting a clandestine wedding scene, alongside hand-painted external sign-writing that enhances the restored façade.

**Appeal**

Meanwhile *Urban Pubs and Bars*, which recently announced significantly increased profits, are opening three new pubs around London. They are the Duchess of Kensington (formerly Coco Momo) on Gloucester Road, the Prince Regent in south London and Old Street Tavern (formerly Serata Hall) on the edge of the City. The chain now operates more than fifty venues across the capital.

Many more pubs, hotels and restaurants are planned across the capital for later in the year, underlining the capital’s enduring appeal as a great place for both Londoners and visitors to eat and drink.

**Vincent Burke is a content creator and communications consultant**  
[www.linkedin.com/in/vincent-burke-7b98968](http://www.linkedin.com/in/vincent-burke-7b98968)



# Hammersmith Bridge – third act

**LBM first reported on the closure of Hammersmith Bridge in 2021 under the heading ‘A bridge too far’. We returned to it three years later with a front cover story: ‘The sorry saga of Hammersmith Bridge’.**

**Vital**

And the saga continues. This January, hundreds of local residents, campaigners and political leaders came together at the Barnes side of the bridge to deliver the message: reopen Hammersmith Bridge

to vehicles and restore vital bus services without further delay.



**Determined**

The turnout and energy on the ground demonstrated how deeply the issue was affecting families, businesses and commuters across Putney, Roehampton and beyond, and how determined the community was to see action.



**Urgent**

Hammersmith Bridge has now been closed to vehicles for seven years, forcing traffic onto already congested roads, cutting essential bus routes and making everyday journeys longer and less reliable.



The event was led by local MP Fleur Anderson alongside Simon Hogg, Leader of Wandsworth Council, and Leonie Cooper, London Assembly Member for Merton and Wandsworth, who all pledged to keep up the pressure on the government and to push for urgent funding and a clear plan to restore what is a key transport link.

# Why set up in Tuscany?



Tuscany is among the most attractive mid-sized regions in Europe, offering potential and existing investors an open investment climate, highly skilled human resources, top-level public research facilities, advanced scientific and technological expertise, cost competitiveness, a diverse economy built around strong business clusters, and an exceptional quality of life.

Between 2019 and 2025, Tuscany attracted over 300 foreign investment operations for a total of €12.4 billion in invested capital. Over the same period, investment projects generated over 15,000 new jobs, confirming **Tuscany's strong competitive positioning in foreign direct investment** and ranking it among the top Italian regions, including **4<sup>th</sup> place nationwide for greenfield investments**.

## Services offered

**Invest in Tuscany provides comprehensive support to international investors throughout the entire investment process.** Pre-settlement services include the collection of investors' information needs and profiles, the analysis of relevant market and location-specific opportunities, the preparation of customized investment dossiers, on-site visits and meetings to explore opportunities in Tuscany, as well as the search, evaluation and selection of suitable settlement options. During the settlement phase, Invest in Tuscany assists investors with

information on business start-up and work permits, supports relations with local employment centers, and manages interactions with public administrations through established networks and partnerships with the authorities responsible for authorizations and business start-up. Post-settlement support focuses on integrating investors into the Tuscan economic, scientific and innovation ecosystem by facilitating relations with institutions, universities, research centers, innovation clusters and chambers of commerce, while also assisting in the implementation of expansion projects.

## Investing in Tuscany: a case of successful facilitation

**A French glass manufacturing company, a leader in food and beverage packaging, announced in 2021 a €110 million reinvestment at its Lucca plant, doubling production capacity and creating 80-90 new jobs while reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.** Invest in Tuscany played a central role, coordinating



public stakeholders, streamlining authorizations, facilitating incentives and infrastructure, and fostering collaborations with academia and local SMEs. The outcome was the successful consolidation and expansion of the company's presence in Tuscany, demonstrating how Invest in Tuscany's structured aftercare and strategic facilitation support investment retention and growth in the region.

# Invest in Tuscany

Tuscany, for centuries in the future



invest in tuscany

## INVEST IN THE LAND OF GENIUS

Fashion, life sciences,  
digital innovation, art,  
tourism and much more.  
Grow your business.  
Invest in Tuscany.

[investintuscany.com](http://investintuscany.com)



A dynamic and  
diversified  
economy

A vast pool of  
talent

An  
Outstanding  
quality of life

A regional  
government  
"open for  
business"

Central  
location in  
Italy and in the  
Mediterranean  
basin

Competitive  
costs

Contact us!

[info@investintuscany.com](mailto:info@investintuscany.com)  
[www.investintuscany.com](http://www.investintuscany.com)

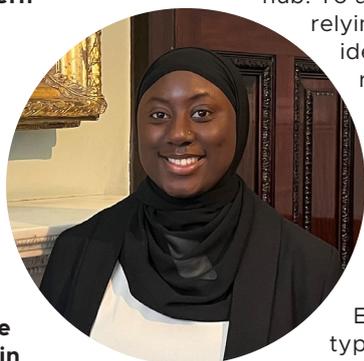


invest in tuscany

# Border permissions in a digital age

**Mariam Touray on the UK's Electronic Travel Authorisation enforcement and the future of pre-travel control**

**The UK's enforcement of its Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme marks a decisive moment in the evolution of modern border management. From February 2026, travellers from visa-exempt nations have no longer been able to board a flight to the UK without first securing digital permission in the form of an ETA. Meanwhile, visa holders need to continue to demonstrate their digital permission in the form of an eVisa.**



This change is not simply administrative. It signifies a reframing of the UK's border strategy, from reactive checks at arrival to proactive risk assessment before travel even begins.

## Ecosystem

The ETA has existed in a phased form since 2023, but its enforcement across all relevant nationalities demonstrates that the UK is now confident in its digital infrastructure. Airlines and other carriers will be legally required to verify that passengers hold a valid ETA, or other digital immigration status, before allowing them to board.

This creates a pre-clearance model, one that mirrors global trends. The United States' ESTA, Canada's ETA and the EU's upcoming ETIAS all reflect the same trajectory. Governments want data first, vetting second and travel third. The UK's decision to enforce ETA aligns it with the digital border regimes of comparable jurisdictions.

## Dual balance

The enforcement of ETAs aims to

strike a dual balance of enhancing security while maintaining the efficiency expected of a global travel hub. To achieve this, the UK is relying on automated checks, identity verification, and risk-based algorithms designed to identify concerns well before a traveller arrives at passport control.

For most travellers, the process should remain straightforward. ETAs are low-cost and typically granted rapidly. So, the crucial shift is not based on practice but rather the treatment of travel. As travellers who previously assumed they could arrive in the UK with minimal pre-approval must now treat entry as permission-based, not automatic. For frequent visitors, the two-year validity should offer enough flexibility to integrate this step into their travel plans.

Questions have been raised about data handling, profiling and transparency. However, the UK's ETA model is rooted in the idea that early digital checks ultimately reduce physical friction at the border and increase the predictability of decision-making.

## Robust systems

One of the most significant legal implications is the repositioning of carriers as frontline immigration enforcers. Airlines must now verify digital permissions at the point of departure or face penalties. This alters the compliance landscape as carriers will need robust systems to read and validate digital statuses in real time, and they must embed these checks into their operational workflows.

This is not optional. The UK's policy creates a statutory obligation, transforming a commercial actor into an essential component of national border security. Airlines operating internationally will already be familiar with this model, but the UK's enhanced reliance on digital checks may require upgrades to both systems and staff training.

## Preliminary assessment

A critical legal nuance is that an ETA authorises travel, not entry. Border officers retain full discretion to refuse admission, and the government maintains the ability to cancel an ETA at any time if suitability concerns emerge.

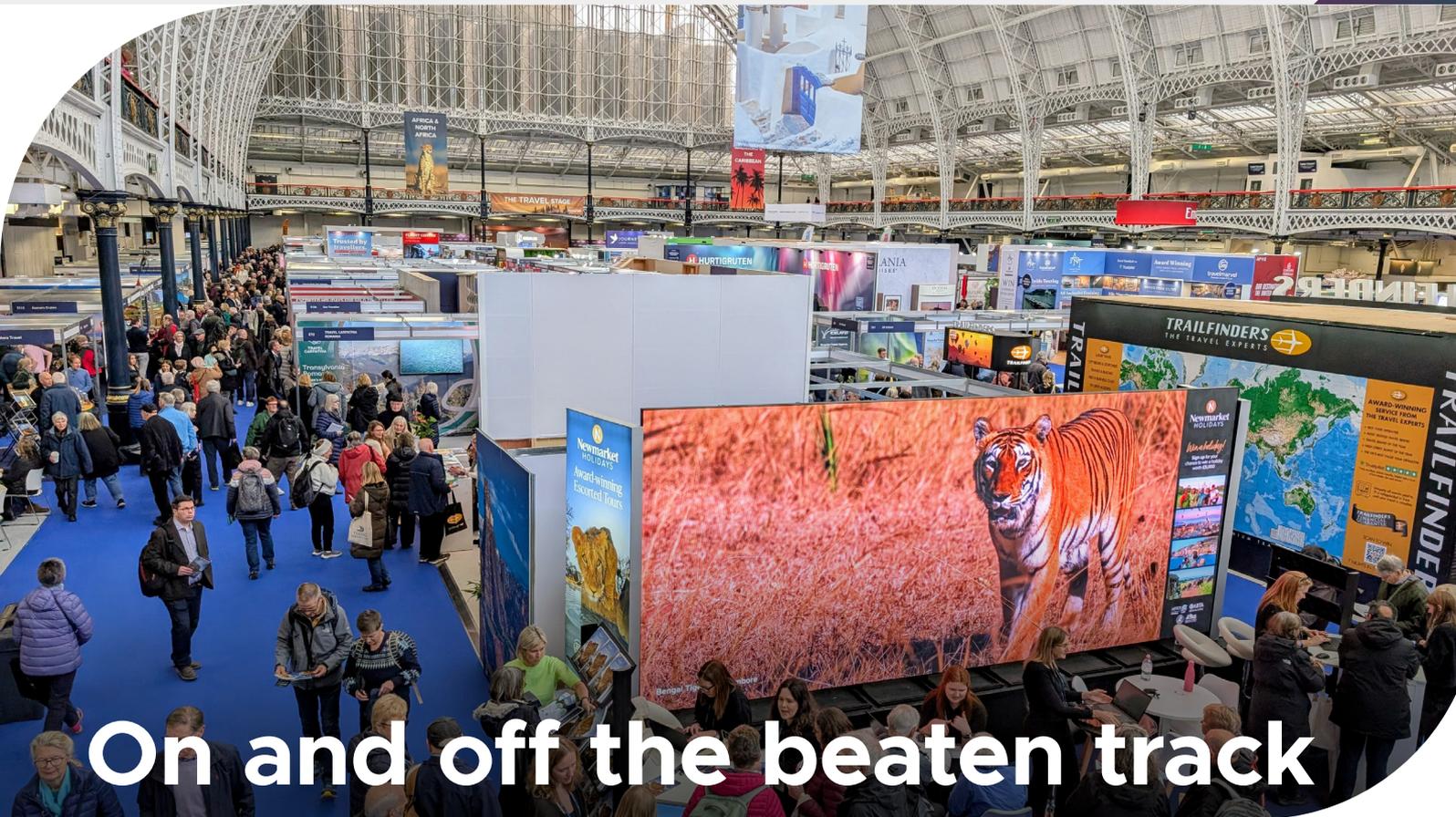
This reinforces the essential point that an ETA is a preliminary assessment, not a final immigration decision. The permission exists to manage risk, not to override existing immigration rules.

## Forward-looking

The UK's full enforcement of ETAs signals the maturity of a long-term strategy. It reflects a recognition that secure borders hinge not simply on physical infrastructure, but on data infrastructure also.

For businesses, carriers and travellers, the message is unequivocal. The era of digital pre-authorisation is no longer emerging – it is here. The UK government believes that this shift will deliver a more secure, efficient and predictable border. If implemented effectively, it may well become the cornerstone of a modernised immigration system anchored in technology, transparency and forward-looking governance.

**Mariam Touray is an immigration paralegal at Barar & Associates**  
[www.bararassociates.co.uk](http://www.bararassociates.co.uk)



# On and off the beaten track

The global travel industry is a growth business and the annual Destinations extravaganza at Olympia appeared bigger and better than ever. Prominent among the 250 exhibitors was the Saudi Arabia pavilion – not difficult to locate, just follow the rhythmic pounding of their traditional drum music.

## Niche

As usual it was a delight to pick out some niche experiences to ponder. *Wild*

*Herzegovina*, for example, promising bird watching, history and culture holidays. And *Taiwan Tourism* and *Ethiopian Experiences* – two locations rarely on the beaten track but well worth a visit.

## Arresting

The 'stage schedules' were as impressive as ever with some very arresting titles. *From the gates of hell to life on the Mongolian steppes*, for example. And what was there not to

like about: *Rioja* or *South Africa*: which stunning wine region will be your next holiday destination?

Travel expert Simon Calder perhaps pulled the biggest crowds. 'Expert' doesn't do justice to his breadth and depth of knowledge of the world of travel, matched only by his enthusiasm for every aspect of it, not least the logistics.

[www.destinationsshow.com](http://www.destinationsshow.com)



# EU reset must reverse trade slump

**New survey data of over 2,000 exporters from the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) Insights Unit has laid stark the impact of Brexit, Covid, war and tariffs on the UK's exports. The data was collected between 10 November and 8 December 2025**

## Urgency

With January marking the sixth anniversary of Brexit, the Trade Confidence Outlook results also underline the urgency for the EU reset to deliver.

The Insights Unit found that overall, 21 per cent of exporters reported an increase in export sales, while 28 per cent reported a fall, and 50 per cent reported no change.

Micro-exporters with fewer than 10 employees are faring worse – only 17 per cent reported increased export orders in Q4 2025, 30 per cent reported a fall, and 53 per cent reported no change.

## Re-opened

In contrast, 39 per cent of large exporters, with more than 250 staff, saw a boost in overseas orders, 14 per cent reported a decrease, and 47 per cent said they'd seen no change.

Since the second quarter of 2018, the number of firms reporting increased orders has never been higher than 28 per cent, not even when the global economy re-opened after the pandemic.

## Challenging

William Bain, BCC head of trade policy commented: "For smaller businesses, the last seven years have been some of the most challenging ever to try and

grow overseas exports.

"Things started to take a turn for the worse as the trade implications of Brexit became clear in 2018 and they have been in the doldrums ever since.

## Disruption

"A succession of further shocks on top of that – from Covid, wars, supply chain disruption and tariffs – have turned exporting into an uphill slog where the path keeps getting steeper. The Prime Minister's trip to China and the real progress made on trade deals with the US, EU and India last year show the government understands the difficulties.

"But we need to see a real focus in 2026 on delivering what has been agreed. The BCC's EU Reset report sets out very clearly the big issues that must be tackled before the year is out."

[www.britishchambers.org](http://www.britishchambers.org)



## Recommendations

**The BCC's EU Reset report has 25 recommendations to improve UK-EU trade in the short, medium and long-term. Its top five proposals for discussions in 2026 are:**

- Negotiate a deep SPS (animal and plant products) agreement to remove export health certificates
- Finalise UK and EU Emissions Trading Scheme linkage to exempt goods from Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanisms
- Establish a youth mobility scheme
- Secure full UK participation in SAFE – the EU's Defence Finance Initiative
- Enhance VAT cooperation and customs simplification to reduce trade costs.



# Ask an Expert

## Leasehold Specialist, Dona Awano explains the latest proposals being put forward by government that will affect Freeholders and Leaseholders.

### Capping Ground Rents at £250

On 27 January 2026, the Government announced its proposal to limit ground rents in existing leases to a maximum of £250 a year for the next 40 years and abolish them completely after that. This is part of the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Bill, which is not yet law but will soon begin its journey through the parliamentary process.

It will be at least a year before the Bill becomes law as an Act, and it may undergo changes on the way. It may not come into force straight away, and the Government does not expect rent-capping to begin before 2028.

### The Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024

The Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 ("the 2024 Act") received Royal Assent on 24 May 2024.

Most of the provisions of the 2024 Act are not yet in force but the need for a flat owner to have owned the flat for two years before applying for a lease extension has now been removed.

The provisions in the 2024 Act include leases being extended to 990 years, abolishing marriage value, capping ground rent at 0.1% of the market value of the freehold interest in calculating the price of a lease extension and limiting landlords right to recover costs from flat owners.

These provisions will however not take effect until the Secretary of State makes a

commencement order, and different parts of it may take effect on different dates.

### Legal challenge to the 2024 Act and potential challenge the Ground Rent cap

Some Landlords challenged the 2024 Act in the High Court on the grounds that it wrongly interfered with their right as freeholders to the peaceful enjoyment of their property under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). They lost in the High Court, but some of them have appealed to the Court of Appeal. It is not yet known whether the Government will await the final decision by the courts before bringing the 2024 Act into force.

Similarly, Landlords will probably take court proceedings to challenge the capping of ground rents, in the same way that they opposed the 2024 Act, with the same arguments about their human rights. They may also argue that because a lease is a private contract agreed between the freeholder and the leaseholder it should not be re-written or interfered with by later legislation. That will all cause delay whether any court case succeeds or not.

### Have there been any other changes to rising ground rents in leases?

The Competition and Market Authority started investigating escalating ground rents in leases in 2019 and it worked with some major developers and freeholders to offer voluntary deeds of variation to their leaseholders. This removed the rising provisions and kept the rent at the original

amount it was at the start of the lease for the rest of the term of the lease.

In 2022 the Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Act 2022 came into force, providing that any new lease granted on or after 30 June 2022 will no longer be permitted to have a ground rent. This law however only applies to new leases and so it does not assist leaseholders with existing high rising ground rents.

### How will the £250 ground rent cap affect leaseholders?

For leaseholders with escalating annual ground rents over £250, the cap will lower the rent payable and bring financial certainty. It will assist with selling and mortgaging such properties, as generally lenders are reluctant to lend on leases with escalating ground rents.

### Should leaseholders with escalating ground rents wait for the cap before buying the freehold or extending their leases?

There are many factors to be considered in deciding whether to wait till the law changes.

At this stage there is no predicting how the Bill may be amended during its passage through Parliament, or how long it will take to come into force.

Reductions in ground rent may lead to reductions in the premiums, but not before 2028, if then. Any potential saving of money may not be worth waiting for. It would be prudent to seek valuation advice.

For more information,  
visit [www.allaw.co.uk](http://www.allaw.co.uk)  
email [contact@allaw.co.uk](mailto:contact@allaw.co.uk)  
or contact the team on  
**020 8771 5254**



**Amphlett Lissimore**

SOLICITORS

# Export of services in the doldrums

Reacting to the trade data for November 2025 from the Office for National Statistics, William Bain, British Chambers of Commerce head of trade policy, said: “Services exports have been the standout feature of UK trade over the past decade, and the prospect of further growth remains strong in the medium term.”

## Concerns

“But there will be concern at the recent weakness in their performance, as volumes have been flat for the last three months. This is very much reflective of slowing global demand and is not just a UK issue. November did see further solid increases in goods sales to the EU but the

rollercoaster effects of changes in tariff policy with the US continued to be felt.

## Cooling

“Looking ahead, 2026 could also be tougher for UK exports, as the Office for Budget Responsibility forecasts a sharp cooling of growth to only 0.3 per cent for the year. UK businesses want long-term clarity on US trade policy around tariffs, faster action on the EU reset and deeper trading terms in the Indo-Pacific region.”

## Goods exports

UK goods exports rose overall in November with notable upswings in EU volumes, although these were partially offset by a 10 per cent drop in sales to the US – principally in chemicals and pharmaceuticals.

Overall export volumes rose by 1.8 per cent in November 2025, month on month, with a 2.7 per cent rise to the EU, and a one per cent rise to the rest of the world. Chemicals and pharmaceutical exports were the drivers of the stronger growth with the

EU. In terms of the rest of the world, automotive exports to the US and China, and aircraft exports to Qatar were the standouts, but other manufactured goods exports declined.

However overall, exports to the US fell by 10.4 per cent in value terms, driven by declines in pharmaceutical and medical exports and chemicals. This was before a deal was reached on pharmaceutical tariffs with the US on 1 December 2025.

## Goods imports

Goods imports fell by 0.5 per cent in volume terms in November. This was due to a 2.5 per cent fall in UK orders from the rest of the world, while imports from the EU rose by 1.4 per cent. Chemicals and pharmaceuticals from the EU were the chief drivers.

## Services

UK services exports continued their recent disappointing run with a 0.45 per cent decline in volumes in November 2025. This was also matched by a downward move in services imports.

[www.britishchambers.org.uk](http://www.britishchambers.org.uk)



# African and Caribbean partnerships

LCCI hosted a delegation of high-growth IT and business process outsourcing enterprises from Uganda, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago earlier this year. The information and networking event took place in the Chamber's newly refurbished Members' lounge area in its City HQ.

## Animation

The group comprised a diverse range of

sectors including AI, cybersecurity, finance, health tech, telecoms, app and game development and animation.

The visit was part of the UK Trade Partnerships programme, an initiative led by the International Trade Centre in Geneva and funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to enhance trade from African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries.



# Overseas business opportunities

A selection of business co-operation offers made by companies wishing to work with UK firms taken from the Enterprise Europe Network Partnership Opportunities Database. To find out more about these and similar opportunities contact Innovate UK Business Growth at <https://iuk-business-connect.org.uk/business-growth-contact/> or call on 0300 123 3066

## France

Company offers access to an autonomous offshore test platform, enabling organisations to test, validate and qualify instruments, sensors, drones and technologies under real marine conditions. The platform provides energy supply, connectivity and operational support in a pre-authorised maritime area.

REF: TOFR20260213023

## Austria

Technology provider specialised in energy efficiency has developed a lightweight internal glazing system that improves the thermal performance of existing old wooden windows without replacing frames. The solution enables quick, low cost and reversible energy upgrades for residential, commercial and heritage buildings.

REF: TOAT20260212032

## Ukraine

Software development company with over 18 years of experience offers near-shore development teams, AI solutions, CMS implementations and end-to-end software delivery based on Microsoft technologies, seeking long-term technology and delivery partnerships with mid-size and enterprise companies.

REF: BOUA20260213024

## Slovakia

Company is specialising in the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning industry (HVAC), mainly active in the thermal energy recovery sector. It has developed and manufactures patented technology of active recuperation of heat energy from black wastewater and waste air. The company is looking for a strategic growth partner.

REF: TOSK20260212029

## Poland

Software and hardware design office with experience in space industry and other sectors is offering a wide range of research & development services, EMC testing and pre-certification, ISO7 cleanliness standard clean room for rent and production of different types of electronic devices for the space industry. The company is looking for commercial and outsourcing agreements.

REF: BOPL20260108011

## Serbia

Specialist in professional and industrial additive manufacturing solutions seeks distributors, industrial users and institutional partners for cooperation in the field of 3D printing, 3D scanning and reverse engineering technologies. It provides advanced systems, materials and full technical support for Industry 4.0 applications.

REF: BORS20260211004

## Sweden

SME offers digital key cabinets, digital medicine cabinets and mobile docking stations designed for secure and efficient management of keys and work phones in healthcare and other regulated environments. The company seeks distributor agreements to expand internationally.

REF: BOSE20260206013

## Luxembourg

Social impact organization, specialised in food circular bioeconomy and Living Lab models, seeks to join a cross-sectoral consortium within topic HORIZON-CL6-2026-01-CIRC BIO-01-two-stage for the part concerning food, nutrition, circular processing and health. It brings expertise in multi-actor co-creation, community-based innovation and microorganism-based food solutions.

REF: RDRLU20260204028

## Spain

Company has developed an intelligent autonomous fire suppression system designed for residential kitchens. By combining advanced detection, automated activation and connected software, the technology enables proactive fire prevention rather than reactive response. They are seeking a commercial agreement with technical assistance to scale production and support market deployment.

REF: TOES20260213018

## Germany

Medical technology specialist is looking for sales partners and pharmacy suppliers for their unique digital solution for the safe and reliable dispensing of medication. Cooperation under a commercial agreement is sought.

REF: BODE20260213026

## Italy

Company is developing a digital B2B marketplace that acts as an operational infrastructure for the fashion and manufacturing supply chain. The solution addresses structural inefficiencies affecting SMEs by enabling data-driven matching, process governance, and compliance with upcoming EU Digital Product Passport and ESG requirements.

REF: BOIT20260210005

# Turning workplace stress into success

Many professionals face difficult workplace situations that leave them stressed, anxious, or unsure how to respond. That, it could be argued, is just how it is. It goes with the territory. However, this book by Anne-Maartje Oud, a workplace behaviour specialist, could prove invaluable.

## Toxic

With 35 real-life workplace dilemmas, it provides practical strategies for challenges such as recognising and managing toxic colleagues, reading non-verbal cues and responding to vulnerable moments like stress or tears.

Each chapter offers a step-by-step guide, giving readers the tools to tackle their work-life challenges head-on. Structured into five sections: self-development; communication; collaboration and teamwork; leadership; and difficult situations, the book offers a clear roadmap to turn stressful scenarios into opportunities to thrive.

"Must-read from the queen of dealing with difficult conversations."  
Joe Navarro, author of *Be Exceptional*

## WHAT TO DO IF...?

How to handle any situation at work and come out winning

Anne-Maartje Oud



## Confidence

Drawing on over two decades of experience, Oud provides guidance that is practical, real-world tested, and designed to help readers handle difficult work situations with calm, clarity, and confidence.

Ideal for career-minded professionals, HR teams, managers, and anyone looking to improve their workplace wellbeing, *WHAT TO DO IF...?* is a hands-on manual for navigating modern work life – addressing every tricky colleague, awkward conversation and stressful situation. It can be read cover-to-cover or used as a quick reference whenever a challenging situation arises, making it a practical companion for any workplace.

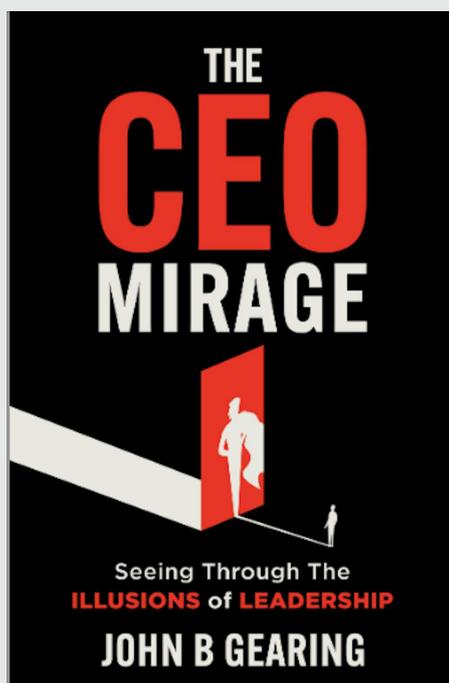
*WHAT TO DO IF...? How to handle any situation at work and come out winning*

Author: Anne-Maartje Oud

Published by Kogan Page

[www.koganpage.com](http://www.koganpage.com)

# Preparation for when reality hits



It is often the case that chief executives and founders are celebrated for their bold ideas, relentless ambition and magnetic charisma. But behind the spotlight, many leaders fall victim to illusions – such as boardroom politics, unchecked ego and the myth of the charismatic founder – that offer a façade of outward success, while quietly eroding the foundation of the business.

## Impressive

The author, John B. Gearing, is a seasoned business leader and board level advisor who has worked for or with impressive companies such as Adidas and APAC. In his book he strips away the polished veneer of leadership, delivering a brutally honest guide to the leadership illusions that derail companies and the uncomfortable – but necessary – truths that save them.

## Illusions

Illustrated with real-world case studies, hard-earned lessons and powerfully

candid reflections, the book ruthlessly identifies the illusions that mislead chief executives, founders and investors and destroy companies from within. These may be the false confidence of optimistic business plans, the dangers of yes-men, the seduction of growth at all costs, and the peril of a vision without the execution to match.

## Leadership

Whether you're scaling fast, preparing for an exit, or just trying to survive the next board meeting, *The CEO Mirage* will likely change how you think about leadership, show you how to lead what's real and, critically, equip you to build a company that doesn't collapse when reality hits.

*The CEO Mirage – how to spot the illusions, blind spots and ego traps that take smart leaders down* by John B. Gearing

Morgan James Publishing

[www.morgan-james-publishing.com](http://www.morgan-james-publishing.com)

# Document scanning & digital capture solutions

For more than 30 years, Agile Document Solutions (ADS) has helped organisations transform the way they work with information.

## Agile Document Solutions

Based in Hoddesdon, this fully ISO-accredited UK specialist in document scanning and electronic document processing has become the partner of choice for some of Britain's most recognisable brands — including Sainsbury's, GKN Aerospace, Caffè Nero and Euro Car Parts. Each has turned to ADS to modernise legacy workflows and enable smarter, faster operations.

What started as a scanning bureau has evolved into a digital transformation powerhouse. ADS converts paper archives into secure, searchable digital assets, extracts critical data, and automates Accounts Payable with speed and precision. The result: reduced manual effort, greater accuracy, and measurable business value from everyday information.

In an economy where speed, security and instant access define competitive edge, paper-heavy processes are a liability. ADS eliminates that friction — quickly, securely and cost-effectively — helping organisations move at the pace modern business demands.

## A Specialist in Document Scanning

ADS is a UK-based, fully ISO-accredited document scanning specialist, transforming physical paperwork into secure, searchable digital assets. Designed for organisations that demand accuracy, compliance and scalability, its services remove complexity and deliver measurable results. Whether digitising decades of archives or live operational records, ADS provides a seamless route from paper to performance.

With the infrastructure and expertise to handle documents of any type, ADS operates confidently across sectors and sensitivity levels. From fragile historical archives to high-volume transactional

files, every document is processed with precision, security and care.

## More Than Scanning: Smarter Document Management

Scanning is just the start. ADS helps organisations find, access and manage information instantly — cutting storage costs, strengthening compliance and accelerating operational efficiency. Every document is indexed, structured and seamlessly integrated into existing workflows, transforming static paper into actionable business intelligence.

## The Bottom Line

ADS removes paper bottlenecks and unlocks business momentum. By converting documents into secure, accessible digital assets, it empowers organisations to work faster, smarter and with complete confidence — **now and into the future.**

For further information visit [agiledocumentsolutions.co.uk](https://agiledocumentsolutions.co.uk) or call 01992 801860.



Transforming the way businesses work with information.

- ✓ Document Scanning & Digitisation
- ✓ HR Scanning & Automation
- ✓ Records Management

- ✓ Invoice Capture & Processing
- ✓ Accounts Payable Automation
- ✓ Digital Mailroom



## Exclusive offers for Chamber members

Discover more at [agiledocumentsolutions.co.uk](https://agiledocumentsolutions.co.uk)

Phone: +44 (0)1992 801860 | Email: [info@agiledocumentsolutions.co.uk](mailto:info@agiledocumentsolutions.co.uk)

# Making tax digital for self-assessment

## | Brian Ducran on the way forward

“ On 6 April 2026, a significant shift in personal tax reporting will take effect. MTD – making tax digital – for income tax becomes mandatory for self-employed individuals and landlords with income over £50,000.

The new rules require nearly one million taxpayers to keep digital records and file five separate digital reports each year, using HMRC-compatible software. These will not produce real-time tax calculations or require early payment.

### Compliance

The government describes MTD as a modernisation initiative. HMRC insists it will provide frequent access to income and expense data, reduce the tax gap, improve accuracy, and support compliance. But with no evidence offered, many remain sceptical. Also, if data must be submitted every quarter, how long before a move towards quarterly payments for self-assessment tax is announced, like VAT?

### Who benefits from MTD, and at what cost?

Consider the UK's digitised traffic enforcement system. The technology speeds up detection and issuance of penalty notices. It has not reduced the behaviour of speeding. Recently, a software fault in variable speed cameras issued thousands of incorrect penalties. Many did not challenge them, believing the technology to be infallible. The technology worked fast, but not correctly.

### Anything but simple

Tax is no different. Before Self-Assessment, the id system would assess millions of taxpayers' tax and send them a bill. In 1996/97, Self-Assessment put the onus on taxpayers to calculate their own tax and pay it. It was originally called 'simple tax' but quickly rebranded after it became

clear to the press and public that it was anything but simple.



Digital reporting may accelerate HMRC's ability to spot inconsistencies, but closing the gap still requires the hard graft; investigation, regulation, and education. Software cannot replace scrutiny, and data alone does not deliver fairness.

### Productivity

No one would argue that updating the tax system with new technology is inherently a bad thing. Yet there are examples where promises about improving lives or reducing workloads have not materialised. Back in the late 1980s, I was told computers in the workplace would revolutionise productivity, administration of the tax system and we would only need to work three days a week! (What was omitted was that pay would be likely to reflect only three working days.)

### Embedded

Computers are now embedded in our working and personal life, but productivity gains have not delivered more leisure time. The productivity benefits have not come without cost. The technology changed the work, but also intensified it, with many working longer hours and more days, not fewer.

Economists call this the *Jevons paradox* – the principle that increasing efficiency through technology can paradoxically lead to more consumption and resource use. In the context of digital tax systems, the promise of streamlined processes may lead to more reporting, more errors, and increased oversight, thus expanding workloads.

In articles in Sage Journals (2020) and Pew Research Center (2023), researchers argue digitalisation increases speed but intensifies work, complexity, errors, and concentrates power. Embedded in systems and daily

life it accelerates errors that outpace scrutiny and harming citizens.

### Benefits and downsides

There is a lesson here for tax reform. Changes to the tax system with new technology bring both benefits and downsides. It is unclear what the benefits of MTD will be for the taxpayer.

While the state can point to the modernisation of its systems, the more visible beneficiaries are the huge technology companies building and maintaining the infrastructure, and the software firms selling the mandated tools. In time taxpayers may find they are no longer customers but captives. They will be compelled to use commercial software products to fulfil their legal obligations and bear these costs, directly or indirectly. For tax, a fundamental touchpoint, we seem willing to privatise access. The jury has not yet returned its verdict. If, as some fear, there are no net benefits, or worse, adverse impacts, it is unlikely to favour MTD.

In the short term, there is little doubt; *compliance will become more complex, more frequent, and more expensive.* Whether it leads to a fairer tax system remains uncertain. ”

**Brian Ducran, a former HMRC officer, is director and head of tax compliance at C&B Partners Limited. He features in an LCCI Lunch and Learn webinar on 18 March: Tax changes in 2026/27 – what businesses must know and do**

[www.londonchamber.co.uk/events](http://www.londonchamber.co.uk/events)  
[www.cbpartnerslimited.co.uk](http://www.cbpartnerslimited.co.uk)



**C & B Partners**  
LIMITED



# Shaping the future of business through tech

Europe has entered a decisive decade for technology – one where the outcomes are not guaranteed. As artificial intelligence reshapes entire industries, quantum computing moves from lab to market, and deep tech innovation accelerates at unprecedented pace, the decisions made today will determine which businesses lead tomorrow. From 8-10 June 2026 at Olympia London, and 8-12 June across the city, London Tech Week brings together the thinkers and doers shaping the future of business through technology.

## Rapid advances

More than an event, London Tech Week is a meeting point for decision makers. In 2026, 30,000+ attendees will convene, including 18,750 enterprise leaders, 8,250 startups and 1,500 investors. Founders, scale-ups, enterprise leaders, investors and policymakers gather not just to explore what is new, but to understand what is next and how to act on it. In a year defined by rapid advances in AI, deep tech and frontier innovation, the conversations taking place in London will resonate far beyond the week itself. That is why global partners including Microsoft and AWS continue to return.

## Influential

The global spotlight follows. In 2025, London Tech Week generated more than 4,000 pieces of press coverage across international titles including The Wall Street Journal, Bloomberg, CNBC, Sky News and the BBC, reinforcing London's role as one of the world's most influential technology hubs.

Attendees don't come to observe –

they come to act. Last year's delegates reported forming an average of 12 meaningful business connections, with 68 per cent identifying new partnership opportunities and 43 per cent of enterprise attendees discovering technologies they subsequently piloted or deployed. Whether you're evaluating AI vendors, seeking investment for growth, recruiting technical talent, or building your market intelligence on emerging technologies, London Tech Week delivers the relationships and insights that translate into business decisions.

## Curated

For the first time, the 2026 agenda is structured across two 'worlds' – Enterprise World and Startup World – each with dedicated stages, curated networking and tailored programming. Designed for deeper relevance, the structure also encourages meaningful crossover, ensuring established businesses can discover emerging innovators and startups can connect with enterprise buyers and investors.

## Global business capital

Across six stages, global speakers including Mati Staniszewski, co-founder and chief executive of ElevenLabs (the AI voice platform valued at \$3 billion), Anton Osika, co-founder and chief executive of Lovable, Jeannette zu Fürstenberg, managing director and head of Europe

at General Catalyst, and many others will explore how technology is reshaping industries, markets and leadership itself. From AI in the boardroom to the future of finance, health, retail and climate, the agenda reflects London's position as a global business capital and the UK's standing as Europe's leading tech

ecosystem – home to over 50 unicorns and attracting more venture capital investment than France and Germany combined.

Technology is no longer a separate consideration – it underpins growth, competitiveness and resilience across every sector. London Tech Week exists to connect

business leaders with the ideas, people and capabilities that will define the next decade. With a citywide fringe programme spanning 8-12 June, the event transforms London into a global technology hub, hosting hundreds of partner events, product launches, and networking opportunities across the capital.

**London Tech Week 2026 takes place 8-10 June at Olympia London. For LCCI members seeking to understand how technology will reshape their competitive landscape, influence their investment decisions or transform their operations, this is where those answers begin.**

[www.londontechweek.com](http://www.londontechweek.com)



# AI is fast becoming the biggest cyber risk

| by John Mc Loughlin

**AI did not arrive in your organisation through a board decision or a formal security review. It crept in quietly, through emails written faster, code generated on the fly, workflows automated in the background and support teams leaning on tools that feel harmless.**

## Behaviour

This is how 'shadow AI' takes hold, not as a project, but as behaviour. That is exactly why it has become one of the most dangerous risks most businesses are carrying today.

Shadow AI refers to any artificial intelligence system operating without security oversight, approval or governance. It includes employees using tools like ChatGPT, Copilot, Perplexity or Claude for client work. It includes AI features silently embedded inside SaaS (software and delivery licensing) platforms.

## Invisible

It includes teams training internal models on company data without understanding where that data goes. It includes external AI agents with excessive access and bots that can read sensitive information, send emails, create files or delete them entirely. These systems are productive, efficient

and largely invisible – and invisibility is where risk lives.



This risk is no longer theoretical. Threat actors are already weaponising AI in real world attacks. AI-driven phishing campaigns now scale faster and adapt faster than human-led operations ever could. Malware is being generated and reshaped continuously to evade traditional detection.

## Identity

Self-learning agents are probing cloud environments for weak identity controls. Credentials are stolen and abused quietly. Employees are impersonated convincingly across email, chat and even voice. These attacks are already happening and are evident in live environments.

The uncomfortable truth is that cyber resilience is no longer just about users, devices and networks. It is about understanding the behaviour of machines that act on your behalf. Non-human identities now move data, make decisions and trigger actions at speed. When those identities are not visible or governed, they become perfect entry points for attackers.

## Blind spot

Research company Gartner identifies

shadow AI as a critical blind spot for chief information officers and cybersecurity leaders. A survey of cybersecurity decision-makers showed that 69 per cent of organisations suspect or have evidence of employees using prohibited AI tools. Gartner predicts that by 2030, more than 40 per cent of enterprises will experience security or compliance incidents linked to unauthorised shadow AI.

## Unusual activity

For companies to bring this risk back into view means detecting when AI tools access sensitive systems, monitoring bot and non-human identity behaviour, flagging unusual activity across cloud and SaaS platforms and identifying shadow AI before it becomes a liability.

It also means spotting AI-driven attack techniques rather than relying solely on known malware patterns and responding quickly when automation causes real world damage.

AI innovation does not need to stop but it does need to be visible, governed and secured. If your organisation is using AI, officially or unofficially, now is the moment to take visibility seriously. You cannot protect what you cannot see.

**John Mc Loughlin is chief executive of J2**

[www.j2mssp.com](http://www.j2mssp.com)

## Under one roof

**LCCI took a stand at TechEx Global at London Olympia in February.**

**The event brought together today's technology leaders and hosted an array of co-located events under one roof.**

**These included five expos:**

- AI & Big Data
- Cyber Security & Cloud
- Data Centre
- Edge Computing
- IoT Tech.

And three conferences:

- Digital Transformation

- Cloud Transformation
- Intelligent Automation.



The whole package was purpose-built for senior IT decision-makers, architects, engineers, and digital leaders. The event attracted over 9,000 delegates – the highest in its history – and featured more than 250 speakers.

## Popular

One of the most popular sessions was the AI & Robotics Meetup which featured a 'live' robot created by UCL Robotics. This brought together

researchers from UCL's Intelligent Robotics group and TechEx attendees for an open, informal exchange on what's happening right now, and what's coming next in robotics.

[www.techexevent.com](http://www.techexevent.com)



# Insights into artificial intelligence developments

| **Andre Reitenbach** looks into his crystal ball

“ **Investment in infrastructure will continue to grow: resilience becomes the priority.** As AI adoption accelerates, demand for compute and resilience will keep rising. The major outages in 2025 showed that even short periods of downtime can cause mass disruption and revenue loss. Growing pressure on latency means AI-ready, distributed infrastructure will be a critical enabler of long-term AI innovation. Organisations will prioritise platforms that can scale quickly, deploy efficiently, and support secure AI workloads.



**Intelligent protection will no longer be a ‘nice to have’ but a business imperative.** AI is becoming foundational to business operation, but it’s exposing an increasing number of people, processes and platforms to risk. At the same time, autonomous agents, AI-driven deception, and large-scale attacks launched by bot armies are expanding the attack surface far beyond traditional cyber threats. Companies who do not prioritise resilience, control, and performance with AI-powered defence will be unable to defend against AI-driven threats.

**Data sovereignty from infrastructure to software will be crucial to innovation.** In 2026, it won’t be enough to simply secure sensitive data and AI workloads behind firewalls. Organisations must have real control over where their data lives, how it is processed, and who can access it. Businesses will need ready-made solutions, like sovereign private AI clouds, to keep data secure within their own infrastructure so that whatever is produced remains their own.

**Just like people hide valuables in a safe, in 2026 we’ll start to see the emergence of digital ‘safe rooms’ to protect data against AI.** AI is weaponising social networks to infiltrate privacy and access data in new ways, whether that be through deepfakes or more realistic attack patterns. These secure environments will allow organisations to operate with confidence that what they see, process, and create is real. Like an advanced locking system that blocks wrong passcodes, digital safe rooms will be supported by AI-enforced tooling that can recognise malicious AI through identifying patterns and behaviours. It’s a legacy concept adopted for a future problem: using proven ideas of isolation and protection of valuables to create

certainty in an era where reality itself can be manipulated.

**The end game for AI infrastructure will be defined by mobility – not just of data, but of compute itself.** As AI workloads scale, compute will increasingly move in line with available resources, particularly energy. Just as content delivery networks optimised data for latency and proximity, we will see the emergence of an AI delivery network where intelligence is distributed dynamically across the globe. Tasks that are less latency-sensitive will be executed where energy is cheapest and most abundant at that moment, while more critical workloads remain closer to users. This approach will increase efficiency and fundamentally change where processing power is hosted.

**Company survival will depend on the extent to which organisations adopt and invest in AI at all levels.** AI is intensifying and multiplying the way we work, the speed of the market, and the level of threats. Its use cases are growing every day. That’s why organisations must push internal ‘AI-enabled’ behaviour. If teams don’t learn to work with AI daily, in 2026 they will be outpaced by the competitors who do. ”

**Andre Reitenbach is chief executive and founder of GCore**  
[www.gcore.com](http://www.gcore.com)

# The risks for business using AI

| **Kirstin McKnight** on what business owners need to be aware of in 2026

## 1. Unclear ownership and copyright risks in AI outputs

When businesses use AI to generate content, there is a significant risk that the output could unintentionally infringe on copyrighted material. Ownership of AI-generated content is often ambiguous, which can lead to disputes over who has the right to use, modify or sell the content. A high-profile legal case, *Getty Images v. Stability AI*, highlights the uncertainty in this area. Getty alleged that Stability AI trained its image-generation model using millions of copyrighted images without permission. In the UK proceedings, Getty's main copyright case did not succeed, while the court found limited trademark infringement relating to early outputs that reproduced Getty's watermark.

To protect your business, it is essential to review carefully the licensing and terms of service of any AI tool you use. Implement internal review processes to check outputs for potential infringement and clearly define ownership rights in contracts. Businesses should also be cautious about using AI outputs commercially when training data sources are unclear and make sure to document all review processes to avoid disputes.

## 2. AI 'hallucinations' misleading business decisions

Twenty per cent of AI-generated outputs contain major accuracy issues, including fabricated details and outdated information. When businesses rely on these outputs for legal, financial or product decisions, they expose themselves to serious legal risks, including misrepresentation, negligence claims and even fines of up to €7.5 million for providing incorrect,



incomplete or misleading information to authorities. In 2024, a Microsoft-powered chatbot, MyCity, was reported to have provided dangerously incorrect advice that could have led business owners to break the law, including falsely claiming they could take a cut of workers' tips or fire workers who complained about sexual harassment.

To protect against this risk, businesses should never treat AI as a final authority. It is critical to implement human review and verification processes for AI outputs before they are shared or acted upon. Clearly disclosing when content is AI-generated and avoiding sole reliance on AI for high-stakes decisions can protect both the business and its leadership.

## 3. Lack of internal AI governance is a ticking time bomb

Many businesses adopt AI tools without establishing clear policies. This lack of governance can quickly turn into a serious legal and operational risk as employees may misuse AI, input inappropriate or sensitive data, or fail to recognise harmful outputs, which could lead to data breaches or escalate into costly lawsuits.

To safeguard your business, it's important to implement a robust company-wide AI policy that clearly defines the purposes for which AI can be used, establishes protocols for reviewing AI outputs and assigns accountability for decision-making. Treating AI as a powerful but regulated tool can prevent it from being a ticking time bomb that threatens your business.

## 4. Data privacy violations

AI systems rely on vast datasets that

often include personal information about customers, employees or third parties. Using this data without proper consent or anonymisation can lead to serious violations of data protection laws, resulting in hefty fines and reputational damage.

Any business that processes personal data through AI must ensure it complies with all relevant privacy obligations. This means collecting and using only the data that is strictly necessary, keeping clear records of consent or other lawful basis for use of the information, being transparent about how data is handled to build trust with customers and stakeholders.

## 5. Rapidly evolving AI regulations and compliance risks

The fast pace of AI innovation has prompted governments worldwide to introduce new regulations, such as the EU AI Act and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025. Businesses that fail to comply with these constantly evolving laws risk serious legal consequences, including fines, regulatory enforcement or lawsuits. AI regulations are dynamic and vary by jurisdiction and can sometimes apply retroactively to systems already in use.

To protect your business, it is essential to stay informed about evolving regulations, conduct regular audits of AI systems, and design strategies with flexibility so you can adapt quickly to new legal requirements as they emerge. Companies that do not actively monitor regulatory changes or embed compliance into their processes may inadvertently violate the law, even when acting in good faith.

**Kirstin McKnight** is practice group leader at **LegalVision**

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

# Britain's Green Parakeets: From exotic curiosity to growing pest problem

The sight of bright green parakeets screeching through Britain's parks might feel like a touch of the tropics, but their growing numbers are becoming a serious headache.

Ring-necked parakeets - now firmly established in parts of England, especially around London and the South East - are no longer just an urban curiosity. They have also been seen in places like Manchester and Glasgow. For many residents, farmers and conservationists, they're an increasingly noisy, aggressive and disruptive presence.

One of the biggest issues is competition with native wildlife. Parakeets are cavity nesters, meaning they rely on holes in trees and buildings - the same limited 'real estate' needed by species like woodpeckers, nuthatches, starlings and some bat species. Parakeets are bold and can evict other birds from nest sites, reducing breeding opportunities for native species.

As populations expand, that pressure on nesting space and food sources can intensify, particularly in areas where habitats are already fragmented.

They are also causing issues for property owners. A recent Springwatch programme featured a flock of parakeets clinging to a wall of a building and pecking at the mortar. Why? Because the mortar is a source of minerals and salts that the parakeets can't get in their diet. In the Amazon you can see them doing the same thing on riverbanks.

There are other impacts too. Parakeets are heavy feeders and will strip fruit trees, raid garden bird feeders and damage crops such as cherries, apples and grapes. While the overall national economic impact is still debated, localised damage can be significant for growers and allotment holders - especially where flocks concentrate.

They can also contribute to noise pollution in residential areas, with their loud calls causing complaints in neighbourhoods where roosting numbers are high.

The wider point is that parakeets are part of a broader pattern: pest birds in the UK can create real problems when populations swell or behaviours bring them into conflict with people. Feral pigeons



foul buildings and pavements, spread parasites and drive up cleaning and maintenance costs for councils and businesses.

Gulls, particularly in coastal towns and increasingly inland, can be aggressively territorial during breeding season, snatching food from people and nesting on roofs where their noise and mess become a persistent nuisance. Starlings, while native, can form huge winter roosts that create sanitation issues and disrupt transport hubs.

So, what can be done about parakeets and pest birds more generally? The most effective approach is prevention and management rather than panic. Limiting food sources is a key first step: discouraging excessive feeding in parks, using bird-proof bins and advising householders on smarter bird-feeder use can reduce unnaturally high concentrations.

For growers, netting and targeted deterrents can help protect vulnerable crops.

Where parakeets are directly threatening sensitive native species or causing repeated damage, licensed control may be considered but it should be evidence-led, localised and carefully monitored.

Habitat measures also matter: increasing the availability of natural nesting sites for native birds can reduce competition pressures. Finally, consistent public messaging is crucial. If communities

understand that cute doesn't always mean harmless, the UK can tackle the parakeet challenge - and other pest bird conflicts - in a way that protects wildlife, livelihoods and quality of life.

If you are experiencing pest bird problems at your premises, Cleankill can help. Go to [www.cleankill.co.uk](http://www.cleankill.co.uk) for more information or call 020 8668 5477 to arrange a free survey.



0800 056 5477

CLEANKILL.CO.UK

CONTACT CLEANKILL FOR

## FAST & EFFECTIVE PEST CONTROL



**BUILT ON REPUTATION:**

**FIRST-CLASS SERVICE**

**VALUE FOR MONEY**

**NO HIDDEN COSTS**

**EXPERT ADVICE**



Winner  
COMPANY  
OF THE  
YEAR



@cleankilluk






**INVESTORS IN PEOPLE**

We invest in people Gold



# AI won't replace your sales team – here's what will

| by Peter Juhasz

“The conversation around artificial intelligence in the business world is dominated by a single, pervasive fear: that AI will replace our people. For sales teams, this anxiety is particularly acute. But after two decades spent scaling businesses, I've learned that this is a fundamental misreading of the real threat. The risk isn't that a robot will take your salesperson's job. The risk is that your entire sales approach will be rendered obsolete by competitors who have stopped thinking about individual tactics and started building integrated systems.



## Interconnected

The real challenge facing UK SMEs isn't a futuristic AI takeover; it's the compounding disadvantage of using fragmented, manual processes in a deeply interconnected world. Enterprise companies often spend upwards of £100,000 annually on comprehensive sales technology stacks, managed by dedicated teams, to create predictable revenue. SMEs need that same predictability but with a fraction of the resources. This isn't a technology gap – it's a systems gap. We persist with isolated tactics, hoping that sheer effort will bridge the divide. We send cold emails, post on LinkedIn and write articles, but each activity fights for survival on its own. This isn't a strategy; it's a recipe for burnout, inconsistent results, and wasted investment.

## Orchestra

Imagine your sales efforts as an orchestra. Cold email is the violin section playing one tune, your LinkedIn activity is the percussion playing another, and your content is the brass

section playing a third. Each might be producing sound, but the result is noise, not music. Cold email without brand awareness is just another unread message in a crowded inbox. LinkedIn posting without a clear path to conversion is just activity without impact. A brilliant article that nobody sees doesn't generate revenue. When these tactics operate in isolation, they deplete your resources. When they work together, they build momentum.

## Brand awareness

This is the core principle of a 'revenue engine' – an integrated system where each component amplifies the others. In this model, outreach doesn't just generate immediate pipeline; it builds brand awareness that makes your content more credible. Your content doesn't just build authority; it validates your outreach and warms up prospects before they ever speak to a human. AI-driven qualification doesn't just save time; it ensures your sales team – your most expensive resource – spends its energy only on prospects who are ready to talk.

## Partnership

This integrated approach fundamentally reframes the role of AI. It ceases to be a threat and becomes the essential connective tissue that makes the system work. The goal is not to replace humans, but to build a powerful human-AI partnership. Let AI handle the 'volume work' – the repetitive, time-consuming tasks like initial research, multi-channel outreach and scheduling. This frees your people to focus exclusively on the 'value work' that only humans can do – building relationships, understanding nuance, providing consultative advice, and

closing complex deals. The businesses that thrive in the next decade will be those that use AI to give their teams superpowers, not replace them.

## Right questions

To begin building this in your own business, you don't need a huge budget. You need to ask the right questions. First, what repetitive, low-value tasks are currently draining your team's energy and morale? Second, where do leads and opportunities consistently fall through the cracks in your current process? And third, what high-value activities – like talking to your best customers or building strategic partnerships – would your team do with an extra 10 hours per week?

## Unique

The answers to these questions form the blueprint for your own revenue engine. The businesses that are winning today aren't necessarily those with the biggest budgets or the most advanced AI. They are the ones who understand that the purpose of technology is not to replace their best people, but to build a system that amplifies their unique human talents. The real threat isn't AI; it's clinging to an outdated, fragmented approach while your competitors build integrated systems that allow their sales teams to be more human, not less. ”

Peter Juhasz is chief executive and founder of Syrvi AI

[www.syrvi.ai](http://www.syrvi.ai)

**Syrvi**   
INTELLIGENCE SERVED

# Why industrial users should be moving from corn to cassava

## I Babatunde Dada on the 'starch shift'

### The food, beverages and pharmaceutical manufacturing landscape is facing a dual challenge:

- The urgent push for net zero operations
- An uncompromising consumer demand for 'clean label' ingredients.

While corn (maize) starch has long been the default industrial thickener, a superior alternative is quietly gaining ground. Cassava starch (tapioca) is no longer just a niche ingredient – it is a technical upgrade that offers specific functional advantages over corn, particularly for the UK's high-value food, pharma, and packaging sectors.

### The technical edge: clarity, stability, and purity

For years, UK food chemists have grappled with 'syneresis' – the unappetizing weeping of water in frozen ready-meals. Traditional corn starch often fails during the freeze-thaw cycles common in the UK's cold supply chain. Cassava starch, however, possesses a unique molecular structure with lower amylose levels, providing extraordinary freeze-thaw stability. It ensures that sauces remain creamy and cohesive from the factory to the consumer's microwave.



Beyond stability, cassava offers unmatched clarity. While corn starch creates opaque, cloudy gels, cassava produces a transparent, high-gloss finish. For the UK's premium confectionery and sauce brands, this means more vibrant colours and a neutral flavour profile that doesn't mask delicate British ingredients.

### Sustainability and the 'clean label' mandate

In the 2026 market, 'non-GMO', i.e. not genetically modified, is a powerful currency. Much of the global corn supply remains tethered to genetic modification, a significant hurdle for major UK retailers. Cassava is naturally non-GMO, gluten-free and grain-free, allowing manufacturers to simplify their ingredient lists and appeal to the health-conscious 'clean label' demographic.

Furthermore, cassava is an energy-efficient raw material. It gelatinises at significantly lower temperatures. For large-scale UK processors, switching to cassava directly reduces thermal energy requirements, contributing to corporate ESG goals and lowering utility overheads.



### Strategic sourcing

The Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS) has opened a new corridor with Nigeria – the world's largest cassava producer. Under the DCTS, Nigerian starch enters the UK at zero per cent duty, offering a resilient, tariff-free alternative to traditional grain markets.

### Case for cassava

The technical case for cassava is clear; better texture, higher transparency and a cleaner label. For UK companies looking to future-proof their supply chains and enhance product quality, the time to switch is now.

**Babatunde Dada is chief executive of OAD Ventures Ltd**

[www.oadventureslimited.com](http://www.oadventureslimited.com)



# Shaping everyday urban life

## | Louise Stubbings on turning sustainability commitments into action in cities

**Urban environments are evolving rapidly, driven by rising expectations around sustainability, accessibility and long-term resilience. As cities adapt, so too must the infrastructure that supports everyday life, from transport networks to public spaces and media platforms people encounter daily.**

### Embedded

For businesses operating in increasingly carbon-conscious environments, alongside local authorities managing ambitious net zero targets and constrained budgets, the question is no longer whether sustainability should be prioritised, but how it can be meaningfully embedded into everyday decisions without adding cost. This includes selecting the right partners, designing infrastructure for longevity, and assessing environmental impact throughout the entire lifecycle.

While sustainability can feel complex, there are three practical ways businesses can turn ambition into action, particularly when it comes to public and private sector collaboration.

### Demand verified sustainability, not promises

The Advertising Standards Authority's crackdown on misleading environmental claims raised expectations around accountability. Environmental credentials must now be supported by evidence, and the same scrutiny increasingly applies to suppliers and partners.

For businesses, this means moving beyond broad questions about sustainability and seeking clarity on how commitments are set, measured and validated. Are decarbonisation targets science-based? How is greenhouse gas impact calculated? Is progress independently verified?

Frameworks such as the Carbon Disclosure Project, Planet Mark and the Science Based Targets initiative help distinguish genuine progress from corporate spin.

### Apply circular economy thinking

A second practical approach is embracing circular economy principles, keeping resources in use for as long as possible. Unlike the traditional "make, use, dispose" model, circular thinking prioritises longevity, reparability and regeneration.



Across urban infrastructure, refurbishment and upgrade programmes can extend asset life by up to a decade while avoiding up to 94 per cent of the carbon emissions associated with full replacement. In sectors such as transportation and the public realm, this reduces both environmental impact and cost.

'Out of home' environments, including bus shelters, roadside and transportation settings across cities, demonstrate how this works in practice. As a channel, out of home plays a significant role within the wider media mix, reaching audiences at scale in real-world environments. Its effectiveness makes it especially important that this impact is delivered responsibly, through infrastructure designed to balance performance with environmental and social considerations.

Refurbishment programmes bring circular principles to life. By replacing expired components, repainting and upgrading specific elements, ageing infrastructure can be restored to full functionality in days, creating local jobs while delivering meaningful cost and carbon savings. These efficiencies can then be reinvested into communities, creating shared environmental and social value.

### Rethink product innovation from the ground up

The most significant sustainability gains often come from rethinking products entirely, rather than retrofitting existing designs. This means considering environmental and social impact from the earliest stages of development.

The Milestone bus shelter range is one example of this approach. Developed through research involving more than 3,200 users, in collaboration with Innovate UK, disability equality charities and forestry specialists, the shelters achieve approximately 70 per cent lower CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions than legacy designs. They use FSC-certified timber, low-carbon concrete and glass, alongside above-ground foundations that reduce disruption and enable component reuse.

Beyond materials, Milestone integrates Living Roofs, solar-powered lighting and improved accessibility for visually impaired passengers, demonstrating that sustainable infrastructure can enhance, rather than compromise, user experience.

### A collaborative path forward

Delivering progress at scale depends on close collaboration between the private and public sectors. Partnerships that combine commercial expertise with public sector ambition are proving most effective.

The collaboration between Bauer Media Outdoor UK and Essex County Council, which introduced Milestone bus shelters along Basildon's Greener Route, shows how shared objectives can deliver multiple outcomes.

As cities continue to evolve, businesses and local authorities share responsibility for bridging the gap between commitment and delivery. By prioritising verified sustainability credentials, embracing circular economy principles and investing in genuine product innovation, organisations can help ensure the infrastructure shaping everyday urban life contributes to a resilient, future-ready city.

**Louise Stubbings is partnerships and creative director at Bauer Media Outdoor UK**

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

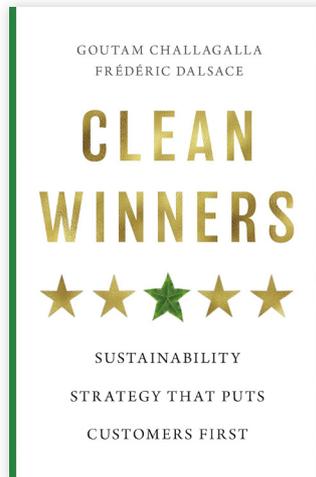


# Why sustainable business isn't paying off

After years of environmentally friendly products taking over shelves, stakeholders demanding sustainability initiatives and companies touting green credentials, the uncomfortable truth, according to the authors of this book, is that many businesses still aren't seeing a payoff – financially or in real environmental and social impact.

## Unstuck

Even sustainability front-runners like Unilever have come unstuck – so what's going wrong and how can we fix it? *Clean Winners* argues businesses have misunderstood what actually drives purchase decisions – sustainability alone isn't enough. We need to switch the narrative – stop asking how to make a product more sustainable and start asking



how to use sustainability to generate customer value and robust profits.

Using examples including Siemens, Nespresso and Michelin, authors

Goutam Challagalla and Frédéric Dalsace explore which brands are leading the way, and a new way of thinking which puts customers first.

## Competitive edge

The authors are professors at IMD Business School in Lausanne, Switzerland and their book offers practical frameworks, tools and tactics to turn sustainability into a competitive advantage. Business leaders looking to become more sustainable, innovative and successful should find a valuable guide.

***Clean Winners: sustainability strategy that puts customers first***

**Authors: Goutam Challagalla and Frédéric Dalsace**

**Harvard Business Review Press**

**[www.hbr.org/hbrpress](http://www.hbr.org/hbrpress)**



## MOBEX EXPANDS TO THE UK WITH CALLING, TEXTING AND WHATSAPP INTEGRATION FOR MICROSOFT TEAMS, VOIP AND MOBILE SOLUTIONS

Mobex, a US communications provider founded in 2012, has expanded into the United Kingdom. The company helps businesses manage calling, business text messaging, and mobile communication from one place and is now bringing those same capabilities to UK organisations.

### CONTROL WHATSAPP, TEAMS TEXTING, AND CALLING IN ONE PLACE

Alongside its VoIP services, softphones, mobile solutions, and Microsoft Teams Calling and Texting, Mobex now offers **WhatsApp messaging inside Microsoft Teams**. This gives organisations a straightforward way to manage customer conversations in the platform staff use every day, while keeping communications centralised and maintaining control of company data.

With Mobex, businesses can reduce reliance on personal mobiles for client messaging and keep conversations accessible to the right people, supporting stronger recordkeeping and continuity when staff change roles or leave.

### KEY SERVICES

- **WhatsApp in Microsoft Teams** WhatsApp messaging inside Microsoft Teams, keeping customer conversations in one place.
- **Business text messaging** from any business number, with full company control of records.
- **VoIP, softphones, and mobile solutions** that let teams call and text from anywhere.



"We've spent more than a decade helping businesses take control of their communication, and the UK is ready for these kinds of tools," said John Dalrymple, founder and CEO of Mobex. "WhatsApp is a major part of how companies here connect with customers. Being able to manage those conversations inside Teams helps day to day work stay organised and more secure."

Mobex is now onboarding early adopters across healthcare, finance, education, property management, and professional services. UK pricing, local support, and a dedicated UK website are already live.

CONTACT US:

 (0) 20 3818 6500

 [contact@mobex.uk](mailto:contact@mobex.uk)

# London's skills crunch: purpose and imagination needed

| by Lucy Gill-Simmen and Christos Tsinopoulos



**London's economy is evolving at speed, faster than many education systems can adapt. The UK capital is set to outpace the rest of the UK, growing at around two per cent a year compared with the national average of 1.9 per cent between 2024 and 2027. Tech firms scale, creative industries reinvent themselves, sustainability roles expand, and AI reshapes entire sectors. Yet employers continue to report the same challenge: they can't find enough graduates who are ready to step straight into real work. This isn't just a skills gap. It's a capability gap.**

## Complexity

Employers are searching for people who can navigate complexity, communicate clearly, think ethically, work confidently with AI, and adapt fast. These qualities are becoming more valuable than any single technical skill because the skills themselves keep changing.

For too long, the national conversation has centred on productivity and training. Yet without purpose and imagination, skills alone can't keep London competitive. The city needs graduates who can learn, unlearn, and reimagine in an age of intelligent machines.

## Modern labour market

In that context, Royal Holloway Business School has launched the BSc Business and Management (London Accelerated), a re-designed two-year degree built for the modern labour market taught in the University of London's Bloomsbury campus.

## London becomes the learning environment

Rather than treating the city as an occasional field trip, this new course uses London as the classroom. Students work on live business challenges, visit companies across key sectors, collaborate with community partners, and complete structured internships. They aren't

learning about business, they're learning in business from day one.

## AI capability is at the core

Every module integrates AI, data literacy and digital thinking. Students learn how to collaborate with AI tools responsibly and creatively, analysing, generating, imagining and evaluating. This isn't about shortcuts. It's about confidence with the technologies shaping London's future.

## Accelerated – without cutting corners

The course delivers a full three-year curriculum over two years through intensive learning and strong scaffolding. Students graduate sooner, with more employer touchpoints and more practical experience than many traditional degrees. It is fast, immersive and structured for success.

## Modern London learners

Flexible, inclusive and designed for living and experiencing central London, the degree offers a pathway into high-growth sectors for those who might not otherwise access them. It directly addresses national reform priorities around employability, AI readiness, regional growth and widening participation.

## Future of work

London is a global testbed for the future of work. As automation accelerates, creativity matters more. As AI becomes embedded, ethics becomes critical. And as industry transforms, education must keep pace.

This new degree closes the skills gap by developing imagination, judgement and adaptability alongside technical capability. London doesn't just need more graduates; it needs graduates ready for the city it is becoming.

**Lucy Gill-Simmen and Christos Tsinopoulos are respectively vice-dean, education and student experience, and dean of the faculty of business and law at Royal Holloway University of London**  
[www.royalholloway.ac.uk](http://www.royalholloway.ac.uk)

# The most significant overhaul of UK employment law in decades

## | Vandana Dass on the Employment Rights Act 2025

**The Employment Rights Bill has now received Royal Assent and is law as the Employment Rights Act 2025, marking the most significant overhaul of UK employment law in decades. The Government has published an implementation roadmap, with changes taking effect in phases from early 2026 through to 2027. Here are the most important developments for employers and highlight practical steps you should be taking now.**

### Overview

The Employment Rights Act 2025 introduces wide-ranging reforms covering:

- trade union and industrial action law
- unfair dismissal and redundancy protections
- family leave and sick pay entitlements
- zero and low-hours working arrangements
- harassment, whistleblowing and workplace protections
- enhanced enforcement through a new Fair Work Agency.

### Key changes and timing Immediate / early 2026 changes

#### Trade union law – phase one

From early 2026, reforms will:

- simplify industrial action ballot and notice requirements
- reduce notice of industrial action to 10 days
- remove the 40% turnout threshold in important public services
- extend industrial action mandates to 12 months
- extend protection from dismissal for taking industrial action to the full duration of the strike.

#### Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

SSP will become available to all workers by:

- removing the three-day waiting period
- removing the lower earnings limit.

SSP will be payable from day one of sickness, at the statutory rate or 80 per cent of average weekly earnings if lower.

#### Family leave – day-one rights

Paternity leave and ordinary parental



leave will become day-one employment rights, with qualifying periods removed.

#### Fair Work Agency (April 2026)

A new Fair Work Agency will be established to enforce key employment rights, including:

- national minimum wage
- holiday pay
- statutory sick pay.

This is expected to lead to increased enforcement activity and scrutiny of employer practices, including supply chains and umbrella company arrangements.

#### October 2026 changes Restrictions on 'fire and rehire'

Dismissals linked to refusing certain contractual changes (including pay, hours and holidays) will become automatically unfair, save for limited financial-distress exceptions. Further regulations and an updated code of practice are expected.

#### Stronger harassment protections

- Employers must take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment
- New employer liability will apply for harassment by third parties across multiple protected characteristics.

#### Collective redundancy consultation

- The protective award for failure to consult will double from 90 to 180 days' pay
- A new (organisation-wide) redundancy consultation threshold will be introduced, subject to regulations.

#### Tipping law reforms

- Employers will be required to consult workers or their representatives on tipping policies at least every three years and publish anonymised consultation summaries.

#### 2027 changes

##### Unfair dismissal

- The qualifying period for unfair dismissal protection will reduce from two years to six months
- The statutory cap on unfair dismissal compensation will be removed.

##### Bereavement leave

- A new statutory right to bereavement

leave will be extended beyond parents

- Parental bereavement leave will also apply to miscarriage before 24 weeks.

#### Pregnancy and family leave protections

- Enhanced protection from dismissal during pregnancy, maternity/adoption leave and for six months after return, subject to limited exceptions.

#### Flexible working

- Employers may refuse requests only where the refusal is reasonable and must clearly explain the grounds and reasons.

#### Zero and low-hours workers

- Employers will be required to offer guaranteed hours to workers who regularly work set patterns
- New rights to reasonable notice of shifts and compensation for short-notice cancellations will apply, including in some cases to agency workers.

#### What employers should be doing now

We recommend that employers begin preparing by:

- Auditing policies and contracts, particularly around sickness absence, family leave, redundancy consultation, flexible working and zero-hours arrangements
- Reviewing employee relations strategies, including union engagement, consultation mechanisms and dispute resolution processes
- Training managers and HR teams on upcoming changes, especially in relation to dismissal, harassment prevention and industrial action
- Reviewing pay and record-keeping practices in anticipation of increased enforcement by the Fair Work Agency
- Planning workforce and budget impacts, particularly in relation to SSP, unfair dismissal risk and guaranteed hours obligations.

**Vandana Dass is managing director and solicitor at Davenport Solicitors**

[www.davenportsolicitors.com](http://www.davenportsolicitors.com)



**DAVENPORT SOLICITORS**

EMPLOYMENT LAW BUSINESS IMMIGRATION HR SUPPORT



# Spotlight on Hair Development

**Hair loss, whether through thinning, chemotherapy, alopecia, hormonal imbalance or natural hair reduction, is a condition which has a detrimental effect on every head it touches.**

## Self-esteem

Business partners and cousins, Janis Levy and Mark Burns, respectively creative director and managing director of Hair Development (UK) Ltd, are well aware of this and run an award-winning family business. They believe that the ability to renew people's lost self-esteem is crucial.

Both MTTs – members of the Trichological Society – Janis and Mark worked under the guidance of Hair Development's chief executive Stanley Levy – also MTTs, Janis' father and Mark's uncle – for many years and took over the helm when he passed away in 2018.

## Recognised

Stan Levy was the guru of hair replacement since the establishment of the company in the 1960s, and his lifelong dedication to the pursuit of hair perfection was a gift to the industry. The company's innovative design and state-of-the-art hair replacement systems have made it a global front-runner, recognised in the receipt of numerous awards including the Parliamentary Review Best Practice and LCCI's own 2024 SME awards. Now, hot off the press, it can be added that Hair Development has won the Family Business of the Year Gold Award at the LCCI SMW 2026 Awards on the evening of 26 February!

Hair Development's head office is located in Mile End Road – where the company was established half a century ago – with a second location in Chelmsford. The company exports around the globe and are proud of what Janis describes as their

“distinctive, unique products from a range of beautiful, ethically-sourced hair extensions, undetectable systems and allied products.”

## Comfort and durability

The company educates professionals with certification in the art of hair replacement and hair extensions, along with a specially curated programme – *Life after the beard* – devised for barbers. Janis says that its “natural drawn, cuticle intact, 100 per cent human hair is sublime” and that her research and development team provide comprehensive specifications, comfort and durability for their clients.

She adds: “Whether gracing the Oscars, Golden Globes or BAFTAs, on the big and small screens and the stage, retail clients and our global wholesale division, we provide outstanding results with discretion and understanding for everybody to improve themselves physically and emotionally.”



## Hollywood

Janis has a unique take on the film industry and can speak with experience and authority as the longest running Cadburys flake girl in the iconic sunflower commercial. This led to her being put under contract to NBC studios in Hollywood working in TV, film and stage for 14 years and mingling with stars.

There remains a strong link with Hollywood and the film industry as Hair Development's products have featured in such well-known productions as *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Lord of the Rings* and *Strictly Come Dancing*.

## Security and safety

Hair Development is very much a family

business and Janis says that “with every success and client list of thousands, the camaraderie and joy within the company is something forever noticeable.” She adds that “clients and staff are loyal and perhaps this is why the feeling between the HD team is one of security and safety. It is a rarity to see such a group that work together seamlessly, fluently, and to be in an industry where the team give more to the results than most.”

## Extraordinary

HD design and manufacturing technology create extraordinary ways to restore hair loss, including the scientific phenomenon of Laser Hair Re-Growth Therapy, a gentle non-invasive, non-surgical method with an 80 per cent success rate. And for the 20 per cent, they too, says Janis, “will leave with a superb head of hair. So, always a 100 per cent guarantee for hair restoration and a genuine team of highly experienced specialists and lifetime customer support.”

Janis also points out that the company work to help people who have undergone chemotherapy and who suffer with alopecia. Janis and Mark are confident that the company founder Stanley would be proud of the Hair Development team as they “celebrate over 50 years of excellence.”

[www.hair-development.com](http://www.hair-development.com)



# The Calm Advantage

## | Carlos Gomez on why 'pushing through' is now a leadership liability

“It often starts with a win. A high-performing leader steps up, delivers under pressure, and becomes the person everyone depends on. In many organisations, especially fast-moving, knowledge-work teams, the reward for competence is more complexity. The leader becomes indispensable. And slowly, invisibly, the cost rises.



### Overthinking

On the surface, everything still looks fine; deadlines met, clients managed, teams moving. Inside, the mind runs at speed. Overthinking becomes constant. Emotional overload becomes normal. Confidence, once reliable, turns fragile. The pressure to perform hardens into a private fear of being 'found out'.

### Drift

This is the high-performer trap. Under sustained stress, leadership shifts from intentional to reactive. Small things feel urgent. Boundaries blur. Saying 'no' feels risky. Conversations are delayed or delivered too sharply. The leader may feel unseen or undervalued despite carrying the load, stuck in a loop of proving rather than leading.

### The cost

When stress becomes the 'default inner operating system', organisations pay for it in subtle ways; slower decisions, weaker relationships, and less stable execution. Teams read their leader's state instantly. When leaders are braced, teams become braced, more cautious, more fragmented, less creative. Calm, in this context, is not softness. It is capacity; the ability to stay present when stakes rise, think clearly with incomplete information,

and communicate with steadiness when others are tense.

### The shift

The turning point is often simple: recognising that most leadership challenges are not primarily skills gaps; they are state gaps. The breakthrough comes when a leader stops trying to push through and starts training a different internal default.

Before that shift, the pattern is familiar: constant overthinking and emotional overload; imposter syndrome and fragile confidence; stress and reactivity under pressure; difficulty setting boundaries or saying 'no'; feeling unseen, under-valued, or stuck.

After that shift, leadership looks and feels different: a regulated nervous system and grounded presence; deep emotional intelligence and self-awareness; clear, confident communication under pressure; strong boundaries and self-trust; a conscious leadership identity and long-term vision.

### Top tips: micro-moves for calm clarity

- **Name the moment.** In the first 30 seconds of a high-stakes meeting, state the aim and the decision required. This interrupts emotional drift and anchors attention.
- **Slow the first response.** Under pressure, the first answer is often the safest, not the best. A two-breath pause reduces reactivity and widens options.
- **Trade certainty for direction.** When information is incomplete, commit to the next right step and a review point, rather than overpromising confidence that cannot be evidenced.

- **Make the courageous conversation smaller.** Reduce the 'hard conversation' to one sentence; what must be said, kindly, today. Avoiding it multiplies stress later.
- **Protect the nervous system of the team.** After a demanding week, name what was hard, recognise what worked, and clarify priorities for the next seven days. This restores coherence and reduces anxiety-driven noise.

### Leadership maturity

These behaviours look small, but they compound. They change the emotional tone of a room, the quality of decisions, and the speed at which teams move from confusion to alignment. In a pressure economy, the calm advantage is one of the clearest signals of leadership maturity and one of the most valuable capabilities a business can build.

For leaders who want to build this capability systematically, through structured practice, reflective insight and a high-calibre peer cohort, NeuraLead's Conscious Leadership Fellowship is designed to upgrade the inner operating system leadership runs on clarity, confidence and calm under pressure. ”

**Carlos Gomez is founder of NeuraLead, Bmitagroup**

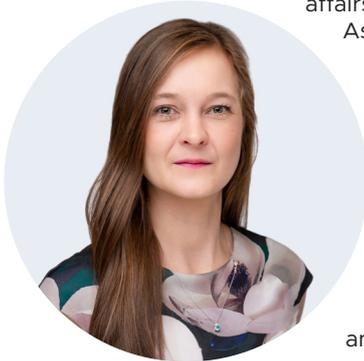
[www.neuralead.org](http://www.neuralead.org)  
[www.bmitagroup.com](http://www.bmitagroup.com)

  
bmitaGROUP  
leadership

# Commonhold reforms and their impact on businesses

| by Abigail Williams

**The Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002 introduced commonhold as an alternative to leasehold property ownership in England and Wales. However, commonhold has not gained significant traction, largely due to its complexity and lack of support. The Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 aims to overhaul property ownership laws, proposing reforms to make commonhold more accessible to developers and homeowners. These changes could significantly impact businesses across property development, management, and legal sectors, driving innovation and adaptation.**



## Commonhold – what is it?

Commonhold allows individual units within a building or development to be owned outright by the occupants, while shared areas (like hallways, gardens, and elevators) are collectively owned by all unit owners through a commonhold association. This differs from leasehold, where the land is owned by a separate freeholder, giving commonhold a more democratic structure. Despite its potential, commonhold has not been widely adopted due to its complexity and lack of understanding among developers and potential homeowners.

## Benefits

Commonhold offers several advantages over leasehold:

- **Long-term ownership:** unlike leaseholds, which lose value as the lease term decreases, commonhold provides permanent ownership of individual units.
- **Improved property management:** in leasehold properties, landlords and managing agents often oversee

maintenance. Commonhold allows unit owners to manage their own affairs through the Commonhold Association, ensuring more accountability.

- **Standardised documentation:** commonhold uses standardised agreements, reducing the inconsistencies often seen in individual lease agreements. This makes property management simpler and more transparent.

These benefits make commonhold an attractive alternative, addressing issues like depreciation of leasehold values, inconsistent management, and complex lease terms.

## Limitations

While commonhold offers many benefits, there are some limitations:

- **Collective decision-making:** like share-of-freehold arrangements, commonhold requires all owners to make decisions collectively. This can lead to disagreements over property management, especially when owners have differing priorities.
- **Lack of statutory protections:** unlike leaseholders, commonhold owners do not have legal protections to challenge the reasonableness of service charges, leaving them vulnerable to unfair charges.
- **Restrictions on leasing:** commonhold also limits the ability to lease units for more than seven years, which could deter investors or owners who want long-term rental income.

## Impact on businesses

The proposed reforms could significantly affect businesses in several areas:

- **Property development:** many developers currently focus on leasehold properties, where they retain control over the land and collect ground rents. With

commonhold, developers may lose these revenue streams. However, commonhold could offer a more transparent and secure ownership model, which may appeal to buyers.

- **Mortgage lending:** lenders may be concerned about the absence of forfeiture as a method of debt recovery in commonhold (as this allows landlords to regain control of a property if the tenant defaults on rent). Without this option, lenders may face challenges recovering debts if owners default, raising concerns about the financial stability of commonhold.
- **Property management:** businesses in property management will need to adjust to the collective ownership model of commonhold. Instead of relying on a single landlord or agent, management responsibilities are shared among owners. This could create opportunities for property management companies to offer services tailored to the unique needs of commonhold communities.
- **Impact on the housing market:** if commonhold becomes more widely adopted, buyers may increasingly prefer properties with clear, long-term ownership structures that do not involve ground rent payments or the risks of leasehold enfranchisement. This could lead to changes in property pricing, demand, and investment strategies.

## Innovate and adapt

The Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 represents a significant shift in property ownership law. While the transition to commonhold may present challenges, it offers businesses the chance to innovate and adapt in a market that values transparency and long-term security, and businesses in the property sector must embrace these changes to stay competitive and meet evolving consumer demands.

**Abigail Williams is a solicitor at TV Edwards LLP**

[www.tvedwards.com](http://www.tvedwards.com)

# Should I click that link? That attached document is fine, surely? This one is urgent, so I'd better just do it..

## Be more suspicious!

Cyber attacks are a sad reality of the modern world. We have all seen the headlines of large companies being brought to a standstill, but you don't have to be a household name to be at risk – over 40% of UK businesses experienced a cyber attack last year (if it wasn't you, there's a good chance it was the business next door).

Larger companies may have the reserves to weather an attack but for many it could spell disaster. Losing money to a fraudster is only

the start of your problems. A threat actor could lock up your computers, bringing operations to a halt. If they steal sensitive data then you will have to deal with statutory reporting obligations, possible fines, as well as the responsibilities for safeguarding your staff and customers. All whilst trying to get back up and running.

The stakes are high but securing your business does not have to cost the Earth. The National Cyber Security Centre has created the Cyber Action Toolkit to help you take

the steps to protect your business from cyber threats.

In this article we will explore one of themes from the toolkit – human risk and how you can educate yourself and your staff to protect the business.

Humans play a surprisingly large role in the majority of cyber attacks. Look at the two adverts below and think about which holiday you would rather go on:



The product is exactly the same but one is much more appealing than the other – our brains are easily influenced. This can be abused to manipulate people into unsafe behaviour, such as clicking on phishing links or opening unsafe email attachments. This sort of attack is called social engineering.

We're probably most familiar with this when it comes to phishing emails – a cyber criminal wants you to click that link so that they can get you to log on to a fake website they've created and steal your username and password or your payment information. Or they may have laced an email attachment with malware which infects your device. They will use social engineering to manipulate you into believing that the email is legitimate and so you will open the door for them. Watch out for things like:

- A manufactured sense of urgency

- Emotional language that makes you feel fear, excitement, pity or curiosity
- Over familiarity or an appeal for secrecy
- Pretending to come from an authority figure

Don't get tunnel vision – this is not just for emails! Social engineering can be used in SMS messages, social media posts, online adverts, fake websites and even phone calls.

With attacks coming from all angles, it's important that you and your staff are watchful and aware of how attackers work so you can shut them down – the good news is that help is at hand! Government funded Cyber Protect teams exist around the country. We know that cyber security is not everyone's cup of tea and that it can feel overwhelming or boring so



have developed engaging, hands on training to bring it to life. Make sure that investing in your staff to secure your business is a priority for 2026!

The final point is that no-one is perfect. That email might come at the ideal moment when your guard is down and touch just the right buttons – after all, if these attacks didn't work then they wouldn't be so common. Do not panic. Have a plan for how to respond, where to get assistance and make sure that your staff feel confident and safe to come forward if something has happened.

*Why is this so urgent? I don't recognise that link. I'll report this one to IT...*

For more information on MPS Cyber Protect training got to [www.met.police.uk/cyberprotect](http://www.met.police.uk/cyberprotect) or email [cyberprotect@met.police.uk](mailto:cyberprotect@met.police.uk)

# When is a ‘director’ not really a director?

| by Nick Porter

**In many London businesses, people are introduced as ‘director’ long before anyone considers what that word means in law. The title appears in email signatures, pitch documents and on websites because it sounds reassuring to clients. Company law, however, is not interested in branding. It looks at who is actually making decisions and exercising control. If someone behaves like a director, or is treated as part of the leadership, they may be regarded as a director whether or not they have ever been formally appointed.**



That matters because legal status brings legal duties. A person who is, in substance, part of the directing mind of the company can find themselves owing the same obligations as a properly appointed director, with the same personal exposure if things go wrong. Many only discover this when a dispute, investigation or insolvency throws past decisions into the spotlight.

## **De facto and shadow directors**

UK law recognises two main categories of unofficial directors. A *de facto* director is someone who, in practice, performs the functions of a director without their name appearing at Companies House. They attend key meetings, help set strategy and give instructions that others follow. A shadow director is someone whose directions the board habitually follows, even if they stay in the background and never sign anything themselves.

Once someone falls into either category,

the usual directors’ duties under the Companies Act 2006 may apply. They must act in the company’s best interests, avoid undisclosed conflicts of interest and not divert business opportunities for their own benefit. If they do, they can be required to repay losses or hand over profits. The fact that they never saw themselves as a ‘real’ director does not protect them.

## **Personal liability and insolvency risk**

These issues become particularly acute when a company is under financial pressure. As insolvency looms, the law expects directors (official or otherwise) to think primarily about creditors. Continuing to incur liabilities when there is no realistic prospect of avoiding formal insolvency can lead to claims for wrongful trading. In the most serious cases, there may be allegations of fraudulent trading, with potential criminal consequences and disqualification from acting as a director in future.

Unofficial directors may also be more exposed than their formally appointed colleagues. Many companies buy directors’ and officers’ insurance to protect named board members against certain claims. Someone whose status has never been formalised may fall outside that protection, leaving their own assets at risk if they are sued.

## **Titles, emails and everyday impressions**

Accidental directorship often arises not from deliberate overreach but from everyday presentation. Director-style

titles are widely used as shorthand for seniority; ‘sales director’, ‘HR director’ or ‘client director’ can sound more commercial than ‘head of’ or ‘manager’. Yet those titles, repeated on business cards, websites and email footers, signal to the outside world that the person has authority to speak and decide for the company.

If colleagues also treat that person as part of the leadership team, a court may decide that, in substance, they were acting as a director. That conclusion can have knock-on effects in disputes about contracts, employment rights and responsibility for decisions taken in difficult trading conditions.

## **Aligning titles with reality**

For businesses, the safest course is to bring form and substance into line. If someone is genuinely shaping strategy or exercising board-level influence, their position should be recognised and supported with proper appointment, training on directors’ duties and appropriate insurance cover. If they are not directing the company, their title should reflect that reality, however tempting a grander label might feel.

Regular reviews of job titles, role descriptions and public-facing materials help ensure that the governance structure is accurately reflected in the way people are presented to clients, partners and staff. In a market where credibility matters, clarity about who really holds the reins protects both the business and the individuals who help to run it.

**Nick Porter is legal director at Buckles Solicitors LLP**

[www.buckles-law.co.uk](http://www.buckles-law.co.uk)

# Apprenticeships in the spotlight

**National Apprenticeship Week** took place in February, the same month as the **British Chambers of Commerce** published a new report calling for the government to reform the apprenticeship system to make it fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The report finds that the current framework is too rigid, lacks clarity, neglects higher-level skills and is failing to meet the needs of business.

Among the recommendations the report makes to solve the problems are:

- Reforming the Growth and

Skills Levy to include funding for short modular training

- Recognising spending on skills as an investment and delaying the introduction of a lower National Living Wage threshold
- Using vital intelligence from Local Skills Improvement Plans to future-proof the system
- Ringfencing funds from the Levy and Immigration Skills Charge for investment in training.

## Options

Research supporting the

recommendations shows that while two thirds of firms were facing skills shortages, more than half of them do not feel that current training options are plugging this gap.

It also identifies that over a third of businesses say lowering the threshold for the National Living Wage from 21 to 18 will make them less likely to recruit younger people. It also finds that government changes to apprenticeships do not give businesses the flexibility they crave.



## Capital catering



During National Apprenticeship Week, culinary students from Capital City College provided the catering for a private reception at No. 10 Downing Street where the Prime Minister was in attendance.

### Networking

In other events, at the Westminster campus, a breakfast networking session was held for employers, where guests heard directly from employers and apprentices. At the college's Enfield campus, people heard from engineering apprentices and toured the college's railway carriage and practical construction classrooms.

With a focus on women and girls in STEM, female employers in the construction and railway engineering sector discussed top tips, workforce disparities and the challenges that remain.

### Skills gaps

Attendees then returned to the Westminster campus for a hospitality evening event, featuring culinary employers and apprentices. These events encouraged and challenged employers to do more and think critically about how to create more apprenticeships to tackle skills gaps in industry.

[www.capitalccg.ac.uk](http://www.capitalccg.ac.uk)



**Capital City College**

## Helping young people thrive in the workplace



The Commercial Education Trust (CET) has published its Annual Report 2024–2025, marking a year of progress as it advanced into the second phase of its three-year corporate plan. Over the period, the trust has

**strengthened partnerships across education and employment, piloted new initiatives, and continued to build a shared understanding of commercial ability that helps young people to thrive in the workplace.**

### Impact in numbers

The report highlights a year of strategic investment and practical delivery across the sector.

In 2024–25, CET:

- **Distributed** £136,214 in grant funding
- **Raised** £40,000 in new income
- **Awarded** three standard grants to organisations shaping sector practice
- **Provided** seven small grants

supporting innovative, localised programmes

- **Hosted** two roundtables exploring commercial ability
- **Produced** a video on youth voice and workplace readiness
- **Supported** one youth fellow researching organisational know-how.

These achievements reflect CET's commitment to investing in work that improves young people's pathways into meaningful, sustainable employment.

### Insights

Throughout the year, CET also played a key convening role. Roundtables in March and June brought together

employers, educators and sector leaders to explore workplace behaviours, organisational know-how and barriers to inclusion. The resulting insights are helping to shape more coherent and collaborative approaches across the sector.

### Leadership

CET continued to strengthen its evaluation and learning practice, expanded its digital communications, and celebrated leadership through the David Coughtrie Awards. Youth Fellow Hannah Yusuf contributed important research highlighting gaps in organisational know-how among young people.

[www.thecet.org](http://www.thecet.org)

# Whistleblowing – the chasm between witnessing and reporting

New research from whistleblowing service provider Safecall finds that despite a concerning number of employees witnessing discrimination, harassment and legal misconduct, many do not report it. *Joanna Lewis* explains

When looking at reports of discrimination, harassment and legal misconduct, a substantial number of UK employees have at some point in their careers been exposed to a range of malpractice - but many have failed to actually report it.

For instance, more than two in five have witnessed unfair treatment in the workplace, but only 23 per cent actually reported it – the most significant reporting gap uncovered in the research. Recognising and addressing malpractice in the workplace is the first step towards creating safer work environments for employees.

## Malpractice

Despite the fact that fewer employees have witnessed bullying compared to unfair treatment, they are more likely to report it, while a similar number have also reported unsafe working practices which have been seen by 35 per cent of employees. This means unsafe working is the most likely form of malpractice to be reported, as has been done by 72 per cent of employees who have experienced it in their workplace. Bribery is least likely to be reported - done so by



Malpractice type	% of employees who have witnessed it	% of employees who have reported it
Data protection misuse	21%	14%
Fraud	18%	12%
Modern slavery	11%	6%
Sexual harassment	15%	8%
Bribery	15%	7%
Falsification of documents	18%	11%

only 47 per cent of those who have witnessed it.

## Concern

It is clear that there are significant reporting gaps between witnessing workplace wrongdoing and actually reporting it – something which should be a serious concern to business leaders.

The gap is more than just a data point - it is symptomatic of a lack of trust in systems which are fundamentally broken. It's not just a case of ensuring compliance; it is about creating safe, inclusive working environments where employees feel protected as opposed to unsupported and vulnerable. That

means going beyond policies and procedures to foster a culture of openness, accountability, and action.

## Precedent

Failing to address this leaves employees scared to report malpractice, and sets a dangerous precedent which will harm businesses - both in terms of reputation, and their bottom line. When employees feel empowered to speak up, it strengthens trust, protects reputation, and drives long-term performance. But when they don't, the risks – both human and organisational – are too great to ignore.

**Joanna Lewis is managing director of Safecall**

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

# R&D tax relief pendulum swings back to the centre

After years of excess, followed by over-correction and uncertainty, the UK's R&D tax relief regime is finally finding its feet. The result is a system that is fairer, clearer and more supportive of Britain's innovators *writes Andrew Hastie*

“ The philosopher Hegel observed that progress rarely moves in straight lines. Instead, it swings, overreaches, and is challenged before finally settling somewhere in the middle. The recent history of the UK's Research & Development tax relief scheme has followed just such a pattern.

For a long period, the pendulum swung decisively towards permissiveness and over-generosity. In the absence of oversight, claims expanded rapidly and the advisory market boomed. What began as a thoughtful incentive to encourage innovation became, in places, overextended and beset by specious claims.

Error crept in and abuse followed. Confidence in the system began to fray. The response, when it came, was forceful. HMRC tightened controls, launched widespread enquiries and introduced much greater scrutiny. The pendulum swung hard in the opposite direction, and many legitimate claimants found themselves caught up in a dragnet of investigations. The process was often slow, bureaucratic and unsettling, absorbing management time and stalling investment decisions.

Yet this disruption, uncomfortable though it was, paved the way for necessary improvements and the pendulum has swung back towards the centre.

## Swapping a dragnet for a fishing rod

Compliance enforcement has become more focused and more intelligent. HMRC now uses better risk profiling,

specialist caseworkers and clearer internal guidance. The result is fewer blanket enquiries and a more proportionate approach to oversight. Businesses with well-prepared, well-evidenced claims are increasingly finding the process predictable rather than adversarial.



At the same time, definitions of qualifying R&D have been tightened. There is less room for alternative interpretations of the rules and far greater emphasis on what constitutes technological uncertainty. This has reduced ambiguity and brought consistency.

## Clarity on subcontracted R&D

Tribunal decisions have also played a quiet but important role in restoring balance to the scheme. Long-running uncertainty over who may claim for subcontracted R&D has been clarified, whether the claimant is the party funding the work or the party performing it. While these rulings may seem niche, they provide welcome clarity in businesses with complex and fragmented supply chains such as construction and consumables manufacturing.

## Anchoring innovation in the UK

Geographically, the focus has also moved. Whitehall now prioritises UK-based R&D activity, with overseas work now out of scope, even where it is funded domestically. This reflects a deliberate policy choice to strengthen local capability and retain intellectual and economic value within the UK. For industries that are location-

dependent, like construction, fresh-food manufacturing and heavy industry, this is a welcome shift.

## Raising the bar on reporting

Reporting requirements have changed too. Advanced notifications, detailed technical explanations and stronger cost evidence have raised the bar. Combined with the crackdown on fraud and error, this has accelerated the professionalisation of the advisory market. The era of specious claims has given way to one of technical rigour and sector expertise. Claimants benefit from better advice and a reduced compliance risk as a result.

## A better fit for overlooked sectors

Most encouraging of all, the new equilibrium suits sectors that have historically been under-represented. Construction, heavy industry, agribusiness, food and packaging manufacturing operate through fragmented supply chains, that are geographically constrained and often innovate in ways that do not resemble traditional laboratory research. Process improvements, materials development, efficiency gains and environmental advances now sit more comfortably within the clarified rules.

In Hegelian terms, the scheme has reached its equilibrium. The mistakes of the past have been corrected without losing the original purpose. After years of upheaval, the R&D tax relief regime is more disciplined, credible and purposeful. For genuine innovators, the pendulum has come to rest in a better place. ”

**Andrew Hastie is head of marketing and business development at Invennt**

[www.invennt.com](http://www.invennt.com)

# How businesses are rebuilding resilience in 2026

by Lakhbir Sandhu

**Many UK SMEs are reassessing how best to manage their finances for the year ahead.**

LCCI has highlighted how persistent inflation and rising costs continue to weigh on business confidence – making more proactive financial planning essential for businesses of all sizes.

SMEs also face tighter lending criteria, placing extra pressure on cash flow and access to capital.

With this background, here are my predictions on the finance decisions SMEs are likely to prioritise in 2026.

## 1. A greater focus on cash reserves

Certain analysis shows that UK SMEs are being short-changed by high-street banks. Average interest rates on savings accounts sit at 1.28 per cent, compared with approximately 4 per cent offered by challenger providers.

For a business holding around £750,000 in cash, that difference could represent more than £20,000 in potential missed interest over a year, depending on where those cash reserves are held.

Against that backdrop, research shows that 34 per cent of SMEs plan to increase cash reserves in 2026, while a further 48 per cent expect to maintain current levels. As businesses continue to hold significant cash balances, we expect more SMEs to focus not just on how much cash they hold, but on where it's held – moving surplus funds out of low-yield accounts and into higher-yield cash saving options in 2026.

## 2. Diversification is the new safety net

With the Financial Services

Compensation Scheme deposit protection now covering up to £120,000 of eligible business deposits per

authorised firm, we expect more SMEs to spread cash across multiple banks rather than holding all funds with a single provider. This helps smaller businesses to protect their cash while benefiting from a variety of interest rates and account features. On average, Flagstone's SME clients hold funds with seven banks through the platform, so this kind of diversification is becoming a core part of resilient cash management.

Research shows that over half of SMEs hold cash as an emergency reserve, while 45 per cent keep it as a buffer against unexpected costs. This reinforces the role cash plays as a safety net – and why flexibility and security matter.

## 3. Automation moves from advantage to necessity

SMEs will place greater emphasis on digital tools that automate cash-flow monitoring and reduce manual processes. AI-enabled reconciliation tools can simplify cash management, improving speed and accuracy while freeing up teams to focus on more strategic work.

Studies have found that robotic process automation systems 'significantly contribute to the reduction of reporting errors' in financial reporting, often outperforming manual processes in both efficiency and consistency.

Centralised dashboards also improve visibility, giving SMEs a clearer, more up-to-date view of their finances. Certain platforms allow businesses to manage multiple savings accounts all in one

place, helping to improve returns while reducing the administrative burden on time-stretched finance teams.

## 4. Labour costs take centre stage

According to a recent poll, 53 per cent of financial advisers think the biggest factor influencing how SMEs will manage their cash in 2026 will be rising labour costs.

A study by the British Chamber of Commerce supports this finding, with 73 per cent of SME respondents stating labour costs remain their biggest cost pressure and even modest wage increases can have a direct impact on monthly liquidity.

With the National Minimum Wage set to rise from 1 April this year, higher payroll costs may reduce the cash available for reinvestment, marketing or paying suppliers on time.

As a result, SME resilience will increasingly depend on how effectively businesses manage their cash cycle and customer risk. For many, this will mean reassessing how rising costs are reflected in pricing.

We expect many SMEs to take a more strategic approach to pricing in 2026 – moving beyond simple price increases towards options such as tiered pricing or value-added bundles that help protect margins while retaining customers.

As business conditions remain unpredictable, many SMEs are likely to adopt more secure and flexible approaches to cash management in 2026 – from building stronger cash reserves to diversifying deposits and automating financial processes.

**Lakhbir Sandhu is chief financial officer at Flagstone**  
[www.flagstoneim.com](http://www.flagstoneim.com)



# Empowerment

**LBM readers should be just in time to head over to The Gallery, Green & Stone, King's Road, Chelsea, London SW3 to catch an exhibition – Empowering Her – of oil paintings by Caroline de Peyrecave SWA. The exhibition “brings visibility to the complex, multifaceted and sometimes overlooked story of being a woman.”**



advertising leader; General Dame Sharon Nesmith, vice-chief of the Defence Staff; Zoe Stratford, England Rugby World Cup winning captain; Dame Maggie Aderin-Pocock, space scientist and science communicator; Lady Phyll Opoku-Gyimah, LGBTQ+ activist and co-founder of UK Black Pride; and Emma Barnett, broadcaster and journalist.

## Visibility

Artist Caroline de Peyrecave said: “For years I’ve noticed how women’s achievements are softened, sidelined or quietly absorbed into the background. Even for famous women, like the ones celebrated in the show, their role is often narrowed down to what they have achieved on the world stage – but as a woman, they are all holding down family, societal expectations, physical challenges, personal insecurities and ordinary life quietly and repeatedly. The show is not just a celebration of the women I have painted, although they are extraordinary. It is a show bringing

visibility to all women – their roles in society and their unseen, and often unnoticed, private lives.”

[www.carolinedepeyrecave.co.uk/projects-and-exhibitions/empowering-her](http://www.carolinedepeyrecave.co.uk/projects-and-exhibitions/empowering-her)



## Shaping Britain

Running from 4 to 14 March, it features eight incredible women who are shaping Britain today across culture, sport, science and public life.

They are: Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, campaigner and former political prisoner; Sally Phillips, actor and comedian; Daryl Fielding,



# Indian winter

**Ash Balakrishnan, senior account manager at LCCI and point man for the Asian Business Association, spent the holiday period in India. He connected with entrepreneurs in Bangalore, Chennai and Hyderabad and met up with Rehana Ameer, chair of the chamber’s City of London Association.**

Balakrishnan’s trip coincided with celebrations for India’s Republic Day, marking the 77th anniversary of independence.



## Asian Business Association

**LCCI’s Asian Business Association (ABA), which celebrated its 30th birthday last year, is regarded as the most important forum for Asian business and provides a voice for the London Asian business community.**

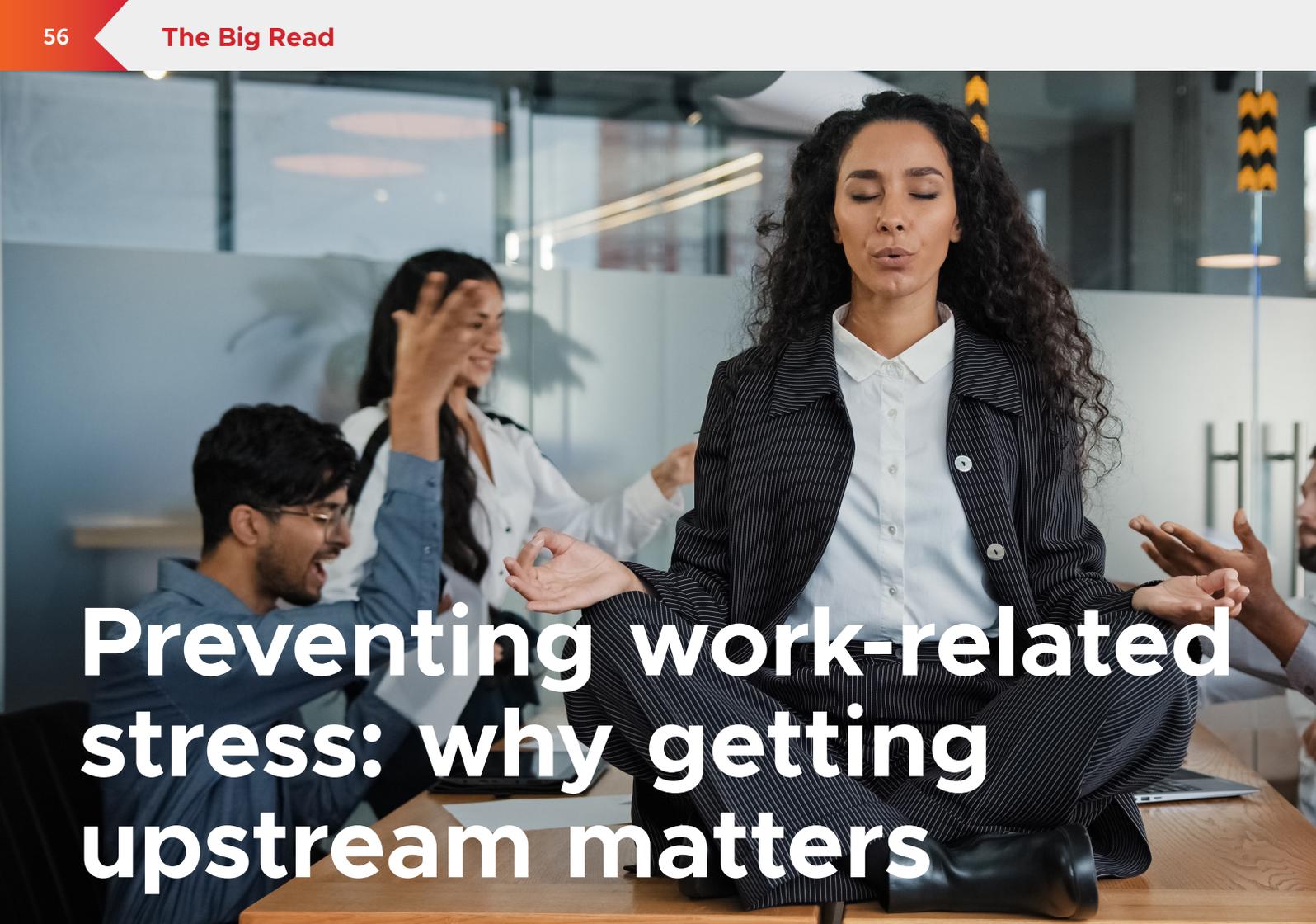
### Links

Its success is a reflection of the development of Asian entrepreneurs in the UK. In addition to hosting networking events, it facilitates cross border trade and investment,

particularly with areas where the Asian community has historic links.

The ABA is open to LCCI members and the Community Network. Contact Ash Balakrishnan to get involved.

[abalakrishnan@londonchamber.co.uk](mailto:abalakrishnan@londonchamber.co.uk)



# Preventing work-related stress: why getting upstream matters

| by Françoise Woolley

“Most organisations I work with want the same things. People who are engaged in their work. Teams that collaborate well and take pride in what they do. Managers who are trusted and able to lead, rather than constantly firefighting. Work that feels purposeful, productive and sustainable, even when it is demanding.



In many workplaces, that aspiration is not far off. People care about their jobs and want to do them well. Pressure is often accepted as part of working life, particularly in fast-moving or resource constrained environments.

When employees talk about stress, it is rarely about a lack of commitment or resilience. What comes up time and again is how work is organised, managed and communicated. Unclear priorities. Growing workloads with no space to plan. Managers pulled

in too many directions. Teams expanding without clarity about who does what.

This is where work related stress most often takes hold, because the conditions around people make it harder to work well.

## Managing employee stress is a legal duty

Under UK health and safety legislation, employers have a duty to assess and manage risks to employees' psychological health in the same way they do physical risks.

Despite this, only 41 per cent of employers are aware of this duty, and 29 per cent have not conducted a risk assessment in the past three years (Personnel Today, 2025). In our experience at Affinity Health at Work, many organisations remain unsure of what effective compliance looks like in practice.

“It should be about understanding where stress is coming from in your organisation and taking proportionate steps to reduce the risk of harm before people become unwell.

”

Assessing and managing stress doesn't have to be about fault-finding or endless paperwork. It should be about understanding where stress is coming from in your organisation and taking proportionate steps to reduce the risk of harm before people become unwell.

This also makes good business sense. Deloitte's UK research (2024) estimates an average return of £4.70 for every £1 invested in workplace mental health and wellbeing. Analysis of the same research suggests that organisation-wide approaches focused



on prevention can deliver even higher returns, approaching £6.30 for every £1 invested.

### Why wellbeing support alone is not enough

Many employers already invest in wellbeing initiatives such as Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) or Mental Health First Aiders. These supports can be valuable, particularly when someone is already struggling.

However, they do not in themselves prevent work-related stress. When pressure is driven by workload for



example, individual-level support can only ever go so far. In some cases, it can unintentionally reinforce the idea that the stress is the employee's responsibility, rather than something shaped by how work is designed and managed.

A preventative approach starts earlier, by looking upstream at the system of work itself.

### What does getting upstream involve?

Work-related stress is created by psychosocial hazards, aspects of work that influence how people experience their job. These include workload demands, a lack of support, role clarity or control over work, how change is handled, and exposure to harmful behaviours.

A well-designed stress risk assessment helps employers understand:

- which psychosocial hazards are present
- where stress is most concentrated
- which factors are having the greatest impact on wellbeing and performance.

This enables employers to prioritise action and inform the development of a practical plan to address the most significant risks. Stress risk assessments should be proportionate to the size, sector and risk profile of the organisation.

### Making stress risk assessment workable in practice

A common concern is what happens if more issues are uncovered than can realistically be addressed? In practice, this is rarely what happens. When people are given a safe way to share their experience of work, they tend to focus on practical issues and realistic improvements.

Stress risk assessment might involve a combination of:

- a short, well-designed survey
- facilitated discussions or focus groups
- reviewing existing data such as absence, turnover or exit feedback.

What matters most is listening to your workforce, feeding back honestly, and being clear about what will happen next.

### Common pitfalls and how to avoid them

Stress risk assessment works best as an ongoing process, not a one-off exercise. Engagement improves when people understand why it is happening, trust confidentiality, and believe their input will lead to action. Insight must be followed by prioritised action with clear ownership and realistic timescales. Managers play a critical role in shaping day-to-day experience of work. Developing manager capability alongside stress risk assessment helps organisations move from insight to lasting improvement.

### A final thought for employers

Preventing work-related stress is not about eliminating stress altogether. It is about designing work that people can sustain and supporting managers to lead well in complex environments.

For employers, getting upstream is not just about meeting legal duties. It is about creating healthier, more productive workplaces where work is designed to be sustainable over time. ”

**Françoise Woolley is senior consultant at Affinity Health at Work**

[www.affinityhealthatwork.com](http://www.affinityhealthatwork.com)



## New look at 33 Queen Street

The Members' Lounge at LCCI's City HQ has undergone a refurbishment to provide members with an improved, modern space in which to meet, work and connect

Creating the right environment for members to collaborate and grow their businesses is a key priority for LCCI. The newly refreshed lounge offers a comfortable and professional setting designed to support everything from informal catch ups to focused independent work.

### Usability

Project manager Amrita Mahajan said that the 'refurb' was about improving usability



rather than increasing capacity. "The previous layout supported general seating but didn't always accommodate private conversations or focused work. Members often adapted the space themselves, moving seats, relocating for calls or leaving to find quieter areas.

"The refurbishment addressed this by creating defined zones. Private pods, a focus area and adjusted seating arrangements now allow

different working styles to coexist. The success of the project is less about appearance and more about reducing friction in how the space is used."

### Rewarding

Mahajan said that it was a rewarding project to work on, as the improvements are practical and immediately noticeable in how the space functions day to day. "Seeing members naturally use the lounge as intended has been a strong indicator that the changes achieved their purpose."





# LCCI Member News



## Channelserve/Wavethru

WAVETHRU is a simple, fast, stand-alone solution that permanently improves mobile signal through glazing. Using a state-of-the-art laser process developed by AGC, a near-invisible micro-pattern is applied directly onto metallic coating of windows either on site or In Factory - letting mobile signals pass freely into the building.

No antennas, no cabling, no repeaters, no multi-operator subscriptions. Just one treatment that lasts the lifetime of the glass.

Modern glazing blocks up to 30 dB of signal, but this one-time laser treatment improves indoor connectivity from 2G to 6G and TETRA. It's passive, eco-friendly, maintenance-free and preserves thermal, acoustic, and aesthetic performance.

For offices, hospitality, healthcare, residential and smart buildings, WAVETHRU delivers instant, measurable improvement - fixing mobile dead zones without disruption, complexity or ongoing cost. **Signal, Solved.**



## Silentnight Achieves B Corp Certification

Silentnight has officially achieved B Corp certification, joining a global movement of businesses committed to balancing profit with purpose. This milestone reinforces Silentnight's long-standing dedication to environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and corporate governance.

The rigorous certification process evaluated Silentnight's entire business operations, from supply chain sustainability to employee welfare, confirming the company's commitment to creating a positive impact across all aspects of its operations. It scored 89.8 points, exceeding the required threshold of 80, and was verified through a detailed audit by B Lab.

As a trusted supplier to the UK and Ireland's largest retailers, as well as major operators in the hospitality, student accommodation and build-to-rent sectors, this certification will have far-reaching implications across multiple sectors.

Tracey Bamber, Chief Executive of Silentnight, said: "B Corp certification is a testament to the incredibly hard work of everyone at Silentnight in maintaining the very highest standards of sustainability and corporate governance."

For further information regarding Silentnight, please contact Neil Clews on **07570 649327** or email [neil.clews@silentnight.co.uk](mailto:neil.clews@silentnight.co.uk).



## MHA

MHA Launches National Foundation to Boost Financial Literacy Among Young People

MHA, the UK member of Baker Tilly International, has launched the MHA 1892 Foundation, a nationwide initiative to improve financial literacy and support social mobility. The foundation will provide grants of up to £3,500 to organisations delivering financial education and essential life skills to young people.

Funds will be raised through charitable activities across MHA's offices, including their London office, with additional partner match funding. The launch follows a successful North West pilot in 2023, which awarded eight grants to projects widening access to financial education.

Named after the founding year of MHA Moore and Smalley, which is now part of MHA following their 2024 merger, the foundation reflects the firm's commitment to creating positive social impact.

Alicia Crisp, Partner at MHA's London office, said: "The MHA 1892 Foundation brings together our efforts under one national platform, helping young people gain the financial confidence they need for a brighter future."

**Marco Giannini,**  
[marco.giannini@mha.co.uk](mailto:marco.giannini@mha.co.uk)



## For Your Health

**Boost Your Workforce Health: The Future of Recovery is Here**

I am proud to introduce Physical Vascular Therapy to the London business community. As a certified medical device, the therapy is scientifically proven to enhance microcirculation—the foundation of physical energy and mental focus. In just 8 minutes, stimulates blood flow in the smallest vessels, combatting the fatigue and stress common in high-pressure executive roles. It is the ultimate tool for corporate wellness and physical recovery. We are expanding our UK presence and inviting fellow Chamber members—especially those in healthcare, sports, and corporate wellbeing—to experience this innovative technology firsthand. We are looking for partners to establish a successful network.

**Connect:**  
[www.linkedin.com/in/mihalyibalazs/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/mihalyibalazs/)

## GIFTED AND TALENTED TUITION CENTRE

The Commonwealth Institute of Advanced and Professional Studies (CIAPS) extends its sincere congratulations to Mr. Benedict Raj Balan on his remarkable



scholarly publications in peer-reviewed journals related to Education. His academic work demonstrates exceptional dedication, intellectual rigor, and a strong commitment to advancing knowledge in the field of education. Through his research, Mr. Balan has made valuable contributions that enhance teaching practices, educational policy, and academic discourse at both national and international levels. His ability to address complex educational issues through evidence-based scholarship reflects a high level of professionalism and academic excellence. CIAPS takes great pride in recognizing his achievements and applauds his continued efforts to promote innovation, quality, and integrity in educational research. The Institute wishes him continued success and many more milestones in his distinguished academic journey.

**Contact:**  
[benedict.balan@gmail.com](mailto:benedict.balan@gmail.com)



**C & B Partners**  
LIMITED

## C&B Partners Limited

C&B Partners Limited is pleased to join the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, engaging with members shaping London's enterprise landscape.

We advise SMEs, scale-ups, property groups, professionals and internationally expanding businesses on efficient structuring, shareholder value protection, and strategic UK tax compliance. From early-stage growth and innovation to international expansion and succession planning, we support value creation across the business lifecycle, including R&D incentive strategy, director and shareholder planning, VAT, cross-border structuring, and estate planning for companies and founders.

We represent clients in enquiries and disputes, applying regulator-informed insight grounded in direct experience.

With over 50 years' experience in senior HMRC technical and operational roles, we understand how HMRC decisions are formed and tested. Our advice is practical, defensible, and commercially grounded.

We look forward to sharing insight, promoting grounded tax practice, strengthening governance and growth across the membership.

If you are a member of LCCI and would like to share your news, contact  
[membersupport@londonchamber.co.uk](mailto:membersupport@londonchamber.co.uk)

## Coming up...



## MARCH

- **LCCI Property & Construction Club Networking and Briefing with Dr Barbara Marino, Development Director – London & Commercial, Keltbray at LCCI**  
Tuesday 3 March, 12.00pm – 2.00pm  
Programme Partners: Bauer Media, Essential Land, London Construction Hub, Menzies



## LCCI Open Week Networking

Wednesday 4 March, 3.00pm – 5.00pm  
LCCI

LCCI's special complimentary two hour taster networking event will give you the opportunity to enjoy some drinks and nibbles while you find out more about the Chamber, meet the membership team and ask any questions. This event is for non-members and Community Network participants only.

- **LCCI Women in Business - International Women's Day Networking Lunch at Piazza Italiana – Fully Booked**  
Thursday 5 March, 12.00pm – 3.00pm

## LCCI BBA Spring Reception

Tuesday 10 March, 6.00pm – 8.00pm  
Soul Mama

Members are invited to an evening of networking and delicious drinks and canapes at Soul Mama, which will bring together ambitious professionals, entrepreneurs and business leaders looking to expand their networks and form meaningful business connections. Free to attend for LCCI Members and £18 inclusive of VAT for Community Network.

Programme Partner: University of Westminster

UNIVERSITY OF  
WESTMINSTER

- **Lunch and Learn: Balancing Flexibility with Business Goals - Hybrid Working, Technostress, and the Work-Life Blend - Online**  
Wednesday 11 March, 1.00pm – 2.00pm
- **Lunch and Learn Webinar: Balancing flexibility with business goals - Navigating flexible working, technostress and the work-life blend – Online**  
Wednesday 18 March, 1.00pm – 2.00pm
- **Lunch and Learn Webinar: Tax Changes in 2026/27 - What businesses need to know and do**  
Wednesday 18 March, 1.00pm – 2.00pm
- **LCCI EA Club Spring Reception at Flight Club Islington**  
Wednesday 18 March, 6.00pm – 8.00pm
- **Lunch and Learn: Turning Waste into Wins – Policy, Compliance and Best Practice for Business Success – Online**  
Monday 23 March, 1.00pm – 2.00pm
- **Commercial Retrofitting in London Report Launch - From Legacy to Net-Zero Future at LCCI**  
Tuesday 24 March, 3.00pm – 5.00pm

## LCCI Asian Business Association Spring Networking

Thursday 26 March, 12.00pm – 3.00pm  
Chatora

The LCCI ABA for the Spring Networking Lunch at Chatora Restaurant is a great way to connect with a variety of industry professionals, share ideas and enjoy delicious cuisine in a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere. Tickets start at £72 inclusive of VAT for LCCI Members.

Programme Partner: University of Westminster

UNIVERSITY OF  
WESTMINSTER

- **Lunch and Learn: The Silent Killers - How SMEs Are Exposed to Invisible Cyber Threats – Online**  
Thursday 26 March, 1.00pm – 2.00pm
- **Go Connect! Easter Networking at LCCI**  
Tuesday 31 March, 12.30pm – 2.00pm

## APRIL

- **Digital ATA Carnets – Get ready for the 2026 eATA transition – Online**  
Tuesday 14 April, 10.00am – 11.00am

## LCCI Quarterly Economic Survey

Wednesday 15 April, 10.00am – 12.00pm  
LCCI

Join LCCI for the release of the latest Quarterly Economic Survey, produced in partnership with Savanta. The survey is recognised as London's leading barometer of business trends and provides an early look at the trends shaping the capital's economy. Guests will hear the headline findings, explore the key issues affecting businesses across London and gain insight from an expert panel who will discuss what the results mean in practice. Free to attend for all LCCI Members and Community Network.

- **Lunch and Learn Webinar: How to Right-Size and Future-Proof Your Workplace in a Hybrid World - Online**  
Wednesday 15 April, 1.00pm – 2.00pm

- **LCCI EA Club Showcase at Church House Westminster**  
Tuesday 21 April, 5.30pm – 8.00pm  
Hosted by Church House Westminster  
Event Tech Partner: Crowd Comms

crowdcomms

## Business Owners Club Spring Reception

Tuesday 28 April, 5.00pm – 7.00pm  
Vintry & Mercer

Celebrate the start of a new season at the spring reception - an evening designed exclusively for London based SME owners to connect, collaborate and spark fresh opportunities. Set within the stylish surroundings of Vintry & Mercer, this relaxed networking reception brings together ambitious business owners from across the capital for meaningful conversation, new partnerships and shared insights. Open to Business Owners only, Premier Plus member tickets are £29.70 inclusive of VAT.

Programme Partners: Dell, IHG Business Edge and Intuit

DELL  
Technologies

IHG® Business  
Edge

INTUIT.



## DATES FOR DIARY

**LCCI Property and Construction Summer Reception at No 4 Hamilton Place**  
Tuesday 16 June, 6.30pm – 8.45pm  
Programme Partners: Bauer Media, Essential Land, London Construction Hub, Menzies

**LCCI Annual Summer Garden Party at College Garden**  
Thursday 16 July, 6.30pm – 8.45pm  
Associate Sponsors: Etihad and Finn Partners

**LCCI Cricket Day at the Kia Oval - Surrey v Kent Spitfires in the One Day Cup at The Kia Oval**  
Wednesday 5 August, 10.30am onwards

## MAY

- **Digital ATA Carnets – Get ready for the 2026 eATA transition – Online**  
Tuesday 14 April, 10.00am – 11.00am

- **Go Connect! Networking at University of Staffordshire London Campus**  
Wednesday 6 May, 4.00pm – 6.00pm

- **Lunch and Learn: The Trusted Advisor – Turning Conversations into Client Loyalty - Online**  
Monday 18 May, 1.00pm – 2.00pm

- **The King's Award for Enterprise: Briefing and Networking at LCCI**  
Wednesday 20 May, 9.30am – 11.30am

- **LCCI Asian Business Association Spring Reception in Collaboration with India Week at Colonel Saab, Trafalgar Square**  
Wednesday 27 May, 6.30pm - 9.00pm  
Programme Partner: University of Westminster

UNIVERSITY OF  
WESTMINSTER

- **Showing Up Powerfully at Work - Managing Imposter Syndrome and Owning Your Value at Work at LCCI**  
Thursday 28 May, 2.00pm - 5.00pm

# Two minute interview



## David Keane of Giftcard

### Who are you?

David Keane, B2B manager UK for Giftcard.co.uk – I work to provide businesses with customised gifting solutions for their rewards programmes, for example as incentives or customer rewards.

### Which one business achievement over the last 12 months are you most proud of, and why?

As a team, we have expanded our presence from seven countries in Q4 of 2024 to 21 countries a year later. I am proud to have worked to on-board new English-speaking markets like Australia, Canada, New Zealand and USA to our international offering.

### If you were advising a young entrepreneur, which business person would you suggest as a model?

I would suggest they model their ethics and practices on those of Sara Davies, founder of Crafter's Companion and star of Dragon's Den. It is often said that entrepreneurs need to be ruthless to succeed; Sara's firm but fair approach, being kind, savvy and showing dedication to her company is inspirational. I recommend her book *The 6 Minute Entrepreneur*

for innovative lessons for business success.

### How do you think the transport system in London can be improved?

Developing a tram system for more London boroughs. Our team from the Netherlands visited London during the TfL strikes last September and had some interesting suggestions for tram development as well the ferry system.

### Which piece of red tape causes most problems for your company and why?

The Trivial Benefit Allowance is a hurdle that is faced by our company and the gifting and incentives industry as a whole. It was introduced in 2016 and allows employers to provide small, tax-free, non-cash gifts (such as gift cards) to employees. However, the £50 limit has not increased in nearly a decade and has lost more than 20 per cent of its real value. We would like to see the allowance to increase to £1,500 annually, enabling employers to give up to five gifts per year. Compared to international counterparts, the UK is behind in this regard. This increase would restore the scheme's relevance and unlock a range of benefits in line with the government's priorities.

### What is your favourite and least favourite thing about London?

Congestion is one of the downsides to London but, alas, is a problem faced by most metropolitan hubs. The infrastructure for biking needs to be altered!

On the upside, it has a claim to be the cultural hub of Western Europe and has everything a person (resident or visitor) could possibly imagine. Theatres, galleries, gastronomy... The resulting diversity at every level of society makes it an incredible place to live and establish a business.

### If you were Mayor of London for the day which one thing would you change?

I would reduce the salary of Mayor of London to the liveable wage of London – the remainder of the salary at the time of this cut would be allocated to local development co-ops to assist the homeless population. The are parts of essential services that

could benefit from the kind of money that would be available should the position of Mayor have a reduced/standard salary.

On a non-serious note, I'd plan a pop-up party on a random Tube line at a random part of the day to brighten up the commuters' day!

### Who would you consider an appropriate person to play you in a movie of your life?

Jason Statham would be a good fit.

### What is your favourite quotation?

*'The only way to do great work is to love what you do'*  
– Steve Jobs

It reminds me that the job I'm currently doing is something I enjoy and even when tough, I can apply myself to the best of my ability. Steve Jobs is a great inspiration when it comes to innovative and creative working methods.

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

# LCCI Member Offers



## □ CHANNELSERVE/WAVETHRU

WAVETHRU is a simple, fast, stand-alone laser treatment that permanently improves indoor mobile signal by enabling mobile signal waves to pass through modern glazing. Suitable for retrofit and new builds, it preserves energy performance, aesthetics and glass warranty while eliminating the need for antennas, cabling or subscriptions. After a precise onsite survey to test the level of signal, selected panes are treated - delivering instant, measurable signal improvement for offices, hospitality, healthcare, residential and smart buildings.

### Contact

For more information go to [channelserve.co.uk/wavethru-uk](https://channelserve.co.uk/wavethru-uk) or book directly - email: [wavethru.uk@channelserve.co.uk](mailto:wavethru.uk@channelserve.co.uk) or call: **+44 7930461117 / +44208 1232566**

### OFFER

Enjoy **20% off** a **WAVETHRU survey** (usual cost £495 ex.VAT - for buildings under 1200 sqm). If you proceed with treatment, **your full survey fee is refunded**. Book now to secure this offer.



## □ BMITAGROUP | NEURALEAD

Bmita Ltd is an advanced leadership and transformation organisation helping high-performing professionals build sustainable performance under pressure through evidence-informed development and measurable behaviour change. NeuraLead is Bmita's institute-led brand and home of the Conscious Leadership Fellowship, designed to help leaders upgrade their inner operating system so they lead with clarity, confidence and are calm under pressure.

### Contact

Email [carlosg@bmitagroup.com](mailto:carlosg@bmitagroup.com) with subject "LCCI-LEAD". We'll send your private link (12-15 mins) and book a 30-minute Scorecard Review. You'll leave with your Scorecard + 14-day protocol. Optional Step 2: if it's a fit, we'll map entry into the Fellowship (individual/corporate seat), no obligation.

### OFFER

Free leadership "X-ray" + debrief: receive a personalised Scorecard across stress, clarity, confidence, decision-making and leadership identity, plus your next-step pathway and a 14-day Calm-Under-Pressure protocol used in our flagship programme. Limited to first 20 LCCI members. Deadline: 30/03/2026.



## □ LONDON MARRIOTT HOTEL COUNTY HALL

Experience quintessential British luxury at London Marriott Hotel County Hall, a historic landmark overlooking the River Thames. Our beautifully appointed rooms offer iconic views of Big Ben and the London Eye, blending timeless heritage with modern comfort. Enjoy elegant dining, including classic Afternoon Tea served in our atmospheric Library. Whether for leisure or business, our distinguished meeting spaces and exceptional service create an unforgettable stay in the heart of London.

### Contact

[selinamarie.pohl@marriott.com](mailto:selinamarie.pohl@marriott.com)  
[www.marriott.com/en-gb/hotels/lonch-london-marriott-hotel-county-hall/overview/](https://www.marriott.com/en-gb/hotels/lonch-london-marriott-hotel-county-hall/overview/)

### OFFER

Enjoy **10% off** all food and beverage exclusively for LCCI members at London Marriott Hotel County Hall. From Afternoon Tea to steakhouse dining with views of Big Ben and the London Eye, enjoy exceptional flavours. A little extra luxury, just for you.



## □ SPECIALIST RISK

Specialist Risk Group (SRG) is one of the fastest-growing groups of insurance intermediaries in the UK, placing £1.6 BN of premium into the Global insurance market. Since our establishment in 2020, SRG has become a trusted partner for clients and broker partners worldwide, specialising in addressing complex insurance needs that others actively avoid.

### Contact

[londonchambers@specialistrisk.com](mailto:londonchambers@specialistrisk.com)  
Amy Green **0207 977 4800**

### OFFER

All members can obtain a **FREE** cyber security risk report. The report outlines the risk to your domain and recommends fixes and management that support positive cyber security and that insurers recognise as good risk management.

If you are a member of LCCI with an offer for other members, contact [membersoffers@londonchamber.co.uk](mailto:membersoffers@londonchamber.co.uk)

# Two minute interview

Jonny Duggan of AnnexusPartners



## Who are you?

I'm the co-founder and chief executive of AnnexusPartners. We are an energy management consultancy that works with organisations to reduce costs, improve efficiency, and achieve their sustainability objectives.

At AnnexusPartners, we focus on providing strategic insight alongside practical, deliverable solutions. Our role is to help businesses navigate an increasingly complex energy landscape while moving confidently towards a more sustainable future.

## What is your connection with the London Chamber of Commerce?

We are a member and I'll be personally attending Chamber events throughout 2026. I am looking forward to building meaningful connections across London's business community.

## What was your first job in London?

I was as a junior trader in Bishopsgate in the heart of the city. At the time, I thought I'd hit the jackpot. The reality was 250 cold calls a day or three hours of talk time, painful at times, but invaluable.

Looking back, those early days taught me resilience and how to handle rejection. They remain some of my favourite and most formative moments in my career.

## Which one business achievement over the last 12 months are you most proud of, and why?

A major highlight has been securing our largest contract to date with a leading UK healthcare provider. While that milestone was significant, what I'm most proud of is the collective progress of the AnnexusPartners team.

Our growth is a direct result of their commitment, expertise and belief in what we're building together. Seeing the team develop alongside the business has been incredibly rewarding.

## If you were advising a young entrepreneur, which businessperson would you suggest as a model?

In today's world, it's easy for young entrepreneurs to become distracted by social media noise and online validation. There's real value in studying business figures who built success long before likes and followers mattered.

Lord Alan Sugar is a great example. He built his fortune through grit and instinct in the 1970s, '80s, and '90s, then successfully reinvented himself for a new generation through The Apprentice. Four decades on, he remains a central figure in British business, not bad for a boy from East London.

## How do you think the transport system in London can be improved?

Now living outside London, transport affects me less day-to-day but it remains a critical issue. London's transport system is world-class, yet constantly under strain.

Smarter investment, cleaner technology and better integration are key. Accelerating electrification of buses and taxis alongside EV infrastructure would future-proof the network too.

## Which piece of red tape causes the most problems for your company, and why?

The complexity and inconsistency of energy and sustainability regulations present the biggest challenge. While regulation is vital for driving environmental progress, misalignment between government and industry slows meaningful action.

Greater standardisation and clearer guidance would allow firms like ours to focus on delivering real sustainability outcomes, rather than navigating layers of compliance.

## What is your favourite and least favourite thing about London?

My favourite thing is its diversity. The city's multiculturalism makes it one of the most vibrant places in the world. As a foodie and sports fan, there's always something exceptional to experience.

On the downside, the rising

cost of living affects both individuals and businesses while overcrowding and cleanliness remain ongoing frustrations.

## If you were Mayor of London for the day, what would you change?

I would focus on tackling knife crime. It's a devastating issue that goes far beyond policing. Investment in youth programmes, mentorship, education and sport is essential to give young people purpose and opportunity.

## Who would play you in a movie of your life?

I'd love to say Denzel Washington, but realistically the pale Irish skin and bald head considered, I'd probably go with Jason Statham. He's got the grit, humour and a bit of an edge.

## What is your favourite quotation?

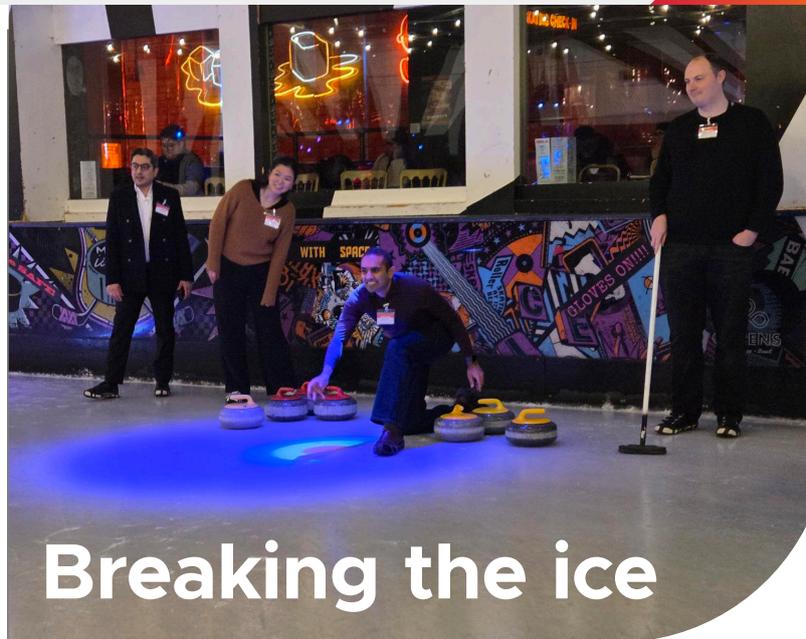
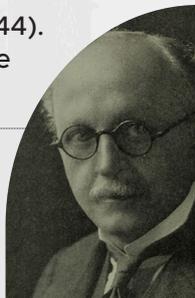
A quote from Cus D'Amato has always stuck with me: "The hero and the coward both feel the same thing; the difference between them is how they act on it."

[www.AnnexusPartners.com](http://www.AnnexusPartners.com)

# Answers to The Knowledge

On page 21

- 1 Sir Alfred Hitchcock, director over 50 films including Psycho and The Birds. One of the most influential figures in cinema history, he died in Los Angeles in 1980.
- 2 The London Marathon. It was first organised in 1981. This year it takes place on Sunday 26 April.
- 3 London Wetlands Centre in Barnes, SW13. The bronze sculpture by Nicola Godden was unveiled by Sir David Attenborough in 2000.
- 4 David Bowie. Born in Brixton, he lived in Bromley from the ages of eight to 18.
- 5 Forty. Originally called The Landlord's Game, Monopoly came to the UK from the USA with the London version first produced in the 1930s.
- 6 Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) perhaps best known for her novels To the Lighthouse, Mrs Dalloway and The Waves.
- 7 London Broncos – rugby league team. They have previously played their home games at Twickenham.
- 8 Sir Edwin Luytens (1869-1944). It was unveiled on Armistice Day in 1920.
- 9 Battersea Dogs & Cats home in Nine Elms, SW8. O'Grady was an ambassador for the home.
- 10 Wembley Stadium. The original stadium was built in 1923. Today's version was completed in 2007, seats 90,000 people and is the biggest stadium in the UK.



## Breaking the ice

Fifty LCCI members assembled at Queens in Bayswater in February at a networking event to celebrate the Winter Olympics. Timed to coincide with Team GB's curling match against Norway (Team GB just edged it in a tight contest). Going for Gold also gave attendees the chance to try their hand at what has been dubbed 'chess

on ice'. An accompanying spread of finger food and cocktails completed the evening. As LCCI events executive Katie Hulbert said: "Well, that's one way to break the ice!"



### Attractions

Queens is the capital's oldest (and only) year-round ice rink. Its attractions include bowling (17 lanes) and darts as well as curling and ice skating.

[www.queens.london](http://www.queens.london)





# New Members

Who has joined the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the last two months?

### 3 Minute Mile

T: 020 3816 3996

hello@3minutemile.co.uk

[www.3minutemile.org](http://www.3minutemile.org)

Leadership development & TA

### Agile Document Solutions

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

Document digitisation

### Allica Bank

[www.allica.bank](http://www.allica.bank)

Business banking

### Aspire Lending

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

Mortgage broker

### Authentic HR Paris

T: +33 6 72 14 80 99

Ah.rh.paris@gmail.com

[www.authentic-hr-paris.com/en/](http://www.authentic-hr-paris.com/en/)

HR expert for UK subsidiaries in France

### Basque Trade and Investment

6 Lloyds Avenue, Suite 6 CL, London EC3N 3AX

T: 020 3006 2434

info@basquetrade.co.uk

[www.basquetrade.net](http://www.basquetrade.net)

Basque industry and interests

### BATCAM

louis.tozer@batcam.tv

[www.batcam.tv](http://www.batcam.tv)

BATCAM provides cutting-edge technology to the world's largest broadcasters

### Bmita Group

[www.bmitagroup.com](http://www.bmitagroup.com)

Training and consultant

### British Weather Services

office@britishweatherservices.co.uk

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

The longest established independent meteorological operator in Europe

### CN Foods Distributors Limited

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

Wholesale and distributors

### Colibrix One

T: 020 8064 0370

info@colibrix.one

[www.colibrix.one](http://www.colibrix.one)

All-in-one global payments and banking

### Continia Software Limited

T: 07968 998027

dg@continia.com

[www.continia.com](http://www.continia.com)

Software vendor

### Currencies Direct

T: 020 7847 9400

ronica.ruparella@currenciesdirect.com

[www.currenciesdirect.com](http://www.currenciesdirect.com)

Commercial foreign exchange

### DP World

T: 01304 863829

helen.gray@dpworld.com

[www.dpworld.com](http://www.dpworld.com)

Transportation

### Etihad Airways

T: 07887 423958

lperrin@etihad.ae

[www.etihad.com](http://www.etihad.com)

National airline of the United Arab Emirates

### Eurocad

[www.eurocad.fr](http://www.eurocad.fr)

Accounting in France

### Europafoodxb Ltd

[www.europafoodxb.com](http://www.europafoodxb.com)

Online supermarket for authentic European groceries

### Experion Technologies UK Ltd

T: 078806 65300

contactus@experionuk.com

[www.experionuk.com](http://www.experionuk.com)

Product engineering and digital transformation services

### First Brand Kit

jenny@firstbrandkit.co.uk

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

Affordable, comprehensive branding solutions for small business owners

### Float Lending AB

T: +46 70 282 26 28

cedric@floatfinance.com

[www.floatfinance.com](http://www.floatfinance.com)

Financing for B2B SaaS companies

### FluxAI

T: 07523473747

teodora@fluxaiconsulting.com

[www.fluxaiconsulting.com](http://www.fluxaiconsulting.com)

Helping companies integrate AI

### Fox Sports Surfacing Ltd

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

Affordable, comprehensive branding solutions for small business owners

### Global Banking School

[www.globalbanking.ac.uk](http://www.globalbanking.ac.uk)

Changing lives through education

### Global PA Association And Training Academy

T: 0207 971 7311

enquiries@globalpa-association.com

[www.globalpa-association.com](http://www.globalpa-association.com)

Developing world Class PAs

### iBanFirst

T: 020 3409 5400

info-uk@ibanfirst.com

[www.uk.ibanfirst.com](http://www.uk.ibanfirst.com)

Cross-border payments

### IFZA

T: 07831396922

[www.ifza.com](http://www.ifza.com)

Leading free zone community in Dubai

### Imobisoft Ltd

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

AI & software development

**Inforich Europe Ltd**

T: 07495425071  
 chargespot.support.gb@inforicheurope.com  
[www.eu.chargespot.global](http://www.eu.chargespot.global)  
 Power bank sharing service

**Infraco**

T: 07454073691  
[www.infraco.co.uk](http://www.infraco.co.uk)  
 Expert utilities and infrastructure

**Inside Edge Productions**

T: 0204 572 5672  
 enquiries@insideedgeproductions.com  
[www.insideedgeproductions.com](http://www.insideedgeproductions.com)  
 Employee-generated video training

**International Exit Strategy**

[www.internationalexitstrategy.com](http://www.internationalexitstrategy.com)  
 Pre-M&A Consultant

**John Lewis**

T: 03456037979  
 business@johnlewis.co.uk  
[www.johnlewis.com/business](http://www.johnlewis.com/business)  
 John Lewis for business

**KINTO Join Limited**

kinto.marketing@kintojoin.io  
[www.kintozero.com](http://www.kintozero.com)  
 KINTO Join Ltd

**Maintaining Matters UK Ltd**

T: 07368685238  
 maintainingmattersuk@gmail.com  
[www.maintainingmattersuk.com](http://www.maintainingmattersuk.com)  
 Premium commercial property care

**Marka IT**

T: 07480568641  
 info@markait.co.uk  
[www.markait.co.uk](http://www.markait.co.uk)  
 IT Support

**Marketick Ltd**

T: 07769479161  
 rubia@marketick.co.uk  
[www.marketick.co.uk](http://www.marketick.co.uk)  
 CRM automation & AI operations

**Matchbox Finance**

T: 02071127574

**MM Global Corp Ltd**

manoj@brandola.uk  
 Branded products

**Morgan Allen & Associates**

[www.morgan-allen.com](http://www.morgan-allen.com)  
 Boutique consultancy firm helping organisations to scale up

**Museum Of Brands Limited**

maria@museumofbrands.com  
[www.museumofbrands.com](http://www.museumofbrands.com)  
 Museum of brands in London

**Muve / Nova**

T: 020 3907 4409  
[www.muve.me.uk](http://www.muve.me.uk)  
 Experts in fast conveyancing

**National Grid Electricity Commission**

T: 020 7004 3000  
 andrew.mower@nationalgrid.com  
[www.nationalgrid.com](http://www.nationalgrid.com)  
 Electricity transmission

**NatWest Group**

[www.NatWest.com](http://www.NatWest.com)  
 Banking services

**Nicoll Transport Ltd**

T: 020 3959 2354  
 hello@nicolltransport.com  
[www.NicollTransport.com](http://www.NicollTransport.com)  
 Theatre, live entertainment, transport

**NTT Data Group**

[www.nttdata.com](http://www.nttdata.com)  
 Trusted global innovator of IT and business services

**Orac Production Ltd**

29c Gloucester Avenue, London NW1 7AU

**Philippine Trade & Investment Center London**

[www.dti.gov.ph/dti-overseas/dti-london](http://www.dti.gov.ph/dti-overseas/dti-london)  
 Philippine Embassy

**Pladis (UK) Ltd**

[www.pladisglobal.com](http://www.pladisglobal.com)  
 One of the world's fastest growing snacking companies

**Raam Advisory & Management Consulting Ltd**

ramc2017@outlook.com  
 Financial services, consulting

**Riverside Court Consulting Ltd**

T: 07715704894  
 bryan.altimas@riversidecourtconsulting.co.uk  
[www.riversidecourtconsulting.co.uk](http://www.riversidecourtconsulting.co.uk)  
 Clear cybersecurity protected reputation

**Rowena Herdman-Smith Legal Consultancy**

T: 07771 906724  
 rkshhs@icloud.com  
 Legal consultant

**Ruth Sloss Coaching**

T: 07814 187 895  
 ruth@ruthslosscoaching.com  
[www.ruthslosscoaching.com](http://www.ruthslosscoaching.com)  
 Executive and team coaching, consultancy

**Signet Corporation Limited**

T: 01375 394 941  
 info@signetcl.com  
[www.signetcl.com](http://www.signetcl.com)  
 Importer of African/Asian Foods

**Staria Limited**

[www.staria.com](http://www.staria.com)  
 Oracle NetSuite partner

**SyncraIT**

T: 020 388 30680  
 help@syncrait.com  
[www.syncrait.com](http://www.syncrait.com)  
 IT support and services

**Syrvi Ltd**

T: +44 203 337 6388  
 contact@syrvi.ai  
[www.syrvi.ai](http://www.syrvi.ai)  
 AI sales & marketing team

**Taylor Rose**

[www.taylor-rose.co.uk](http://www.taylor-rose.co.uk)  
 Smart, modern law

**The Cozm**

[www.thecozm.com](http://www.thecozm.com)  
 Tech company using AI and automation

**The Curent Group**

T: 07876791264  
 dan@curentgroup.com  
[www.curentgroup.com](http://www.curentgroup.com)  
 A human touch to world class experiences

**TrellisWorks Ltd**

T: 01635 861434  
 sales@trellisworks.co.uk  
[www.trellisworks.co.uk](http://www.trellisworks.co.uk)  
 Technology & telecommunications

**True One Ltd**

[www.blackoakmanufacture.co.uk](http://www.blackoakmanufacture.co.uk)  
 Interior refurbishments and exterior renovation

**Turner**

[www.turner.studio](http://www.turner.studio)  
 Architecture and urban design

**VRTical Media**

T: +1 413 537 4124  
 jaysalouis@vrticalmedia.io  
[www.vrticalmedia.io](http://www.vrticalmedia.io)  
 Premium 360° virtual tours that convert

**Woburn Partners**

[www.woburnpartners.com](http://www.woburnpartners.com)  
 Strategic communications advice

**YLD**

T: 07581263317  
 james.gibbons@yld.com  
[www.yld.com](http://www.yld.com)  
 Digital engineering and design

# LCCI Partners and Patrons Noticeboard

## ETIHAD

### Etiihad Airways

Etiihad Airways continues to strengthen its presence in the UK market, operating from London Heathrow and Manchester with seamless onward connectivity via Abu Dhabi. As Abu Dhabi's role as a global business and investment hub grows, the airline connects the UK to the UAE and wider GCC, and onward to key markets across India, Southeast Asia and Australia.

Etiihad's premium proposition remains central to its appeal, with First and Business cabins offering private suites, direct aisle access and fully lie-flat beds, enabling greater comfort and productivity on long-haul journeys.

For organisations managing international travel, the Etihad for Business platform delivers preferential corporate fares, priority services and spend-based rewards, alongside digital tools that enhance visibility, reporting and cost control. Further reinforcing confidence in the brand, Etihad was named the world's safest airline for 2026, underlining its continued commitment to operational excellence and passenger wellbeing.

## MENZIES

BRIGHTER THINKING

### Menzies

As we move further into 2026, organisations across every sector are operating in a landscape shaped by regulatory reform, evolving tax policy and ongoing economic recalibration. While signs of greater stability are beginning to emerge, businesses continue to navigate wage inflation, compliance demands and heightened stakeholder expectations. At the same time, new opportunities are taking shape through digital transformation, sustainability initiatives and sector-specific growth trends. Strategic planning, strong governance and timely action remain critical to balancing risk with ambition in the months ahead.

Menzies LLP is a leading UK accountancy and advisory firm, supporting businesses and individuals with audit, tax, advisory and sector-specialist expertise.

In this outlook, our partners share their perspectives for 2026, reflecting on developments in deals, restructuring, financial reporting, regulatory change and sector performance. Their insights are designed to help you anticipate change, strengthen resilience and position your organisation for sustainable success in an increasingly complex environment.

[www.menzies.co.uk/sector-predictions](http://www.menzies.co.uk/sector-predictions)



### Port of Tilbury

The Port of Tilbury, part of the Forth Ports Group (Acting as the London Construction Hub), can help deliver construction projects in London and the South-East whilst ensuring the lowest carbon emissions are achieved.

As a leading import location for construction materials, we enable flexible onward distribution via road, rail, and river, operating 24/7 to support just in time delivery throughout project lifecycles.

We have a strong track record delivering solutions for major schemes, including Thames Tideway, Crossrail, HS2, Battersea Power Station, and the London 2012 Olympics, establishing ourselves as a trusted partner.

Key benefits of the London Construction Hub include; (1) 5 million sq. ft. of warehousing, (2) oversized cargo handling capacity of up to 600 tonnes, (3) reverse logistics and waste processing to improve efficiency, site utilisation, and safety, and (4) high security, through support from one of the UK's most established fully warranted port police forces based on site.

## CITYLIT

INSPIRING PASSIONS · REALISING AMBITIONS

### Citylit

**Deaf Day at City Lit: Connecting Organisations with the UK Deaf Community**



For three decades, City Lit, Europe's biggest adult education college, has hosted Deaf Day, the largest Deaf and hard-of-hearing event in the UK.

The event takes place on Saturday 11th April. Drawing thousands of attendees, it offers businesses a unique opportunity to engage with the Deaf community at scale.

Deaf Day brings together learners, professionals and exhibitors from Deaf-led organisations, alongside public and private institutions. City Lit works with over 70 partners, including the Metropolitan Police, British Museum and RNID. It continues to attract national attention; in 2025, it featured in a Sky News documentary, highlighting its cultural significance and the growing visibility of the UK's Deaf community.

Whether you are exhibiting, promoting services, strengthening EDI or accessibility commitments, exploring Deaf awareness training, recruiting, or learning, we would be delighted to welcome you.

Get in touch with [deafedu@citylit.ac.uk](mailto:deafedu@citylit.ac.uk)  
<https://news.sky.com/video/dig-deafness-in-britain-mini-doc-stereo-ed1-ar-mp4-13360373>



### Bauer Media

**Bauer Media Outdoor UK rebrands Amscreen as BMO Technic, bolsters data capabilities**

Bauer Media Outdoor (BMO) has announced the rebrand of Amscreen, Europe's largest manufacturer of digital outdoor signage, into Bauer Media Outdoor Technic following its acquisition at the end of 2025. The move marks a significant step in BMO's strategy to deliver market-leading sustainable and innovative Out of Home (OOH) infrastructure across the UK and Europe.

The addition brings screen innovation, expertise, and manufacturing fully in-house, ensuring greater control over the quality and development of its digital OOH estate from end to end.

BMO also unveiled enhancements to Bauer Media AdAstra, its audience planning platform powered by Bauer Media's data intelligence, which comprises extensive audio and publishing first-party datasets. Advertisers can now reach segments such as car buyers, fashion fans, families, and luxury shoppers through both traditional and programmatic channels.

Adshel Live, the UK's largest DOOH network, will expand to 4,600 screens by the end of 2026. BMO confirmed expansion of its digital retail media estate through Morrisons Live and the extension of Sainsbury's Live into convenience locations.

Beyond commercial innovation, BMO is advancing its community impact by installing over 100 communication kiosks equipped with defibrillators by the end of 2026. The initiative follows the successful deployment of its first device in Lewisham, which was used within 48 hours to help save a life.

# Single gateway for business support

LCCI is just one of over 50 chambers of commerce in the UK which are accredited by the British Chambers of Commerce for the range and quality of the services they provide to the business community. In this series, *LBM* turns the spotlight on a selection of the UK's other main chambers.

Established in 1984, the East Midlands Chamber is the culmination of the merging of several accredited chambers of commerce, the first dating back more than 150 years.

Mergers in the last 25 years have included Southern Derbyshire Chamber, North Derbyshire Chamber, Derbyshire Chamber of Commerce, Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce and Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce.

In 2013, following the merger between Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce and Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce, East Midlands Chamber was formed. This created a single chamber for the three counties and three cities.



## Key services

The chamber – under the leadership of Scott Knowles DL, is a membership, representation and business support organisation, working with more than 12,000 businesses annually, from sole traders and micro businesses to SMEs – those with growth potential both in the UK and overseas – and the large global brands in the region.

East Midlands Chamber is a single gateway for business support, having secured £12.1 million in publicly funded contracts over the past three years and supported over 13,000 employees from engaged businesses.

## Flagship

Its flagship Accelerator programme offers support to help businesses grow and innovate. These include offering guidance and funding to help businesses research or introducing a product or service into new international markets. The East Midlands Combined County Authority High Growth Accelerator, Accelerator Workshops for managers and senior leaders and Derbyshire, Leicester and Nottingham Accelerator help businesses adopt new technologies or processes through adviser support and Growth Vouchers to fund consultancy and training.

## Growth

Since 2022, Accelerator has engaged over 16,000 enterprises and created or safeguarded 1,169 jobs. The chamber's Innovation and Growth Specialists offer



tailored support funded through Innovate UK Business Growth.

The chamber's Employment Services team tackles economic inactivity as part of Department for Work and Pensions supply chain and helped 977 individuals into employment in 2024.

The East Midlands Manufacturing Network is a dedicated, supportive peer network, launched in March 2022 and has more than 500 members.

## Enterprising

The chamber delivers both the Enterprising Women network, established in 1997, to champion women in business and Generation Next, its peer network for young regional talent. Both networks have hundreds of members and bring businesspeople together with award ceremonies, conferences, inspirational talks and networking.

In 2024, the Chamber joined the UK Fair Chance Alliance, promoting workforce inclusion by encouraging businesses to employ ex-offenders.

## International

The chamber's international trade team facilitated £1.3 billion in goods movement and processed nearly 13,000 export documents and customs declarations in the past 12 months – helping businesses to overcome increasingly complex paperwork and navigate the cost of trading internationally. Examples include supporting businesses to understand CBAM (Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism) and Regime 42 – effective 1 January 2026, France has abolished the use of fiscal representation by non-EU businesses, forcing UK businesses to adopt alternative mechanisms for exporting their goods.

## Hot topics

The chamber launched its Framework for Growth in November 2025 – a comprehensive publication shaped by insight from its members to set out what government must implement to unlock

confidence and drive growth across the region.

The framework outlines priorities for skills, transport, connectivity, innovation and investment, ensuring the region is equipped to seize emerging opportunities and overcome barriers to productivity and competitiveness.

## Devolution

The chamber has been encouraging plans to devolve greater powers from Westminster to Leicester and Leicestershire. Devolution would give the city and county access to funding, so that major spending decisions can be made locally, including investment in transport, skills and digital and energy resilience.

Two years after Leicester and Leicestershire's Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) was published, the chamber released its progress report, highlighting areas of success and where further work is required. Launched in 2023, the LSIP is funded by the Department for Education and produced by the chamber.

The chamber has undertaken research into Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for several years, with strategic partner emh Group. Green Growth trends research produced by the chamber, in conjunction with the University of Derby, has been published for over ten years.

## Sentiment and performance

The chamber's Quarterly Economic Survey measures both sentiment and actual performance and is a key indicator of challenges and opportunities faced by businesses, highlighting concerns and confidence for the months ahead. The findings are distributed to the media and frequently referenced in broadcast news, while the data is used to shape policy within the chamber and presented to political leaders.

[www.emc-dnl.co.uk](http://www.emc-dnl.co.uk)

**east midlands  
chamber**

Derbyshire | Leicestershire | Nottinghamshire

# London Business Matters Issue 204 March/April 2026

## Page-by-page

### FEATURES

QES **6**

As I see it ... **8**

The productivity puzzle: Keith Smith, HRUC **12**

JCB anniversary **13**

Andy Haldane at BCC **15**

### LONDON LIFE

Assa O'Connor, Anomali Art **16**

Better Bankside **17**

Nightlife Taskforce **19**

### CONNECTED LONDON

Business expansion: Capital on Tap **20**

Hospitality in the capital: Vincent Burke **22**

Hammersmith Bridge **23**

### INTERNATIONAL

Border permissions: Barar & Associates **26**

Destinations at Olympia **27**

Overseas business opportunities **31**

### BOOK REVIEWS

*What to do if ...* Anne-Maartje Oud **32**

*The CEO Mirage:* John B Gearing **32**

### A SMARTER CITY

Making tax digital: C&B Partners **34**

London Tech Week **35**

AI and cyber risk: J2 **36**

TechEx **36**

AI insights: GCore **37**

AI business risks:

LegalVision **38**

AI and sales teams:

Syrvi **40**

### SUSTAINABILITY

From corn to cassava: OAD Ventures **41**

Shaping urban life: Bauer Media Group **42**

*Clean Winners* book review **43**

### SKILLS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Skills crunch: Royal Holloway University of London **44**

Employment Law overhaul: Davenport Solicitors **45**

Spotlight on Hair Development **46**

The Calm Advantage: bmita leadership **47**

Commonhold reforms: TV Edwards **48**

Director rules: Buckles Law **50**

Catering apprenticeships: Capital City College **51**

CET annual report **51**

Whistleblowing: Safecall **52**

R&D tax relief: Inventt **53**

Rewarding resilience: Flagstone **54**

### DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Asian Business Association **55**

Empowering Her **55**

### THE BIG READ

Preventing work-related stress:

Affinity Health at Work **56**

### CHAMBER SPOTLIGHT

East Midlands Chamber **69**



# CAPITAL MATTERS

MARCH/APRIL 2026

A special advertising features and listings supplement produced by Crosby Associates Media Limited, the official publishers of London Business Matters

COVER STORY

**Why investing in the next generation is not just a strategic choice – it's a necessity**

PAGES 74-75

# Invest in your people and turn sustainability into competitive advantage

In today's operating environment, sustainability is no longer a bolt-on initiative or a CSR footnote. It is a commercial imperative. The latest insights from the Reuters Global Sustainability Report highlight a decisive shift: organisations are embedding sustainability within core operations, prioritising upskilling existing employees over external hiring, and aligning environmental goals with performance outcomes. For business leaders, the message is clear – capability drives competitiveness.

At **Shoreditch Business School (SBS)**, part of **New City College**, we work directly with employers to translate sustainability ambition into measurable business results. Our courses are designed with a Business-to-Business focus: improving operational efficiency, strengthening leadership capability, and equipping teams to deliver sustainable growth.

Operational efficiency and renewable energy investment remain leading

decarbonisation strategies. Yet there is a growing importance of supply chain engagement and internal development, with over half of organisations ranking employee education as their top priority. This is where targeted professional development delivers real ROI.

Through our partnership with the **Environmental Business Network (EBN)**, SBS connects businesses to a powerful ecosystem of sustainability expertise. Together, we support organisations to turn regulatory pressure into commercial opportunity.

We are excited to offer the newly produced **Sustainability, Leadership and Management qualification** accredited by the CMI. This course equips managers to align environmental responsibility with strategic decision-making – ensuring sustainability becomes a driver of performance, not a cost centre.

Our delivery model reflects the realities of modern business. Courses

are available online or in person, tailored to organisational needs, and delivered by expert trainers in high-quality facilities.

Join us at our upcoming webinars: **Unlock ROI Through Targeted Leadership Development and Turn Sustainability Into Commercial Advantage**, or attend our practical in-person workshops on **Project Management and Sustainability Meets Commercial Success**.

The organisations that will lead tomorrow's economy are investing in their people today. **Shoreditch Business School** provides the expertise, flexible solutions and strategic insight to help you achieve measurable results.

Visit the **Shoreditch Business School** website by scanning the QR code, and secure your place at one of our webinars or explore our tailored courses. Discover how investing in your people will power your business forward.

## Sustainability is a commercial imperative

Bespoke courses near London's financial centre

- Upskilling your existing workforce is the fastest route to measurable business performance
- Develop leaders who drive both profitability and sustainability
- Make sustainability a driver of ROI
- When your people grow, your business performs



0330 135 9000  
shoreditch-business.ncclondon.ac.uk  
f i y t d





Access  
Business  
Credit



## **Business Funding and Cash Flow Solutions for Limited Companies.**

- 📍 Invoice Discounting
- 📍 Factoring of invoices

- 📍 Trade Credit Insurance
- 📍 Small Business Loans

📞 **Free phone: 0800 6940484**    **Telephone: 0207 305 5059**

**[www.accessbusinesscredit.co.uk](http://www.accessbusinesscredit.co.uk)**

**Access Business Credit is a trading style of Access Credit Management Limited**

Co Reg 3937357 | Vat GB763 5605 19 | ICO liscense no. Z643776X

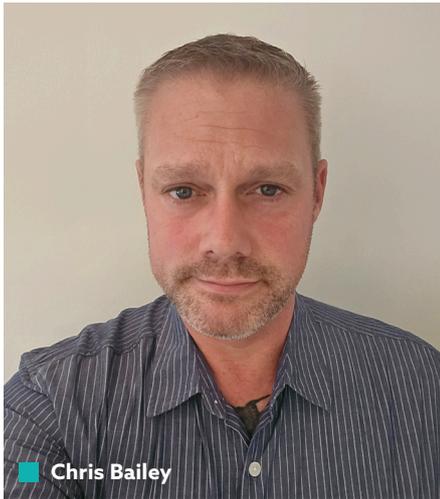
---

Access Business Finance is a trading style of Access Credit Management Limited, who is an independent commercial finance broker note lender, we can introduce you to a range of finance providers pertinent to your Limited Company's unique requirements. We do not offer independent financial advice.

# Why investing in the next generation is not just a strategic choice - it's a necessity

By Chris Bailey, Group Skills Development Manager at Barratt Redrow PLC

Barratt Redrow PLC is one of the largest residential property development companies in the United Kingdom operating across England, Wales and Scotland.



Chris Bailey

## WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO INVEST IN THESE TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SCHEMES?

As the UK's largest housebuilder, investing in apprenticeships and early careers isn't optional - it's the foundation of our future.

Over a third of construction workers in the UK are already aged 50 or older, and by 2036 around 750,000 people are expected to retire<sup>1</sup>. That's a huge transfer of skills and experience leaving the industry. Without a new generation coming through, we risk a major gap in expertise, productivity, and delivery.

The **Skills Horizon Barometer report** from Skills for Life highlights that 90% of SMEs are experiencing some form of skills shortage, with the biggest gap - 32% - at entry level. Across the sector, more than 140,000 vacancies remain unfilled, delaying housing and infrastructure projects<sup>2</sup>. Looking ahead, the UK will need almost 1 million additional construction workers by 2032 just to meet demand<sup>3</sup>.

Apprenticeships provide a direct, scalable way to nurture homegrown talent and support the development of skills in our

business. Our experience shows that by upskilling our workforce and embracing technical training programmes, we can address these gaps, strengthen our talent pipeline, and ensure the sector remains competitive.

Our degree apprenticeships provide us a robust and qualified talent pipeline into Commercial, Technical, and Management roles within the business. These are available for both career changers, older workers, internal talent looking to upskill, and also for the younger generation looking to enter and advance into Construction. It breaks the myth that all apprenticeships are trade based and for low academic ability, and it opens more opportunities for those wishing to join the industry.

## CAN THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR MEET HOUSING DEMAND WITHOUT INVESTING IN YOUNG APPRENTICES?

The construction industry is at a pivotal

moment. The Labour Government has committed to delivering 1.5 million new homes by 2029, that's 300,000 a year, to tackle the housing shortage<sup>4</sup>.

To meet such ambitious housing targets, we don't just need more people - we need the right skills. Apprenticeships across all levels and qualifications give us a way to develop our workforce, maintain quality, and embed the latest capabilities in areas like digital construction and sustainable building.

Without investing in young talent, the sector risks widening the skills gap, driving up costs, and losing critical expertise as older workers retire. Apprenticeships also help us diversify the industry and attract people who might never have seen construction as a career. So, while the sector might manage in the short term without them, the truth is clear: apprenticeships are essential if we want a sustainable, modern, and resilient construction industry.



<sup>1</sup>Holmes, H. & Burgess, G., 2024. *Construction and Building Trades: The Skills Horizon*. Places for People. Available at: <https://www.placesforpeople.co.uk/media/ae5piox1/pfp-skills-final-report.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>Holmes, H. & Burgess, G., 2024. *Construction and Building Trades: The Skills Horizon*. Places for People. Available at: <https://www.placesforpeople.co.uk/media/ae5piox1/pfp-skills-final-report.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>Holmes, H. & Burgess, G., 2024. *Construction and Building Trades: The Skills Horizon*. Places for People. Available at: <https://www.placesforpeople.co.uk/media/ae5piox1/pfp-skills-final-report.pdf>

<sup>4</sup>Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/planning-overhaul-to-reach-15-million-new-homes>



## HOW IMPORTANT ARE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMMES FOR SUPPORTING DIVERSITY, INNOVATION, AND THE SKILLS PIPELINE?

Apprenticeships programmes have a serious and important impact on the sector. Today, females make up just 0.9% of housebuilders and 4% of skilled tradespeople, while ethnic minorities represent only 6% of the construction workforce<sup>5</sup>. Without early careers pathways, we risk reinforcing these imbalances instead of breaking them down.

Apprenticeship schemes are designed to challenge outdated perceptions of construction as traditional, male-dominated, and low-skilled. In reality, our industry is highly technical and increasingly focused on sustainability and innovation – we’ve even been recognised by TIME and Statista as one of the 100 World’s Most Sustainable Companies. Through initiatives like #BuildWithoutBarriers, we’re showing a new generation that construction offers long-term opportunity, career progression, and meaningful, modern work.

For our business, these programmes have been transformative. Around 5.3% of our workforce are apprentices, graduates, or trainees, bringing fresh ideas, energy, and new perspectives that help us stay agile in a rapidly evolving sector. Many progress into permanent roles, strengthening our talent pipeline, reducing recruitment costs, and improving retention.

We’ve also seen real results on diversity,

in our 2024 Trade Apprenticeship intake, female applications rose by 40% and applications from ethnic minority candidates increased by over 32%. This is a critical step toward closing the sector’s diversity gap and ensuring the workforce reflects the communities we serve.

In short, without apprenticeships, we’d lose not only a vital skills pipeline but also the momentum we’ve built in driving diversity, innovation, and a modern image for construction.

## ARE STRUCTURED TRAINING PATHWAYS ESSENTIAL, OR IS ON-THE-JOB MENTORING ENOUGH?

Structured training provides a clear framework for developing the right skills, knowledge and recognised qualifications. It ensures consistency, accountability and measurable progress across the workforce. On-the-job mentoring is an excellent complement, offering real world context and peer-to-peer support, but it should not stand alone. Mentoring can accelerate learning, build confidence and encourage collaboration, yet structured training remains the most robust and scalable route to long-term professional growth.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO BUSINESS LEADERS WHO ARE HESITANT ABOUT INVESTING IN APPRENTICESHIPS?

At Barratt Redrow, we’ve seen first-hand how structured training and employment schemes can transform both individuals and the wider business. For any employer considering this for the first time, our advice is to visit the

**Skills for Life** website. Skills for Life is a campaign led by the Department for Education that seeks to help SMEs understand the full range of training and employment schemes available to them. Whether you’re exploring T Levels, curious about HTQs, or want to learn more about apprenticeships, the website has all the information you need in one place.

We encourage SMEs to see apprenticeships as a long-term investment. They create a pipeline of skilled, loyal employees who grow with the business and often progress into leadership roles. Even during economic challenges, we’ve prioritised early careers programmes because they close skills gaps and bring fresh energy into our organisation.

It’s also important to make schemes accessible and inclusive. By offering a welcoming application process and clear, debt-free pathways from Level 2 to Level 6, we open opportunities to candidates from a wide range of backgrounds, helping to address industry-wide diversity challenges.



One of the biggest draws for young people is the chance to earn while they learn. Providing a competitive salary alongside a recognised qualification attracts high-calibre candidates and fosters loyalty. This commitment is strengthened when apprentices are paired with senior mentors, accelerating learning, building confidence, and showing clear progression paths.

Finally, embedding learning into company culture makes a real difference. Beyond formal qualifications, access to development platforms and training in wellbeing, leadership, and diversity helps shape well-rounded professionals. Celebrating success stories – sharing the journeys of apprentices and graduates – builds internal support, inspires future talent, and challenges outdated perceptions of the industry.

<sup>5</sup> Holmes, H. & Burgess, G., 2024. Construction and Building Trades: The Skills Horizon. Places for People. Available at: <https://www.placesforpeople.co.uk/media/ae5picx1/pfp-skills-final-report.pdf>



**METROPOLITAN  
POLICE**

# **43% OF UK BUSINESSES WERE ATTACKED BY CYBER CRIME IN 2025**

The Met Police Cyber Protect and Prepare Team  
can help keep your organisation safe.

*Our fully funded services include:*

**CYBER SECURITY TRAINING**

**TABLETOP EXERCISES**

**CYBER ESCAPE ROOMS**

**To learn more about our services,  
visit [met.police.uk/cyberprotect](https://met.police.uk/cyberprotect)**