



SHREWSBURY BUSINESS CHAMBER

ISSUE 1 2026

**FIND OUT ABOUT UPCOMING
NETWORKING EVENTS**

**RECORD YEAR FOR
OUR MEMBERS**

**THE DAY THE FOUNDER
STEPPED OUT OF THE MIDDLE**

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CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

KEVIN LOCKWOOD

Manager of Shrewsbury Shopping Centres

Christmas seems a long time ago now and we have had a lot of rain over the last month or so, however, it hasn't put a dampener on my optimism for 2026. I say it a lot, Shrewsbury adapts and changes to anything that is thrown at it from a Business perspective as many of our SME's are fleet of foot! It's always a challenge, however we meet it head on and make the necessary changes as and when required.

Here's a few things to be positive about Shrewsbury in 2026...



Economic and Commercial Growth

- **Award-winning local market** - Shrewsbury Market Hall secured the 'Best Community Market' title at the Great British Market Awards 2026, highlighting the strength of independent traders and boosting town centre vitality and entrepreneurship.
- **Strong retail performance** - Footfall in Shrewsbury's town centre reached its highest levels since before the COVID-19 pandemic during late-2025, suggesting growing visitor engagement and consumer interest that can support local businesses in 2026.
- **Top retail ranking** - Shrewsbury was ranked the West Midlands' top retail centre for town centre vitality in national rankings, reflecting ongoing retail strength and attractiveness to shoppers and investors.
- **New office activity** - Severn Mortgage & Protect expanded by taking new office space at Shrewsbury Business Park, signalling confidence from growing businesses choosing to base themselves locally.
- **Business rebranding and growth** - A local construction and project management firm, ALS Projects, kicked off 2026 with a rebrand and renewed focus after successful initial trading, showing entrepreneurial momentum.

Support and Networks

- **Creative and retail support** - The Shropshire Artisan Showcase programme invites creative and maker businesses to take part in a supported retail pop-up in Shrewsbury, fostering new small business growth and skills.
- **Co-work and start-up spaces** - The planned Shropshire Growth Hub Co-Work Hub will offer freelancers and small business owners shared workspace and support, encouraging networking and enterprise development in 2026.

Long-Term Investment and Development

- **Retail park development** - A new retail park under construction near Hazledine Way (with tenants like Starbucks and KFC) is due to open in late 2026, creating new business activity and employment.

In summary, Shrewsbury's 2026 business landscape is characterised by strong town centre performance, market and retail recognition, business expansion and networking, and ongoing investment projects that together suggest positive prospects for enterprises in the area.

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EXCITING RETAIL OPPORTUNITY FOR CREATIVE BUSINESSES

SHROPSHIRE ARTISAN SHOWCASE

Creative businesses across Shropshire are being invited to apply for the Shropshire Artisan Showcase 2026, a fully funded programme designed to help designer-makers and producers take their next step into physical retail while building skills, confidence and long-term resilience.

Delivered by the Shropshire Growth Hub in partnership with Darwin Shopping Centre and Buy-From Creative Agency, the programme will support eight selected businesses through a structured programme of retail preparation, expert guidance and real-world trading experience.

The initiative will culminate in a week-long pop-up showcase at the Darwin Shopping Centre, Shrewsbury, from **11th - 16th May 2026**. The revised dates allow participating businesses to benefit from increased spring footfall and a longer lead-in to the summer trading season, giving them the best possible platform for success. The programme is made possible through core funding from the Marches Growth Hub, provided by the Department for Business and Trade.

Anna Sadler of the Shropshire Growth Hub said: *"This is the third time we've delivered this highly successful programme, and the showcase week has been a real highlight for participants. It's a genuine opportunity for creative businesses to test their products, connect with customers and fellow makers, and strengthen their brand in a live retail environment all with expert support behind them."*

Previous participants emphasise that the programme offers far more than just shop space. Rita Bains, founder of The Perfume Laboratory in Bridgnorth, took part

in the 2024 Artisan Showcase and describes the experience as transformational for both her confidence and her business.

"I originally applied because it felt like a genuine opportunity to work alongside like-minded people in a supportive and inspiring environment," Rita explains. "It wasn't just about selling products - it was about being part of a community where we could learn from one another, share experiences and grow together."

For Rita, the structured support was as valuable as the showcase itself. Through workshops, mentoring and peer learning, she gained practical insight into retail presentation, marketing and customer engagement.

"Taking part had a really positive impact on my business. It gave me valuable marketing insights, especially in learning how to showcase my products at their very best, and introduced me to new customers and connections. The shared knowledge made it a real and very positive learning curve."

Since completing the programme, Rita's business has continued to grow. She has gone on to trade at further events across the county and is now expanding into larger premises, reflecting increased confidence and ambition.

"We're in the process of moving into a bigger space with additional floors. It's an exciting step forward and really shows how much the business has developed since the showcase."

The Shropshire Artisan Showcase 2026 is aimed at creative businesses that are ready to explore physical retail but want guidance and support to do so sustainably. Participants benefit from a four-month programme focused on retail readiness, marketing and sales, alongside the opportunity to trade in a prominent town-centre retail setting.

LOCAL IT BUSINESS OWNER ELECTED TO GTIA UK & IRELAND EXECUTIVE COUNCIL



Start Tech has announced that their managing director, Ian Groves, has been elected to the Global Technology Industry Association (GTIA)'s Executive Council for the UK and Ireland for a second term.

Ian will collaborate with other leaders in the UK, Ireland and across the globe to strengthen GTIA and advance the people and businesses of the global IT channel. Executive Council members are elected by GTIA members and serve three-year terms.

Ian Groves commented on the announcement, "I'm incredibly proud that I've been elected for another three-year term on the UK & Ireland Executive Council for GTIA. GTIA exists to help people and businesses in the IT channel grow through trusted insight, collaboration, and community leadership.

"Continuing this work means representing the priorities of the UK & Ireland IT community, building on the momentum we've created, and helping advance the conversations and initiatives that matter most locally and across the broader channel.

"If you're looking for ways to accelerate your business and your career and you aren't yet involved, I'd be happy to discuss it further."

Ian Groves is a leading voice in the MSP industry. As managing director of Start Tech, Ian has guided his company to become an award winning Managed Service Provider during its 25 year history. His growing list of

awards includes being named 'MSP Titan of the Industry' (across EMEA) and leading Start Tech to be named as one of Britain's 50 Best Managed IT Companies for three consecutive years.

"We are thrilled to welcome Ian Groves to the GTIA Executive Council and are grateful for his leadership and dedication to our mission to help the IT channel connect and grow," said MJ Shoer, Chief Community Officer, GTIA. *"As a key influencer for GTIA in the UK and Ireland, he will help advance our regional strategy, champion the needs of local members, support the community, and contribute to events and initiatives that foster meaningful growth across the IT channel."*

GTIA's regional communities bring members together locally to connect with peers and engage in the conversations shaping the IT channel. Guided by Executive Councils, these communities advance GTIA's strategic goals while advocating for the unique needs of each region. Through events and topical interest groups, members exchange real-world insight, collaborate on shared challenges, and gain perspective that helps them grow their businesses and stay ahead of emerging issues and opportunities in the channel.

For more information on GTIA's regional communities in ANZ, ASEAN, Benelux, DACH, North America, the UK and Ireland, visit gtia.org/membership/member-groups/communities. To become a GTIA member, visit gtia.org/join-now.

BERRYS RECOGNISED AS ONE OF THE UK'S TOP 25 PLANNING CONSULTANCIES

We are proud to have been ranked once again amongst the top UK planning firms in the annual Planning Consultancy Survey.

The survey by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) listed Berrys 23rd in the country based on fee income for planning work as well as being in the top 10 UK consultancies for heritage and conservation and transport engineering consultancy.

The consistently prominent position of Berrys within the UK rankings and the continued growth of the team and complementary services such as architecture, engineering and heritage and archaeology, is testament the professionalism, dedication and value placed on the team by our clients and colleagues alike.

Stuart Thomas, CEO at Berrys said: *"We are excited for the future. The market is growing, a trend initiated by the prominence of planning at the heart of the Government's manifesto. We have a diverse range of high-quality work across the residential, commercial, and rural sectors and are delighted to have been so highly ranked in this year's survey."*

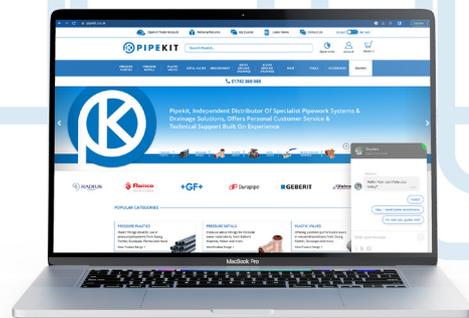
He added: *"People are at the heart of our business and are the sole reason for our success. We pride ourselves on being an employer of choice and investing in every member of the team. We now have over 40 people in the development team made up of planners, architects, heritage consultants and civil engineers. These teams work alongside each other to provide a coordinated, multi-disciplinary approach to development projects."*

Berrys is a UK-wide consultancy business that covers all property-related services under one roof. With four offices across the UK, we've built a strong reputation locally and regionally for all property related matters. We are here to help.

For all planning and development related enquiries, please contact our team at Shrewsbury (01743 271697), Kettering (01536 412464), Hereford (01432 809830) or Towcester (01327 356140).



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CAFÉ MANAGER CELEBRATES 20TH ANNIVERSARY



The manager of Love Coffee in Shrewsbury is celebrating 20 years working with Salop Leisure this month.

Sue Oliver, who turns 69 this spring, has worked at Love Coffee since the business moved from its Meole Brace site to Emstrey in 2006. It's been a family affair for Sue ever since, with daughter, Clare Clark, working with her for the last 18 years, and granddaughter Bella Clark joining the business 4 years ago.

Love Coffee is the on-site café at the award-winning caravan and motorhome dealership, Salop Leisure. This is in addition to the Love2Stay caravan site and glamping village, and plant and tree centre, LovePlants, all based at Emstrey in Shrewsbury, just off the A5.

Despite reaching her two-decade milestone, Sue says she has no plans to hang up her apron just yet. "I've managed Love Coffee since it opened and intend on staying here for a few more years yet," said Sue. "I've grown with the business over the last 20 years and feel very proud of how much it has progressed in that time."

"Salop Leisure is a big company, but it doesn't feel like working for a big corporate company. It's got that family feel, where we support one another and work hard to deliver outstanding customer service."

"My daughter, Clare, joined me just 2 years after I started and works closely with me at the café, and now we have my granddaughter, Bella, as well. We all get on very well, inside and outside of work, and have a supportive environment with the whole team. I want to say thank you to Salop Leisure for 20 wonderful years here!"

Mike Harris, joint managing director at Salop Leisure, said, "We are all very proud of the hard work Sue has put in to building Love Coffee into the successful business it is today. Love Coffee is a very important part of Salop Leisure, and is instrumental in bringing in new customers who discover our caravan and motorhome showroom and plant centre as a result. We see customers of all ages here 7 days a week, on business and pleasure, enjoying the delicious lunch menu, cakes and drinks. It's conveniently placed to stop off for a bite to eat or a decent coffee, where you will always receive a warm welcome from Sue and the team."

"Salop Leisure is run as a family business, with a supportive and passionate team. That ethos has led to the business having excellent staff retention and longstanding members of staff like Sue. As we approach our 60th anniversary, it's important for us to reflect on how we've sustained that approach as we've grown to employ over 250 people."

Love Coffee is open 7 days a week, from 9am - 4.30pm Monday to Saturday, and 10am - 4.30pm on Sundays, with free parking and Wi-Fi.

LAWYER RECOMMENDED AS 'AN ASSOCIATE TO WATCH' JOINS FAMILY TEAM EXPANSION AT LANYON BOWDLER

A lawyer recognised as an “associate to watch” in a prestigious national legal guide has joined a Shropshire law firm as it expands its family team due to growing demand.

Helen Davies qualified as a solicitor more than 15 years ago and brings a wealth of experience to her new role with Lanyon Bowdler, having worked for several firms across the north west of the country.

Her appointment comes as Lanyon Bowdler reports increasing demand for the firm’s services - circumstances that have led to the expansion of its family law team. Helen, who is based at Lanyon Bowdler’s Oswestry office, was recognised as an associate to watch in the 2025 and 2026 editions of Chambers UK, reflecting her commitment to delivering exceptional client service and results.

Sue Hodgson, head of Lanyon Bowdler’s family law team, said demand was continuing to grow for the firm’s advice regarding family issues such as divorce and cases involving children.

She said: *“We are delighted to welcome Helen to the firm. She is a highly-regarded solicitor with a wealth of experience and has built up an impressive reputation for her pragmatic and client-focused approach.*

“As a Resolution member and specialist in complex higher income and asset financial remedies and private children law, Helen is dedicated to helping clients achieve constructive, practical outcomes during what can often be difficult and emotional times in their lives, so she will be a valuable addition to the team.”

After completing her LLB law and criminology degree with honours at Keele University in 2005, Helen studied for the LPC at the College of Law, Chester. She undertook her training contract at a firm in Liverpool before qualifying as a solicitor in April 2010.

Helen said her key aim was always to reach a positive conclusion for her clients and their families. *“I am excited to be joining Lanyon Bowdler and working with clients across a range of family law issues,” she said.*

“My particular focus is on the financial aspects of relationship breakdowns, whether involving married or unmarried couples, which often involve complex property, business interests, and inherited assets.

“I also advise on nuptial and cohabitation agreements, as well as complex Children Act matters. I frequently collaborate with other professionals such as accountants,

financial advisers, coaches, and therapists as needed to ensure clients receive a coordinated and holistic approach to their family circumstances.”



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HARPER ADAMS UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF DEDICATED UNITEMPS BRANCH



Harper Adams University has officially launched its recruitment agency - Unitemps Harper Adams.

The University joined the Unitemps network earlier this year, and the new agency will deliver flexible and efficient workforce solutions for students, graduates and local jobseekers.

Alastair Dawes, Director of Business Engagement and Knowledge Exchange at Harper Adams, said: "Our partnership with the national Unitemps network further strengthens our commitment to equipping students with practical, real-world experience and the skills essential for long-term career success.

"By enhancing employability, we'll be making a meaningful contribution to the future prospects of both our students and jobseekers across the local community.

"We're committed to our region, and this investment, establishing a dedicated recruitment agency, further reinforces our work supporting employers across Telford & Wrekin and the wider county of Shropshire.

"Through our Unitemps branch, we aim to help employers address current skills shortages by providing fast, reliable access to a skilled and motivated workforce."

Staff from the Unitemps Team will be based both in the Bamford building, on the University's Edmond Campus, and at The Quad, located in the Station Quarter area of Telford.

The team will be led by Branch Manager Jenice Forde, an outstanding recruitment professional who has held several senior positions, most recently as Regional Manager at Reed Recruitment in Manchester, recruiting talent in Engineering, Accountancy, Finance, Legal, Business Support & Sales. Jenice is a Harper Adams University Business Graduate.

Jenice added: "I am excited to lead Harper Adams' Unitemps Branch. I'm looking forward to working with colleagues across the University and Shropshire's employers to place our exceptional students and the local community in roles to meet their staffing needs."

To find out more about Unitemps Harper Adams, visit: unitemps.com/branches/harper-adams-university/

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WHY CHOOSE COUNSELLING AS AN EARLY INTERVENTION TO PROMOTE EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Most of us wouldn't ignore a warning light on the dashboard for long; yet we often do exactly that with our emotional wellbeing.

Stress, anxiety and overwhelm rarely arrive all at once. They tend to lurk quietly, with small signs that are easy to dismiss.

Perhaps you're feeling disconnected. Maybe you're functioning every day ok, but feeling exhausted or even numb afterwards. You realise you're not taking care of yourself as you once did.

Counselling can offer support at these early stages, helping to prevent manageable difficulties from becoming something more entrenched.

Why choose counselling as an early intervention to promote emotional wellbeing?

If your car develops a strange banging sound, what do you do? Do you assume it will sort itself out and carry on driving, hoping it improves over time? Or do you recognise it as a sign that something needs attention? Most of us know that ignoring early warning signs in a car can lead to bigger problems later: a breakdown at an inconvenient moment when it's pouring with rain, or a fault that becomes more costly to fix. Acting early often prevents further issues. Yet when it comes to our emotional wellbeing, many people do the opposite. Early signs of stress, anxiety or overwhelm might be minimised or even pushed aside. Timely support could make a significant difference.

So why do people put off seeking help with their emotional distress?

Common myths about counselling

- Therapy is for individuals with mental illness
- Strong people deal with issues on their own
- Talking doesn't change things
- Therapists might tell you what to do
- Therapy is too expensive

Therapy is for individuals with mental illness

The most common misconception about counselling or therapy is 'my issues aren't serious enough' to require professional support. Early intervention can prevent every day stress from becoming burnout. You could think of it as similar to a regular dental check up or a health screening.

Strong people deal with issues on their own

Many people and perhaps especially men may have a tendency to 'grin and bear it' alone. Some people could feel a sense of failure if they consider seeking external support.

If you require legal advice, chances are you'd contact a solicitor for advice. We usually choose to seek the skills of a mechanic for an annual service for our car. Despite these two examples, sometimes people resist consulting a mental health professional for emotional difficulties. Like our car, we benefit from attention to our emotional wellbeing too.

Talking doesn't change things

Therapists use evidence based techniques that help to deepen a client's understanding of themselves. Fresh awareness and personal development are all part of the therapeutic process. Resilience is built and confidence improved.

Therapists might tell you what to do

This is a common fear. However a therapist will work with you, accompanying you in your experience. They will guide you to your own discoveries. Empowering you to find your own solution.

Therapy is too expensive

There are different options for counselling including NHS services, a visit to your GP who can refer you to talking therapy. You can choose to self refer to a private counsellor, such as myself. Even a single session can provide significant support if cost is an issue. If you are an employer you might consider funding your employees emotional wellbeing support as part of a staff benefit.

Early intervention in counselling is not about waiting until things feel unmanageable. If you notice the early signs, take them seriously, and give yourself space to reflect and reset.

Just as regular maintenance keeps a car running reliably, attending to your emotional wellbeing can help you stay resilient, grounded and better equipped to navigate life's challenges.

Seeking support is not a sign of weakness: it's a practical, proactive step towards looking after yourself, and in many cases, those who depend on you too.

Susie Harris MNCPS (Accred)
Presence Counselling & Psychotherapy
www.presencecounselling.co.uk office@
presencecounselling.co.uk
07958 794265

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REDEFINING HYPERLOCAL: HOW KATY RINK IS BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE MODEL FOR COMMUNITY MEDIA

When national newspaper feature writer Katy Rink launched My Shrewsbury in 2017, she had a clear goal.

She had a vision to create a new breed of hyperlocal media that puts culture, creativity and community connection at its heart—while finding a way to make it commercially viable in an era when local journalism is under unprecedented pressure.

Katy says: "Having forged my own career as a local journalist in traditional media, I was devastated to witness the hollowing out of local newspapers across the UK. Due to lack of funding, they have become so badly stretched that they can no longer properly reflect the richness of the places they serve. "I launched My Shrewsbury to help champion Arts and culture, food, drink and events— all that 'good stuff' that makes towns feel alive. My Shrewsbury offers intelligent, joyful cultural coverage that makes people feel connected to Shrewsbury and champions the town itself."

The Covid pandemic proved a pivotal moment. Like many publishers, My Shrewsbury accelerated its digital transformation, pivoting away from print and going fully digital in January 2024.

The platform now attracts around 1,000 users a day to myshrewsbury.co.uk, with a highly engaged and clearly defined audience. Recent reader research shows that 95% of users are primarily interested in events and what's on, followed closely by food and restaurant reviews, and arts and culture coverage.

My Shrewsbury's readership skews towards older readers, aged 45+ who spend disproportionately on dining out, theatre and live shows, travel and holidays—making them a valuable and responsive audience for local businesses.

My Shrewsbury's social media channels provide vital additional exposure for clients with keenly engaged local audiences of nearly 30K followers across Facebook and Instagram.

Where My Shrewsbury truly stands out, however, is in its approach to sustainability. New media funding models are notoriously difficult to crack, but Katy has built a diversified revenue ecosystem that reduces reliance on any single income stream. This includes paid-for event listings that businesses can upload remotely, content and promotional packages for local brands, featured business



profiles and social media posts, and digital display advertising.

The publication works closely with a select group of local businesses to produce premium-quality promotional content, deployed across My Shrewsbury's own trusted channels—content that increasingly surfaces in AI-driven SEO searches thanks to the platform's commitment to quality and credibility.

Alongside this sits a growing subscriber base for In the Loop, My Shrewsbury's bi-monthly paid cultural guide, designed to keep readers connected to what's happening in town.

At a time when many local outlets are shrinking or disappearing altogether, My Shrewsbury is quietly leading the charge—proving that hyperlocal media can be culturally rich, commercially smart, and deeply rooted in the communities it serves.

Katy is keen to connect with businesses or individuals who can now help take My Shrewsbury to the next level, who share her passion and vision: "I wanted to prove the model works and roll it out so that the 'My' model can help shine a light on smaller towns and communities across the UK. I am ready to explore that now and am looking for the right people to join me on this journey."

If you would like to get in touch, contact Katy on 07701 048360 or sales@myshrewsbury.co.uk

SHARK CLOSE ENCOUNTERS - ALL IN THE NAME OF CHARITY!



Nick Jones, Director at Throgmorton Associates, had always been fascinated by sharks and can watch them for hours but had never had the opportunity to join them in the water..... until now!

When he told the team at Throgmorton what he was planning to do for his next charity fundraising challenge, amazingly a few said they'd like to do it as well and it turned into a real Throgmorton Team effort.

What an experience thankfully all 3 advisers (Adrian, Becky and Nick) survived their time in the huge Shark Tank at the Blue Planet Aquarium!

This time the team were raising money for the St. James's Place Charitable Foundation in aid of The Movement Centre.

After starting in a classroom studying PADI training, they headed to the training pool to practice using the Scuba gear before they were finally ready to get into the big pool to spend 30-40 minutes with the big fish in their own environment! Nick said that it was quite a surreal experience and he wasn't sure if he'd ever felt so vulnerable before!

The Blue Planet Aquarium at Cheshire Oaks has a huge 3.8million litre tropical tank, home to Sand Tiger Sharks, Nurse Sharks, Blacktip Sharks, Bamboo Sharks, Arabian and Brown Banded Southern Stingrays and magnificent aquatic fish.

Betty and Alfie were the largest, scariest looking Sand Tiger Sharks at about 10ft long. They'd all been warned that Alfie likes to get a little too close and so it proved

We'd all like to say a HUGE thank you for everyone's support so far!

It's still not too late to donate though <https://www.justgiving.com/page/tawm-sharkdive>

For more information on The Movement Centre or the work of the SJP Charitable Foundation, please visit www.the-movement-centre.co.uk / www.sjpfoundation.co.uk



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RECORD YEAR FORECAST FOR CARAVAN SALES



Salop Leisure has reported a strong and confident start to 2026 after attending two major trade events in the caravan and holiday park sector.

Ed Glover, Head of Marketing at Salop Leisure, attended the Caravan, Motorhome and Holiday Show in Manchester earlier this month, where he spoke directly with prospective buyers and reported a 12% increase in lead generation. Ticket sales for the event were 15% up on last year, with 9% more people through the door who were interested in making a purchase.

Salop Leisure was also present at the HARPA (Holiday and Residential Parks Association) 2026 conference, where confidence among industry leaders and operators was notably high.

Ed said the mood across both events was positive, pointing towards a year of growth for the caravan and motorhome sector.

"Attending these two events has been a great start to 2026, with plenty to feel positive about," said Ed.

"It was valuable to speak with customers face to face, catch up with industry colleagues and hear from some excellent speakers. There is a real sense of confidence across the sector.

"Here at Salop Leisure, sales levels across Touring Caravans, Motorhomes and Holiday Homes is up 11% on January last year, indicating a positive year ahead for the business.

"This year also marks Salop Leisure's 60th anniversary, which is a real testament to the trust we have built with

customers, suppliers and park owners over the past six decades. We look forward to revealing more about our 60th year in due course."

Find out more about Salop Leisure at www.salopleisure.co.uk.



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SHAPE THE FUTURE OF SKILLS IN SHROPSHIRE – YOUR VOICE IS THE GAME CHANGER



Imagine a Shropshire where every business, regardless of size or sector, has the skilled workforce it needs to thrive. That future starts with you. The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is your direct line to decision makers – your chance to ensure training and development truly reflect the needs of our business community.

Why does your input matter?

Real change happens only when you speak up. In 2023/24, over 1,000 businesses across the Marches (Herefordshire, Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin) shared their views. The result? New courses, upgraded training facilities, and targeted funding for specific new courses that employers in manufacturing, engineering and construction asked for. What sector could be next? Without your insight, decisions are made on assumptions – not facts. That risks leaving our local economy behind. Your experience and perspective are vital to shaping the skills agenda for today and tomorrow, for every sector.

What's in it for you?

- Direct influence: Your feedback will guide investments in training, facilities, and support – tailored to what businesses like yours actually need.
- Confidential and quick: The online questionnaire takes just 8 minutes. Prefer a personal touch? Book a

confidential 1:1 interview with the LSIP Team.

- Be part of a movement: Every response strengthens our collective voice, making it impossible for policymakers to ignore the needs of businesses across the Marches area.

Ready to make a difference?

- Complete our simple online survey <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MLSIP2-24L1> and be the reason our region gets the skills it deserves. Our survey is confidential and does not ask for sensitive business information.
- Want a 1:1 interview? Please email rosieshropchamber@gmail.com to book your confidential interview with one of the LSIP team.
- Questions or want to learn more? Visit Marches Local Skills Improvement Plan

Don't wait for others to decide your future. Take part today – your voice is the catalyst for real, lasting change.

THE COLLECTIVE
SHREWSBURY

RETAIL LETTING OPPORTUNITY IN THE HEART OF SHREWSBURY

Are you running a small business and considering a retail unit in Shrewsbury? If so - we'd love to hear from you!

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THE DARWIN

THE DAY THE FOUNDER STEPPED OUT OF THE MIDDLE

You've built something. Now build the engine underneath it.

Building a business and growing looks so simple from the outside. Get more customers. Hire more people. Build more systems. When you want to scale we know it doesn't work that way. You're caught between being too big to improvise and too lean to justify a full senior leadership team. Instinct got you here. It's now tripping you up.

That's where we come in. We are 3 Fractionals from Shropshire, three senior leaders in marketing, sales, and operations. We step into founder-led businesses at exactly this point: when you're ready to scale, but the weight of it all shouldn't rest on you alone.

Pippa says: 'Fractional leaders are not consultants who draw up plans and leave, or temporary hires who disappear after the task. Fractionals do the work, embed strategy into execution, and stay until outcomes are in sight. It's executive power without the full-time cost and commitment'.

Sylvie says: 'We work fractionally, not full time. You get senior thinking, experience. Real leadership. And you pay a fraction of the salary'.

What fractional leadership actually solves

A common misconception to moving to the next level of business is hiring more people. Another salary. Another layer to manage. But the real problem isn't headcount. It's the focus. When you are responsible for making all the decisions without enough strategic input, you end up always firefighting when you should be building, it's exhausting.

Fractional leaders don't add complexity. We remove it. We fix direction before you add people. We bring clarity before you pile on systems. And we deliver measurable results without the bloat.

Take a recent Midlands SME. They brought in a Fractional for four days a month. Within twelve months, they'd launched a new brand, overhauled lead generation, and grew revenue by 35%. Total cost? Less than half what a permanent hire would have cost them. Same outcome. Far less risk. Plus, they are not on your books.

This isn't experimental

Fractional leadership is already mainstream in the US. The UK is catching up fast. CIM research shows that 42% of UK businesses with 50-250 employees have used or



seriously considered a fractional leader in the past two years. Demand has grown 35% year on year since 2020.

Why? Because senior leadership shouldn't require a long-term payroll commitment when what you actually need is strategic grip, not another manager.

The awkward middle stage

You've outgrown winging it. You're not ready for full-time execs across every function. You need experienced operators who can step in, see what's broken, fix it, and leave you with something that works.

That's us. We optimise time, focus, and decision-making. We don't overpromise. We don't do noise. And we don't stick around longer than necessary.

If you've built something worth scaling, don't carry the weight alone. Bring in the right senior thinking at the right time. That's how businesses in your position actually grow.

Shrewsbury has quietly become a hotspot for fractional leadership, not by accident, but by necessity. The region is rich in owner-led businesses that have scaled through grit, reputation, and local demand, fertile ground for fractional services, where senior operators embed quickly, bring structure, and deliver momentum without corporate drag.

SALOP LEISURE SET TO SMASH FUNDRAISING TARGET



The award-winning caravan and motorhome dealership, Salop Leisure, has announced it is on track to exceed its two-year fundraising target for Severn Hospice.

At the start of 2025, Salop Leisure pledged to raise £10,000 for the charity through events and initiatives over two years. They have already raised a total of £7,880 through the Salop Santa Dash, a charity auction, and sponsorship. They have also made a £5 donation to Severn Hospice for every caravan or motorhome sold during 2025, and the on-site plant and tree centre, Love Plants, donated £1 for every Christmas tree it sold.

Ed Glover, Head of Marketing at Salop Leisure, said, "We're incredibly proud of the progress we've made with our two-year pledge to raise £10,000 for Severn Hospice - we are well on our way to exceeding that target. Thank you to all of our customers and our associates for supporting our efforts to fundraise for such an important local charity.

"We have lots planned for fundraising in 2026, including taking part in the annual Severn Hospice Dragon Boat Festival in July!"

Severn Hospice provides vital care and support to families living with incurable illness, offering comfort, dignity and peace during the most difficult times, completely free of charge.

Holly Gibbons, Corporate Fundraiser at Severn Hospice, adds, "We are incredibly grateful to Salop Leisure and all of their customers for the amazing support - reaching over half of their £10,000 target already is a fantastic achievement. It's been wonderful

to see the enthusiasm and commitment behind all their fundraising and I'm looking forward to working with them in planning more exciting activities and initiatives. Our services at Severn Hospice are entirely free and are made possible by the incredible generosity of our local community and businesses like Salop Leisure."

Find out more about Salop Leisure at www.salopleisure.co.uk.



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Insurance Solutions You Can Trust

In 1939, Brown & Brown started as a small, two-partner firm with a bold vision centred around relationships. While this vision has propelled us to grow into one of the world's largest insurance brokerages, our foundation remains the same: a commitment to trust, resilience, teamwork and delivering results for our customers.

Business doesn't stand still, and neither do we. Our strength is in our people. With deep local connections and the resources of a global leader, we take an agile, forward-thinking approach to risk. Whether our customers are expanding, evolving or facing new challenges, we build solutions that help protect what they value most.

Ready To Find Your Solution? Let's Chat.

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Website:	BBrown.com

ONE MONTH UNTIL SHROPSHIRE BUSINESS FESTIVAL



Shropshire Business Festival, the county's biggest B2B event, is taking place on March 5th, 2026, at Telford International Centre.

It is a free one-day networking event that brings together business leaders and emerging talent from across the region. The event hosts exhibitors, seminars on the Start Tech stage, and marketing and business growth workshops from Clear. Shropshire Chamber of Commerce is hosting a new speed networking area, and there will be expert advice on hand in the Talbots Law Lounge.

The Start Tech Seminar Stage will host talks throughout the event from business leaders. Former BBC journalists Peter Plisner and Chas Watkin will share their insights in how to promote your business on TV and radio, the Start Tech team will dispel AI myths and dissect a real cyber attack, Leigh Buttrey from Clear will show you how to make your marketing budgets go further in 2026, and Dave Courteen will share his story behind the sale of The Shrewsbury Club, with useful insights in low term business strategy. More seminars are to be announced in the coming weeks.

Shrewsbury digital agency, Clear, has announced its workshop topics. They have a session on the AI tools that can save you hours in your working week, insights into how to improve your website's user experience, and how to understand the differences in quotes to build an e-commerce website.

Places are now available to book onto a closed session with Simon Adcock from Founder Trap (TM), titled 'If you step away for 30 days... does your business stall or scale?' He will reveal the reason growth feels heavy, and the single biggest constraint holding your business back.

You can also book a free session with 'Mystic Nick', aka Nick Jones, Director at Throgmorton Associates Wealth Management. In your 15-minute private session, you can ask Nick anything about your future work, career and personal opportunities. Nick will share his expert advice

and provide a follow-up report.

"We've got a brilliant range of businesses exhibiting in the main hall, from first-time exhibitors to really established organisations like the Federation of Small Businesses and Barclays," said Beth Heath from Shropshire Festivals. "Add to that a jam-packed schedule of seminars, workshops, one-to-one sessions, and networking - this is the best business event of the year to grow your contacts and knowledge!"

Shropshire Festivals is hosting an exclusive dinner directly after the festival, which will mark 10 years of Shropshire Business Magazine. Shropshire Business Conversation will have panel discussions from a selection of the magazine's cover stars, which include past and present bosses of some of Britain's best-known brands, including the co-founder of Music Magpie and the former CEO of Caffè Nero.

Beth adds, *"We'll be seating our speakers at your tables, so it's much more than an after-dinner talk; it's the chance to pick the brains of these impressive business leaders and be inspired by their experiences."*

The lineup for Shropshire Business Conversation dinner includes Charlie Blakemore - CEO of Intercity Technology, Deborah Mitchell - founder of Heaven Skincare, Mo Chaudry - Telford-raised entrepreneur and Chairman of M Investment Group, Sarah Holmes - Managing Director of Merrythought, Will Stratton-Morris - former CEO of Caffè Nero and now Group Chief Business Development Officer, and Walter Gleeson - co-founder of Music Magpie.

Shropshire Business Festival is taking place on Thursday, March 5th, 2026, from 1pm - 6pm at Telford International Centre, and Shropshire Business Conversation will take place upstairs at the same venue, from 6pm. Secure your free ticket to the festival, book onto workshops, and purchase a Shropshire Business Conversation ticket at www.shropshirebusinessfestival.co.uk. Tickets to the Shropshire Business Conversation are £53.99, which includes a two-course dinner.

STRONG START TO 2026 FOR PEAKES TRAVEL ELITE



Shropshire's award-winning independent travel agent has had a strong start to the year, with record sales figures, an award, and the unveiling of a newly renovated shop in Shrewsbury's town centre.

Claire Moore, managing director at Peakes Travel Elite, reported that last year's sales figures were up and 2026 has already enjoyed above-average footfall, with customers booking in exciting and exotic trips around the world. Claire said, *"The latest holiday trend is all about expedition cruising. You can reach the world's most remote corners in smaller ships, such as Antarctica, the Galápagos, or Arctic Norway - places that larger vessels can't reach. It's where adventure meets comfort. You could be kayaking amongst icebergs or spotting polar bears by day, then enjoying expert talks and gourmet food by evening. For travellers seeking authentic experiences in extraordinary places, it's the next big thing in travel."*

"Customers have loved coming in to see the newly renovated shop floor to get their holiday plans underway. Our renovation was completed at the end of 2025, following lots of hard work to create a more inviting, modern space where our wonderful customers can enjoy planning their holidays."

The renovated space has a new area at the front where customers can relax with a drink and browse travel

brochures while they wait for their appointment. The space has also been modernised, with new furniture from local business, Chrisbeon. Claire adds, *"We have created more privacy by reducing the number of appointment desks on the ground floor, whilst retaining our upstairs luxury space for more in-depth appointments. Delivering top-level customer service is key, and the office renovation has helped us achieve that."*

This month, AITO (The Specialist Travel Association) awarded Peakes Travel Elite with the AITO Silver Agent Excellence Award at the All Stars Gala Dinner Awards 2026. The award recognises their proactiveness in providing the highest level of customer satisfaction.

Peakes Travel Elite has also announced the return of its 'Meet The Expert' in-store events. Each event is dedicated to a particular country, with a subject matter expert brought in to Peakes for a day of one-to-one appointments. They are hosting a Latin America expert from Distinctive Americas on February 14th, and a Japan expert from Inside Asia on March 21st.

Booking is essential, so call 01743 233234 or email sales@peakestravelelite.co.uk to book an appointment or reserve a place at a Meet the Expert event. Appointments can be in-person, via video call, or by phone.

Find out more about Peakes Travel Elite at www.peakestravelelite.co.uk.

POPULAR RURAL WALK & EAT EVENT RETURNS



Shropshire Festivals has announced the relaunch of Shropshire Tasty Trail. The popular walk and eat event follows a route through the Shropshire countryside, along footpaths and through private estates not usually open to the public. Along the way, walkers enjoy a three-course meal made from locally sourced products.

The event is taking place on Sunday, April 26th and will follow a new route starting from Ellesmere's historic Oteley Estate. The route will pass meres and cross privately owned land, through fields and woodland. It will be the first time the event has taken place since 2023.

A 9.5 mile route has been plotted that will have three stations where the starter, main course, and dessert will be served, washed down by either a locally produced beer, cider, liqueur or soft drink, with acoustic live music to spur you on.

The three-course menu comprises of a starter of Oteley Made Sausage Rolls with Hill Farm Spiced Plum Chutney or an Oteley Made Spiced Sweet Potato Chickpea Roll with a medium Shropshire Cider. The main course will be Oteley's Slow Cooked Beef Bourguignon or an Oteley Three Bean Chilli served with Niche Sourdough Bread & Estate's Dairy Cultured Butter with Station Bitter from Stonehouse Brewery. Dessert will be a mixed berry cheesecake from Greenfields Farm Shop served with an Iced Tea Spritz using The Shropshire Distillery's After Noon Citrus Grey Tea Liqueur. There will be non-alcoholic options at each stop. Aaron & Partners Solicitors are providing cup-holding lanyards to help walkers carry their drinks.

Tickets are now live with staggered start times, allowing walkers to enjoy the peacefulness of the countryside. All

dietary requirements will need to be passed on to the Shropshire Festivals' team at the time of booking. The Oteley Estate's private 10-acre garden and stableyard will mark the finish line of the trail, where there will be local businesses selling the products that were used on the trail. Oteley's on-site farm shop and café will be open on the day.

Shropshire Festivals' Director of Fun, Beth Heath, said, *"I am thrilled to bring back one of my favourite events - it's all about celebrating local produce and our beautiful Shropshire countryside - you can't beat it! In recent years, we have been too busy delivering public festivals and corporate event management to accommodate the Tasty Trail - but our visitors have not stopped asking when it will be coming back. So we are so pleased to be able to fit it into our busy 2026 event calendar, with events planned every month through to winter.*

"This is an environmentally low-impact event that champions our local food and drink sector. If you love discovering new countryside and enjoying locally made products, this event is for you.

"If you want to join us, tickets are likely to sell out as they are limited, so don't delay in booking yours."

Tickets are £49.95 per person for a ticket with alcoholic drink options, or £45.95 with soft drinks only. Tickets include admittance to the walk, a three-course meal along the trail, a drink at each stop, a reusable half pint cup, and a lanyard. There will be toilets and water refill stations at each stop.

There will be free parking and dogs on leads are welcome (they may need to be lifted over stiles on the route). Due to stiles and uneven ground, this event isn't suitable for wheelchairs or pushchairs.

To find out more and purchase tickets, visit www.shropshiretastytrails.co.uk.

March 18, 2026 | 6pm

Speed Networking

for Local Business

CONNECT. COLLABORATE. GROW.



Free to attend

SHREWSBURY COLLEGE – ENGLISH BRIDGE CAMPUS

Speed networking for local business

Shrewsbury College - English Bridge Campus
Wednesday 18 March - 6pm to 8pm

Back by popular demand is our annual speed networking event

This is a great opportunity to shout about your own business and meet other local businesses to connect. with refreshments provided you will be guided round a rotation of meet and greets to share your company story.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH

CHAMBER SPEED NETWORKING

WED 18 MAR

SPONSORED BY
SHREWSBURY COLLEGE

FREE TO ALL

APRIL

**HARPER ADAMS CAMPUS TOUR AND
LEADERSHIP UPDATE, CHANCE TO NETWORK**

WED 15 APR

SPONSORED BY HARPER
ADAMS UNIVERSITY

MEMBERS: FREE
NON MEMBERS: £10

NETWALK

2 HOUR WALK COVERING 4 MILES AND
INCLUDES A PUB STOP.

WED 29 APR

6PM

FREE TO ALL

MAY

FINANCE CONSIDERATIONS FOR SMES

WED 20 MAY

SPONSORED BY
THROGMORTON ASSOCIATES

MEMBERS: FREE
NON MEMBERS: £10

JUNE

SUMMER BBQ AND TOUR OF FACILITIES

WED 24 JUN

SPONSORED BY LOVE 2 STAY

MEMBERS: FREE
NON MEMBERS: £10



For more information about our events, please take a look at the events section of our website and follow all our socials for updates.

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THANKYOU!

Thankyou to everyone who has contributed to this issue of the Shrewsbury Business Chamber magazine.

We are always looking for new content to promote over social media, so if your business has some exciting news, any events or good news to share, then please send these to us so we can promote for you across our social media.

If you would like to be featured or have a story or an event you'd like included, if you could please send an email to shrewsburybc.editor@gmail.com with all copy and any images.

To advertise in future issues if you could please contact shrewsburybc.editor@gmail.com

Thinking about becoming a member?

Shrewsbury Business Chamber is the business group of choice for the Shrewsbury area. The Chamber organises regular events allowing businesses to network, voice their opinions and gain useful business expertise. The Chamber provides a collective voice and ensures business issues reach the right officials. A not-for-profit membership organisation which is headed up by a volunteer business focused Executive Committee. The Business Chamber works closely with other local private and public sector organisations for the betterment of businesses from across the Shrewsbury area.

MEMBERSHIP	ANNUAL FEE
Retired	£30
Charity	£50
Sole Trader	£70
Up to 10 employees	£100
More than 10 employees	£140

For more information on how to join please head to our website www.shrewsburybusinesschamber.com

The opinions expressed here do not necessarily represent the views of the editor, or those of Shrewsbury Business Chamber.

To advertise in future issues if you could please contact our editor via email at

shrewsburybc.editor@gmail.com