

London

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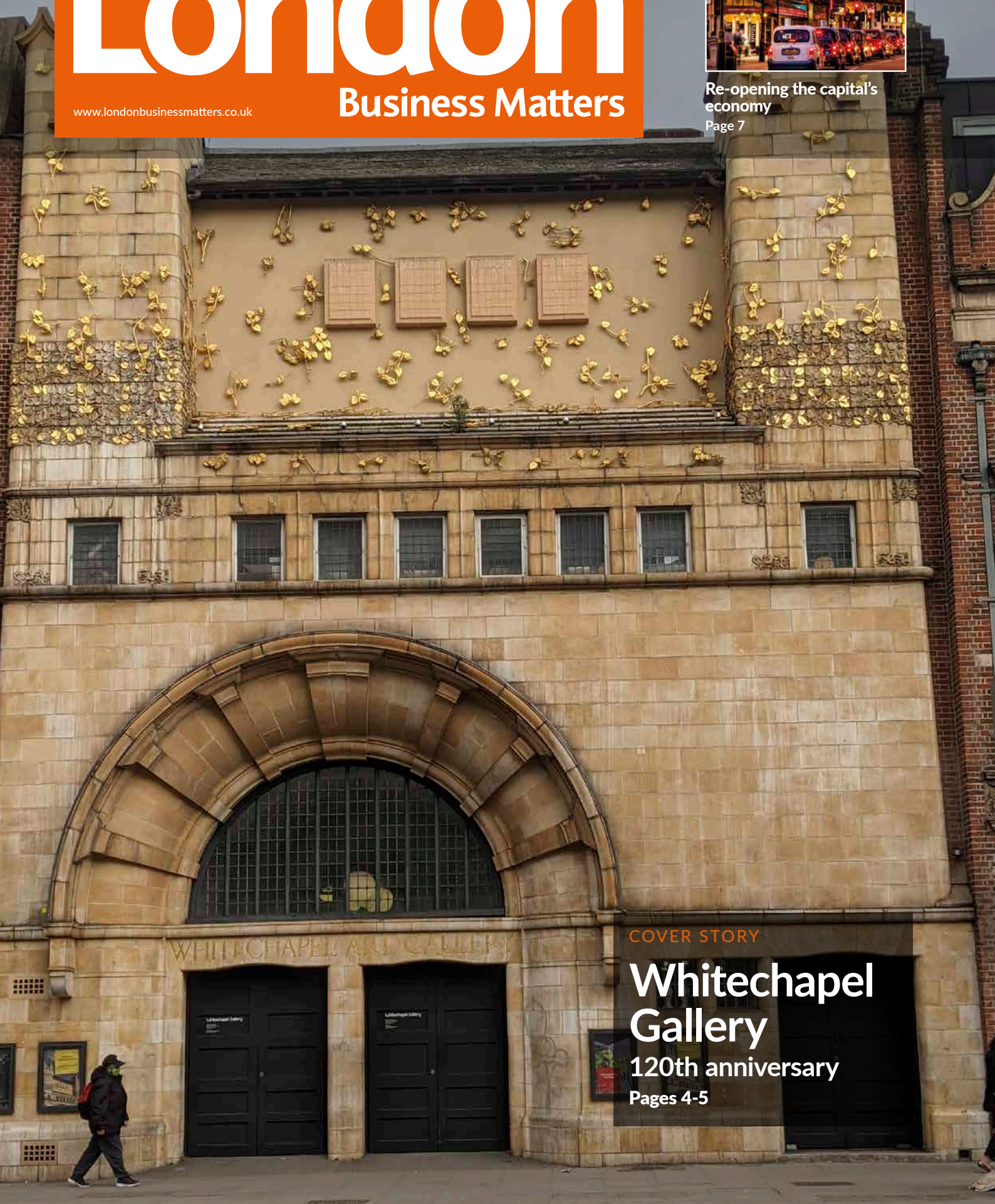
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INSIDE



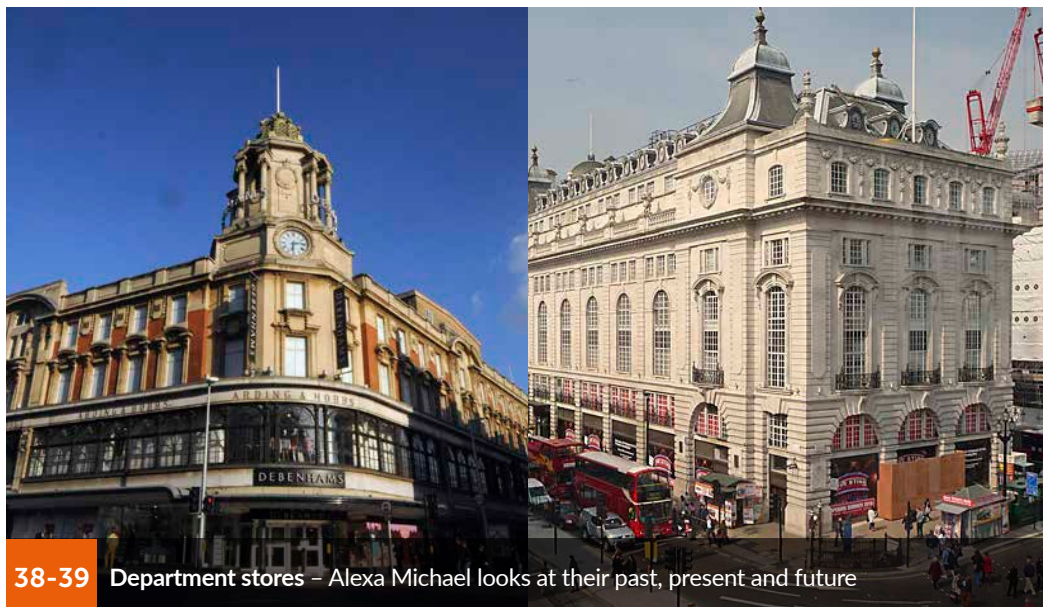
Re-opening the capital's economy
Page 7



COVER STORY

Whitechapel Gallery

120th anniversary
Pages 4-5



38-39 Department stores – Alexa Michael looks at their past, present and future

Regulars

Overseas business opportunities
From France to South Korea
Page 15



Webinars

What's been on and what's coming up
Pages 22-23



Two minute interview

Rodolfo Arocena of Dynamic Global
Page 28



News and events in Europe
Pages 46-47

New members
Who has recently joined LCCI?
Page 50

Features



Transport

TfL emergency funding extended
6

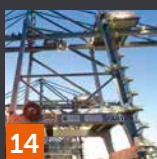


Budget

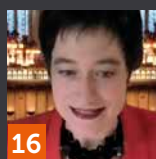
Welcome measures but gaps remain
10-11



Who will be Mayor?
Race for City Hall
12



Thames Freeport
Open for business
14



Environment

Dr Kirsten Dunlop connects global trade with climate action
16



International trade

Richard Currie of UPS looks beyond Europe
16-17



Caribbean

Deodat Maharaj on trade and investment opportunities
18

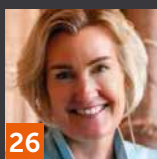


LCCI in the news

Post-Covid recovery dominates
20



LCCI Community App
Making connections
21



Business leadership
Haviland takes over at British Chambers
26



Covid Q&A

UK restrictions eased but mixed picture in Europe
29-30



Apprenticeships

Supporting SMEs across London
45

Front cover: Whitechapel Gallery, March 2021

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London Chamber of Commerce
33 Queen Street, London EC4R 1AP
Tel: 020 7248 4444
Fax: 020 7489 0391
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CHAMBER CONTACTS

Events
Victoria Jayne – 020 7203 1875

Export Documents
Davor McKinley – 020 7203 1856

Enterprise Europe Network
020 7203 1929

London Business Matters is edited by Peter Bishop – editor@londonbusinessmatters.co.uk

Information

Alexa Michael – 020 7203 1866

International business

Gwen Laryea – 0207 203 1840

Membership sales

020 7203 1960

Member support

Nick Charles – 020 7203 1957

Media relations

Steven Reilly-Hii – 020 7203 1897

Sponsorship opportunities

Dean Wade – 020 7556 2382

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Crosby Associates Media Limited
Liverpool (Head Office):
Burlington House, Crosby Road
North, Liverpool L22 0PJ
Tel: 0330 124 3780
www.crosbyassociates.co.uk

PUBLISHING CONTACTS

Advertising sales

Gina Forshaw – 020 7846 4809
gina.forshaw@crosbyassociates.co.uk

Production/design

Andy Bellis
andy.bellis@crosbyassociates.co.uk



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Mayor kickstarts London recovery with major investment

Last month Mayor of London Sadiq Khan unveiled a package of measures worth more than £544 million to kickstart London's recovery from the coronavirus pandemic as he brought together leaders and key London organisations – including the LCCI – at his inaugural Recovery Summit

The Mayor has put revitalising high streets, supporting communities and boosting jobs at the centre of his plan to rebuild the capital as a fairer, cleaner and greener city with a better long-term future for Londoners. His announcements included:

- As part of an ongoing programme working with City Hall, utility companies in London will bring forward an additional £499m of investment – creating over 1,400 jobs, with programmes to support jobs for younger Londoners, and those from BAME backgrounds



- A *Good Work Fund* to support Londoners from the next academic year to gain the skills they need to support London's recovery, such as for jobs in the green, health and social care, creative and digital sectors
- £5 million of investment from the European Social Fund to support unemployed people into work and help those in-work to im-

prove their skills at higher levels and progress into better jobs

- A *High Streets for All Challenge* that will invite Londoners and boroughs to come up with ideas for how high streets could change to meet the needs of a post-Covid world
- £3 million allocated to *Future Neighbourhoods 2030*, a project that will support neighbourhoods to transform their local environments, tackle climate change and air pollution, and prepare them for a zero-carbon future
- £1 million investment for the fifth tranche of *London Community Response* fund, which will provide grants for voluntary and community sector organisations to support the recovery and renewal of London's communities
- An open call for innovations that will help to address London's recovery challenges via *ChallengeLDN*.

Maximise

A special group has been formed who will use their procurement and recruitment power to maximise employment opportunities and help young people to flourish. The group – which is chaired by NHS London and includes LCCI, TfL, London Fire Brigade, Metropolitan Police, University of London, Association of Colleges, Film London, Trades Union Congress, London Jewish Forum and Muslim Council of Britain – have devised and signed London's first ever city-wide Anchor Institutions' Charter.

These organisations – who between them employ over 490,000 people and spend over £73 billion a year in London – have committed to help the capital recover from the pandemic by targeting job opportunities and support to Londoners

most impacted by the virus and the economic fallout of the last year.

Commitment

This work on anchor institutions is part of a growing focus by cities and is a means by which they can take radical steps to address inequality and boost their local economy by having the biggest employers work together. The work in London has been supported by Bloomberg Associates, who say that London is by far the biggest and most important international city to attempt to coordinate the spending and recruitment powers of anchor institutions in this way.

Undermining

Mayor Sadiq Khan said jobs and investment were crucial to getting the city going again, hence the multi-million package. He aimed to target resulting job opportunities to where they were needed the most. "It is unacceptable that despite the capital be-



Credit: European Parliament/Flickr.com (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

ing a massive generator of wealth for this country, London also has some of the most deprived communities of anywhere in the country, with stark inequalities, made even worse by the pandemic. So I'm calling on the government to match my ambitious plans as a starting point. By failing to fund and support the capital, the government faces the real risk of undermining a national recovery."

www.london.gov.uk/coronavirus/londons-recovery-coronavirus-crisis

Vital and welcome

LCCI welcomed the Mayor's investment package. Chief executive Richard Burge said: "London has been harder hit by the economic impact of Covid-19 than anywhere in the UK."

"The Mayor's investment in recovering our capital's economy is both vital and welcome, and it's essential that the government also invest in any targeted support London needs, including the right settlement for Transport for London. It simply cannot be ignored that London is the nation's world city and its economy is key to the UK's recovery from Covid-19."

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Celebrating the power of art in London's East End

Whitechapel Gallery celebrated its 120th anniversary last month with the launch of a twelve-month interactive campaign online, sharing rarely-seen material from its historic archives

The gallery's inaugural exhibition – *Modern Pictures by Living Artists, Pre-Raphaelites and Old Masters* – was presented in 1901 and attracted 260,000 visitors. It was rumoured the high numbers were because this was the first encounter with electric lights for many, but founders Samuel and Henrietta Barnett believed visitors were drawn in by the safe, welcoming space for creative innovation, something the East End had previously lacked.



Whitechapel Gallery, c. 1910

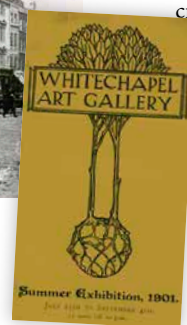
Inspired

The Barnetts believed in the power of art – not only to educate, but also to unite communities who spoke myriad languages, held different religious beliefs and hailed from various backgrounds. Inspired by

this idea they raised funds to construct a picture gallery as few inhabitants of the once-poverty stricken area could read or write. They settled on the Whitechapel High Street site, though looking around

at London's prestigious museums, Barnett noticed that they all resembled classical Parthenon-like temples, with grand steps leading up to an inner sanctum. He hired Britain's most progressive architect, Charles Harrison Townsend, whose first instructions were to create an entrance on street level, providing direct and immediate access to the artwork inside.

The new Whitechapel Art Gallery brought international artists and audiences to the East End, holding such early exhibitions as *Chinese Art* in 1901, *Japanese Art* in 1902, *Indian Art* in 1903 and *Muhammadan Art and Life in Turkey, Persia, Egypt, Morocco and India* in 1908. The gallery chal-



The Association of Students' Sketch Club, 1931



David Hockney, 1970

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lenged the expectation that works by the great modern masters were to hang in stately homes, whilst in the same space sharing work by local artists and groups like the Women's International Art Club. Founded to promote contacts between women artists of all nations, the club exhibited at the Whitechapel Gallery from 1921 until 1966 and counted among its members Eileen Agar (1899-1991), Gillian Ayres (1930-2018), Sonia Delauney (1885-1979), Elisabeth Frink (1930-1993), Gwen John (1876-1939) and Lee Krasner (1908-1984).

Roll call

The history of Whitechapel Gallery has since its inception been a history of firsts. It has premiered a roll call of modern masters including Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), Mark Rothko (1903-1970), Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975), Frida Kahlo (1907-1954), David Hockney (b. 1937), Lucian Freud (1922-2011) and Cindy Sherman (b. 1954). In recent years artists have included Nan Goldin (b. 1953), Zarina Bhimji (b. 1963), Gillian Wearing (b. 1963), William Kentridge (b. 1955) and Elmgreen and Dragset (founded 1995).



The Guerrilla Girls pictured outside the Whitechapel Gallery

Courtesy of the Whitechapel Gallery Archive



East End Academy, 1950

Freedom fighters

Perhaps its most famous exhibitor debuted at the gallery in 1939. The Stepney Trade Union hired the gallery to show Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) who aimed to raise consciousness about the Spanish Civil War. He



Queen Elizabeth and Ladies in Waiting, Stepney Childrens Pagent, 1909

Courtesy of the Whitechapel Gallery Archive

exhibited just one work – perhaps the greatest history painting of the 20th century, *Guernica* (1937). At Picasso's request East Enders contributed their boots, leaving them under the painting to be sent to the freedom fighters in Spain. The momentous

The history of Whitechapel Gallery has since its inception been a history of firsts

occasion was revisited in 2009 as Goshka Macuga (b. 1967) hung one of the three existing tapestry copies that were made of Picasso's work in her commission, *The Nature of the Beast*. The exhibition took place in a newly reopened gallery, having expanded into the neighbouring Passmore Edwards Library earlier the same year. 120 years has seen dramatic changes in the East End, but the Whitechapel Gallery's exhibitions, education programmes and spirit of innovation remain constant.

www.whitechapelgallery.org

Opening up

Whitechapel Gallery is scheduled to re-open on 19 May 2021



Barbara Hepworth install

Courtesy of the Whitechapel Gallery Archive

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Emergency funding extended for TfL



Transport for London (TfL) has been given a seven-week extension of emergency grant to help replace lost fares, taking it to the middle of next month. This is designed to see the company through the mayoral election period

Covid-19 and the resulting lockdown periods have hit TfL hard with estimates it will need up to £3.2 billion of government support for the 2021/22 financial year and about £1.6 billion a year between 2023 and 2030 for new infrastructure. It may have to abandon or pause certain projects but aims to break even on its operating costs within two years.



Rapid recovery

A statement from the Mayor's office – Sadiq Khan is ultimately responsible for TfL – said: "Ministers

need to provide TfL with long-term financial sustainability to ensure London makes a rapid recovery."

LCCI chief executive Richard

"Ministers need to provide TfL with long-term financial sustainability to ensure London makes a rapid recovery."

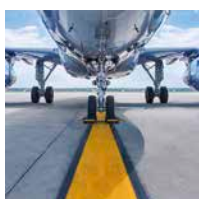
Burge welcomed the offer of funding on the basis that it would keep the network moving but added: "However, it's already clear that another deal would be needed beyond the mid-May funding deadline, as TfL's revenue will still be significantly impacted by loss of commuters and tourists, likely into late 2021. It's therefore disappointing that the offer doesn't extend further at this stage."



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Liverpool (Head Office)

Burlington House · Crosby Road North
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Manchester

First Floor, Lloyds House, 22 Lloyd Street
Manchester · M2 5WA

London

3rd Floor · 33 Finsbury Square
London · EC2A 1BB

Bringing people back into central London



Mayor Sadiq Khan has announced that £6 million will be invested in directly supporting the re-opening of London's economy once Covid restrictions are lifted

The money will help with the eventual reopening of central London, including a campaign to attract visitors and tourists back into the capital later this year and featuring major events that showcase central London's public spaces and cultural riches. Money could also be spent on helping local businesses to put in place more al-fresco dining to enable hospitality venues to re-open successfully post-lockdown.

Challenges and opportunities

The announcements coincide with the publication of a report conducted by Arup with Gerald Eve and the London School of Economics showing the future challenges and opportunities facing London's Central Activities Zone (CAZ), which has suffered a sudden and rapid reduction in footfall due to the pandemic.

The report concludes that the central London ecosystem is well placed to recovery strongly, with world-leading sectors such as tech and its arts and cultural offer. But if home working remains the norm for office workers and no further action is taken, the report shows this could lead to an estimated 86,000 fewer jobs within the CAZ by 2031 with the losses in retail, food and culture. The economy of London would contract by £36 billion by 2031 compared to a No-Covid-19 scenario – a significant hit to the UK economy as a whole.

Bolster

The Mayor has announced that



London is joining forces with Berlin, New York and Paris to bring forward innovation that will speed up the revival of central London, and bolster the resilience of businesses hardest hit by Covid.

The four cities will be working together over the summer to share data and ideas. From June the Mayor will be launching an open call for innovators and entrepreneurs to come forward with new ideas that can help the sectors hardest hit – such as arts and culture – to adapt and thrive post-lockdown.

www.london.gov.uk

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The implications of the Uber decision in the Supreme Court

by Jonathan Mansfield



For some years now the Courts have been grappling with the limits of rights of workers in the “gig” economy.

- Uber actively prevented drivers and passengers for having an agreement between themselves without the use of the Uber app.

The argument here was about whether Uber drivers have the status of “workers”. The concept of a “worker” is something created by statute and means that those with status have certain rights including to be paid the minimum wage, to have paid holiday and various other protections.

The Judgment places emphasis on the relationship of “subordination and dependency” of the drivers. The drivers do not have the ability to increase their professional skills or increase their earnings other than by working for Uber.

Uber had tried to argue that the drivers were self-employed.

It was also found that the drivers were working the whole time they were logged onto the Uber App and not just when taking passengers to destinations. Given that the effect of the ruling is the entitlement to the minimum wage this is likely to significantly increase earnings for drivers.

A number of reasons were set out as to why they considered it to be the case. These factors were as follows:

- Uber set the fares for each journey rather than the drivers who could not decide their own prices;
- Uber provided effectively non-negotiable terms and conditions for working as a driver for them;
- Drivers who cancelled or did not accept rides would face penalties;
- Uber would provide a rating system which had the effect of controlling the way the drivers worked. The drivers would face penalties or termination of contract if they did not fulfil these conditions;

It should be noted that there are a large number of industries where there is a reliance on individuals who are stated to be self-employed. The trend in the other cases such as those involving Pimlico Plumbers from 2018 indicate a willingness of the Courts to extend workers rights in this area. This is so even if the parties agree contractual terms which state an employee is self-employed.

Jonathan Mansfield,
co-founding partner,
Thomas Mansfield Solicitors

For advice on these difficult issues please contact Jonathan Mansfield at Thomas Mansfield Solicitors jonathan.mansfield@thomasmansfield.com or 07947598148.

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Navigating The New Normal To Help Your Business Thrive

By Simon Garcia
Owner of Freedom Wellbeing Inc

So, it looks like homeworking is here to stay, but even after a year in this situation, organisations & workers are still struggling with the adjustment and it is not likely to settle down for a while, as a reintroduction to office-life will be thrown into the mix in the coming months.



With the imposed homeworking situation, organisations whether pro agile-working or very much against, were left to “suck it and see” and generally, there has not been much of an argument against how well it’s worked overall. To ensure that it remains a positive development, there needs to be a proactive approach to workplace wellbeing from both employers and employees, with equal focus given to mental and physical health.

Freedom Wellbeing Inc have completed around a thousand homeworking assessments during the pandemic. Over the first six months, the emphasis of discomfort was on the physical side. A majority of those assessed had worked from home a day or so a week pre-pandemic and for that, a dining table & chair, though not ideal, was sufficient as a workstation. When suddenly using it for five days straight, musculoskeletal disorders kicked in.

For the six months that followed, the pendulum swung toward mental health. The novelty of being home and not forking out for your annual train ticket now worn off, the psycho-social impact of no physical interaction with colleagues, staring at the same four walls, plus the added stress of increased restrictions, home-schooling and winter weather all piled pressure on our mental state. Anyone that has experienced stress will know, it manifests into muscle tension (hunched shoulders, stiff neck), where we resort to our fight or flight instinct.

Here are five steps for employers and to adopt to help ensure everyone stays physically healthy, mentally strong and at their most productive.

- Homeworking assessments are an essential to ensure your staff have everything they need to perform their role as safely as possible and remaining productive.
- If you have any form of EAP (Employee Assist Programme), promote it constantly. If you do not have EAP, look into ad-hoc stress & anxiety counselling.
- Train managers in Mental Health First Aid, so they can recognise warning signs within their team.
- Send out a wellbeing survey every 6mths to gauge how people are coping with the new ways of working. This will be incredibly beneficial for forward planning.
- Initiate shorter video meetings. If you book 60min meetings as standard, make it mandatory that they are 50mins. This will allow for breaks in between back-to-back sessions.



For support with Homeworking Assessments, Counselling, MHFA Training or implementing a suitable Wellbeing Program for your organisation, contact Freedom Wellbeing Inc today.

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Travel proposals could benefit London and UK recovery

The Central London Alliance, of which LCCI is part, has urged the UK government to explore the adoption of the EU’s coronavirus digital green certificate scheme, and the benefits it could bring to London and the UK’s economic recovery from Covid-19.

The Digital Green Certificate will be a proof that a person has been vaccinated against Covid-19, received a negative test result or recovered from it.

Security and authenticity

It will be available, free of charge, in digital or paper format and will include a QR code to ensure security and authenticity of the certificate. The Commission will build a gateway to ensure all certificates can be verified across the EU, and support Member States in the technical implementation of certificates. The certificate would be issued to EU citizens and their family members, regardless of their nationality. It should also be issued to non-EU nationals who reside in the EU and to visitors who have the right to travel to other Member States.

Confidence

Richard Burge, on behalf of the Central London Alliance, said: “The ability to travel internationally with confidence will be absolutely vital to London’s economic recovery, and therefore the economic recovery of the UK.

“The EU’s proposals for a coronavirus digital green certificate sound a sensible way to safely get the continent’s travel, tourism, and trade industries moving once more.

“The Central London Alliance urges the UK government to explore the adoption of this Europe-wide scheme – to provide consistency of approach and confidence to travellers across Europe.”

The Central London Alliance is a collection of London businesses large and small, communities, charities, associations and authorities who are pooling their resources and considerable influence to push for a faster and more sustainable recovery of the capital city. It includes LCCI, the Heart of London Business Alliance and Integrity International Group www.centrallondonalliance.com

Wild West



LCCI member Martin Dubbey featured as an expert commentator in last month’s Panorama – *Cashing in on Covid*

The former senior customs and police officer, now running Harod Associates, a leading global investigation and intelligence company, was interviewed by BBC investigative reporter Richard Bilton about the state of chaos at UK ports as companies and the government scrambled to get hold of supplies of personal protective equipment.

Dubbey compared the situation with a Wild West gold rush with his role focussing on helping prevent companies getting scammed.

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Budget 2021 – welcome measures but gaps remain

Chancellor Rishi Sunak's second budget was delivered at an even more critical time than his first one as economic recovery is now more vital than ever. Overall it contained several welcome measures that will give businesses much-needed certainty, but gaps remain. LCCI analysts looked at six key headings: furlough, financial support, self-employed, apprenticeships, recovery investment, and how London fared

Furlough extension

With 712,200 now furloughed, London has had the highest number of furloughed staff in England since July. Its unemployment rate is now estimated at seven per cent – the highest in the UK. The extension of furlough to end of September will



give businesses and their employees the much-needed certainty they have been waiting for. Businesses will be required to contribute 10 per cent in July and 20 per cent in August and

With 712,200 now furloughed, London has had the highest number of furloughed staff in England since July

September. This must be kept under review as the government assesses the gradual reopening of our economy.

Financial support

Businesses will be relieved that a cliff-edge has been avoided for the time being, with the 100 per cent business rates holiday extended through to the end of June. Business rates will still be discounted by two thirds for the remaining nine months of the year. Businesses in central London that are dependent on the return of tourism and office workers may need this extended further.

VAT relief will also continue until the end of September, with an interim rate of 12.5 per cent to follow for another six months. The standard rate is not set to return until April next year.

Many businesses will also be assured by the targeted support aimed at helping them to reopen. This includes:

- new Restart Grants, worth up to £18,000 for hospitality, accommodation, leisure, personal care and gym businesses
- a new Recovery Loan Scheme to replace the Bounce Back Loan

and CBIL schemes, providing loans between £25,001 and £10 million, and asset and invoice finance between £1,000 and £10 million, for businesses of all sizes

- much-needed support for theatres, museums and other cultural organisations in England through the Culture Recovery Fund.

For many, however, the cost of doing business in the capital will mean that this support will barely scratch the surface. The top level of business grants for the largest businesses forced to lock down should be extended, along with removal of the cap on discretionary grants to better reflect the high costs of doing business in London.

It was extremely disappointing to see such little targeted support for the aviation industry. We urge the government to act without delay to introduce further support, namely full business rates relief for airports.

Extension of Stamp Duty relief until September will be a boost to the property and construction sector. But commercial tenants and landlords need the government to outline a clear solution to address the rent arrears crisis.

Support for the self-employed

The extension of support for the self-employed, along with the ability of newly self-employed to claim income support grants, is welcome. A fourth grant will cover February to April, worth 80 per cent of average trading profits up to £7,500, with a fifth grant to be made available from July.

Apprenticeships and traineeships

Apprenticeships have an important role to play in supporting our recovery and addressing growing unemployment. Doubling the apprenticeships incentive bonus for businesses to £3,000 for all new hires is a very positive move, as are the additional funding to triple the number of traineeships and the introduction of a new "flexi-job" programme allowing apprentices to work with a number of employers in one sector.

Recovery investment

Investment in future growth will be a boost to recovery, and LCCI wel-

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come the Chancellor's announcement of number of initiatives such as a new management programme for upskilling 30,000 SMEs over three years, a new 25p 'super-de-duction' in tax from April for each pound invested in new equipment for the next two years, and a 'Help to Grow' scheme of digital support for 100,000 SMEs.

But the hike in corporation tax to 25 per cent will be a sharp hit to many businesses and will be a worry for inward investment.

While new visa reforms will be a shot in the arm for science, research and tech, and improved visa processes for scale-ups and entrepreneurs are also welcome, businesses across

our economy need access to skills at all levels. The government should engage with industry to address ongoing skills gaps in sectors such as construction and logistics, and growing concerns about future skills gaps in industries like hospitality.

What's in it for London?

We particularly welcome the government's plans to position the City of London as the leading market for high quality voluntary carbon offsets. As a world-leading global capital, London must play a critical role in the reduction of global carbon emissions, and we look forward to working with local and national

government on cementing London's leadership in other areas of green-ing the global economy.

The announcement of the Thames Freeport will also be a significant boost to the capital's trade and commerce – see page 14.



However, London needs a comprehensive plan that recognises its complex importance to the nation as a whole, as well as its crucial role in Global Britain's evolving relationships with the rest of the world. It

was disappointing to see such little mention of the capital and its treatment as a subset of nationally applied policies. London's competitiveness and reputation are critical to the UK's competitiveness and reputation. Its world-city status is a vital contributor to the wealth of the UK. As such, it is an essential component in the UK's overall recovery, and we will continue to make the case for recognition of and investment in the capital's pivotal recovery role.

Furthermore, with talks between the government and TfL ongoing, LCCI continues to call for a long-term settlement to ensure investment in our capital's vital transport infrastructure.

London should not be 'levelled-down

Commenting on the Budget, LCCI chief executive Richard Burge said: "In London, full economic recovery will not just happen when shutters can be lifted. Lockdown easing will be staggered and the conditions after full unlocking have to be right for the safe return of domestic and international visitors, as well as business travel and trade. That's why the extension of support beyond the lockdown lifting dates makes sense and will be welcomed by business.

"But the road to recovery may well end up with more speed restrictions than hoped, so it's important the government remain open-minded to a need for further extension, if so.

Recovery plan

"Announcements in the Budget about the Thames freeport and positioning the City of London as the leading market for high quality voluntary carbon offsets are welcome. It's vital that government continue to invest in

London, as in real terms Covid-19 has levelled the capital down more than any other part of the UK. As we look to recover from this pandemic we need to see national and local government backing a London recovery plan that is loud and proud about the capital and the role that its domestic and global economies plays in the UK's prosperity. Allowing London to be levelled-down will not aid levelling-up the rest of the UK."

M
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www.morleycollege.ac.uk

LCCI members are eligible for discounts on courses at Morley.

Race for City Hall

In the run-up to next month's Mayoral election, LCCI has been hosting sessions for the main candidates and giving businesspeople a chance to grill them online. It has been a bit different from last year when, just before lockdown and well in advance of the postponed election, the Chamber organised a hustings event at the London School of Economics with hundreds of delegates able to witness the candidates in person.



Nevertheless, the democratic process has been well served and the representatives of the Conservative, Green, and Liberal Democrat parties have been given the opportunity to get their manifestos aired. A session with the Labour candidate, incumbent Sadiq Khan, is due this month.

Here are highlights of proposals made by the candidates featured so far.

Conservative – Sean Bailey



As Mayor he would put London's agenda at the top of the government's agenda.

On transport:

- He noted that London has the best fares income in the world, but has proposed private sponsorship plans similar to a scheme



used on the Dubai metro to support TfL's finances

- He would launch a London Infrastructure Bank to fund long-term transport projects in the capital
- In terms of greening road transport, he indicated that the Ultra Low Emissions Zone can have an adverse effect of encouraging drivers onto the road once they have paid the charge. Bailey would instead electrify London's bus fleet. He would encourage getting private vehicles off the road as much as possible and sees taxis as playing a helpful role to reduce private car use
- He would at least double the number of electric charging points and introduce night deliveries to facilitate improved logistics.

On the built environment:

- He pledged to deliver homes through an organisation - *Housing for London* - making better use of TfL land
- He would tackle building site emissions, lowering the construction carbon footprint through biodiversity
- The government recently announced priority local authority areas for allocations of the levelling up fund. When asked why only two London boroughs were allocated funding when six appear in the government's own deprivation index, and whether this indicated a levelling down of London, Bailey responded that government funding for London's local authorities is already significantly higher than those in other parts of the country.

Green – Sian Berry



As Mayor she would introduce a more local focus for business with smart road pricing and less reliance on international travellers.

On the economy

- London's economy should be measured in terms of its financial and not merely its size. The central area should be re-balance with more residents and reduced numbers of visitors. There would be a focus on the capital's local economies. As mayor she would lobby for a £14 per hour London Living wage by 2022.

On transport

- She would introduce "smart, fair road charging". London's transport hub should focus on the city's knowledge economy more than on international trade in goods and become more sustainable in material resources.

On housing

- City Hall cash would be used to buy homes for key workers and TfL sites would be used for building outer London housing.

On the environment

- Businesses would be set the chal-

lenge of reducing waste and as mayor she would put in place a detailed plan to reach net zero carbon targets by 2030.

On Brexit

- She would strive to improve trading relations with Europe – her party calls for a return to the customs union.

Liberal Democrat –



Luisa Porritt

As mayor she would combat the government's attitude to London which she saw as levelling it down at the same time as building bridges with Whitehall.

On recovering from the pandemic

- Empty offices in the centre should be converted into housing; high streets in the boroughs should be "reinvented"; home working and City Hall investment would facilitate a locally-led economic recovery.

On skills

- She would support the "lost generation" of young people with a new apprenticeship programme and would conduct a basic Universal Income trial.

On the environment

- She would propose more safe and efficient cycling routes; and more support for the green economy.

On Brexit

- She would fight for a strong relationship with the EU and work cooperatively with fellow mayors in Europe.
- The 2021 London mayoral election will be held on 6 May 2021 at the same time as elections for the London Assembly and other local elections across England.

For a full list of London mayoral candidates visit www.londonelects.org.uk

Trade figures reflect business struggles

Office for National Statistics (ONS) data show that UK goods exports to the EU fell 40.7 per cent in January, with imports down 2.8 per cent

The figures show the biggest drop since records began in 1997 and are the first since the new trading arrangements between the UK and the EU came into operation.

The ONS said temporary factors were likely to be behind much of the falls. Separate new data relating to GDP showed that the UK economy shrank by 2.9 per cent in January amid the third lockdown.

Ominous

Commenting on the trade figures, British Chambers of Commerce economist Suren Thiru said: "While changes in data collection limit historic comparisons, the significant slump in UK exports of goods to the EU, particularly compared to non-EU trade, provides an ominous indication of the damage being done to post-Brexit trade with the EU by the current border disruption.

"Continued coronavirus restrictions and the unwinding of Brexit stockpiling also added to downward pressure on trade between the UK and EU in January.

"The practical difficulties faced by businesses on the ground go well beyond just teething problems and with disruption to UK-EU trade flows persisting, trade is likely to be a drag on UK economic growth in the first quarter of 2021.

"Although the postponement of import checks will help avoid exacerbating the current disruption, there must be a greater focus on long-term solutions to improving the flow of UK-EU trade. Offering tax credits to support firms to adapt to the new arrangements would help many address new burdens and requirements better."

Complexities

Richard Burge, LCCI chief executive said: "While these figures should be treated with a degree of caution, we must be clear that this hit to trade is not just down to teething problems. Many traders have struggled in the aftermath of the end of transition with significant complexities and a lack of clarity and understanding

"The London trade debate tends to focus on services, but goods trade is also key to its activity."



about new rules and processes. The knock-on effect this is having on traders' confidence is particularly concerning, and it will be important to see how this picture develops as further data emerges over the coming months.

"The London trade debate tends to focus on services, but goods trade is also key to its activity. Every possible effort must be made to work with industry to support businesses with clear and thorough guidance, particularly at a time when they are still grappling with the impacts of Covid-19."

Modest decline

On the GDP figures Thiru said that they confirmed a better-than-expected start to the year for the UK economy "as the third lockdown and post-Brexit border disruption combined to trigger only a relatively modest decline in economic activity in January.

"The vaccine rollout and budget stimulus will boost output as restrictions ease. However, the lingering economic effects of Covid, including elevated consumer and business debt levels, may severely limit the pace of any recovery.

"Despite a number of welcome announcements in the budget, there are still many businesses and individuals who have, through no fault of their own, been excluded from government support. Many will require help if they are to navigate a difficult few months ahead before the economy is able to fully reopen."

SPONSORED COLUMN

Government launches Brexit Support Fund for SMEs



By Jaspal Dhillon, VAT Director at Lubbock Fine

HMRC have confirmed that small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) will now be able to apply to the SME Brexit Fund to support them with customs duties and VAT obligations.

The aim of this support scheme is to help businesses prepare for the new import controls coming into force and to help businesses adapt to new customs and tax rules when trading with the EU.

What can the grant be used for?

The grant can be used either for staff training purposes or to pay for professional advice to help meet a firm's declaration requirements, in areas such as customs, excise and matters concerning VAT.

What support is available?

HMRC will provide grants up to £2,000.

Who will be eligible?

Businesses will only be eligible if they meet the following criteria:

- Your business will need to be established in the UK
- Although your business may be established in the UK, the minimum requirement is to be established for at least 12 months before submitting the application for support

- You will need to make certain that your business has not previously failed to meet any tax or customs obligations
- The number of employees must not exceed 500 employees
- The annual turnover of the business must be within £100 million
- Your business will need to import or export goods between Great Britain and the EU, or move goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland

How to apply

This will be an online application process, which we at Lubbock Fine can provide more details on where required.

Get in touch

If you're looking to find out more on the support scheme or looking for professional advice, please get in touch with VAT Director, Jaspal Dhillon (jaspaldhillon@lubbockfine.co.uk).

Lubbock Fine
Paternoster House
65 St Paul's Churchyard
London EC4M 8AB
t +44(0)20 7490 7766
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Thames Freeport 'open for business'

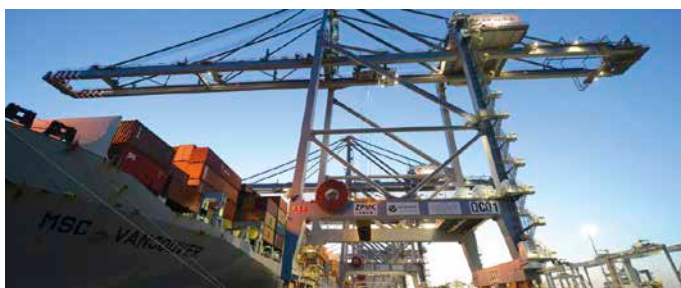
Thames Freeport announced that it was open to do business with new customers, just hours after the Budget announcement that it would be one of eight new freeports in England

Thames Freeport is a digitally linked economic zone connecting Ford's Dagenham engine plant, the global ports at London Gateway and Tilbury, and many communities in urgent need of 'levelling-up'. Businesses looking to expand can take advantage of the tax benefits of relocating to the freeport and being part of a customs zone which makes it easier and cheaper to move goods into and out of the country.

Other benefits of Thames Freeport include:

- £5.1 billion additional GVA
- Over £4.5 billion in new public and private investment
- 25,000+ new jobs with many more across supply chains, with significant investment in training and skills
- 1,700 acres of development land – much with planning consent
- £400 million port investment into some of the most deprived areas
- 20 per cent of the UK's most deprived communities are in London and the South East.

There is a vast amount of freeport experience in the group. DP World has its origins in Jebel Ali, Dubai's hugely successful free zone, while Tilbury was a freeport until 2012.



Jebel Ali Port, Dubai

Catalyst

Stuart Wallace of Forth Ports (owner of the Port of Tilbury), said: The freeport builds upon the successful completion of our new port, Til-

bury2 and provides the platform for further expansion. The freeport policy's special economic measures will turbocharge the best of the private sector, attracting value add manufacturing activity to the ports,

Freeports around the country

As well as Thames Freeport, East Midlands airport, Felixstowe and Harwich, Humber, Liverpool city region, Plymouth and south Devon, Solent, and Teesside have been named as the new wave of freeports. All are expected to open later this year.

Businesses within the areas will be exempt from rates and stamp duty, and customs processes will be simplified.

the Thames Estuary and the wider South East, alongside supporting key infrastructure projects in the coming years. The Thames Freeport will be that catalyst to level up the left behind communities along the estuary."

Dr Graham Hoare OBE of Ford of Britain said that the free port would be a new centre of excellence for the country "as we electrify, automate and digitise our future. The freeport provides Ford with a great opportunity as a test bed for a variety of customer-focused mobility technologies and other business opportunities at Ford Dagenham in the future."

Expand

Alan Shaoul from DP World in the UK (owner of the port and logistics park, London Gateway, and an LCCI member), urged companies wishing to expand to get in touch. "Our London Gateway site alone has almost 10m square feet of land that has planning consent, and the capacity to expand materially its operational area and attract new foreign direct investment."

The Thames Freeport group will be working with the Port of London Authority, Thurrock Council, Barking and Dagenham Council, the South East LEP, the Thames Estuary Growth Board and other key stakeholders and will continue to develop programmes, including the proposed hydrogen fuel production, storage and fuelling project.

www.thamesfreeport.com
www.londongateway.com

Playing a vital role

The Port of London was the biggest port in the UK last year, handling 47.4 million tonnes of cargo, ensuring that essential supplies were delivered uninterrupted to supermarkets, factories, forecourts and hospitals.

Terminals on the Thames handle a diverse range of cargoes including food, fuel, building materials and UK goods for export.

PLA chief executive, Robin Mortimer, explained: "In a year in which UK ports all played a vital role in keeping the country fed, fuelled and supplied throughout the pandemic, we are proud that the Port of London handled the most cargo of any UK port.

Supply chains

"Last year saw a massive collective effort across the port, including from terminal operators, shipping lines, essential support services such as towage providers, and of course our own team. Working together we kept essential supply chains running, so medicines, food and fuel arrived without delay."

Developments during the year included the completion of phase one of the Tilbury2 facility, providing expanded unaccompanied freight capacity ready for Brexit, continued growth in calls at London Gateway and expanding services to the continent as demand increased later in the year.



HMM Algeciras which called on the Port of London in June 2020 is the first of a class of 12 container ships that have a capacity of 23,964 twenty-foot equivalent units

Overall trade in the Port of London fell to 47.4 million tonnes in 2020, down 12 per cent from 54.0 million tonnes in 2019. London's ports – London Gateway, Tilbury

and Ford at Dagenham – are diverse, bringing in building materials, food, petrol and jet fuel.

www.pla.co.uk



Overseas business opportunities

Do you want to access a selection of business co-operation offers made by European companies wishing to work with UK firms? Every month Enterprise Europe Network publishes a Business Opportunities in Europe Bulletin, which contains the latest co-operation offers from companies across the EU and beyond. To find out more about this issue's listed overseas business opportunities or to subscribe to the bulletin contact Enterprise Europe Network London at enterprise.europe@londonchamber.co.uk or 020 7203 1929.



Israel

A company offers innovative underfloor heating solutions that suit many different types of home flooring including marble, ceramic, parquet, and carpets. The company is looking for commercial agents to represent the underfloor heating solution to potential customers. In addition, the company is looking for distributors under distribution agreement.
REF: BOIL20210131002



South Korea

This company's water purifier and softener use an eco-friendly CDI (Capacitive De-Ionization) technology to control mineral levels in water. This company is the first to commercialize the CDI technology in Korea, of which only 10 other companies in the world possess. Thanks to the technology, its items are energy and cost efficient with high recovery rate. It hopes to make commercial agency, distribution services, manufacturing or outsourcing agreements with potential global partners.
REF: BOKR20210216001



Sweden

A food company with innovative plant-based beverages is looking for distributors, especially importers or wholesalers, which supply different trade channels such as retail, E-commerce and HoReCa (Hotel, Restaurant, Café) in order to have a successful distribution with a very performing product for consumers and HoReCa professionals. The product works smoothly well because of a very appreciated taste together with coffee, tea, smoothie, cereal or when cooking food.
REF: BOSE20210211001



Italy

A company, specialized in pharmaceutical sector, is developing a novel system for 3D printing of customized medicines, based on extrusion technique. The company is seeking for partners interested in a technical cooperation agreement, with the aim to study and develop the process about loading the machine.
REF: TRIT20210301001



Hungary

An SME specialises in the production, installation, commissioning and maintenance of different types of water disinfection units and works with various types of sensing and controlling electronics to archive the automatic operation of these units. They provide chlorinators, chlorination systems, electronics, applications, chemical dosing units, UV technologies, ozone generators and heat pumps.
REF: BOHU20210203001



Slovenia

A research institute has developed a novel method for the deposition of vanadium and other metal oxide nanoparticles. The method is simple and results in unimodal nanoparticle size distributions. The institute is looking for producers of lithium-ion batteries, vanadium redox batteries, catalysts, microbolometers, ethanol sensors and other electronic devices for technical cooperation agreement and license agreement to apply the technology in their production.
REF: TOSI20210222001



France

A design agency working for luxury sector is looking for recyclable, biodegradable raw materials such as polymers for production of display corners. The searched partner could be a supplier of material and/or manufacturer of the final product in the basis of these materials.
REF: BRFR20210114001



Denmark

A biotechnology SME offers in-depth analysis of gene expression data. Currently beta testing, the company seeks new collaboration partners from Europe and North America in terms of companies or organisations within the field of biotechnology or biomedicine that provide data on either gene or protein expressions, under commercial agreements with technical assistance or research agreements.
REF: TODK20190805001

Mergers and Acquisitions - top tips to make it less daunting



Dan Burrows

Mergers and Acquisitions Executive Consultant

Mergers and acquisitions are an inevitable part of business. Whether you're acquiring to diversify your product range, gain market share, or need access to skills and experience you don't have; or if you've decided it's a good time to sell up and move on, chances are you'll end up in an M&A process.

As a technology business, we're committed to doing the best for our customers and providing the widest range of services we can. That's why we have a dedicated M&A team. We help customers prepare for sale, or do technology due diligence on businesses they're thinking of acquiring. We've done a lot of M&A work, and we wanted to share some tips we've learned along the way.

- If you're thinking of selling, you'll do everything you can to make your business attractive. But, don't forget about technology and systems. You wouldn't buy a car without service history or a service plan, so why would buyers want to take on a system that hasn't been upgraded for years? Or infrastructure that doesn't have support? Take time to get the technology up to scratch, and it's one less thing to worry about.
- For buyers, it's not usually enough to ask what 'core systems' the business uses. In our experience, it's not the flagship ERP implementation that causes real problems, but that small-scale payroll, or factory management system, that sits on a 15 year-old PC in the corner of a dusty office. Good technical due diligence uncovers those key risks and provides a clear plan to mitigate them.
- Selling a technology business? You may have a market leading web platform, but if it's not secure, you'll never be able to sell it. Prepare for the inevitable questions, and have your product independently evaluated for security, scalability, and reliability. It'll look better in the seller's information pack!
- If you've just bought a business and need to integrate it with another, technology not only helps, but actually drives change. Take the opportunity to evaluate the wider systems and infrastructure landscape, and invest in things that'll make real differences to all the businesses in the Group. It'll save work later on.

If this has got you thinking, we'd love to talk to you about your M&A plans. You can get in touch with our M&A team at M&A@waterstons.com, or find more on our website visit: www.waterstons.com/core-services/mergers-and-acquisitions

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Trade beyond Europe



Richard Currie believes that now is the time for UK SMEs to exploit trade opportunities outside the EU

Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic have reminded UK business owners just how much they rely on their European customer base. As businesses begin to come to terms with post-Brexit rules, it's no surprise that many are unsure what 2021 will look like when it comes to international trade. Research has also highlighted this trend of uncertainty, with recent

data from global accountancy firm, UHY Hacker Young revealing that a fifth of British SMEs that currently export to the EU have temporarily

stopped overseas sales due to the complexity of new customs rules.

While many UK SMEs remain uncertain about exporting to the EU, the UK government's ambition to sign free trade agreements with countries that cover 80 per cent of UK trade by 2022 is signalling a new era of global business and trade. As we enter 2021, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is also likely to fuel the shift toward online shopping, further emphasising the importance of international trade for SMEs. In 2020 alone, there was a 57 per cent year-on-year increase (YoY) in outbound UK ecommerce sales, with the peak holiday trading



period in November experiencing a 42 per cent YoY like-for-like surge in international cross-border online sales, compared to the same period last year. With a combination of beneficial new free trade agreements and the continued shift towards ecommerce – there has never been a better time for SMEs to look to the future and forge new opportunities around the world.

Here are the top four international markets UK SMEs should consider trading with in 2021.

A fifth of British SMEs that currently export to the EU have temporarily stopped overseas sales due to the complexity of new customs rules.

Connecting global trade to climate action

This year's Tacitus Lecture – *Too hot to trade: world trade and climate action* – was given by Dr Kirsten Dunlop, chief executive of EIT Climate-KIC. In a brilliant and wide-ranging speech to a global audience, she focused on how businesses can innovate to create systemic change and sustainable world trade. In this edited extract Dr Dunlop sets the scene



Tacitus was a historian of world changing choices and actions, coloured by the complexity of human nature: the dangers of vested interests, power without accountability, concentration of wealth generated through trade and conquest, leading to corruption and abuse.

I am here to talk about a topic of world changing choice: the relationship between world trade and climate change – where the desire for the safety of the status quo stands indeed against the prosperity and survival of our children and of all future generations. I am neither a climate scientist nor an expert in world trade. I am here as a practitioner of innovation in service of transformation – of core business models, industry paradigms, places and spaces – the cities, regions, nations in which we live.

Transformations

My business is: how to change the world. The focus of my work is on doing that to avert the consequences of climate change – specifically

through systemic approaches to innovation designed to catalyse systems transformations.

I am also, however, a historian of cities and of urban civilization, which as a history, is all about stock and flows of resources and the people husbanding, exchanging and speculating on them – from salt and gold to alum and paper, cotton and sugar, spice, herring, wool or saltpetre. Cities and urban civilization flourish where trade possibilities accumulate; trade connects and relates, enacts our interdependencies, traces human lines and marks across the skin of the planet.

Disconnected

As I researched for this speech, I noted with increasing concern how little discourse, relatively speaking, there appears to be within the circles of world trade on how to connect world trade to climate action, how disconnected still World Trade Organisation and UN Framework

“Perhaps the most telling aspect is that climate change is rarely mentioned in trade discussions and agreements.”

Convention on Climate Change processes are; with neither getting us to where we need to be. Perhaps the most telling aspect is that climate change is rarely mentioned in trade discussions and agreements, and where it is, only in an environmental context whereas climate change is far more than an environmental issue. It is now fundamental to the economic prosperity of humanity, let alone nations, and to world trade in every dimension. Resolving emissions in cities, for example – currently responsible for more than 70 per cent of global emissions and in the agricultural

practices that sustain them (11 per cent emissions globally) – is bound up inextricably with global trade architecture, habits and practices.

Tipping points

I am going to make a series of assertions about the situation we face. But for the purposes of this talk I won't elaborate beyond the key points of principle. Suffice to say that what I am bringing to you is based on the latest scientific findings and conclusions. These point to the fact that we have badly under-estimated both the speed and extent of climate change. In particular our analysis has failed to pay sufficient attention to what are called the 'tipping points' of the climate system. These are points at which our climate system may change abruptly from one relatively stable state to another one, far less conducive to human development and possibly trigger irreversible, self-sustaining warming. Examples are the collapse of the West Antarctic ice sheet, and the disappearance of Arctic sea ice. Put simply, global warming and global warming feedback effects are happening much faster than we have anticipated. **”**

See the full lecture at www.world-traders.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/2021-Tacitus-Lecture_Too-Hot-to-Trade_Dr.-Kirsten-Dunlop_25.02.2021.pdf

The World Traders' Tacitus Lecture was sponsored by the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry www.world-traders.org



USA



With a GDP of approximately \$21.43 trillion (2019), the United States is the world's largest economy and holds huge potential for small and medium sized businesses. UK businesses have long realised the export potential the US holds: In 2019, UK goods exports to the US were worth £57.6 billion. New regulatory changes and tariffs introduced in recent years have made it as easy and attainable as ever to export to the US – especially for small businesses. The US also ranks 6th in the World Bank's *Ease of Doing Business Report* for 2020.

Latin America



Many Latin American economies are experiencing rapid growth and the UK government has significantly boosted its trading interests in this region since the Brexit referendum. Since 2010, the UK government has also pushed the 'Canning Agenda' in a bid to strengthen its links in the region. What's more, consumers in this market are often prepared to pay extra for British-made goods, so, with a population of over 653 million people, Latin America is a region which UK SMEs can no longer ignore.

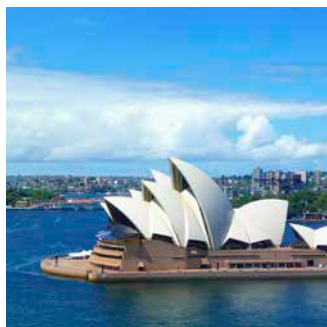
Japan

The UK government signed its official economic partnership agreement with Japan in October 2020 – its first major trade deal as an independent trading nation. The deal will not only deliver huge benefits for the 9,500 SMEs across the UK already exporting to Japan, but for those wanting to enter the Japanese market, who will benefit from



tariff-free trade on 99 per cent of all exports to Japan. There are opportunities for UK companies across a broad range of industries, and with the ecommerce market in Japan set to increase by 29 per cent between 2018 and 2022, to be worth \$203.90 billion, the opportunities for UK SMEs looking to target Japanese customers are endless.

New Zealand and Australia



The UK has an important history of close economic relations with New Zealand and Australia - British businesses traded a significant £21 billion worth of goods and services in total with both countries in 2019. As a result of Brexit, the UK's priority is to finalise negotiations with both nations, and objectives of the negotiations are said to be focused on enhancing opportunities for UK SME exporters. The deals are also being viewed as part of the UK's intention to pursue accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. If successful, the UK's accession will help simplify the export process for small and medium-sized business, making it easier to trade with other markets.

Richard Currie is senior director of Public Affairs at UPS

London Chamber members can take advantage of UPS's international online rates especially for SMEs. Receive a 10 per cent discount until 31 December 2021 by applying the promo code UKLCC10 on the *Review and pay* screen at ups.com/smb

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No Jab, No Job – What are the Options for Employers?



Lianne Lambert, Managing Director, Lighter HR

The Covid vaccination roll out programme continues at pace but, whilst the take up rate is much higher than anticipated, there are still those people who are hesitant about or anti-vaccinations.

Employers are now starting to ask questions such as “Can I make having a Covid vaccination compulsory for my staff?” “Can I ask people to tell me whether or not they have been vaccinated?” “Can I refuse to pay enhanced company sick pay to someone who refuses to have the vaccination, catches Covid and needs to take time off work?”

These are very interesting questions and we'll only know the answers for definite when cases start to hit the employment tribunal system. In the meantime, we can provide guidance on what we think is likely to happen and this month we're looking at the “no jab, no job” debate.

It is extremely unlikely that you could dismiss a current employee for refusing to have the vaccination, but it is possible that you can make it a condition of employment for future hires. In all cases, you need to assess what you're trying to achieve and whether insisting that employees have the vaccination is the best way to achieve that aim.

“Some people are unable to have the vaccination on health grounds so excluding them from roles could be found to be disability discrimination.”

As an example, if your aim is to prevent the spread of Covid in an office environment then an alternative to compulsory vaccination would be to operate in a socially distanced way. However, if you operate in a setting where your employees need to have close contact either with each other or with the public, then insisting people be vaccinated may well be an appropriate way of managing the risk of Covid.

There is still debate as to whether clauses on vaccination, even for new hires, could be deemed to be discriminatory. Some people are unable to have the vaccination on health grounds so excluding them from roles could be found to be disability discrimination. Younger people aren't currently able to get the vaccination so a compulsory vaccination clause could be age discrimination.

If you do think you have solid grounds for insisting on new employees being vaccinated, then we suggest that you seek guidance on your specific situation before moving ahead with your plans.

For guidance on this or other HR matters, contact Lianne at LSL@LighterHR.co.uk or call **0203 319 1649**

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Trade and investment in the Caribbean



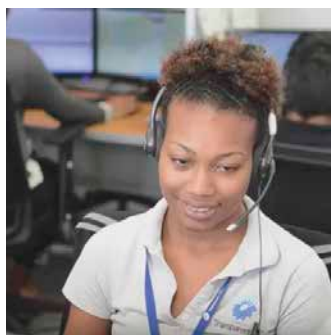
by Deodat Maharaj

When we think of the Caribbean, we often think sun, sea, sand and cricket – an ideal location for holidaying and relaxation. However, the collection of islands from the Bahamas just off Florida, heading south to the twin-island state Trinidad and Tobago before reaching South America has a burgeoning business sector, that is carving out its niche in the global marketplace.

Access

Countries of the Caribbean are signatories to a plethora of trade agreements including CARIBCAN with Canada, the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement and the CARIFORUM-UK Economic Partnership Agreement which has been in place since the UK left EU. These reciprocal trade agreements offer immense opportunities through customs duty waivers or reductions and quota free access, reliable product quality and easily accessible shipping routes, making it relatively cheaper and easier to trade. The Caribbean also provides close access to the markets right next door in North America.

Between 2016-2019 export of goods from the Caribbean to the EU has seen tremendous growth, from US 2.5 billion in 2016 to US five billion in 2019. Among these exports are rum and other spirits distilled from sugar cane which increased in value from US\$ 104 million in 2016



to US\$ 130 million in 2019. This growth can be attributed, not only to the Caribbean's historical ties to the EU but also greater awareness of this trade agreement and the myriad benefits it entails. Further, there has been a growing trend for Caribbean food, beverages and natural products across Europe and in the UK alone, the Caribbean food industry is worth almost £100m.

Love affair

The British love affair with Caribbean culture and flavours has driven

huge growth for the region's products to supply restaurants, bars and retail outlets. Over the past five years, the number of Caribbean restaurants in the UK has tripled and in the 12 months to August 2019 alone, the Caribbean restaurant count grew by 144 per cent. When it comes to locations, London and Central England are the two areas that over-index in terms of Caribbean foods. Meanwhile, foodservice wholesale giant Bidfood also singled out Caribbean food as a top 10 cuisine trend, while last year, retailer Tesco highlighted Caribbean fare as an 'emerging trend'.

Caribbean businesses much like the rest of world have been impacted by Covid-19. Tourism, the lifeblood of many economies in the region saw a big decline in people coming to the Caribbean.

Naturally, the knock-on effect has also been a reduction in foreign direct investment into the Caribbean as the UK and other markets battle with their own fallout from the pandemic and investors limit their risk.

Opportunities

As with all crises, there's often opportunity and as we work towards recovery from Covid it is worth bringing focus to the opportunities that are apparent across the Caribbean.

Countries in the Caribbean provide strong foundations for businesses boasting outstanding track records of economic and political stability, openness to international trade and economic integration with one of the lowest perceived



risks in the Latin American Caribbean region. The Caribbean's privileged geographic location makes the region a perfect gateway to markets in North, Central and South America, offering a 13 million strong qualified work force with multilingual capabilities. In addition, governments are committed to supporting the development of key sectors with attractive incentives for investment, tax holidays or preferential income taxes, exceptions from duties on imports, property tax exemptions, an extensive range of free economic zones.

Areas such as business process outsourcing, renewable energy and technology in agribusiness are all industries that present a great investment opportunity. There is much that the Caribbean can benefit from the UK in helping the region to expand its services sector other than tourism.

Regional partner

As demand increases internationally for Caribbean products and services, and consumers look for healthy alternatives, Caribbean firms are increasing capacity to fill these needs and export. The Caribbean Export Development Agency as the lead regional partner for private sector development is committed to working with businesses to create jobs and prosperity for Caribbean people. This is being achieved by supporting businesses to export and steering foreign direct investment to our shores.

Business is a central partner and will play an important leadership role in the post Covid-19 recovery and beyond. Looking ahead, there are immense opportunities to doing business in the Caribbean. It is high time that the Caribbean's inextricable historical and cultural ties with the UK are translated into trade and investment success to create jobs and prosperity for the people of the region.

Deodat Maharaj is executive director of the Caribbean Export Development Agency
www.carib-export.com





Export-led recovery is the way forward



New research released last month estimates nearly 6.5 million jobs in the UK are supported by exports

Commissioned by the Department for International Trade and carried out by the Fraser of Allander Institute at the University of Strathclyde, it assesses the value of exporting-led jobs to the UK economy and helps inform the discussion around the untapped exporting potential of businesses across the country.

Productive

The research estimates that median wages in jobs directly and indirectly supported by exports were around seven per cent higher than the national median and that more jobs (3.7 million) are supported by exports to the rest of the world than to the EU (2.8 million). The Office for National Statistics also estimates that goods exporting businesses are 21 per cent more productive than those who do not. It provides a clear rationale for pursuing an exports-led recovery from Covid and using trade liberalisation to boost strategic industries – such as services, tech and renewables – that are key to building back better from the pandemic.



The research is accompanied by a new Board of Trade report – *Global Britain, Local Jobs* – that prescribes a series of policy fixes to unlock the UK's full exporting potential and propel a trade-led, jobs-led recovery from Covid-19. This includes:

- Boosting the UK's role as a global

hub for services and digital trade

- Pursuing new trade deals with large and fast-growing economies beyond Europe, particularly in the Indo-Pacific
- Greater support to help businesses internationalise and adopt new export targets.

Trade liberalisation

The Board of Trade – which is led by International Trade Secretary Liz Truss – argues the UK's departure from the EU is an opportunity to deepen trade liberalisation and boost the role trade plays in the economy. It believes that the UK should follow the likes of Australia, Singapore and New Zealand, who have all used trade liberalisation to spur growth and capture global market share.

The report advocates deeper trade ties with faster growing nations outside Europe, with 65 per cent of the world's middle classes set to be in the Asia-Pacific by 2030 and nearly 90 per cent of world growth expected to be outside the EU in the next five years.

Green economy

It recommends the UK 'ride' the digital and green waves, highlighting the UK's comparative advantage in those industries, with the exporting potential of the green economy set to be £170 billion per year by 2030, and argues the UK should lead the charge for a more modern, fair and green World Trade Organisation by working with like-minded allies on issues like industrial subsidies.

Liz Truss commented: "Export-led jobs are more productive and higher paying, but currently too few businesses export and our economy would benefit from being more international. This potential can be liberated through more trade deals, boosting our role as global hub for digital and services trade, and by pursuing policies that drive an exports-led recovery."

www.gov.uk/government/publications/board-of-trade-report-global-britain-local-jobs

SPONSORED COLUMN

Customs Applications – Using your IP to monitor counterfeit goods

HGF Trade Mark Director Adjoa Anim highlights the importance of Customs Applications for Action for businesses that import and export goods.



Introduction

Apart from providing protection for businesses' intangible assets, registered intellectual property (IP) rights are invaluable tools for those that trade across international borders. These rights can be instrumental in helping customs authorities monitor imports and seize counterfeit products in territories of interest, via a Customs Application for Action (AFA).

What is an AFA and what is the benefit?

An AFA is a document containing details of IP rights which is provided to Customs Authorities; officials refer to the information when inspecting imported goods to confirm their authenticity. This allows for the smooth transition of genuine goods and arms the authorities with tools to help stop and seize counterfeit goods.

AFAs in business

Say, a UK business imports manufactured product from Turkey and sells them to customers across Europe. It would be prudent to have AFAs in the following territories:

- Turkey – to reduce the risk of counterfeits being made and shipped out of the country of manufacture;
- The UK – to filter the product coming into the 'home' country; and,
- The EU and other European target markets – to help protect the business' international

customers from receiving counterfeits.

Application and maintenance process

An AFA is prepared and submitted to the relevant Customs Department (for the UK, it is the HMRC). The AFA information includes, but is not limited to:

- Details of IP rights (e.g. trade marks, design rights, patents and geographical indications), that a business applies to its products;
- Details of a legal contact and a technical contact to respond to legal and product queries from the Customs Authorities, respectively;
- Details of product packaging, images of authentic and counterfeit goods, places of production, modes of delivery, values of goods delivered and transit routes into the relevant territory and entities involved in the manufacture, transit and reselling of the products; and,
- Agreement to update the Customs Authority on changes to the relevant IP rights and deal with detained genuine or counterfeit goods.

The more information the authorities have, the easier it is for them to inspect goods and hold possible counterfeits.

Once accepted, AFAs last for a year and can be renewed annually. The relevant Customs Authority will contact the legal representative when it detains any goods.

Should you have any questions concerning Customs AFAs or other areas of IP, please contact Adjoa at anim@hgf.com



Post-Covid recovery dominates the media



by Steve Reilly-Hii

Following the Prime Minister's announcement of the government's roadmap out of lockdown in late February, LCCI took to *BBC London* TV and Radio, welcoming the clarity on which businesses could plan and urged the right support was provided over what would be more restricted months ahead.

Weight

Proposing what that support should look like, LCCI joined forces with London's Local Chambers and the Central London Alliance, writing to Chancellor Rishi Sunak ahead of the Budget. Representing around 6,000 London businesses, the letter carried such weight that the *Evening Standard* based a front-page story and editorial on it. *City AM* also made it their main online news story for the day. Whilst related comments made by LCCI chief executive, Richard Burge, on the *BBC's Politics London* show were also reported on *BBC Radio 2* and *BBC Radio 4*.

On Budget day LCCI welcomed a number of the business support measures outlined by the Chancellor, with reaction reported on news broadcasts throughout *BBC Breakfast*, on *BBC Online*, *LBC*, and local newspaper titles across London.

Recovery

With the lockdown easing roadmap outlined, and immediate financial support for businesses in place, LC-Cl's focus also turned to medium to longer-term London recovery and the need for, once safe, the right measures to support the return of commuters and domestic and international travellers.

LCCI research with London Councils regarding the likelihood of a 'hybrid' economy for central London due to increased home working each week beyond the pandemic was reported by *i News* and *LBC News*.

Those stats showed that almost half of the 1,251 business leaders

Qualified praise for Sunak's Budget from London business groups and disappointment from the Mayor

London businesses urge Rishi Sunak to deliver 'Marshall Plan' to help capital's economy

Capital hit 'disproportionately' through 11 months of lockdowns and restrictions, leaders say



Upskilling employees' digital skills is the highest priority for London businesses in training their own workforce

Ministers must be 'loud and proud' about capital

Continued from Page 1

and the North over London in his Budget on March 3. The capital has seen the fastest rise in atmospheric CO₂ of any region in Britain during the pandemic and footfall in the West End is down 66 per cent on 2020.

Key demands in the letter include an extension of the furlough scheme beyond the end of April, maintaining the business rates holiday and VAT relief schemes, packing back other tax payment deadlines to the end of the year, and increasing the level of grants to

better reflect the high costs of doing business in London. It also calls for targeted help for sectors that have suffered badly since March, such as a pledge to cover the cost of event cancellations. If further restrictions are ordered, increased theatre tax relief and extended business rates relief for airports. Measures to encourage people back into central London could include new flexible rail ticketing and a global marketing campaign to encourage visitors to return when it is safe to do so.

Mr Borge said, "We've got to recover from this."

ernment to be loud and proud of London and the role that it plays nationally and globally. Allowing London to be levelled down will not do anything to help the rest of the UK. A strong London is the main and most effective way to help level up the regions and the country as a whole. We must desperately need the help. This has to be a vital opportunity to demonstrate support for London."

The demands came at Sadique Khan's meeting with the Government to appoint a dedicated minister for responding to the economic challenges facing the city and to help coordinate efforts with other departments.

He said "Ministers still need to discuss many businesses' requirements at this point. Plans to end the business holiday and VAT cut in March are under the fast-track scheme in April. A huge financial cliff edge for companies." The Chancellor was today expected to be prepared to extend the fast-track scheme until summer and provide business rates holiday for residential property and leisure.

● The third lockdown has brought high street with retail sales down



London business chief urges capital's MP to make cross-party demand for 'proper plan for London' from government

Remote working could help with firms' carbon reduction efforts



SPONSORED

Three UK businesses on how they're now trading with Europe

LCCI joined forces with London's Local Chambers and the Central London Alliance, writing to Chancellor Rishi Sunak ahead of the Budget

polled expect to have over two-fifths of their staff still regularly working remotely at the end of 2021. The number of business leaders saying that 81-100 per cent of their staff will regularly work from home a year from now has doubled (22 per cent) compared to 2019's figure.

Remote workers

Less people travelling into central London each day will have consequences, but also offer opportunities for outer London boroughs. One example of this is Clockwise, an LCCI member who have opened a co-working space in Wood Green, hoping to draw in remote workers who now don't have the need to travel to zone 1 daily.

LCCI helped Clockwise to feature on *BBC London News*, as part of a package about how Covid-19 recovery will change work patterns in London.

Recovery

London's economic recovery is very much the dominating theme of LCCI media coverage currently, with the Chamber featuring in articles about related investment by

the Mayor of London, joint calls with other business groups, and stories based upon LCCI's virtual roundtable events between London mayoral candidates and LCCI members.

Media interest in the impact of Brexit on London business is the other main theme of our current coverage with, for example, Richard Burge being widely quoted on the drop in trade with the EU in January.

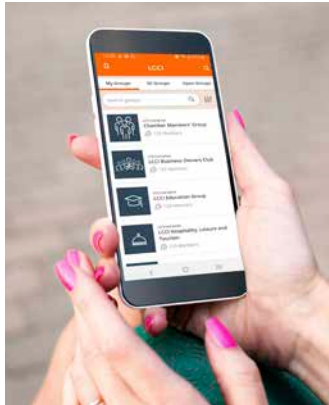
Steve Reilly-Hii is senior media relations manager at LCCI

If you're an LCCI member and interested in speaking with the media about your business and Covid-19 recovery or Brexit, contact press@londonchamber.co.uk

Making connections – the LCCI Community App

LONDON CHAMBER
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

Since its launch earlier this year, hundreds of businesspeople have taken up the LCCI Community App, designed to support business development



The digital B2B social network app is free to join, easy to use and accessible on desktop, tablet and mobile. LCCI Members and any business who registers with the free LCCI Community Network can access the app either from home or on the go.

Key features

- Newsfeed – the homepage is where to find live posting activity based on the groups joined
- People – a complete list of everyone on the app
- Connect & Chat – have 1-to-1 conversations and develop connections
- Groups – join a range of interest groups as well as having the functionality to create tailored groups. LCCI Members can also join sector groups to engage with peers
- Calendar – find out about upcoming events
- Notifications – customise alerts on mobile and/or on desktop.

The app can also be used to discover LCCI member product and service offers, gain access to EU and International Trade news and advice and engage with and provide comment on LCCI's policy, research and media activities.

Profile raising

The app has business interest groups that everyone can join and contribute to, as well as a selection of LCCI Member exclusive groups and sector-led groups. This enables

users to find out the latest news in their industry, find peers to collaborate with and share business updates, events and opinion pieces.

App user feedback

"I have found LCCI's new App a good tool for us to get information easily and quickly on mobile. It is a great opportunity for all members to create a community rather than just being a member. Great job!"

– Susanna Toth, UK market entry consulting, H-Net Agency



"The new App is a powerful tool bringing our LCCI community even closer together, enhancing our membership and our voice. If you're not yet on it, I'd say get on it!"

– Mark Jenkinson, director, Crystal Associates



Free for all businesses to join

LCCI is providing the capital's firms, traders and entrepreneurs with free access to a new 'London Chamber Community Network'. With a Community Network account you can access a number of free benefits, including the LCCI Community App. Sign up at: www.londonchamber.co.uk/membership/london-chamber-community-network

LCCI Members and Community Network participants can login to the app straight away using their existing LCCI online account details. Make sure to customise your profile and start building a personalised business network.



Download the iOS or Android app on your mobile by searching for 'London Chamber Community'. Or you can join on desktop at: community.londonchamber.co.uk/login

SPONSORED COLUMN

Managing the Pandemic: ISO/PAS 45005:2020 for safe working during the COVID-19

by Maria Dimitrova, MBA
Head of Business Development, IMSM



2020 marked a turning point in how organisations approached business operations. The COVID-19 pandemic proved challenging at many levels and has pushed forward the need for consistent business continuity management strategies.

Questions, however, remain about how much might have been missed out during the pandemic management. The urge to protect lives has led governments to focus on restrictive measures whilst designing and providing solutions. Undoubtedly, this approach has been beneficial to both business and society. Nonetheless, some issues may have been either missed or not considered. If not addressed, these are likely to affect organisations' resilience.

Businesses need to prepare for potential challenges related to the side effects of the pandemic. Pandemic management is no longer a hypothetical predicament. It is happening now and for real. Depending on actions taken, adverse events have the inherent capability to escalate into a disaster. It is also possible that they result in a return to normality.

COVID-19 management has obviated some most fragile sectors and areas that need further investment to ensure resilience. Actions are being taken to mitigate the pandemic impact. However, organisations should plan on how to mitigate issues that might have been left out. It is unclear what the effect of actions

that have not been taken is likely to be on business.

Although non-mandatory, ISO standards offer a common framework to help organisations design and implement management systems and certify their efficiency against worldwide recognised criteria. The International Organization for Standardization has gone a step further and published comprehensive guidance on COVID-19 management. ISO/PAS 45005:2020 has also been made available on the ISO's website, and organisations are welcome to consult it for free.

COVID-19 is not the most challenging adverse event in human history. It is, tragically, by far the most unexpected. It has become apparent that technological advancements have the potential to support the economy throughout adversities efficiently. Research shows that productivity has remained at the same level as the first quarter of 2020. One of the most valuable lessons learnt during this pandemic is that organisations need to continue the delivery of products and services within acceptable time frames during disruptions. ISO 45005 has been designed to help organisations implement adequate protection by proactively identifying potential threats.

That is the opposite approach to merely having a static emergency plan.



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Webinars and events

What's been on ...

MARCH

Property & Construction Online Briefing

Pat Hayes, MD, Be First

Sponsored by Advanced UK and Menzies

Linking on to the UK Defence and Security Supply Chain

Thriving after redundancy: top tips and advice to help manage the transition

Alistair Stirling, Founder, Stirling Careers Consultancy

Policy Roundtable



Shaun Bailey AM, Conservative Candidate for Mayor of London

Business Owners Club: Practical Tips and Tricks

Duncan Hopwood, Hopwood PR, Vandana Dass, Davenport Solicitors and Stephen Holmes, Endeavour

Sponsored by OnBoard

Go Connect! At Lunchtime Virtual Networking with Fife Chamber of Commerce

EU Exit - Business Opportunities in Germany

Dagmar Wülknitz and Andrew Harfoot from NRW.INVEST, York-Alexander von Massenbach, Partner and Head of London Office, Luther and Philip Dietz, Partner, Luther

Asian Business Association Spring Virtual Networking



Tony Matharu, Founder and Chairman, Integrity International Group and Global Hospitality Services; Richie Mehta, Filmmaker, Director and Writer; and Nisha Parti, Film Producer

Sponsored by Trinity College

Power up your PowerPoint. How to pitch and present with impact online

Robin Kermode, Founder and Communication Coach

London Chamber of Arbitration and Mediation: Mediation in Arbitration

Chris Parker, Partner; Craig Tevendale, Partner; Rebecca Warder, Senior Lawyer at Herbert Smith Freehills and Kathryn Britten, Managing Director, AlixPartners

How to get the most from LinkedIn, Pinterest and Google Display Advertising

Carl Winter, Digital Marketing Director and Alex Francis, Paid Social Lead, MCM

Black Business Association: Black Women in Business

Shereen Daniels, Founder & Managing Director of HR Rewired; Phyllis Agbo, Senior Surveyor at CBRE and former international heptathlete and Gynelle Leon, Director and Founder of Prick, Cacti & Succulents

Sponsored by Imperial College Business School

Defence and Security Private Online Roundtable

Rob Jones, Director of Threat Leadership, National Crime Agency

How Phishing Attacks Work (And How to Protect Your Business)

Jorge Geddes, IT & Cyber Security Sales Manager

Maximise your LCCI Membership

Recordings of the webinars can be accessed at: www.londonchamber.co.uk/events/covid-19-webinar-series

... Coming up

APRIL



Thursday 1 April at 10.45am – 11.45am

Capital 500 with Vicky Pryce, Chief Economic Advisor and Board Member, Cebr and James Rentoul, Director at Savanta ComRes

Tuesday 7 April at 11.00am – 11.45am

Storytelling: The Importance of Empathy and Emotion in Marketing with Christine MacKay, CEO, Salamandra UK

Wednesday 14 April at 9.15am – 10.15am

Go Connect! At Breakfast Virtual Networking

Wednesday 14 April at 10.00am – 10.45am

Digital Transformation for SMEs with Paul Goldsmith, Managing Director, Goldstar IT

Tuesday 20 April at 10.45am – 11.30am

How to sell Delivery Duty Paid (DDP) to the EU: Top tips from the experts with Charles Hogg, Commercial Director, Unsworth; Laurent Deneubourg, Director, Bansard and Michael Boulanger – CEO, RM Boulanger



Tuesday 20 April at 2.15pm – 3.00pm

Capital Conversation with Georgia Gould, Chair, London Councils

Wednesday 21 April at 10.45am – 11.30am

Business Owners Club: Hear from the Founders with Segun Akinwaleola, Founder, The Gym Kitchen and Paul Stark, General Manager, OnBoard by Passageways

Sponsored by OnBoard

Wednesday 21 April at 12.30pm – 2.00pm

LCCI Virtual Networking – Property and Construction focus

Sponsored by Advanced UK and Menzies

Thursday 22 April at 2.00pm – 2.45pm

How to secure your first non-executive director role with Elise Perraud, Chief Operating Officer, NEDonBoard

Thursday 22 April at 10.45am – 11.30am

Interactive Cyber Briefing for Business Leaders: Secure your business against the evolving threat with Kieran Fowler, Senior Information Security Consultant; Stewart Hogg, Head of Information Security, Waterstons

Wednesday 28 April at 11.30am – 12.15pm

How to get to the top of Google with Christopher Clowes, Co-Founder, HC Media

Thursday 29 April at 10.45am – 11.45am

Fraud and the Pandemic with Robert Brooker, Chair of London Fraud Forum; Head of Forensic & Fraud PKF GM;

David Clarke Chair of Fraud Advisory Panel; Ashley Hart, Head of Fraud, TSB and Rich Wentel, Deputy Director of the Counter Fraud Function based in the Cabinet Office

MAY

Wednesday 5 May at 11.00am – 11.45am

How to Support Your Organisation to Work from Anywhere in 2021 and Beyond with Severine Hierro, Senior Product Marketing Manager and Patty Yan, Product Marketing Manager, RingCentral

Tuesday 11 May at 2.30pm – 3.15pm

Capital Conversation with Air Vice Marshall Maria Byford, Chief of Staff Personnel and Air Secretary, RAF - Diversity and Inclusion

Wednesday 12 May at 12.30pm – 2.00pm

Go Connect! At Lunchtime Virtual Networking

Thursday 13 May at 1.30pm – 2.30pm

Black Business Association & Black Inclusion Week: Black Business Owners

Sponsored by Imperial College Business School

Thursday 13 May at 2.30pm – 3.30pm

Property and Construction Online Briefing: The Future of the Workplace with Richard Morris, Chief Executive (UK), IWG Plc

Sponsored by Advanced UK and Menzies

Thursday 20 May at 10.30am – 11.15am

The New World of Prospecting with Tony Morris, Managing Director, Tony Morris International

JUNE

Wednesday 9 June at 10.00am – 11.00am

Business Owners Club: Coach and Grow for Women in Business with Kielan Tayler, Clancarty Consulting Ltd

Sponsored by OnBoard

Tuesday 15 June at 9.30am – 10.30am

Submitting Winning Bids for MoD Contracts with Mike Raynor, Bid Consultant, Raynor Bid Consultancy

Wednesday 16 June at 9.30am – 4.00pm

Frankfurt RheinMain One-to-One Business Clinics

Wednesday 16 June at 9.15am – 10.15am

Go Connect! At Breakfast Virtual Networking

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Haviland flies in to lead BCC

British Chambers of Commerce have appointed Shevaun Haviland as the organisation's new director general

Haviland joins British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) from the Cabinet Office where she ran the business partnerships team and led the inclusive economy partnership with the aim of building a stronger economy and fairer society through partnerships between government, businesses and civil society.

Digital innovation

Before working in central government, Haviland had an extensive private sector career and was at the forefront of digital innovation through her work as the founding director of the Academy of Digital Business Leaders and as a director at Independents United.

Haviland succeeds Dr Adam



Marshall who is standing down this month after five years at the helm and 12 years at the BCC.

Insight

BCC Chair, Sarah Howard MBE, who led the recruitment process, spoke of Haviland's "entrepreneurial spirit, strong private sector background and experience in government" which meant that she had the insight and expertise to lead the BCC on behalf of business communities throughout the UK and around the world.

"I know that under her leadership, and with a strong team around her, the BCC will continue to play a pivotal role in these critical times for our businesses and our country."

"Adam Marshall leaves the British Chambers of Commerce in a strong position after five years as director general and I am enormously grateful for the contribution he has made."

Recovery

Shevaun Haviland said that the chamber network was at the forefront of helping businesses navigate the pandemic and building new trading relationships with the world. "It will be a privilege to represent this network and to lead the BCC in the next phase of its development. Our businesses will be central to driving recovery and renewal in their communities across the UK. I look forward to championing the needs of our members – at home and around the world - driving change and seizing the opportu-



Outgoing BCC director-general Dr Adam Marshall

nities to thrive and grow."

Restart, rebuild and renew

Outgoing BCC Director Dr Adam Marshall said: "At this time of challenge and change, the vital work of chambers of commerce has never been more important, and I know that our business communities in the UK and around the world will work closely with Shevaun and the BCC team to restart, rebuild and renew."

www.britishchambers.org.uk

Covid must not set the clock back on gender equality

Last month International Women's Day was widely celebrated and progress in equality has clearly been made. However new research – *Building Bridges* – from City & Guilds reveals that the economic fallout of Covid-19 and the impact of home schooling and childcare obligations could threaten to set the clock back on progress made towards women's empowerment and gender equality in the workplace

According to the research – based on findings from a poll of 1,000 employed or furloughed people of working age in the UK – men and women have different priorities when it comes to job satisfaction. Whilst women are found to consider work life balance, supportive colleagues and flexibility as top priorities, men prioritise earnings and are more concerned about moving up into senior positions highlighting a greater emphasis on career progression.

Opportunity gaps

The pandemic's impact, combined with the long-standing opportunity gaps that women already face, suggest that women are set to be hit particularly hard in the current climate. According to City & Guilds' own insights, even pre-pandemic a fifth of women were unable to secure better jobs since they were unable to work the hours required, whilst part-time workers – a contingent made up of more women than men – were less likely to receive workplace training than full-time employees and were less inclined to believe there were opportunities for progression.

Furthermore, with women making up the majority of employees within service led industries according to ONS, and 133,000 more women than men furloughed at the end of 2020, it's clear that women are in a more precarious position when it comes to employment, training and progression opportunities. The numbers suggest that women stand a greater chance of losing their jobs and therefore, access to opportunities to retrain and upskill will prove

to be important in helping women get back into meaningful employment once furlough draws to an end.

Flexible working

Kirstie Donnelly, chief executive at City & Guilds Group, commented: "Worryingly, many women are in jobs that are at high risk of disappearing due to the pandemic, but it's crucial that – equal – opportunities for women to upskill, reskill and progress in their jobs do not fall by the wayside."

"We need to recognise that this is an issue which must be addressed, and it starts with encouraging more flexible working practices and taking a fairer approach to in-work progression for women. If we fail to do this, there is a very real risk of undoing the progress made towards gender equality."

City & Guilds Group recently launched the 'Skills Bridges' programme designed to help individuals who work in industries heavily impacted by Covid-19 to reskill and switch careers into growing industries or those facing labour shortages.

Leadership styles

Donnelly continued: "Economic slowdowns disproportionately affect women – we need to make sure this isn't the case and that women are not crowned the losers of this pandemic. Gender balance in the workplace isn't just a nice to have – it is a critical component to the growth and success of any organisation. We need the diverse perspectives and leadership styles of both women and men for organisations and societies to thrive. That's why it's crucial that women are empowered to gain the skills they need to progress within their own industry or to make a move to a more secure job."

City & Guilds Group is calling on employers, government and wider society to ensure gender imbalance does not fall by the wayside and take active steps to ensure flexible working policies and equality of opportunity to reskill and upskill remain on their agenda – particularly as women appear to be at higher risk of losing their jobs.

www.cityandguildsgroup.com/research/building-bridges-towards-future-jobs

Are your premises ready for the rodent return?

With the country beginning to unlock, Cleankill Pest Control is reminding businesses to check they have the right measures in place to stop an infestation of rodents.

The British Pest Control Association (BPCA) reported a 51% spike in rodent activity in the Spring of 2020, with a further spike of 78% during the November lockdown. Cleankill, which covers the whole of the south of England, has since reported a further year-on-year increase of 27% in rodent related callouts in the first two months of 2021.

With children returning to school and the Government's roadmap underway, now is the time for businesses to make sure their pest control contracts are in place as the return of workers to offices, shops and factories may mean an increase in infestations. In some cases, the rodent problem might have already existed but gone unnoticed during lockdown. In other cases, rodents might choose to return to the places that have traditionally supplied them with food and harbourage.

Paul Bates, Managing Director of Cleankill Pest Control, explains: "It has been a tough year for everyone except, it would



Rat valves prevent rodents travelling past a certain point within a drainage system

seem, rodents. Our figures from across the last 12 months show how well rats and mice have adapted to lockdowns.

"Employers are legally required to provide their employees, customers, and other stakeholders with a safe working environment. That means making sure their preventive pest control systems are in place and working."

Launched in 1995, Cleankill Pest Control has its head office in Croydon, Surrey.



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Two minute interview

Rodolfo Arocena, co-founder of Dynamo Global



Who are you?

I am Rodolfo Arocena, an industrial engineer from Montevideo, Uruguay with an MBA from HHL in Leipzig, Germany. I am co-founder of Dynamo Global, a Microsoft Gold Partner which specialises in Dynamics 365 ERP.

What is your connection with the London Chamber of Commerce?

At Dynamo Global we opened a subsidiary in the UK at the beginning of 2020, and since we are new in this market, we are trying to do as much networking as possible. Therefore, we became members of the LCCI with the support of London & Partners.

What was your first job in London?

I have never had a job in London. The plan for this year was to travel regularly to the UK, meeting with companies and looking for ways to add value to them. The pandemic caused us to revise that plan.

Which one business achievement over the last 12 months are you most proud of, and why?

Opening a Dynamo subsidiary in the UK and, later on, another one in the US have been achievements that we are very proud of. We must now transform these actions into growth in very challenging times through our value proposition, combining outstanding quality services with competitive pricing, and always prioritizing flexibility and customer experience.

"If there is one thing I hate about my job it's..."

... if I had to choose, I would say that after working hard preparing and presenting a project proposal to a potential client, it is not pleasant when you do not get clear replies, or just silence. On the other hand, being a Microsoft Gold Partner can be very demanding due to all the requirements Microsoft sets. That has to do with being partners of an important organization, so it is not a complaint, it's just something you have to live with."

If you were advising a young entrepreneur which business person would you suggest as a model?

I do not have any specific role model to recommend. I believe that many people, especially in today's connected world, contribute with very valuable ideas, experiences, habits, and thoughts, etc., and that the challenge is having the ability to listen to and read about them and combine those insights with your own, and so define your path.

"Every time I travel to London I appreciate how clean it is, how things work, and the combination of old and modern."

How is the current pandemic affecting your business?

It did affect us, specially during the months of April, May, June and July. There was a lot of uncertainty in the whole world, and many of our clients understandably decided to reduce the regular services they get from us.

We had to adopt many cost-saving measures but, fortunately, nothing irreversible. Even though some opportunities were postponed, we are starting to see a better scenario as services are already coming slowly back to normal. We hope the trend will continue but it depends on how the pandemic evolves.

What measures have you taken?

We have implemented some cost-cutting measures in the company. We also implemented full home-office working between March and June. After that and until now, we split the team in two halves, one is working from home and the other half is working at the office, alternating weekly.

How do you think the transport system in London can be improved?

What I can say from the times I used it is that I am impressed by how efficient it is, how well it works. But I don't use it very of-

ten so I guess it probably has opportunities for improvement, like everything has.

Which piece of red tape causes most problems for your company and why?

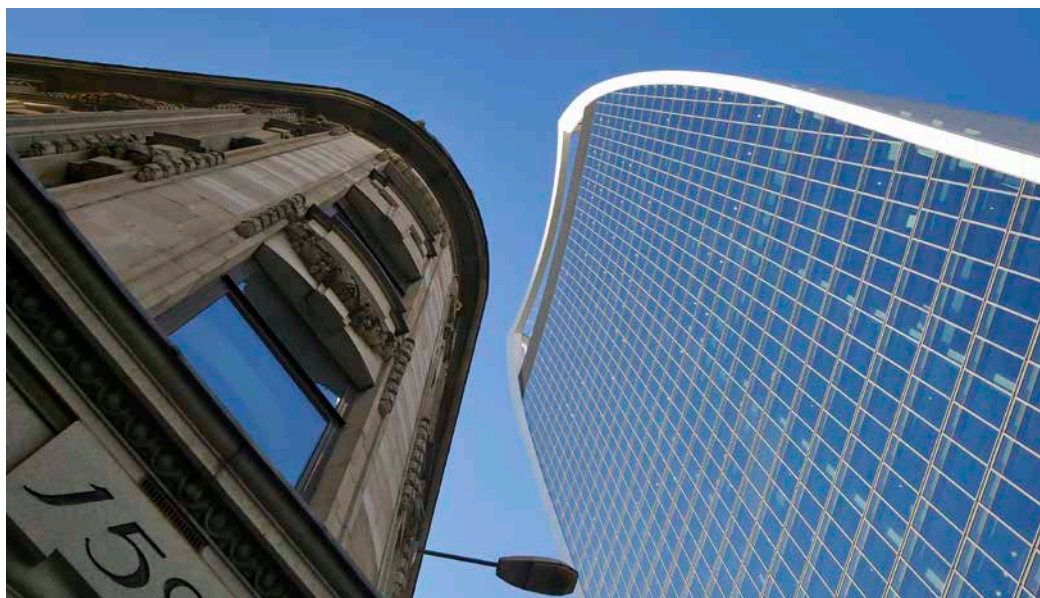
So far I cannot identify any red tape causing a problem to us, but we are new, and we may find them in the future. The process of incorporating the company, establishing the office, and all those steps have been very straightforward, much simpler than what I would have expected.

What is your favourite and least favourite thing about London?

For me is very difficult to find a favourite thing about London, I mean, I truly love the city, and I think it is a one of a kind in the world. Every time I travel to London I appreciate how clean it is, how things work, and the combination of old and modern. The architecture is astonishing. I love the parks, the whole environment ... it is my favourite city in the world.

For the least favourite thing, I would say the traffic, it makes it almost impossible for a foreigner (specially one used to LHD) to drive a car through the city.

www.dynamo-global.com



UK restrictions eased but mixed picture in Europe

How far have lockdown restrictions been eased in England?

Monday 8 March 2021 saw stage one of the first phase of lockdown restrictions eased in England. Both primary and secondary schools reopened to pupils in all year groups, although some schools staggered the return over the course of the week. All households with children of school age currently receive two rapid Covid-19 tests per person per week so that infections can be swiftly diagnosed and only those infected made to self-isolate, rather than entire schools having to close.

Further education colleges also reopened to students on 8 March but only university students doing practical courses such as medicine, dentistry, veterinary science or art and design were permitted to return.

Two people from different households could legally meet out of doors for social purposes e.g. having a picnic in the park, not just for exercise. One regular indoor visitor is now allowed to see a relative in a care home but they must wear full PPE and take a lateral flow test to ensure they do not have Covid-19.

All households with children of school age to get 2 rapid COVID-19 tests per person per week

■ www.gov.uk/government/news/all-households-with-children-of-school-aged-to-get-rapid-covid-19-tests-per-person-per-week

Covid roadmap out of lockdown: Everything you can and can't do from March 8

■ www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/covid-lockdown-rules-roadmap-march-8-easing-dates-b922586.html

Lockdown rules easing on 8 March: What is allowed from Monday, from going to school to visiting care homes

■ inews.co.uk/news/uk/lockdown-rules-easing-8-march-what-allowed-monday-901920



What restrictions changed on Monday 29 March?

The Rule of Six was set to return out of doors. The group can be formed of people from two different households or up to six individuals from multiple households. They can meet in a private garden or in any public open space.

Outdoor sports facilities, such as golf courses and tennis and basketball courts, will reopen. Grassroots outdoor sports such as football can also take place again.

Government advice was due to switch from 'Stay Home' to 'Stay Local'. People should continue to minimise the number of journeys they

make, while office-based staff have been told to continue working from home where possible.

All the above is dependent on the rate of Covid-19 infections, hospital admissions and deaths continuing to fall.

In addition, a new rule change was due to come into force on 29 March. This is a ban on leaving the United Kingdom without a 'reasonable excuse' including travelling abroad to work, seek medical care or attend a wedding or a funeral. Leaving the country to go on holiday has been officially declared illegal and could result in a £5,000 fine.

Gov.UK: How the rules will change on 29 March

■ www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home#how-the-rules-will-change-on-29-march

People trying to leave UK for holiday from next week face £5,000 fine



Outdoor sports facilities, such as golf courses and tennis and basketball courts, will reopen. Grassroots outdoor sports such as football can also take place again

What can you do from 29 March? How lockdown rules are easing in England under the next step of roadmap

■ inews.co.uk/news/uk/lockdown-rules-what-do-from-29-march-easing-england-roadmap-next-step-922236

People trying to leave UK for holiday from next week face £5,000 fine

■ metro.co.uk/2021/03/22/lockdown-people-travelling-abroad-without-valid-excuse-face-5k-fine-14285368/

How far are Covid-19 infections, hospital admissions and deaths declining in the UK?

On Friday 19 March, the UK saw 4,802 new cases of new Covid-19 infections, together with 101 reported deaths that had occurred within 28 days of a positive Covid test result. The previous Friday had seen 6,609 new cases recorded, together with 175 deaths. Monday 22 March saw 17 Covid deaths reported in the past 24 hours, the lowest since 28 September 2020, although the number of new infections had risen to 5,342, perhaps due to increased testing as pupils return to school.

The rate at which Covid infections are falling nationwide – known as the R number – is estimated by the Government's scientific advisory group SAGE to be between 0.6 and 0.9, slightly up on the previous week. This means that, on average, every ten people with Covid will infect between six and nine others.

Continued on p30

Covid: UK death rate 'no longer Europe's worst' by winter

■ www.bbc.com/news/health-56456312

Coronavirus (COVID-19) latest insights

■ www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/articles/coronaviruscovid19/latestinsights

COVID-19: UK reports 17 coronavirus deaths in last 24 hours - as record-breaking vaccination streak ends

■ news.sky.com/story/covid-19-uk-reports-17-coronavirus-deaths-in-last-24-hours-as-record-breaking-vaccination-streak-ends-12253698

How is the UK's vaccination programme progressing?

The government's target is to offer 32 million people a first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine by mid-April. This number covers all nine priority groups, including everyone over 50, all clinically vulnerable people and frontline health and social care workers. The plan is then to offer all adults aged 18 and over their first vaccine by the end of July.

Sunday 21 March saw a record 873,784 people given a Covid-19 vaccination. The number dipped to 367,006 the following day but meant that 28 million adults – almost 44 per cent of all UK adults per 100 of population – had received their first dose, while over 2.2 million had had both doses. It is anticipated that there will be a reduction in the UK's Covid-19 vaccine supply in April due to a delay in shipping five million Oxford AstraZeneca vaccines from India to the UK.

Covid vaccine: How many people in the UK have been vaccinated so far?

■ www.bbc.com/news/health-55274833

Covid UK: coronavirus cases, deaths and vaccinations today

■ www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/22/covid-uk-coronavirus-cases-deaths-and-vaccinations-today

Covid vaccine: UK supply hit by India delivery delay

■ www.bbc.com/news/uk-56438629



Poland has the highest daily rate of new Covid-19 infections since November 2020

What is happening in mainland Europe?

Governments in mainland Europe have reimposed lockdown after Covid-19 cases rose sharply again. It is believed that much of the continent, including France and Germany, are seeing a third wave of Covid-19. At time of writing, Germany has seen a 46 per cent increase in Covid-19 cases (14,195, up from 9,673) while in France Covid-19 infections have doubled in a week and admissions to intensive care are at a four-month high.

Germany had announced that a new lockdown would be imposed over Easter with all non-essential shops closed and church services moved online but this was promptly rescinded after a major outcry. France has entered a partial lockdown affecting 21 million people in 16 areas of the country, including Paris. Non-essential shops have been forced to shut, inter-regional travel is banned and the nationwide nightly curfew has been moved back an hour to 7pm local time. However, schools, hairdressers and bookshops are permitted to open.

Poland has the highest daily rate of new Covid-19 infections since November 2020. It too has imposed a partial lockdown, with non-essential retail, hotels, cultural and sporting facilities closed for three weeks. In

Spain, there have been warnings of a fourth wave of Covid-19 after deaths from the virus rose to 633, compared to 298 a week earlier. Spain is currently under a nationwide curfew, with most regions imposing varying levels of restrictions on travel, public gatherings and business operations.

In the UK, the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, has warned that the European third wave will hit Britain.

COVID-19: As fears of a third wave mount, what's going on in Europe?

■ news.sky.com/story/covid-19-as-fears-of-a-third-wave-mount-whats-going-on-in-europe-12252610

Covid: France and Poland increase lockdown measures as infections surge

■ www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-56466223

Covid-19 news: Europe's third wave could hit UK, says prime minister

■ www.newscientist.com/article/2237475-covid-19-news-europes-third-wave-could-hit-uk-says-prime-minister/#ixzz6pwBPycRU

How is the vaccine rollout faring in Europe?

The vaccine rollout across Europe has been hindered by delayed deliveries, as well as the suspension in several countries of the use of the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine, over fears of possible side effects. European citizens are also far more hesitant to take the Covid-19 vaccine. At time of writing, 12.5 per cent of adults per 100 of population in both

France and Germany have been vaccinated against Covid-19, compared with almost 44% in the UK. In the European Union, Malta has vaccinated over 32 per cent of adults per 100 of population, the highest in the bloc, with Bulgaria at the bottom of the table with 5.31 per cent of adults vaccinated per 100 of population.

In January, Oxford AstraZeneca said it would have to reduce the number of doses it could deliver to the European Union (EU). The company blamed production delays in its factories in Belgium and the Netherlands, leading to criticism from the EU. Oxford AstraZeneca replied that its agreement with the EU allowed them to supply Europe from the UK, but only once the UK had enough vaccine supplies. The UK had placed Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine orders earlier than the EU Member States.

However, EU Member States have reported hundreds of thousands of unused doses of the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine because of the drop in public confidence. On 15 March, 13 European countries suspended use of the vaccine following reports of a small number of cases of blood clots among vaccine recipients. (Indonesia, Thailand and Venezuela did the same from outside the bloc). The European Medical Association then reviewed the inoculation and concluded that it was "safe and effective" and "not associated" with a higher risk of blood clots. On 19 March, France, Germany, Italy and Spain said they would resume administering the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine but would leave it to individual EU Member States to do so.

UK and EU vaccine dispute deepens as Brussels considers new export controls

■ www.cnn.com/2021/03/22/uk-and-eu-covid-vaccine-export-ban-spat-grows.html

Number of COVID-19 vaccination doses administered in Europe as of March 21, 2021, by country

■ www.statista.com/statistics/1196071/covid-19-vaccination-rate-in-europe-by-country/

Covid-19: EU states to resume AstraZeneca vaccine rollout

■ www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-56440139

Covid-19 Q&A is written and researched by Alexa Michael, member research executive at LCCI

Preparing for business post-lockdown



The coronavirus pandemic could cost UK small businesses up to £69 billion according to a survey of more than 4,000 SMEs so it's more vital than ever to hit the ground running as soon as legislation allows. Author and business consultant **Richard Crawford** *Small shares his tips to prepare for business life post-lockdown*

Face your fears now

The prospect of coming out of lockdown with a small business can be daunting as much as it's exciting. "First thing to get you into the right mindset is to try and face your fears because once you deconstruct them and work out what it is that's actually scaring you you can really start to tackle it so that you're ready to move forward. Sometimes it helps talking to a third party, such as a counsellor or business coach, because their neutral perspective can shed a different light on a problem or area and help you see it differently. Other times it's just about getting the ball rolling and making a start, whether that's unpacking stock from the garage or contacting staff about a return to work plan. Ultimately, any steps taken towards returning to work are a step in the right direction.

Make sure that you're Covid-safe

Ensuring your business is Covid-safe is a vital part of the reopening process but how do we go about it? Update your risk assessment to manage the risk of coronavirus in your business. This will help you to understand what you should do to work safely and protect people. Think about how you will manage the requirement for keeping your workplace clean and offering customers and staff the opportunity for frequent hand washing to reduce the potential for coronavirus to spread. Communication is key. Make sure that you consult and involve your team in the steps you take every step of the way.

Remember what makes you different

For most small businesses what makes them stand out from the rest is exactly that – their difference. Remember what makes you different, whether that's the product

you make, your ethics, the way you manufacture or market yourself and so on, and hone in on that USP. The lockdown has seen a resurgence in people supporting local high streets and independent retailers. For that reason it's never been a better time to remember what makes you different and celebrate that. Put yourself out there and promote your business to anyone who will listen!

Reconnect with your client base

No matter how good your business is it won't be successful if you don't have that human connection. Lockdown has shown just how much people rely on human connections in their lives and it's no different

"Try to form strong, meaningful relationships with your clients."

in business. Try to form strong, meaningful relationships with your clients and by doing so you'll not only ensure people trust and value you but also that they return to you for business again and again. Fortunately we live in an age where these relationships don't have to be in person, so utilise different social media platforms in order to engage with people of different ages and demographics.

Review your prices and your product offering

Now is the time to ask whether you're charging the right price for what you offer. In most cases, people aren't charging enough. Ask yourself whether you can add products into bundles or increase some of your charges for your services. More times than not, it can make a huge difference to your bottom line.

Re-launch. Don't reopen

This is probably my most crucial piece of advice. This is your time to be noticed and it's vital that you reopen with a bang rather than simply open your doors and wait. Can you re-launch with a product offering or a seasonal offer? Talk about the exciting things you have learnt during the past nine months and engage with your customers to get them through the door.

SPONSORED COLUMN

'Right to Work Checks' by a UK Employer under UK Immigration Rules

All employers in the UK who employ staff under a contract of employment, service or apprenticeship, must make Right to Work Checks before employing a new employee and at regular intervals.

It is the responsibility of employers to make sure that employees have the right immigration status that allows them to work.

How to conduct a right to work check?

Employers can conduct a manual check or an online check in the following manner:

1. Obtain original documents to confirm the identity and immigration status.
2. Check the document's validity in the presence of the holder.
3. Make and retain a clear copy and record the date the check was made.

All copies of documents taken should be kept securely for the duration of the worker's employment and for two years afterwards. The copy must then be securely destroyed.

Conducting either the manual check or the online check as set out as per Home Office guidance and the Code of Practice will provide the employer with a statutory excuse.

What is a Statutory Excuse?

If you conduct the right checks as set out in the law, you will have a statutory excuse against liability for a civil penalty. This means that if you have correctly conducted right to work checks as required,

"The Right to Work check must be carried out by the employer as the check cannot be performed by a third party"

you will not receive a civil penalty for an illegal worker.

The Right to Work check must be carried out by the employer as the check cannot be performed by a third party, such as a recruitment agency or your professional adviser so you must be very careful.

What are the sanctions against illegal working?

If you are found to be employing someone illegally and you have not carried out the prescribed checks, you may face a civil penalty of up to £20,000 per illegal worker and in serious cases, a criminal conviction carrying a prison sentence of up to 5 years and an unlimited fine along with other measures like cancellation of sponsor licence.

Penalties for the employee for illegal working

Working illegally is a criminal offence. Illegal workers face having their wages seized. They may also be prosecuted and can be imprisoned for up to six months.

Temporary Concessions due to Coronavirus (COVID-19) have been announced, however once the things return to normal you will be required to complete the Right to Work Checks.

HSMP Services Ltd., as an OISC registered Immigration Adviser, can help you comply with UK Immigration Rules. Please contact today.

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Good sleep patterns mean good business

by Jason Brennan

Sleep has a profound impact on all aspects of our lives and our work, from energy levels to stress management and mood, through to influencing our hormonal makeup, immune system, dietary choices and motivation or willingness to exercise. Indeed, studies have compared the effects of sleep deprivation to alcohol intoxication, demonstrating the crippling effect poor sleep can have on our ability to learn and to have a productive and fulfilling day's work.

Quantity and quality

Improved sleep routine has been found to be among the most widely-reported benefits of our enforced shift towards working from home, with my company's survey into over 1,300 UK workers having found that factors such as removing the daily commute have significantly improved both their sleep quantity (90 per cent) and quality (81 per cent).

If the last year has shown us anything, it is the critical importance of employees looking after all aspects of their physical and psychological wellbeing, and businesses supporting this wherever they can. Therefore, ahead of our phased return for offices we urge employers to recognise and more permanently support their workforce's need for a good night's sleep, promoting workplace initiatives and benefits that better fit the needs of their team.

For those looking to take proactive steps immediately, here's six basic steps business owners and managers working in any industry can take and apply to their teams:

Understand the sleep patterns of your organisation

Before you can implement a program to help your workforce you need to have an overview of their sleep challenges. Conduct an anon-



Although you can't be there after hours to make sure your employees aren't spending hours on LinkedIn, Snapchat, ASOS or whatever else, you can and should enforce a company policy of 'no emails after work'.

ymous survey within your workforce to establish the basic sleep patterns.

Implement specific programmes

From your survey results create tailored sleep support and wellness programs. Programmes like afternoon meditation can help combat workplace psychosocial risks too.

Combat workplace psychosocial risks

It's not surprising that sleep and psychosocial risks have a negative

relationship. It's the responsibility of employers to reduce work related stress and do what they can to combat these risks.

Educate your staff

Like anything in life, the more educated you are, the more informed your decisions will be. Most people don't realise the long term and chronic health effects sleep deprivation can have, so inform your workforce. Let them know that sleep goes beyond feeling groggy in work. Have information readily available that is interesting or in-

teractive about what can affect your sleep.

Brighten the place up

Create bright work spaces with as much natural light as possible. Working in dull, poorly lit spaces affects our circadian rhythm.

Discourage the extended use of electronic devices

Encourage regular breaks from screens throughout the working day. Although you can't be there after hours to make sure your employees aren't spending hours on LinkedIn, Snapchat, ASOS or whatever else, you can and should enforce a company policy of 'no emails after work'.

Jason Brennan is an author and director of leadership and wellness at Wrkit

www.wrkit.com

'Hold on to your donations' plea from charity shops

The Charity Retail Association has launched a campaign urging the public to stop leaving items outside of closed charity shops or already full donation banks

The public are asked to hold on to their donations until shops reopen unless their preferred charity offers alternative donation options. The public's generous donations will help charities respond to increasing demand for their services due to the pandemic at the same time as a dramatic fall in income due to the closure of charity shops and cancellation of fundraising events.

Charity shops are currently closed due to the lockdown with staff and volunteers unable to access their shops to process donations. Donations dropped off outside charity shops or overflowing dona-

tion banks, are getting destroyed by the weather conditions or ruined by animals. Charity shops are not going to get the value of donations aban-



doned outside their doors but quite the opposite, it will cost them money to dispose of ruined donations.

Robin Osterley (pictured), chief executive of the Charity Retail Association says: "With so many people using the lockdown as an opportunity to have a clear out, we are grateful to everyone who is putting aside items to donate to charity shops.

We are optimistic that when charity shops reopen there will be a surge in donations of high-quality pre-loved items and strong customer sales which will raise much needed funds to help those in need.

"To make sure that donations do not go to waste we are urging people not to abandon donated items outside of closed shops or next to already full donation banks. The accumulation of abandoned donations outside closed shops creates a major problem as they will be quickly ruined by the weather, become a public nuisance and potentially risk public safety. It costs charities and local councils significant large sums to dispose of ruined donations left on the street."

Enthusiasm

Allison Swaine-Hughes, retail director at the British Heart Foundation, adds: "Since the more recent closure of our shops, we have had

some incidents of donations being left outside and although we appreciate the public's enthusiasm to donate, we would kindly ask that no items are left at shops or donation bank sites, as we are currently unable to collect them, meaning they end up as waste which we have to pay to dispose of.

Once it is safe for us to reopen and start our collection services again, we will be hugely grateful to receive any clothes, home wares or furniture, all of which will help us continue our vital work to fund heart research.

We truly appreciate the continued support and would encourage those decluttering during this time to also consider posting us any unwanted, quality items such as jewellery, books or vinyl records via our freepost service at bhf.org.uk/postyourdonations."

www.charityretail.org.uk

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Local communities and business working together

Small and medium-sized businesses (SMB) in London have played a pivotal role in supporting communities through the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, contributing an estimated £3.4 billion through community initiatives such as volunteering or cash donations, according to a new report from Intuit QuickBooks and Oxford Economics

The analysis shows that on average in 2020, each SMB in London gave: nine hours per month in staff volunteering; £679 in cash donations and £370 in product or service donations.

This was mirrored by an upswell in support and appreciation for SMBs from the general public, with 44 per cent of Londoners now more likely to shop at SMBs compared to before March 2020.

Digitisation was an essential part of maintaining both SMBs' relationship with communities and their ability to trade, with 88 per cent of small and medium-sized businesses in London becoming more digital in 2020, for example through social media, online stores and click-and-collect services.

Value

The report explores the relationship and shared value exchange between SMBs and their communities during the coronavirus pandemic and shows how critical these businesses are to the UK, bringing value beyond just economic benefits.

Three quarters of London-based businesses undertook some form of charitable initiative: whether volunteering time; offering their business premise for free; giving discounts to NHS workers; or donating cash.

Two in five SMBs in the capital focused their efforts towards their local community – demonstrating that SMBs are an essential foundation of communities across the capital.

Chris Evans, vice president at Intuit QuickBooks said that the actions of small business were inspiring and pointed out that they had been forced to pivot their business models and embrace digital technology to reach customers and

The Digital Opportunity for Small Businesses

How improved digital skills and connectivity boost local areas



qb intuit quickbooks.

The report explores the relationship and shared value exchange between SMBs and their communities during the coronavirus pandemic

protect their livelihoods. "It takes real resilience to move fast, change and pivot, but what's amazing is this pivot has put digital at the heart of communities.

"Communities are more connected and this has created a circular effect where small businesses do more for their communities, while communities do more to support them in turn. This is an incredible outcome from a tough situation, and I hope our report will draw even

more attention to the vital contribution SMBs make to our communities and inspire continued support."

Consumer support

UK residents mirrored the increased community support from smaller firms by becoming more supportive of local small businesses, including through their shopping habits.

Across London, 73 per cent of adults said that local SMBs played a valuable role in their community in 2020, while nearly three in five said they appreciate SMBs in their community more than they did before the coronavirus pandemic.

Community support is also helping to boost SMBs' optimism for their prospects in 2021. Nearly a third of London SMBs felt that local support for their business had increased during the coronavirus pandemic. Of these, 88 per cent agreed that this had boosted their optimism for the future.

Recover and flourish



Mary Portas (above), Queen of the High Street and keynote speaker at QuickBooks Connect, said: "The High Street has faced a hugely tough year in the face of Covid-19. We've all woken up to the importance of small-to-medium size businesses in our lives and the role they play in our local communities. It's crucial that they get the much-needed support they need to be able to recover and flourish and I hope that we all now recognise our role and the importance of shopping and supporting local.

"This report is encouraging for the future of our SMBs, who are such an integral part of the cultural and economic fabric of the UK."

Digital

Digital was crucial in making SMB support for their community possible – and keeping businesses trading.

Of the 88 per cent of SMBs in London that became more digital, 78 per cent reported this as important to their ability to contribute to and support their local community and wider society, while 86 per cent said this was important for their business to continue operating.

Overall, a third of SMBs in London began offering digital products or services through existing platforms, such as Uber Eats or Amazon, while eight per cent launched their own digital product or service, such as an online store or click-and-collect. More than one in five of businesses did both.

www.oxfordeconomics.com/recent-releases/The-Digital-Opportunity-for-Small-Businesses



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TW.WORKS

In Tunbridge Wells, corporates are in good company

Royal Tunbridge Wells has long been home to large corporates, but in recent times more than ever are committing to more space in the town, for the long-term.

The strong and diverse business

community is supported by a vibrant restaurant, retail and hotel offer, quick links to London and a pipeline of talent from the stellar local grammar schools.

With many Global and local

businesses now considering new, flexible space in the area to help their employees who live here commute less, we are seeing a post-Covid change towards greater flexibility and wellbeing.

“

Ross Feeney, CEO of Tunbridge Wells Together said:

“As a group, we believe the time is right to attract more corporates to Tunbridge Wells, whether this is for a large regional office ‘spokes’ or to sponsor and support employees’ flexible working requirements post-Covid by paying for local office space for them. Either way, Tunbridge Wells has all the elements to support businesses growing in the town. We believe

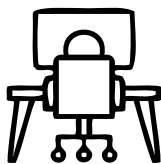
strongly that there is ample opportunity for investors to develop new grade A office space in the area, due to the growing demand for both small office operations and for larger corporates looking to escape London-priced floorplates. Given the year we have all experienced, it has also never been more important to consider better wellbeing and ways to better ‘support local’.”

”



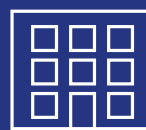
£496,619

Average house price
in TW compared to
£256,000 UK

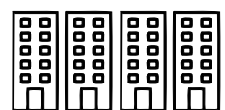


3,000

More commuters now
working from home



London corporates
shedding
1/3 to 50%
of space should
open a TW office



17%

Of retail space is
empty & could be
made into offices



5,000

New companies set
up in the last
5 years in TW



10,000
jobs in
10 years

Predicted pre-Covid
for TW



24

Days annually
saved by not
commuting



**LEGAL &
CREATIVE**

Fastest growing
sectors in TW

DEVELOPERS:

Why now is the time to Make Space in TW

There is a rapidly growing demand for office space in and around Tunbridge Wells as the business heart of Kent.

In the last two years, 200,000 sq ft of commercial space has been altered to residential under Permitted Development Rights.

We are hoping that now corporates, developers and investors alike see that now is the opportunity for commercial space to be retained or created, responding to the current real demand here.

The Local Plan is being drafted at the moment and there will be a bias towards the conversion of empty retail space (currently 15.9% of all retail units in the Borough) to office space or business centres. This is not without its challenges and we would like to see developers and landlords coming together to provide expertise to help us achieve this most effectively. We want the Government to consider business rates relief for retail premises that will be converted to offices to attract

more investment and to make lettings of empty retail space easier.

There are also many new housing developments under construction or planned over the next 5-10 years in and around the Borough. We would like to see some of these giving provision to flexible offices, which will attract buyers who need home office space in this new world.

Get in touch to find out more.

Follow us for more information and announcements via the hashtag #TWWorks on social channels.

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Department stores – past, present and future

Arding & Hobbs, Bourne & Hollingsworth, Gamages, Marshall & Snelgrove, Swan & Edgar ... none of these grand London stores exists in the twenty-first century. Alexa Michael takes a look at the changing world of department stores

Department stores have a very long history. It is likely that the earliest department store was Fortnum & Mason which was established by William Fortnum and Hugh Mason in 1709. The store began to specialise in luxury foods, such as fresh poultry and game in aspic jelly. Its famous hampers were devised for travellers setting out on long journeys. It is believed that William Fortnum invented the Scotch Egg in 1738 by wrapping a hard-boiled egg in sausage meat and covering it in fried breadcrumbs.

Over more than 300 years, Fortnum & Mason hampers have been delivered to the most unlikely of places and recipients. These include the Suffragettes on their release from Holloway Prison for smashing the shop's windows in 1911, to climbers on Mount Everest and to soldiers on the battlefields of Iraq, as well as to far more hospitable locations nearer home.

Over more than 300 years, Fortnum & Mason hampers have been delivered to the most unlikely of places and recipients.



Bourne & Hollingsworth, taken in the early 1920s



The former Arding and Hobbs store



Former Swan and Edgar department store



View of Marshall and Snelgrove department store, taken from Bond Street, Leeds, early 1950s

Browse and shop

Although it was founded as a grocery store, Fortnum & Mason grew rapidly during the Victorian era and later became a department store selling a wide range of goods including homeware, dining and entertainment items, giftware and it has a Gentleman's department on the third floor. However, it continues to focus on food and beverages.

Another very early department store was Harding, Howell & Co, located at 89 Pall Mall in St James', London, which opened in 1796. Catering for fashionable, well-heeled women, the store was split into four

departments, namely furs and fans, haberdashery, jewellery and clocks, and millinery (hats). Here, women could browse and shop at their leisure – and independently of men.

Newfound wealth

The affluent women who frequented these stores had the Industrial Revolution to thank for this new opportunity to spend money. Rapid industrialisation was changing the lives of millions, both in the capital and throughout Britain. It was enabled by free trade, a plethora of new inventions that would be used to mass manufacture goods, a vast merchant navy and an unending supply of cheap factory labour. Such newfound wealth meant new outlets in which to spend money – and hence the department store was born.

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the department store began to resemble the kind of premises that shoppers would recognise today. The Great Exhibition of 1851, held in the Crystal Palace in London's Hyde Park, served as a giant shop window for the myriad of new consumer goods shipped from around the world and newly available to ordi-

nary people. The Crystal Palace comprised 300,000 panes of plate glass, itself a new discovery. (It was moved to South East London after the Great Exhibition but burned down in 1936).

Tastes and aspirations

Early department stores included Harrods (started by Charles Henry Harrod in 1849) and John Lewis (opened in 1864 in Oxford Street, London). William Whiteley opened a drapery store at 31 Westbourne Grove in 1863. Within four years, this had become a row of shops with 17 separate departments. By 1890, more than 6,000 staff were employed by the business. The majority lived in male and female dormitories owned by the company and worked from 7am to 11pm six days a week. They had to obey 176 rules! To be successful, it was crucial that the merchants who founded these stores understood the tastes and aspirations of the middle-class women who formed their customer base.

Harry Gordon Selfridge was a partner in Marshall Field's in Chicago, USA, founded in 1852, a hugely successful and popular department store. He visited London in 1906 but



Picnic hampers at Fortnum & Mason

Credit: Harry n/flick.com (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Credit: Steve Kersley (CC BY-SA 3.0)

Credit: Leeds Museums and Galleries/Flickr.com (CC BY-NC 2.0)

found no retailer as exciting as his own. This led him to establish his namesake store at the western end of Oxford Street in a palatial Beaux Arts building. Opened in 1909, Selfridge's offered 100 departments, together with restaurants and a rooftop garden, among other attractions. The staff were very highly trained and experts in the store's merchandise. Selfridge liked to say: 'The customer is always right' and is said to have invented the tag line 'Only [so many] shopping days to Christmas.'

Rebranded

Army and Navy Stores began as a co-operative society for military officers and their families during the nineteenth century. The company purchased a number of independent stores in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1973, the House of Fraser acquired the Army and Navy Stores group and the majority of stores were rebranded as House of Fraser. In 2005, the flagship Army and Navy store in London's Victoria Street, together with remaining Army and Navy stores in Camberley and Chichester, underwent a process of refurbishment and began trading as House of Fraser.

House of Fraser began as Arthur and Fraser in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1849. It became Fraser and Sons in 1891 and the company enjoyed steady growth in the early twentieth century. From the 1930s onwards, the company acquired a large number of stores which led it becoming a national chain (and household name). Notable acquisitions in the post-war years included the Scottish Drapery Corporation, Binns, Barkers of Kensington, Dickins & Jones, Howells and Army and Navy.

However, the company's fortunes later changed, with dozens of House of Fraser stores closing over the past 50 years. House of Fraser was acquired by Sports Direct in 2018 and subsequently went into administration. This was extended for another year in 2019 with many stores facing closure or an uncertain future.

Demise

Recent years have seen the demise of many high street department stores such as BHS, C&A and most recently Debenhams, London being particularly badly hit – see box. In 1950, Debenhams was the largest department store chain in Britain with 110 branches. In 2006, it announced plans to double the number of its stores to 240 and was opening new outlets as late as 2017. Even John Lewis, with its reputation for quality merchandise and its 'click and collect' service, has not been immune,

with eight of its stores closing in 2020. In February 2021, the company announced that a further eight of its stores could remain permanently closed after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Why has the death knell sounded for so many of the country's famous retailers? In the case of Debenhams, some experts say that the company failed to keep up with fashion trends (a criticism also often levied at Marks & Spencer) and it became an irrelevance. It also faced high overheads, such as rents, rates and staff salaries and upkeep of the Debenhams estate. Some also blamed Debenhams' demise on poor financial management.

Strong competition

Every bricks-and-mortar retailer now faces strong competition from online retail. John Lewis expects that up to three quarters of its sales will be made online by 2025. However, that doesn't explain why Primark, the fast fashion retailer with no online retail offer at all, has customers queuing round the block at its stores. It owns 370 outlets in 12 countries, 189 of them in Britain.

Recent years have also seen a growth in specialist retailers, for example in furniture which has been relatively slow to move online. The strength of specialist retailers such as DFS, Furniture Village and Heal's lies in an in-depth knowledge of their product category.

Destination stores

Has the great British department



store had its day? Kyle Monk, director of retail insights and analytics at the British Retail Consortium, thinks not.

"Department stores play an important part in the fabric of many town centres and local economies. They offer a convenient, curated shopping experience which is difficult to replicate online. Department stores themselves are not on the way out. However, some operators have faced substantial challenges."

Monk believes that successful department stores have known for some time how to diversify their offering. He cites the example of Selfridges which turns over several billion pounds annually and was profitable enough pre-pandemic to re-invest 300 million into store improvements. To be successful today, a department store must be a destination. It has to mix food and beverage, expert advice, complementary services and exciting experiences, along with carefully curated category collections. Where possible, it has to offer exclusives. Department stores that simply offer items that could just as easily be

bought elsewhere are on their way out, not department stores themselves. Some department stores are diversifying even further and considering leasing part of their shop floors as co-working space or even converting portions to residential property.

'Secret sauce'

How does Monk account for the success of stores like Primark that do not trade online? "Primark are experts in buying; it is their 'secret sauce'. They source quality goods at far better price points that others cannot and do so at a scale and volume that is not profitable via an online model. They also identify and iterate on fashion trends at an incredible pace – the turnaround from identifying a signal to an item being on hangers is staggering."

It looks as though variety and excitement, speed of sourcing, buying acumen and above all, being a destination are the way ahead for department stores in the twenty first century.

Alexa Michael is member research executive at LCCI

Capital losses

For decades, London was home to a group of upmarket department stores but none of the ones below exist today.

- Arding & Hobbs was established in 1910 and located near to Clapham Junction Station in Battersea. At one point, it was the largest department store in South London. In the 1970s, the company went into administration and was then broken up and sold. The building was later occupied by Debenhams and TK Maxx, although Debenhams ceased trading there in 2020.
- Bourne & Hollingsworth, founded in 1894, was sited on the corner of Oxford Street and Berners Street in London's West End. It had a strong reputation for selling top quality goods and treating its staff well. Despite the emphasis on quality retailing, Bourne & Hollingsworth closed its doors in 1983. The flagship Next store now occupies the site.
- Gamage's (pictured) was a department store in Holborn close to the City



of London. It operated between 1878 and 1972 and was renowned for its toy and hardware departments. The original Gamage's building no longer exists.

- Marshall & Snelgrove's London branch was located on the north side of Oxford Street at the junction with Vere Street. The company had other stores outside of London. The Oxford Street branch was demolished and rebuilt in the 1970s and reopened as Debenhams' flagship store. All the other Marshall & Snelgrove stores were rebranded.
- Swan & Edgar was located in Piccadilly Circus and opened in the early twentieth century. The store closed in 1982. (The author recalls shopping here as a child with her mother).

Why did so many top-end department stores close? The 1970s and early 1980s were difficult years economically, with industrial unrest, rising unemployment and a slump in the tourist trade which would have affected visitor numbers. Many companies were also forced out of Central London by high rents and business rates.

Credit: Robert Cutts/Flickr.com (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Employees as brand advocates

Nowadays, brand marketing goes much further than marketing campaigns and advertising. When it comes to brand advocates, we typically think of social media influencers and the more traditional brand ambassador. *Matthew Hayes* explains the importance of using employees as brand advocates and the benefits to both the brand or business and its staff

What is a brand advocate?

A brand advocate is somebody that shares the same values and ethos as a brand, representing them in a positive light, often helping to increase brand awareness and even sales.

Typically speaking, a brand advocate is often a social media influencer, a brand ambassador or there is some sort of mutual, or contractual agreement in place.

However, who are the most powerful spokespeople for a brand or business? The people who work there, of course. These people are often the living embodiment of the brand and front-line representatives that can make or break that brand interaction.

Brand advocates are a way to drive organic and authentic traffic to a brand or business.

It may not be the most traditional concept or the one we necessarily think of first, but it definitely makes the most sense. Particularly in a time where employee retention and communication are so important.

Brand advocates are a way to drive organic and authentic traffic to a brand or business. Whilst

the Internet and social media are incredibly powerful tools for raising brand awareness, nothing quite beats word-of-mouth marketing.

In 2016, a global study found that 50 per cent of employees share something on their own social media channels about their employer. And given that social media has upped the ante over the last few years, I expect this figure to be significantly higher in today's climate.

So, with that in mind, brands should be working towards improving their internal communications to create a better relationship with employees, promote their vision and

mission, and raise brand awareness through organic brand advocacy.

Brand advocacy builds brand love

When done correctly, brand advocacy can build brand love and there are a number of ways to do that.

Whilst many brands focusing their attentions to external communications, however, many neglect or overlook the importance of internal communications and training.

Internal communications are a phenomenal way for brands and businesses to collectively communi-



What can the retail industry



by Andrew Richardson

Unemployment is always a pressing issue for the government. The pandemic and the temporary closure of businesses has caused significant stress for workers and business owners. In the world of furlough payments, we can forget the financial significance of unemployment payments. Simply put, fewer people out of work means fewer people claiming allowances and a rise in overall disposable income, both advantages for the state of the economy.

Closure

Arcadia's Topshop and Topman are victims of the high street. The recent acquisition of their brands by ASOS and BooHoo represent a



Credit: Brian Robert Marshall (CC BY-SA 2.0)

loss of 13,000 jobs in the UK. The closure of high street stores is set to continue this year, and retail workers now face record levels of unemployment. However, a return to work is coming, intending to end furlough and recover from

the unemployment caused by the pandemic. This is an opportunity to create a forward-thinking workforce beyond the pandemic. Successful retailers must do what they can do reduce unemployment in the industry — but how?

Employment and disability

In order to reduce the number of people who are out of work down to a disability, The Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work launched a campaign in 2018 which retailers can voluntarily opt in to. The *Disability Confident* employer scheme which provides employers with the skills, examples and confidence to recruit and develop disabled employees.

The government aims to see one million more disabled people in work by 2027 and this is a great opportunity for retailers who are doing well in the industry to expand their workforce. By looking at the Disability Confident list of employers that have signed up, we can see that branches of big names such as Asda, Barclays, and B&M Bargains are all committed.

cate with their employees. Whether this is done via training courses or conferences, internal Intranet or even an email newsletter, this can help improve employees' knowledge of the business, the brand and the products or services.

Not only that, but internal communications help boost staff morale, providing them with motivation and detailed information ensuring they are involved and up to date with all aspects of the business.

They also provide a sense of togetherness, connecting employees through a series of shared values, missions, goals and objectives.

Shared values

Here, is where consumer and employee sentiment is key. Consumer sentiment has always been an important variable in businesses, allowing owners to forecast production, plan ahead or adjust their output depending on popular opinion – and the same goes for employees, too.

And if brands aren't entirely sure how to turn their attention to employee sentiment, the first step to make is investing in a brand audit or brand value proposition. These can help to educate and ensure stakeholder and employee perceptions are aligned, as well as making sure people are communicating the same messages, vision, mission and values of the brand.

A brand vision is simply intent. The vision should support and reflect the long-term business strategy and help guide the future. And a brand mission, is a statement that communicates the purpose and objectives of a brand.

And with the vision and mission of the brand in mind, it is important for brands and businesses to consider both employees and consumers to ensure values are shared across the board.

Employees are key

Employees are a pivotal part of any business. And quite simply, without them, businesses wouldn't be able to function. It is the employee's business just as much as the employers, so it is only right for them to play a part and get involved.

We are beginning to see more well-known brands implementing this strategy and using their employees as a face of the brand, rather than just working their magic behind the scenes. Disney are a great example of this as its employees have been the embodiment of the brand and its ethos for years.

The likes of Sass and Belle, Lindex and Zoella are all putting staff at the forefront of their brands, getting them just as involved as main stakeholders.

Sass and Belle, for example, have

a website filled with images of their employees and often share quotes and content from them, too. This in turn, creates a more personal and emotional bond between the brand and the consumer, as the brand is no longer faceless.

Similarly, in 2015, Lindex launched an underwear campaign and instead of tapping into their network of professional models, they used their own employees and have continued to do so. Again, this improves their position in the market by appearing more relatable and creating that all-important emotional connection.

And Zoella often shares content, crediting employees for their ideas, allowing them to take part in social media takeovers and truly getting them involved. By doing so, they are adding personal and humanistic elements to their branding – and it's paying off, too.

In doing this, the brand achieves an even wider reach as employees share the brand's content across their personal channels, get to know their online connections and create organic relationships with potential consumers themselves.

Not only that, but this creates reputation, making brands come across as a desirable employer and recruiter, as well as helping to retain current staff and employees.

Listening to new ideas, accepting criticism and being transparent

is also paramount. Your employees may well be your consumers too, and as they say, the customer is always right.

After all, employees are the ultimate representative of a brand, and Amelia Neate, Senior Manager at Influencer Matchmaker says, "It's important to remember we're living in a social age where employees are becoming micro-influencers in their very own right."

"For example, Emily Rose Moloney started out as an employee for ASOS and now, working as a fashion influencer, is promoting them on her social media channels, with her Instagram account gaining almost 80k followers."

Togetherness

What employees think of a brand or business they work for speaks volumes. And employees help to drive brand awareness, so empowering them through a plan of brand advocacy is a sure-fire way to achieve great results.

So, next time you are seeking to boost stats and see results, consider the power of your employees and come together to create your very own culture.

Matthew Hayes is managing director of brand agency Champions (UK) plc
www.championsukplc.com

do to reduce unemployment?

Encouraging a diverse workforce

In 2017 it was reported that retail companies in the FTSE 100 are ahead of other industries when it comes to gender diversity. Retailers should focus on broadening their selection process when it comes to the recruitment process. This can ensure that those who've lost a job in a retail position face equal opportunity when it comes to finding a new role.

Encouraging diversity in gender and cultural background when hiring is not only beneficial for employees, but also for the business itself. Ultimately, when a workforce is representative of a customer base, it can lead to a better understanding of the target market and an improvement in business performance.

Charity collaboration

Another way to reduce unemployment

In 2017 it was reported that retail companies in the FTSE 100 are ahead of other industries when it comes to gender diversity

ment levels is to collaborate with charities who are there to help those who are struggling to find work.

Partnering with a disabled or mental health charity for example can help you reach those who are out of work because of a disability or health issue and encourage them to apply.

One example of this is men's shirts retailer, CT Shirts. This company has a long-standing partnership with the Prince's Trust which involves fundraising and a mutually

beneficial relationship. This charity works closely with vulnerable young people who need a helping hand to get their lives back on track.

Like many retailers that The Trust works with, CT Shirts took advantage of one of their 'Get Hired' days – a day of greetings and interviews with young people who have been through The Prince's Trust Programmes to get to know some potential employees.

Cross-discipline training

It's true that for many retailers, while the jobs of their in-store employees may be at risk, often recruitment in their digital marketing and e-commerce teams are still growing. Therefore, an important consideration to make is whether retail employees should be trained in other areas of the business too. Or at least should their knowledge

of the company and its products or services be valued so that they're allowed to progress in another area of the business after redundancy?

There are advantages and disadvantages to this idea, but it's certainly something for retailers to think about before making mass redundancies across the business. Cross-discipline training can also encourage more loyal employees and therefore those who are more invested in the performance of the retail business as a whole.

There is a range of considerations that retailers are currently making or should think about when it comes to reducing unemployment. As some companies pave the way, it's down to other industry players to make big changes too.

Andrew Richardson is a copywriter at online marketing agency Charles Tyrwhitt Shirts

Best places in London for flexible working

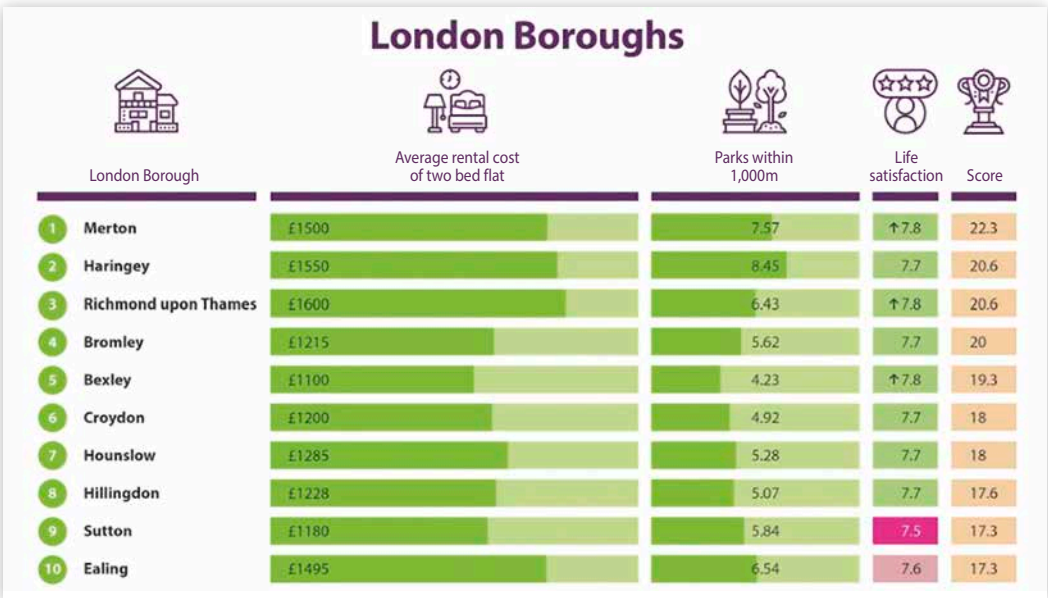
With half of UK workers saying they would quit if denied flexible working once the restrictions ease, a new report has revealed the best cities, towns and London boroughs for flexible working in 2021

The Flexible Working index, conducted by Ready Steady Store, found Merton is the best London borough for a balance between working from the office and working from home. This comes after the Minister for Women and Equalities, Liz Truss (also International Trade Secretary), called for employers to 'normalise' flexible working.

As people want to be able to work from where they work best, the study looked at the below points for Londoners:

- Life satisfaction score
- Amount of green space within 1,000m radius
- Average rental cost of a two-bed flat.

Analysts created a weighted score for all points, which then gave each borough an average score on its



benefits for flexible working. Two-bed flats were considered as there has been an increase in interest for these, with people needing extra space for an office.

The top London boroughs are:

- Merton
- Haringey
- Richmond upon Thames

- Bromley
- Bexley.

Even before the pandemic, London was a hotspot for flexible workers. The top three most flexible boroughs are located slightly outside of the centre, in areas that feature a lot of green space and are slightly more removed from the hustle and bustle of the city

itself. With a high life satisfaction score, and a huge number of parks and green spaces between them, they're ideal for living away from the centre with quick transport links.

www.readysteadystore.com/blog/great-britains-best-telecommuter-towns

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BUSINESS & FINANCE



2021 CHALLENGES: WORK ON YOUR TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY

Agile solutions for today's fast-paced CFOs in an M&A environment

Sam Kunda, Managing Partner, and Jag Johal, Co-Founder at Change Frontier



sam@changefrontier.com

The economic impact on businesses by the pandemic and prolonged lockdowns, has been brutal; it's an environment that requires business leaders to be at their best to navigate their organisations through unprecedented challenges and uncertainty. Whilst survival might seem like the only priority, it's no longer the focus for many executives. Achieving growth is back as a paramount goal. Two principal methods are via organic growth or M&A.

In this segment, we give the spotlight to CFO's embarking on M&A as part of their strategy and provide insights on how they can overcome the common challenges to unlock real value. Managing the M&A process and outcomes can be an arduous undertaking. Our 4 hot spot areas we recommend you give special attention are: stakeholder management, regulatory and compliance risk, integration and ERP systems infrastructure. Depending on the type of M&A transaction, combining two organisations (often IT-based), increases compliance and regulatory risk, which require adequate solutions to mitigate.



Co-Founder

Stakeholders play a pivotal role in how well firms merge. If poorly managed, they will slow down the transition process. Integration is often underestimated; significant benefits are derived from smooth dataflows for easy reporting and decision making, standardised processes, procedures boost efficiency, and reduce costs. A robust ERP platform creates a strong foundation for successful integration. CFOs should lean towards SaaS solutions that offer more flexibility and cost-effectiveness, allowing teams to work anytime from anywhere in the world with ease compared to on-premise solutions.

Speed of a transaction often dictates what executives can achieve, and there can be many unknowns with added pressure to continue trading as a new structure ASAP. Decision-makers naturally jump on a tactical solution that seems like the best option, typically consultancy services from the 'Big Four' firms. But how much value lies in a patched, short-term solution, merely able to delay the need for restructure and transformation whilst wasting away your budget?

Strategic solutions are the best way to solve these challenges and sustain a long-term competitive advantage from an M&A growth strategy. Dynamic CFOs should be backed by a solid digital transformation roadmap, with SaaS ERP systems that enable them to onboard/merge new entities quickly and train staff faster, whilst flexible enough to meet the difficulties of regulatory risks in a global business environment. Fully integrated systems with smooth dataflows will aid decision-making, providing insights to spot business and revenue growth areas.

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London tops new company formation table for 2020

Of the new companies formed in the UK last year, London was the home for almost a quarter of them. It was of course an extremely difficult year for many people and businesses, with the UK unemployment rate rising to 5.1 per cent and an estimated 1.74 million people without a job

However, this has not stopped Brits from following their passion as data has shown new company incorporations have surged in that time. Experts at Reboot SEO Agency looked at the most popular sectors and cities for new company formations, and how the figures compared previous years.

Most popular sectors for new company incorporations in 20/21

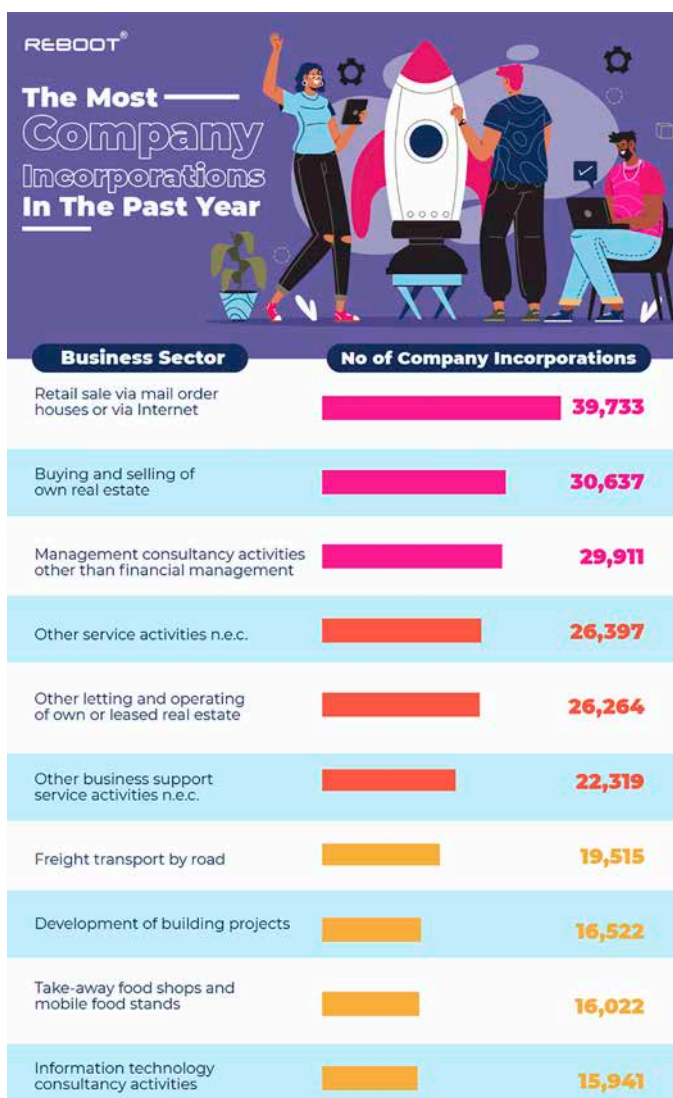
The most registered sector of incorporations from January 2020 to January 2021 is classified under 'Retail sale via mail order houses or via internet' with 39,733 registered.

An impressive 835,494 incorporations were registered in the UK from January 2020 to January 2021

The list of activities classified inside the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) Code '47910' include: internet auctions, internet retail sales, mail order, radio direct sales, telephone direct sales, and television direct sales.

In second place is 'Buying and selling of own real estate', with 30,637 new company incorporations over the last year.

The list of activities classified inside the SIC Code '68100' include: apartment buildings buying and selling, building sales and purchase, dwelling buying and selling, land buying and selling,



real estate buying and selling, real estate owner, and static caravan sales.

Third is 'Management consultancy activities other than financial management', with 29,911 new company incorporations.

In fourth place is 'Other service activities n.e.c.' with 26,397 and following closely behind in fifth is 'Other letting and operating of own or leased estate' with 26,264 company incorporations.

Most popular city

The city that showed the biggest increase is London, with 219,679 new company incorporations in the English capital.

In second is Birmingham with 19,724 registered, and in third is Manchester with 17,517 incorporations registered in the last year.

Three-year comparison

An impressive 835,494 incorporations were registered in the UK from January 2020 to January 2021.

This shows a 41 per cent increase from 2019 (591,924 incorporations registered), a 96 per cent increase from 2018 (425,703 incorporations registered), and a whopping 141 per cent increase from 2017 (345,675 incorporations registered).

www.rebootonline.com/seo-company

Supporting apprentices at SMEs across London

A partnership between Lloyds Banking Group and apprenticeships start-up Multiverse has created 51 new apprenticeships at SMEs across London in under a year

The collaboration has been running since last April and makes use of the Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Fund, which allows large employers to pledge their unspent levy – making it easier and more financially viable for smaller companies to create apprenticeship roles.

Training and assessment

Through the fund, Lloyds has transferred a portion of its levy to Multiverse to distribute among SMEs in the capital, to help fund the training and assessment costs of apprenticeships.

The partnership with Multiverse has seen Lloyds Banking Group provide £535,000 to help smaller businesses recruit and train apprentices, boosting firms' skills base while creating opportunities for young people in the capital.



Ed Thurman, Lloyds Banking Group Ambassador for London, said: "We know from our own experience the massive contribution that apprentices can make, and the government's belief that they can play a significant role in the economic recovery was reiterated in the recent Budget by its doubling of apprenticeship incentive payments for businesses.

"Apprenticeships help young people and businesses to succeed together, and this partnership is creating fresh opportunities across London.

"The commitment and determination of the apprentices involved to date is clear and we're looking forward to working with Multiverse to help even more young people benefit from apprenticeships."

Diverse talent

Multiverse, which was founded by Euan Blair, works to give young people an alternative to university by matching them with company apprenticeships.

He said: "No matter the size of your company, apprenticeships are a powerful tool for recruiting diverse talent and tackling skills gaps, particularly in digital and tech.

"Apprenticeships provide access to some of the very best careers and we want to help more people to take advantage of these great opportunities."

"Working with Lloyds Banking Group, we're supporting people to realise their full potential, while making it easier for small and medium sized businesses to access the apprenticeships they need.

"Apprenticeships provide access to some of the very best careers and we want to help more people to take advantage of these great opportunities."

Skills

Annabel May, 19, a Level 3 Business Administration Apprentice at New Schools Network, a beneficiary of the partnership, added: "Since starting my apprenticeship in July, I haven't looked back. From the brilliant support I've received at both Multiverse and New Schools Network to the amazing opportunities I've been able to take part in, I have learnt a vast array of skills.

"One of these is definitely public speaking, as I am now able to talk to sometimes hundreds of people at once with confidence and clear communication."

www.lloydsbankinggroup.com
www.multiverse.io



News from the EU



Compiled by
Angelina Markousi

EU and US conclude negotiations on agricultural quotas



■ The EU and USA have concluded negotiations to adjust the European Union's World Trade Organisation (WTO) agricultural quotas, following the UK's withdrawal from the EU. This is the culmination of two years of negotiations in the WTO framework to divide these EU quotas, with part of the volume remaining with the EU 27, and part going to the UK, based on recent trade flows. The agreement covers dozens of quotas and billions of euros of trade including for beef, poultry, rice, dairy products, fruits and vegetables and wines.

Data protection: process on personal data flows to UK



■ The Commission has launched the process towards the adoption of two adequacy decisions for transfers of personal data to the United Kingdom, one under the General Data Protection Regulation and the other for the Law Enforcement Directive. The publication of the draft decisions is the beginning of a process towards their adoption. This involves obtaining an opinion from the European Data Protection Board and the green light from a committee composed of representatives of the EU Member States. Once this procedure will have been completed, the Commission could proceed to adopt the two adequacy decisions.

Connecting Europe Facility to fund greener transport



■ The European Commission has welcomed the agreement reached by the European Parliament and the Council on the Connecting Europe Facility proposal, worth €33.7 billion, as part of the next long-term EU budget 2021-2027. The Connecting Europe Facility programme supports investment in Europe's transport, energy and digital infrastructure networks. It will support the goals of the Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy laying the foundation for how the EU transport system can achieve its green and digital transformation and become more resilient to future crises.

Conference on the future of Europe



■ European Parliament President, David Sassoli, Prime Minister of Portugal António Costa, on behalf of the Presidency of the Council, and Commission President Ursula von der Leyen have signed the Joint Declaration on the Conference on the Future of Europe. The Conference sets itself the goal of giving citizens a greater role in shaping EU policies and ambitions, improving the Union's resilience to crises, be it economic or health-related. It will create a new public forum for an open, inclusive, transparent and structured debate with Europeans around the issues that matter to them and affect their everyday lives. It will create a new public forum for an open, inclusive, transparent and structured debate with Europeans around the issues that matter to them and affect their everyday lives.

InvestEU approved

■ The European Commission has welcomed the European Parliament's vote, confirming the political agreement on InvestEU reached in December 2020. The InvestEU Programme will provide the EU with crucial long-term funding, crowding in private investment, in support of the recovery and helping build a greener, more digital and more resilient European economy. Through an EU budget guarantee, the programme will leverage substantial private and public funds to support investments and create jobs, building on the successful implementation of the European Fund for Strategic Investments. It will provide and attract long-term funding in line with EU policies and contribute to the recovery from a deep economic and social crisis.

New EU energy labels



■ To help EU consumers cut their energy bills and carbon footprint, a brand-new version of the widely recognised EU energy label will be applicable in all shops and online retailers from Monday, 1 March 2021. The new labels will initially apply to four product categories – fridges and freezers, dishwashers, washing machines, and television sets (and other external monitors). New labels for light bulbs and lamps with fixed light sources will follow on 1 September, and other products will follow in the coming years.

Building a climate-resilient future

■ The European Commission has adopted a new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change, setting out the pathway to prepare for the unavoidable impacts of climate change. While the EU does everything within its power to mitigate climate change, domestically and internationally, we must also get ready to face its unavoidable consequences. From

deadly heatwaves and devastating droughts, to decimated forests and coastlines eroded by rising sea levels, climate change is already taking its toll in Europe and worldwide. Building on the 2013 Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, the aim of these proposals is to shift the focus from understanding the problem to developing solutions, and to move from planning to implementation.

Horizon Europe's strategic plan 2021-2024



■ The European Commission has adopted the first strategic plan for Horizon Europe, the new EU research and innovation programme worth €95.5 billion in current prices. The strategic plan is a novelty in Horizon Europe and sets the strategic orientations for the targeting of investments in the programme's first four years. It ensures that EU research and innovation actions contribute to EU priorities, including a climate-neutral and green Europe, a Europe fit for the digital age, and an economy that works for people.

UK £20 million SME Brexit Support Fund opens

■ UK smaller businesses can apply for grants of up to £2,000 to help them adapt to new customs and tax rules when trading with the EU. The £20 million SME Brexit Support Fund enables traders to access practical support, including training for new customs, rules of origin and VAT processes. The fund, announced in February by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Michael Gove, is the latest round of government support for UK trade. To be eligible, businesses must import or export goods between Great Britain and the EU, or move goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

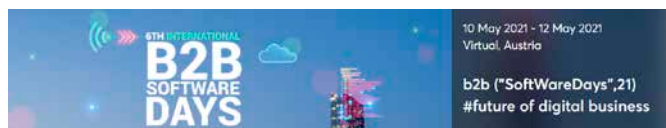
EVENTS



Registration Deadline: Tuesday 13 April 2021

Location: Online

This virtual networking event takes place on April 14th 2021. DigithON is an event organized in the framework of the BE-READI ALPS' project, an inspiring and innovative programme co-financed by the European Union via INTERREG Alpine Space. The matchmaking will focus on digital transformation in the field of alpine technologies, renewable energy and sustainability, focusing on technologies such as IoT, machine-learning, data analysis, and AI.



Registration Deadline: Sunday 9 May 2021

Location: Online

This is the 6th International B2B Software Days, organised by FFG, WKÖ/Advantage Austria, the Vienna Business Agency and TU Wien in collaboration with the Enterprise Europe Network and the go-international initiative. The event is free of charge and primarily targets companies and R&D institutions looking for technological, research and business co-operations. Consulting companies without technical expertise in digital business are not target group of this event.



Registration Deadline: Friday 30 April 2021

Location: Online

This event aims to bridge international start-up companies with corporates during a one-day event that will be organised as a virtual event to take place on May 3, 2021. The matchmaking session will be open until 12 May 2021. Participation will be possible via smartphone, browser, or tablet. Participants will get first-hand insights, take part in a 1:1 match-making session, establish new connections and learn more about how to successfully explore opportunities for new cooperations and connect their visions to enhance innovation.



Registration Deadline: Thursday 13 May 2021

Location: Online

The 10th Edition of Murcia Food Brokerage Event 2021 will present the latest creations in the field of food technology, providing companies from different European countries with an excellent opportunity to hold bilateral meetings aimed at establishing technology cooperation agreements and research proposal.



Registration Deadline: Friday 7 May 2021

Location: Online

The B2M event is actively supported by the EEN Sector Groups Materials, Nano- and Micro-technologies, as well as BioChemTech. Participants in this event will have the opportunity to present their own project concepts and to meet representatives from companies, SMEs, universities, and research organisations, in order to exchange ideas during pre-arranged meetings with the aim of paving the way for future cooperation and European projects including call topics for 2021.



Registration Deadline: Friday 14 May 2021

Location: Online

This conference and B2B event, featuring the main topics 'Green Transition', 'Digital Transition' and 'Recovery from COVID19', focuses on international research and development cooperation and start-ups. Industry, researchers, SMEs, Start-Ups, regional and national innovation and funding agencies as well as EC officials and all other stakeholders of the European innovation ecosystem are expected to gather virtually and in Graz to listen to exciting key note presentations, engage in interactive workshops and participate in B2B meetings organized by the Enterprise Europe Network.



Registrations for all events are now open

For further information contact the Enterprise Europe Network London office at enterprise.europe@londonchamber.co.uk

Members' noticeboard

w@terstons

Business & IT Consultancy

Business & IT consultancy welcomes new boardroom appointment

Waterstons is delighted to welcome Angus Kidd into the company as a non-executive director. Angus has worked in large international financial services organisations specialising in the field of risk management and compliance. Angus said "The opportunity to join Waterstons at such a pivotal time in their growth was what really attracted me. I believe my experience in growing successful businesses in new territories will be hugely valuable. I'm excited to become part of an organisation whose values and culture put their people and their clients at the heart of everything they do". Susan Bell, CEO of Waterstons said "Angus brings invaluable experience in growing and nurturing international businesses and we look forward to tapping into his knowledge and expertise to help us continue to develop our UK and international presence".

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Apiax makes it radically simple for financial institutions to comply with global regulations. Apiax has recently won its first customer in Germany and opened a subsidiary in Frankfurt. To accelerate this growth plan, the company received support from the Frankfurt-based Futury Regio Growth Fund. This growth follows an excellent year for Apiax, in which the company was able to win new customers, strategic partners and further strengthen its market positioning despite adverse circumstances. The new subsidiary is also set to create future-proof jobs and strengthen the financial centre of the German state.

The expansion follows existing initiatives in the UK and Singapore and adding to the previous locations of Zurich and Lisbon. Apiax's next key objectives include accelerating global growth plans, strengthening product development, and continuing to build a strong team across all locations.

Alan Blanchard, Head of Business Development UK at Apiax
alan.blanchard@apiax.com
www.apiax.com | 07768796177

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British Middle East Corporation Limited is a Private Limited Company registered in England and Wales, incorporated in 2009, and having its main and registered offices located in London, with overseas offices in Cairo and Tashkent.

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Mont Rose College of Management and Sciences
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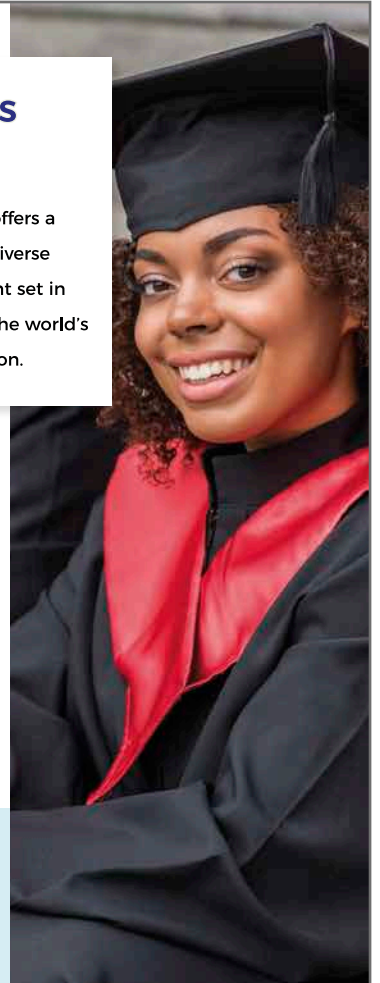
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Mark Downing (pictured), the company's founder and Managing Director has steered the company through some challenging times but is rightly very proud of the company's achievements. Mark has always enjoyed being a manufacturer however, after the 2008 credit crunch Mark made the de-

cision to manufacture as much as possible in house giving the company much more control over the design and, quality and availability of its products. Today the company boasts a world class electronics manufacturing facility and has won the Prestigious BIBA's awards 4 times being the recipient of the Company of the Year, Manufacturer of the Year (twice) and the International trade award. Scorpion has also been awarded the Norther Automotive Alliance award 3 times.

Mark explains; "There are some big events driving changes in the market and my job is to make sure we take full advantage.

- **Coronavirus**; this has accelerated the shift to online sales and in turn the parcel delivery service providers. These companies require accurate and up to date information about the movement and location of their fleets. Also, there is a big focus on security, vehicle & contents theft. Scorpion's Fleet Management telematics system is a market leader in this field.

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Best of luck and good business to all of our valued customers.

Mark Downing



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