

# Business News

In association with



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## Pretty in pink

BY MIKE PRYCE  
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It would have made old Henry Ford – “You can have your new vehicle in any colour you want, as long as it’s black” – turn in his grave.

Because in the macho world of trucking, haulage firm Robinsons of Worcester is putting on a new face.

The company, based at Home Farm, Besford, near Pershore, has just taken delivery of a new pink truck – a muscle-bristling Scania R420LA6x2/4MNA with a standard R series sleeper can and a Hyva wet kit.

What’s more, it has proved such a hit, the colour may be adopted as the company’s official livery.

The colour is all down to the two year-old daughter of company boss Edward Robinson.

He said: “Isabelle loves the colour pink so when we ordered a new Scania tractor unit from Keltruck we decided to have it painted especially for her.

“It’s proved so popular we have already bought three more pink tractor units and eventually, we may switch our entire fleet over to the colour.”

Robinsons of Worcester, which is run by Edward and his father David, operates a mixed fleet of 10 vehicles specialising in heavy duty agricultural haulage, including grain and soil.

Chris Kelly, marketing director of Keltruck, said: “We have a quarter of a million pound paint shop at our disposal at West Bromwich, West Midlands, and we can supply trucks in any colour under the sun, but I think I’m pretty safe to say this is the first time we have been asked for a pink one.

“And it’s certainly the first time the livery has been chosen by a little girl. It could set a trend.”



FOR THE GIRL WHO HAS EVERYTHING: Little Isabelle Robinson with her dad Edward. She loves pink and when Robinsons of Worcester ordered a new Scania truck they asked for it to be painted in Isabelle’s favourite colour.



SPEAK PLAINLY: Ian Stirzaker of March & Edwards in Worcester.

### I’m all for solicitors ditching the jargon

WORCESTER solicitor Ian Stirzaker is backing a call for lawyers to speak in modern English.

He says a report from the City Law School for solicitors to abandon complex and archaic “legalese” is to be welcomed.

Some of the legal terminology used today, such as “hereinafter” (below) and “save as aforesaid” (otherwise) would have been out of place 150 years ago.

Mr Stirzaker, managing partner at March & Edwards in Sansome Walk, said: “A problem is that many standard reference works on legal subjects are written using terminology which has been interpreted by the courts and has a specific legal meaning, but is not particularly client-friendly.

“It actually takes more skill and ability for a modern lawyer to deal with complicated topics in a concise client-friendly way. At March & Edwards we always try to make sure that we give our clients clear, understandable, commonsense and well priced advice.”



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# Always try to encourage a strong sense of networking

How should firms handle relationships between clients and service providers? Michael Whitefoot reports

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**IN CHARGE:** Michael Whitefoot, managing director of county business storage specialists Whitefoot-Forward.

**T**HE current recession is making it more difficult than ever for businesses of all sizes to manage the age-old problem of cash flow. Whether your own business fortunes are suffering or not, getting caught in a cash-starved supply or payment chain can bring your operation to a grinding halt.

In such trying times every possible avenue to ease cash flow needs to be explored and one of these should be to talk things over with each of your service

providers. Not only do both of you need to know where you stand; you may find that there are flexibilities that will help you do better business together.

At my own company we have, in the past 18 months, provided help to a number of clients. This has been in the form of extended payment terms, discounted costs

for long-term clients who previously paid on time, spreading the cost of large projects over several months and offering discounts in exchange for extended contracts.

Where clients have been able to make payments in advance, or on invoicing, they have also secured discounts.

That's not to say we are in a position to buffer other businesses from the financial squeeze but where we can offer favourable terms we will - especially to secure continued revenue that will help our own cash flow.

These measures were also made available because our clients, who have been instrumental in the growth of our business, are in constant communication with us. This has enabled Whitefoot-

Forward to offer and put in place a bespoke package wherever it's of practical help to customers.

If every business was prepared to consider options such as these there might be fewer breaks in many a supply chain caused by companies going under. There would also be an extremely strong sense of networking and mutual support across the business community - and that's likely to pay long-term dividends, as customers who survive continue to build on your relationship when the recession ends.

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## BUSINESS TALKING

LOUISE HEWETT

**R**ESearch from the Recruitment & Employment Confederation (REC) shows that more than 50 per cent of businesses using temporary workers are unsure of the EU Agency Workers Directive (AWD) and its potential implications when it comes into force in October 2011.

It is important that hirers and agency staffing suppliers work together and begin as early as possible to develop plans to minimise costs and any potential disruption.

One of the main principles underpinning the AWD is to give agency workers equal treatment to permanent employees and direct recruits after 12 weeks of service on the basis of pay and working conditions.

Although there has been a degree of recent clarification - the Government is finalising guidance as to what exactly equal treatment will mean in practice and the REC will subsequently be compiling model documents for its members.

One thing is for sure: equal treatment does not mean agency workers will have the same status as employees - they will not be able to claim for unfair dismissal, redundancy pay or maternity leave and as such will remain a flexible form of labour for organisations as the economy emerges from the recession.

Agency workers have the flexibility to leave their assignments at any time and as such are not entitled to the same benefits that would be given to a direct employee. After 12 weeks temping in the same role a temp will be entitled to the same basic hourly rate as a permanent employee.

It seems likely that many larger organisations with fixed pay scales will use an identifiable new starter rate as the comparator for pay, however, in other smaller workplaces this may be more difficult or not relevant if the assignment is a new project with no comparison.

Some temps in areas such as IT may be getting paid more than their permanent counterparts. There is no implication that their pay will have to be lowered, however they may need to show the steps put in place to decide on the temps pay rate.

The key to ensure minimal disruption is simply to plan well in advance and work closely with your agency - which ideally should be a well-informed member of the REC - leading you through the process and further guidance from the Government as it unfolds.

For more details and guidance notes you can e-mail me at [louise@hewett-recruitment.co.uk](mailto:louise@hewett-recruitment.co.uk).

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**HEWETT RECRUITMENT**

## Ben takes on IT role

HEWETT Recruitment has taken on specialist recruiter Ben Mannion to head up its new IT recruitment division.

Born in Worcester, the Cambridge graduate said: "IT has become an intrinsic part of every business, ranging from one member of staff to a big team."

Louise Hewett, managing director of Hewett Recruitment, which has offices in Worcester and Kidderminster, said: "Ben's dynamic approach and proven expertise makes it an exciting move for us."

**UP, UP AND AWAY:** Staff and guests at the hotelshop UK 10th birthday party release balloons to raise money for the Prince's Trust.



## Flying high to raise money

DROITWICH-based hotelshopUK launched its 10/10 charity fund-raising appeal by releasing more than 100 balloons into the night sky over the town.

The event was part of the company's 10th anniversary birthday celebrations. The 10/10 challenge pledges to raise £10,000 for the Prince's Trust over the coming year with different events and initiatives.

Managing director Vivienne Hudson is a member of the regional council for the trust in

the West Midlands.

She said: "hotelshopUK is still here and growing apace, ready for the next 10 years and more."

"We know firsthand the importance of support in times of need and during the days, weeks and months after the 2007 floods which devastated our business, we were helped by several local companies to get operational again."

"We are proud and thrilled that we did it and are here to celebrate our 10th anniversary. "Support from the community

made us more determined than ever to help others, resulting in our commitment with our 10/10 challenge to raise £10,000 during our 10th anniversary year for our chosen charity the Prince's Trust, whose admirable work supports young people getting their lives back on track."

Each of the hotelshopUK balloons launched at the celebration party has a name and number attached to track whose balloon travels the furthest.

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# Bosses stepped up a gear at Morgan Cars

BUSINESS leaders from around the county met at the Morgan Motor Company, Malvern Link, to drive forward their commitment to business and industry in Worcestershire.

The event, which was organised by the Worcestershire Ambassadors, Chamber of Commerce Herefordshire and Worcestershire and the Institute of Directors in Worcestershire, was attended by more than 100 influential business leaders.

They were able to network, tour the fascinating factory in Pickersleigh Road and hear from Charles Morgan, chairman of the iconic sports car company, in the firm's centenary year.

The gathering was the first in a series of planned combined

events by the three organisations.

Louise Hewett, chairman of the Worcestershire Ambassadors, was pleased with the success of the day.

She said: "One of the Worcestershire Ambassadors' clear objectives for 2009 was to work towards a more connected community and making the most of the resources we have in the county, which is something we felt to be particularly important in the current economic climate."

"We have 127 Worcestershire Ambassadors, consisting of business owners, chief executives and honorary VIPs. Ambassadors are all Worcestershire enthusiasts who are nominated on the basis of their level of influence and belief in all things to do with

the county.

"We promote all that's good about living and working in Worcestershire, showcasing our success stories, making it clear that this is a great place to invest in and do business."

Mike Ashton, the chamber of commerce's chief executive, said: "The event was a big success with a large number of companies attending, doing business and seeing one of our most successful companies in action."

"I would like to thank Charles Morgan for allowing us to hold the event at his fabulous facilities."

For more information about the Worcestershire Ambassadors and forthcoming events contact Louise Hewett on [louise@hewett-recruitment.co.uk](mailto:louise@hewett-recruitment.co.uk).

**MEETING:**  
From left, Mike Ashton, Chamber of Commerce; Ian Priest, Clydesdale Bank; Louise Hewett, Hewett Recruitment and Worcestershire Ambassadors, and Charles Morgan, Morgan Motor Company.

## Double scoop at awards

WAPPLE, a mobile internet and web marketing company has been named overall champion of the prestigious ICT Excellence awards 2009.

The company beat off stiff competition to win a cheque for £2,000 and it also won the Best Innovative Product category. Wapple employs 14 people and the judges chose the company for its technical

brilliance and provision of a product that taps into the rapidly increasing use of the internet through mobile phones.

EPI International, of Ombersely, near Worcester, was highly recommended for Best Knowledge Transfer and Lanner Group of Redditch was highly commended for Best Innovative Product.

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## About turn for fortunes of pub

DAVID Allen and Alex Pepler made the right move when they sank their money into a rundown pub near Worcester.

They took on the Plough Inn next to the Elgar Birthplace Museum at Lower Broadheath and six months later are glad to say that their investment is paying dividends.

Mr Allen said: "It was a sad example of a traditional country pub which had been neglected and was badly in need of some TLC. The locals had begun to eat and drink elsewhere, but that didn't put us off.

"Six months on, we have that local trade back, and we're very happy."

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# The recession's ending, so where do we go from here?

Financial expert John Painter says the time has come for companies to act as the economy takes off



**ADVICE:** John Painter of chartered accountants Crowther Beard LLP.

**W**HEN the recession was called in September 2008, Crowther Beard LLP challenged leaders to do five things:

The first was to manage their cash flow, followed by retaining their best people (and saying farewell to the worst ones).

Retaining the best customers (and letting go of the unprofitable ones), improving profit by removing waste and guarding energy – because it will be needed when times get really tough.

These five strategies took advantage of the recession and made changes that normally business leaders do not want to do.

There were four countries that didn't technically go into recession – Australia, China, India, and Indonesia – but globally things have been tough for everyone regardless of where they operate.

Most businesses took the opportunity to right-size and remove the obvious cost but almost all failed to leverage the recession to its fullest in terms of waste reduction. Issues such as 'consequences' and 'leadership' remained the sacred cows.

What are consequences? Everyone is fully aware that

failure to implement is their biggest issue.

We are all capable of coming up with clever plans but rarely do firms implement everything they set out to do. The primary reason for this failure is that there are few, if any, consequences for missing targets. It takes courage to set and follow through on the consequences.

If a company achieves its goals there needs to be positive consequences but if they don't then negative consequences need to be applied. This policy needs to start at the top of the company.

What about leadership needing to change? Obviously the leader needs to set a good example regarding their targets and accepting the consequences for not achieving them. The leader also needs to guarantee that shareholders can get the right return on their investment. Profit needs to be locked in place, whatever remains is all you have to run the business.

This attitude forces the leader to take tough decisions. The leader needs to be seen by all concerned as firm but fair.

An independent review of overheads and operating costs is essential before the economy takes off in 2010. Why put more business through an incapable

system? Companies will not meet their profit budgets without this review and they should find the savings are somewhere between 10 per cent and 20 per cent of their annual sales, depending on how hard they cut in 2009.

There is less than 12 months to free up this cash. Firms will need all of it to fund the growth that is coming and already cashflow is tightening, so action needs to be taken now. Companies need to get some help as they will not make the time it needs.

Decisions need to be made, consequences established and budgets delivered.

There is a cost benefit; the savings which a company makes in 2009/10 will be there year after year.

Fix whatever issues come out of this thought process. Keep asking the question until all the barriers are dealt with and then just make a start.

If a start isn't made within the next five days it probably won't happen.

If a start is made, increased cashflow, reduced risk and the ability to fund future growth are the rewards.

For more information contact John Painter, Crowther Beard LLP, chartered accountants, on 01905 454854 or [jhp@crowtherbeard.com](mailto:jhp@crowtherbeard.com).

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## Time is fast running out for those reduced rates of VAT

FOR the past 12 months VAT rates have been at the temporarily reduced rate of 15 per cent but the Government's new year date to revert back to 17.5 per cent will mean administrative changes for which businesses need to be ready.

Accountancy firm Kendall Wadley, which has offices in Worcester, Malvern and Hereford, is advising clients to act now, though mindful that clubs, pubs and restaurants will be allowed to keep the 15 per cent VAT rate until 6am on January 1 to accommodate the new year drinkers and avoid retail complications as customers eat and drink.

Kendall Wadley partner Liz Needham said: "Businesses issuing VAT invoices after January 1 should be at 17.5 per cent, unless the goods or services were supplied before the rate change and they can then choose to charge at 15 per cent.

"For the supply of services that span the change period, firms can charge 15 per cent for those services provided before the change, 17.5 per cent afterwards, or they can charge for all services at 17.5 per cent."

Suppliers issuing invoices prior to the rate change, but where delivery will take place after the January 1, may charge VAT at 17.5 per cent.

Ms Needham and the Kendall Wadley team are advising clients to maximise sales in December to encourage customer spending at the lower VAT rate before it goes back up to 17.5 per cent – ensuring goods are not only invoiced and paid for before the beginning of 2010 but actually supplied to the customer.

Ms Needham is also alerting those businesses on the cash accounting scheme (where VAT is accounted for when payment is received).

She said: "If the supply is before December 31, 2009, but paid for after, then VAT is payable to Customs & Excise at **TURN TO PAGE 21**

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# If you want to be successful then it pays to plan ahead

Phil Dutton says groundwork is the key to setting up a new business



**EXPERT ADVICE: Phil Dutton is NatWest and RBS director for business and commercial banking.**

**S**OME business people have a bit of a problem with planning. There they are hard at work with sleeves rolled up, in charge of a frantically busy production line or office.

As long as trade is this good, tomorrow can look after itself, right? However, too many dreams, brilliant ideas and hard work come to grief because budding entrepreneurs are too busy getting their project off the ground to seek good professional advice and plan ahead.

The real tragedy is that many of these potential pitfalls to a business plan could be avoided by following a few rules.

Like all good business practice, planning is pretty basic, even if the words used to describe it might sometimes seem unfriendly and daunting.

What does it all mean – cashflow, profit margins, break even, market research?

When running a business the main focus tends to be on the actual delivery of the product or the service, but attention needs to be given to the fundamentals of business practice which read across from the very small to the large operations.

Take cashflow, for example.

product can you expect to sell and at what price?

On a simple level, market research might involve little more than gauging enthusiasm among people you know – ask them for their comments about your product or service.

Also, ask who else is selling a similar product. Can the market support another competitor, and if so how will it affect current prices?

Research is just good planning and planning is just common sense.

In our personal lives we all plan ahead – from booking holidays or deciding to start a family to taking out pensions and life insurance.

In business it's even more crucial. For one thing, few people are going to lend you money to go into business without seeing your business plan. But it's also important to be clear in your own mind what your objectives are and how you're going to achieve them. If you've asked the tough questions in advance – and found honest answers to them – then you can proceed with confidence, having ironed out potential problems before they arise.

Some people say that business plans are worthless number-crunching exercises designed only to keep bankers busy. The business plan isn't there to keep us happy, it's there to put you on the road to success – and keep you there.

All it means is maintaining a steady enough flow of income into your business from customers to meet the bills steadily flowing in from suppliers. You may be tempted to give a valued client more time to pay but if your suppliers can't do the same, it could be the last act of generosity you perform.

If that sounds obvious, you're halfway there.

Planning is obvious. A big problem for many companies, especially in today's economic environment, is the funding gap where it takes longer to get paid than you have to pay. This is sadly the most common aspect of failed businesses – not so much a lack of sales but a lack of cashflow.

The same goes for market research. How much of your

## Be fully prepared to adjust your systems

**FROM PAGE 20**

15 per cent not the new rate of 17.5 per cent."

Quotes and estimates for work to commence after January 1 should quote the 17.5 per cent rate and those customers willing to pay before the new year date can be charged at the current 15 per cent, subject to Customs and Excise's anti-

forestalling legislation.

Ms Needham said: "Refunds or credit notes should be dealt with at the same rate originally declared or invoiced and invoices issued for 12 months in advance must show VAT at 15 per cent for all monthly payments up to 31 December 2009.

"All payments after that date

must be at 17.5 per cent. In a nutshell, the normal tax point rules take precedence.

"Businesses need to be prepared to adjust their systems back and keep up to date with the changes from Her Majesty's Customs & Excise who have issued some anti-forestalling legislation to stop blatant avoidance."

## Support fund-raising with unwanted bras

WORCESTERSHIRE County Cricket Club is teaming up with the 2nd Skin Lingerie Bra Chain Gang to host a special event to raise funds for the Worcestershire Breast Unit Campaign.

On Tuesday, November 24, WCCC is organising a Christmas shopping evening with a difference.

As well as offering a large range of gift ideas, the Bra Chain Gang would like everyone attending to take along an old bra.

The bras will be counted during the event, together with hundreds of others collected over the last couple of months, and recycled for cash to help raise much needed funds for Worcestershire Breast Unit campaign.

About one in three women will see a breast specialist at some point in their life and about one in nine will develop breast cancer. A care unit is



**EVENT: Help raise money for a breast unit at a special event on November 24.**

desperately needed in Worcestershire but it's going to cost £2.5 million.

The event is being held in the Graeme Hick Pavilion at New Road, Worcester, between 6pm to 9pm.

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ernment. Currently focusing their efforts on small businesses in the credit crunch and after the successful launch of their '50 free website Giveaway,' the company are still looking to help more small businesses and start-ups.

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## IT'S A SMALL BUSINESS WORLD!



**“The banks are doing everything they can to support small businesses”  
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The word is finally reaching leading politicians that the banks are certainly not doing all they can to support the small business community.

**“A lack of credit, confidence and leadership is standing in the way of economic recovery”** – says Shadow Chancellor, George Osborne MP, when interviewed recently on Radio 4's Today Programme. Whilst Alistair Darling and Gordon Brown continue to squabble with Mervyn King, Governor of the Bank of England, about to split or not to split the biggest banks and who, in the banking world, should and who should not get a bonus.

It strikes me as fiddling whilst everything around us collapses!

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) has, for months, reported to and lobbied decision makers at all levels for the retail banks to support local businesses by considering their clients' longer term history and assessing the situation on a case by case basis. Their one size fits all on lending only to 'safe' borrowers will simply not do. I would ask them 'which successful business owner has ever turned to their bank with full pockets?'

More recently, and very locally, I have been shocked to hear about a number of cases where business owners face virtual overnight changes to their long-term credit package, where overdrafts used on a seasonal basis have been slashed, where obligatory site visits have had 1000 percent increases in charges and where bank officials have given such poor advice to borrowers that it has led to a serious threat to them losing the family home.

One bank, I understand, is no longer interested in micro businesses, which means most of their small business customers!!

This lack of credit has stagnated our economy. Those who have money are holding on to it and those who haven't – well, are dealing with the situation as best they can, and I will leave that to your imagination.

I implore local bank officers to consider their customers' track records, take a step back and consider the local economy, look again at the employment prospects both for those laid off and for the employer who may decide to simply throw in the towel and to start taking some measured risks again.

The FSB will continue to lobby on behalf of small businesses. If you have a case study which you think we can use (anonymity assured), or would like to know more about the FSB's work and member benefits visit [www.fsb.org.uk](http://www.fsb.org.uk) or phone **01386 750032**.



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# Youngsters join movement to show off entrepreneurial skills

Its Global Entrepreneurship Week and Young Chamber students have been taking part in special events



**T**HIS week schools and organisations across the UK are taking part in and hosting events to contribute to the worldwide movement of entrepreneurial people.

Millions of people are unleashing their enterprising talents and turning their ideas into reality to celebrate Global Entrepreneurship Week.

On Monday, youngsters at Tudor Grange Academy, Worcester, and King Charles I School, Kidderminster, took part in a day-long event designed to provide Young Chamber students with a better understanding of business and enterprise and the skills and attributes needed in a workplace environment.

Using both Coca-Cola's commercial savvy and the impressive record and associations of the Young Chamber, students were provided with a better understanding of business and enterprise, as well



as sharpening the skills and attributes that they will need to succeed in a work environment.

Schools from all parts of Worcestershire and Herefordshire have also taken part in this year's national Make Your Mark challenge. The event is the largest one-day enterprise competition for schools and colleges in the UK.

Today is Women's Enterprise Day. It is all about celebrating successful female entrepreneurs and inspiring more women and girls to turn their ideas into

reality. Events are taking place in Worcestershire and Herefordshire with a Women in Business event at Worcester's Pitchcroft racecourse.

Tomorrow is Social Enterprise Day. A social enterprise is a business with aims which are primarily social or environmental and whose surpluses are ploughed back into the business or community. The focus is to help inspire the next generation of social entrepreneurs and encourage them to start up businesses that will help address some of society's biggest problems.

Friday is Home Enterprise Day. Organised by Enterprise Nation, it focuses on people who have started up successful businesses from their own homes.

The day provides an opportunity to raise the profile of home-run businesses, offer advice to and increase confidence of those who are starting out, and to provide inspiration to existing businesses looking to grow.

Anyone who runs a business from home and would like to take part should visit [enterprisenation.com](http://enterprisenation.com).

**SKILLS:**  
Schools in Worcestershire and Herefordshire have a better understanding of the business and enterprise needed in the workplace.

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580 sq. ft., 825 sq. ft., 650 sq. ft. and 703 sq. ft.

Workshop and small office

700 sq. ft. Workshop only

For further details telephone  
Dave Jennings on 01905 29061 or 07725 960978



## Economic results show performance is starting to rise

THE quarterly economic survey (QES) examines the economic climate in Worcestershire and Herefordshire and provides an insight into how local businesses are performing at home and abroad.

Members of the chamber of commerce are given the opportunity to report on their businesses' performance during the preceding three months and also their future business outlook.

This information is subsequently collated on a local, regional and national level forming the UK's largest private quarterly survey of business; more than 5,000 businesses participate in the QES through their local chambers of commerce in every region of the country.

The national results are used by the Treasury, the Bank of England and Government bodies to inform policy decisions.

Responses from across Worcestershire and Herefordshire suggest that while the cost of raw materials is the most predominant pressure on prices, 23 per cent of companies now expect the

prices of their goods and services to rise over the next three months, while 67 per cent expect prices to remain constant.

While business confidence balances have strengthened in both sectors and key indicators signify recovery from recession, worryingly only 27 per cent of businesses report that they are operating at full capacity compared with 49 per cent last quarter.

As the economy recovers from recession this indicates that current levels of unemployment can be expected to rise further and the impact on business will be long lasting.

Potential further job losses threaten the country's skills base and a sustainable recovery will rely on the ability of businesses to invest and increase their export potential.

For more information about the quarterly economic survey in Worcestershire and Herefordshire contact Felicity Copp, education and policy executive at the chamber of commerce on 0845 6411500 or, alternatively, e-mail [FelicityC@hwchamber.co.uk](mailto:FelicityC@hwchamber.co.uk).

# Business news

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## HEWETT RECRUITMENT

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**WINNING WAYS:** The bridge designed by McMorran and Gatehouse which impressed the judges, from left, John Wilkie, Peter Ross and Giles Downes.



**APPOINTED:** Trevor Field.

## Change of tune marks new role for Trevor

TREVOR Field has been appointed to lead the group marketing department at Advent Training, in Hagley, near Bromsgrove.

Mr Field, who is aged 45, worked at Egg and West Bromwich Albion football club before spending more than three years as marketing director at Virgin Money.

He also worked at EMI for two years where he was involved in marketing some of the biggest names in music.

Mr Field is now keen to apply his expertise to the world of vocational training, where he sees plenty of growth potential.

He said: "This is an exciting time for us. The UK is moving out of recession and there are real opportunities for people who want to switch career and take advantage of the growth ahead."

"The earning potential for those who have the motivation to re-skill is huge and we're well placed to provide the right kind of training to these individuals."

# We're so thrilled with our wooden art prize

### Architects walk away with top award for design of bridge to cross stream

BROMYARD-based architects McMorran and Gatehouse have won a prestigious accolade at this year's 2009 Wood Awards.

The company's design for a bridge to cross a stream in Northumberland won Best Use of British Timber in the Special Awards category of the annual competition held in Carpenter's Hall, London.

The green oak bridge, which was built on an estate

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near Berwick-upon-Tweed, was designed by McMorran and Gatehouse in collaboration with the furniture designer Jeremy Cosmo Davies from Berwick and London structural engineers Price Myers.

The dynamic double curves, spanning 10 metres

across a stream running through a spectacular landscape garden, were inspired by local boat building craft skills.

Timber was resourced from within the UK, mainly from 19th century plantations in Herefordshire.

William McMorran said: "Wood is a timeless material and its extraordinary ability to effortlessly span great distances, has, we hope, been

exemplified by this bridge.

"We are thrilled that the design concept and all the team's hard work in bringing this small but complex project to fruition has been recognised by the judges.

"All our projects demonstrate how contemporary design is enriched by using traditional materials and craftsmanship in new ways."

John Wilkie, chairman of the judging panel, described

the bridge as "a tour de force of timber construction".

He said: "The intriguing design uses the capabilities of green oak to bend and settle into new forms, creating the elegant curves which complement this beautiful setting."

A model of the bridge was featured at this year's Summer Exhibition organised by the Royal Academy in London.

# Fair brings jobs for five and hope for many others

MORE than 120 unemployed jobseekers made their way to Pertemps People Development Group's (PPDG) offices in Shrub Hill, Worcester, for a successful job fair.

Nine employers and agencies attended with 250 vacancies on offer. Jobseekers from around the county were smartly turned out with freshly prepared CVs provided by their employment coaches at PPDG and many are now on the road to full-time employment.

Second interviews were given to 16 of those looking for work on the day and many more interviews were

arranged for the following days.

Five people left the event having obtained jobs immediately.

Simon Smithson, PPDG regional operations director for Worcestershire and Herefordshire, said: "Our customers have seen this event as a golden opportunity to meet employers and possibly secure a job or take important steps towards gaining employment."

"It was a great experience to see so many of them come along and show real enthusiasm while talking to employers confidently about what

they can offer a company if they were to be recruited."

All of the employers and agencies were pleased with the event which will help many local jobseekers return to work.

Di Hall-Smith of Hewett Recruitment, which has offices in Kidderminster and Worcester, said: "It was run superbly by Pertemps People Development Group and everyone was very friendly."

"We had some good feedback from those attending and hopefully over the next week or so we will be putting some of the people we met at the jobs fair into work."



**HELP AND ADVICE:** Some of those who took part in the jobs fair at Shrub Hill, Worcester.