



Atlas Observer

Wirral's business magazine

www.atlasbusinessclub.co.uk

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HELLO!

Welcome to our latest edition of The Atlas Observer. The magazine was launched last year as part of Atlas Business Club's commitment to lift Wirral business by providing a platform to facilitate business growth and opportunities here in Wirral, across the Liverpool City region and beyond.

Atlas was formed in 2012 by Artemis Media, McEwan Wallace and Mills Media to bring together business owners, members of the professional services and key decision makers in Wirral and the wider North West.

The Atlas Business Club has gone from strength to strength. Our last event attracted over 90 delegates and our 2013 programme attracted high profile speakers including Andy Bounds - Britain's Sales Trainer of the Year, David Allison - CEO of Wirral University Teaching Hospital and Chris Brown - Head of marketing for Liverpool Vision.

2014 is set to be an exciting year for the region with an unprecedented number of high profile events taking place including The International Festival for Business, The British Golf Open with the Peel Ports and Atlantic Gateway projects. We must of course not forget the return of the Giants on July 23rd.

The Atlas Business Club will support these events and support economic activity in the region throughout 2014 by running a series of business and networking events throughout the year. The Atlas Observer will continue to promote business success here in Wirral.

We hope you can join us in our celebration of the success of our business community. The Atlas team look forward to welcoming you at our meetings.

Best wishes for a prosperous 2014.

The Atlas Team.



Alastair Gould
McEwan Wallace



Emma Parker-Goff
Artemis Media Profile



Andrew Mills
Mills Media Group

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BUSINESS BRIEFS



HOW R&D TAX RELIEF CAN HELP YOUR BUSINESS IN 2014

This region has an excellent reputation for Research and Development, with international and SME businesses across a wide range of sectors undertaking pioneering work. But many Wirral businesses are missing out on R&D tax relief because they just don't think it applies to their business or sector.

What they might not know is that the Government offers a specific tax relief for Research and Development which could save limited companies thousands of pounds each year – this could apply to businesses in industries such as manufacturing, engineering, software, construction, food and drink, technology, pharmaceuticals and more.

As part of the relief, for every qualifying £100 spent on R&D an extra £125 deduction can be claimed against profits in the corporation tax computation.

R&D tax relief really can cover a wide range of projects – more than businesses may think. You may have designed or manufactured a product, developed software, improved your product or manufacturing processes. Expenses such as staff costs and materials used in the R&D can be claimed, in addition to fees for sub-contractors involved.

At McEwan Wallace we have helped numerous companies to claim tax relief on R&D.



R&D tax relief can also be backdated for up to four years so any claims made now could provide your business with substantial savings for 2014.

It is worth noting that while this reduces your profits for tax purposes, if a loss is made because of the R&D you can 'cash' the losses in and get a cash payment from the Government (although the rate of relief is not as advantageous as if the losses were used against future profits).

This need not be a complex process – our tax specialists can identify costs from your company accounts which fall under R&D and support you throughout the claim process.

R&D tax relief is currently at the highest threshold ever, so start 2014 by taking advantage of the breaks that it can offer your business.

WIRRAL BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP HAS MERGED WITH THE WIRRAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE TO CREATE A NEW LOOK BUSINESS SUPPORT ORGANISATION.

The merger will combine the services and resources of both organisations to support the growth of commerce and industry in Wirral and provide a powerful lobbying voice for issues affecting the region's businesses.

A new Board and Executive Structure, headed up by Wirral Business Partnership's Asif Hamid as Chair and Paula Basnett as CEO, will secure the financial stability and long term future of the organisation.

CAMELL LAIRD HAS STARTED WORK ON BUILDING SECTIONS OF THE ROYAL NAVY'S SECOND £3BN AIRCRAFT SUPERCARRIER.

The shipbuilder is to construct the flight deck and hangar of the 70,600 ton Prince of Wales carrier, following successful delivery of flight deck and hangar modules for the first supercarrier Queen Elizabeth in May, 2012.

John Syvret, Cammell Laird chief executive, said: "We are working hard on all fronts and I think we were successful getting this contract as the Aircraft Carrier Alliance recognised what we achieved previously in terms of quality, production, safety and value for money."

WIRRAL LAWYER JONATHAN BROWN AND HIS CORPORATE TEAM AT INTERNATIONAL LAW FIRM HILL DICKINSON HAVE ADVISED ON THE SALE OF THE UK'S BIGGEST LABEL PRODUCER.

Systems Labelling has sites in Deeside,

Runcorn and Essex and employs 140 people, supplying the big supermarkets as well as the drinks and cosmetics industry. Jonathan has acted for the company for many years and he assisted in the acquisition by The Americk Group.

WIRRAL PRINT FIRM LT PRINT HAS INVESTED £250,000 ON A STATE-OF-THE-ART DIGITAL SUITE AT ITS WALLASEY HEADQUARTERS.

The firm is moving all its digital production in-house after previously operating from premises in Hamilton Street, Birkenhead. With the larger design and production facilities LT Print has doubled its digital printing capacity. LT Print's client list includes top London hotels Claridges and The Savoy, Coors Brewery, the Bank of Scotland and Liverpool Football Club.



WIRRAL LAW FIRM CALLS FOR BUSINESSES TO BACK IFB

Law firm Hillyer McKeown is calling on Wirral business leaders to get involved with next year's International Festival for Business (IFB).

The Hamilton Square based company says the festival will provide a wide range of opportunities to showcase Wirral businesses and entrepreneurs on an international platform.

The inaugural festival will be the largest international business event in the world in 2014, and the largest business event in the UK for over 50 years. It will be global, entrepreneurial and accelerate the growth of UK business into international markets.

Speaking about the opportunities surrounding IFB 2014, Ian Millington, Partner at Hillyer McKeown, said: "IFB will present real opportunities for Wirral businesses. The benefit is not just for Liverpool city centre, but for the wider region as a whole. Wirral business leaders need to come together and get involved with the opportunities presented by IFB in order to help drive business growth, accelerate trade aspirations and encourage international trade expansions."

IFB will present over 100 events in 61 days throughout June and July 2014 with an anticipated 250,000 visitors expected and business representation from over 125 countries. The festival is seen as a key catalyst to achieve a doubling of UK exports by 2020.



Ian added: "As a firm, we are acutely aware of the platform that IFB presents to the business community. We want Wirral businesses to understand how they can benefit from IFB, rather than seeing it as something international, remote or just too big.

"We are planning some IFB fringe events to bring together the Wirral business community, because IFB 2014 isn't just for large corporate organisations, it's also for the region's SME's.

"IFB will present real opportunities for SME's who are focused on growth and feeling confident about the recovery in the economy.

"With Peel's Wirral Waters regeneration scheme also on the horizon, this is an exciting time for the Wirral and it is just the start of a showcase that will renew the area, revitalise business partnerships and extend the reach of international opportunities for Wirral businesses."

MSIF BOOST FOR FOZ

Birkenhead based electrical and building services firm Foz Contract Services has benefitted from investment of £1.4m from Merseyside Special Investment Fund (MSIF).

The investment will allow the company - formed following the acquisition and subsequent merger of Foz Electrical and TFR Contract Services - to expand its services across the region. Clients include Seddon Group, MITIE Group, Lovell, HT Forrest, Carillion, Wirral Council and several housing associations.

The investment was overseen by Dow Schofield Watts - the corporate finance and advisory specialist co-founded in 2002 by Wirral based partner Jon Schofield.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES



Bob Baxter, Paul Arrowsmith, Barrie Farrell and Lonni Landis from Mills Media

MILLS MEDIA TO CAPITALISE ON GROWTH WITH NEW APPOINTMENTS

Wirral marketing agency Mills Media has announced major new appointments within the business.

Barrie Farrell – head of the Business Television division – has been promoted to Creative Director and will now direct the creative content of all projects implemented by the firm across its conference, digital, exhibition and business television teams. Barrie joined Mills Media as a Scriptwriter in 1991 and has had a creative input in all departments working as Head of Production and Head of Conference and Live Events.

Over the last 12 months, Mills Media has won significant national and international projects and is currently working on a portfolio of projects which include managing conferences and exhibitions at Disneyland Paris and Offshore Europe in Aberdeen. Mills Media has seen an increase in repeat business at an international level and Barrie's elevation will result in campaigns which are creative, consistent and on message, generating significant results for clients.

Barrie will work closely in his new role with Lonni Landis – the newly appointed Client Account Director – Paul Arrowsmith, who has been appointed as Projects Director and Bob Baxter the Photographic Director. Andrew Mills will remain Managing Director of Mills Media together with Jenny Griffiths who is Financial Director.

Lonni will continue to lead the business development activity at Mills Media and crucially will remain as the lead on all accounts – liaising with Barrie to create and deliver clear marketing strategies for clients.

As Projects Director, Paul Arrowsmith will direct the growing team which is responsible for producing all of Mills Media conferences and exhibitions. Paul's team includes set designers, sound and light technicians, camera operators and production teams. Bob Baxter will direct Mills Media commercial photography department which includes industrial, studio, architectural, aerial and PR divisions.

Andrew Mills, Managing Director of Mills Media, said: "Here at Mills Media we constantly strive to deliver the best possible service to clients. The new elevations within our senior management team will greatly enhance our service offering. We are confident that our new business model will take the firm from strength to strength."



CLIENT WINS A BOOST FOR THE NEW YEAR AT ARTEMIS

PR specialist Artemis Media enjoyed a successful end to 2013, winning a raft of new clients and retaining existing clients for 2014.

The Birkenhead based firm – led by managing director Emma Parker-Goff and account director Ed Casson – has been appointed by HS Ocean Group (HSOG), a specialist provider to the oil, gas, offshore and shipping industries. HSOG has headquarters in Wirral and a network of offices in Houston, Gabon, Nigeria, Congo, South Africa, Mainland Europe, Malta and the Caribbean. Artemis will be implementing an international media campaign in the national and trade media.

Artemis has also been appointed by recycling-led waste management specialist B&M Waste Services Ltd. Artemis will be working with the Bromborough headquartered business to promote its total waste management solutions across all media.

In December 2013, Artemis won a contract to promote the Bounce Back project - a joint initiative between the University of Liverpool and Wirral based AIW Health which will improve access to personalised mental health care across Merseyside. The firm also won contracts to promote global leadership programme World Merit and Camp Leaders – one of the UK's biggest gap-year travel specialists. Following the



Emma Parker-Goff and Ed Casson from Artemis at the North West launch of the 'I Stand For' campaign

successful launch of their 'I Stand For' campaign in August last year, Wirral based national youth advocacy charity NYAS has retained Artemis to raise awareness for a range of its services and campaigns throughout 2014.

Emma Parker-Goff said: "2014 looks set to be a great year for Artemis. We are delighted that so many of our existing clients are retaining our services and it is fantastic to welcome a number of high profile new clients on board."



SMITH AND SONS REBRANDS AUCTION DEPARTMENT AND STRENGTHENS WITH TWO NEW PARTNERS

Smith and Sons has rebranded their auction department to Smith and Sons Property Auctions, in a move that reflects the firm's commitment to uphold the values and quality of service delivered by the Wirral based business for over 170 years.

Smith and Sons left the Auction House franchise and returned the service in house, providing buyers and sellers with a more streamlined and personal service.

Chris Johnson, Partner and Auctioneer at Smith and Sons, said: "As we continually review our auction business, we felt that there was no better brand to be associated with than that of Smith and Sons. By being part of a national syndicate, the strong name of Smith and Sons had become diluted and so we took the decision to incorporate the auction department wholly within the business.

"This move will enhance and improve the service we offer. As more and more people look to buy and sell at auction, we aim to develop this part of our business further, attracting new vendors and purchasers whilst developing and consolidating relationships with new and existing clients."

Smith and Sons are keen to hear from property owners looking to sell both residential and commercial buildings particularly those in need of refurbishment and repair. A free no obligation visit will allow a full appraisal of the property and the auction process explained for those unfamiliar with how an auction works.

Chris added: "As the property market continues to improve and with lenders now willing to support loans, we are beginning to see more buyers explore the market, with people keen to maximise their investment. For many, the auction route provides the ideal opportunity."

Smith and Sons has also strengthened the business with the appointment of Andy



Smith and Jason Wadeson as partners.

Andy and Jason – both Chartered Surveyors – have worked at the firm for several years, initially taking on qualified roles in the valuation and commercial management departments, continuing their professional development and taking on increased responsibilities.

Smith and Sons last auction sale of 2013 was held on December 4th at the Village Hotel in Bromborough, with 14 lots offered to a busy room of investors, dealers and owner occupiers.

Properties receiving the most attention were houses in need of refurbishment. Houses in Zig Zag Road and Harcourt Avenue in Wallasey attracted strong bidding achieving prices of £88,000 and £65,000 against guides of £60,000 and £55,000 respectively.

A three bedroomed semi-detached house in Bromborough sold for £108,000 against

a guide of £75,000 and Glenwood Road in Little Sutton achieved £68,000 against a guide of £60,000.

The Carlton Pub on Borough Road in Birkenhead also received a good deal of interest with the purchaser buying to convert to residential use.

Auctioneer Chris Johnson said: "Despite fewer lots than usual, we will – after post-auction sales – achieve a success rate in the region of 80%. As expected there was strong bidding for houses in need of refurbishment and this method of sale demonstrates that due to competitive bidding, sale by auction will obtain the best price within a relatively short timescale for this type of property."

To book a free appraisal and discuss the benefits of selling by auction ring Auction Manager, Annette Shelley on 0151 647 9272 or email aas@smithandsons.net

PROPERTY & CONSTRUCTION



ATLAS FIRE AND SECURITY OPENS NEW HQ

Atlas Fire and Security has celebrated the opening of a new administration and operations headquarters in Birkenhead.

A launch party welcomed dozens of Wirral businesses to the new 5,000 sqft Atlas House premises at Kelvin Park, which was officially opened by Wirral Council's Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment, Kevin Adderley.

Managing Director John Piggott said: "Our growth is following a planned business programme we have been delivering since 1993 for both our operations and our customer development. This has now led us to creating the opportunity to purchase and relocate into new premises.

"We are an ambitious company with aspirations for future growth and our investment demonstrates the direction which we wish the business to follow."

Atlas Fire and Security employs 20 local staff, including two apprentices who have now been fully trained and are seen as very important to the future of the business.

Mr Piggott added: "Our company success has been made through a culture of providing quality work, expertise, and customer care. By using industry leading products and a team of experienced technicians it ensures that we provide consistently high quality of installations, maintenance and a 24-hour repair service to our customers."



KIMPTON CELEBRATES 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Wirral building services specialist Kimpton Ltd celebrated its 50th anniversary in style with hundreds of guests at Thornton Hall Hotel.

Founded in 1963 by Eric Kimpton, the company delivers a range of M&E services and renewable energy projects to commerce and industry across the UK.

Managing Director Richard Kimpton said: "We were absolutely delighted to welcome guests including family, employees, supply chain partners and clients to celebrate this auspicious milestone with us. We are proud of the fact that Kimpton is still very much a family business and we hope there are many more celebrations to come."



A Happy News Year For Bagnall & Morris

Bagnall & Morris, the Bromborough based family-run waste management specialist, has reflected on another successful year with plenty of good news to report across the group.

Communications Manager Michael Hill gives the Atlas Observer the lowdown...

B&M WINS GREEN APPLE AWARD

"B&M won a Green Apple Environment Award in the national campaign to find Britain's greenest companies, councils and communities. The Green Champion award was presented to the partnership between B&M, Alstom Transport UK and Haz Environmental.

"Since December 2011, B&M Waste Services and Haz Environmental have been working with Alstom Transport to help minimise waste costs, increase recycling rates and improve carbon efficiency at Alstom's mainland sites.

"Competing against more than 500 other nominations, the presentation took place at a glittering ceremony at the House of Commons."

GO PAPERLESS WITH B&M

"As a customer focused company with an environmental ethos, B&M Waste Services has been selected by the Environment Agency (EA) as one of the first waste management companies to introduce electronic Waste Transfer Notes (WTN) / Duty of Cares.

"For our customers, this means a streamlined process for completing their annual Waste Transfer Note / Duty of Care; no more paper documents, faxing or postage; savings on time, cost and administrative burdens. We are currently contacting customers to talk them through the changes and hope they are as excited as we are."

B&M EXTENDS CARBON NEUTRAL COMMITMENT

"We are pleased to announce that B&M Waste Services has successfully extended its Carbon Neutral commitment until October 2014. Carbon Footprint Ltd pointed out that by using B&M 'the service has a significantly lower carbon footprint compared to similar services currently available on the market'.

"This year B&M is supporting the Indonesia Landfill Gas Diversion and Power Generation project, which will see sanitary standards improved at the biggest landfill site in Indonesia and crucially equip the site with a landfill-gas capture system."

BAGNALL & MORRIS GETS TO WORK ON A41

"Bagnall & Morris Ltd, the CCTV survey and drainage maintenance specialist, has been busy in recent weeks completing significant renovation to the A41 near our head office in Wirral.

B&M SECURE SHREDDING ON FACEBOOK

"And finally, B&M Secure Shredding - which was named best new business at the Wirral Business Awards, 2013 - has joined Facebook. So why not like our page and find out about our latest services and exclusive offers?"

"You can find us at www.facebook.com/BMSecureShredding

GREEN ENERGY



WIRRAL BUSINESSES ENCOURAGED TO GO GREEN THIS WINTER

Renewable energy specialist Stiebel Eltron UK is encouraging the region's businesses to support the green agenda this winter.

Wirral based Stiebel Eltron – a leading manufacturer of heat pump and solar technology – says there has never been a better time for commerce and industry to take advantage of government incentives to go green.

The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) announced further support for businesses through the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) in December – including Air Source Heat Pumps amongst other technologies now eligible for payback.

Mark McManus, Stiebel Eltron Managing Director, said: "This announcement is good news for manufacturers and installers alike – there has been much lobbying to include Air/Water source heat pumps as part of the commercial RHI. The tariff itself of 2.5p is pitched very well to give businesses the right kind of return that they need.

"Up to now only ground source heat pumps have been incentivised and we have certainly seen an increase in take-up – we hope to see a similar rise in demand for Air/Water heat pumps now that consumer confidence will grow and a return on investment is guaranteed. We are currently lobbying to get DHW heat pumps for commercial projects listed on the Enhanced Capital Allowance (ECA) Scheme, as this will be a further incentive for businesses to go green."

Mr McManus added that Stiebel Eltron UK is offering a range of free advice services to businesses and home owners this winter.

"We work with architects and developers at the design stage to maximise the energy efficiency of buildings and can provide consultations on how people can convert their property to green energy – all free of charge. This includes undertaking a survey of the property examining the heat loss and heat demands of the building and providing a set of recommendations as well as advice on complying with legislation and applying for government incentives."

For more information contact Stiebel Eltron UK on 0151 346 2300 or email mark.mcmanus@stiebel-eltron.co.uk



STIEBEL ELTRON UK IS ALSO CELEBRATING AFTER ITS TECHNICAL DIRECTOR JOHN FELGATE WON A PRESTIGIOUS GREEN ENERGY AWARD



Mr Felgate – based at Stiebel Eltron's HQ at the Wirral International Business Park – was presented with the 'Contribution to Energy Efficiency Award' at the Energy Efficiency & Renewables Awards 2013.

The judges agreed that Mr Felgate, who has more than 10 years of experience in the green energy industry, stood out as worthy of praise.

As well as leading Stiebel Eltron UK's technical team - advising on a wide range of green build residential and commercial projects across the UK - Mr Felgate is Chair of the Domestic Heat Pump Association's Technical Committee and a passionate lobbyist for renewable energy systems.

He said: "This is a great honour and I am delighted to have been recognised by my peers. I am fortunate to work for an innovative company with market leading products that it is always striving to improve upon. I also have the backing of a great UK team, whose experience and expertise helps me to do my job well."



NYAS LAUNCHES HELPLINE FUNDRAISING APPEAL

Wirral based charity NYAS is launching a new campaign to raise funds for its dedicated Advocacy Helpline service.

NYAS is a national charity which provides advocacy and legal services for vulnerable children and young people who have nowhere else to turn.

Its Advocacy Helpline is an invaluable service used by thousands of young people each year to seek help and support. The Helpline costs £250,000 to run each year with the majority of funding via a National Lottery Grant and a Department for Education contract. However, there is currently an annual shortfall of £39,900 which NYAS needs to find to maintain its high levels of service for children and young people in desperate need of support.

Christine Renouf, Chief Executive of NYAS, said the charity was now launching a Fundraising Committee with the aim of attracting corporate and individual donations. "The Advocacy Helpline is absolutely at the core of NYAS and what we do – as a freephone number it acts as a lifeline for children and young people who are in desperate need of help and do not know where else to turn."

If you are a business or individual who would like to make a donation or to discuss sponsorship, please contact Bob Towers at NYAS on 0151 649 8700.

THIRD SECTOR



INVOLVE NORTHWEST HOSTS REACHOUT AWARDS

A WIRRAL partnership aimed at helping vulnerable and hard-to-reach people into work honoured its outstanding service users.

The group of outstanding achievers came from a variety of backgrounds and all have worked hard to turn their lives around and overcome multiple barriers within their lives.

They were supported by the ReachOut Partnership – funded and backed by Wirral Council – which aims to overcome the challenges people across the borough are facing to finding employment. The ReachOut Partnership was formed by a cohort of Wirral based agencies – Involve Northwest, The Social Partnership, Advocacy in Wirral, Remploy, Wirral Change and Inclusive Access.

The awards celebration – which also celebrated local employers including BR Contracting and RAS Cards – was held at Wallasey Town Hall and attended by a host of dignitaries, including the Deputy Mayor of Wirral Cllr Steve Foulkes and Wirral Council leader Cllr Phil Davies.

The ReachOut Partnership has helped 849 Wirral people into work in the past year alone, with a sustainable success rate of 50 per cent and on target to reach 65 per cent. Since launching, ReachOut has supported more than 20,000 people across Wirral, with 4,662 job starts across a range of sectors.



4748 LAUNCHES IN HISTORIC HAMILTON SQUARE

An exciting new mixed use venue has launched in Wirral's historic Hamilton Square offering private and corporate entertainment, a business hub and boutique accommodation.

Housed in two newly renovated Georgian Grade I Listed buildings, 4748 is a unique space and niche venue, offering guests an impressive range of facilities and services where guests can 'Celebrate, Work, Eat, Sleep and Play'.

4748 offers private and corporate hospitality, a venue for weddings and other celebrations, serviced offices, meeting rooms and boutique accommodation. New Year has also seen the opening of The Cellar Bar and Cafe with access to Walled Gardens and Stables.

4748 – located at 47 and 48 Hamilton Square in Birkenhead – is the brainchild of local entrepreneur and European Patent and Trade Mark Attorney Dominic Schiller, who has attracted investment of over £750,000 and brought in a team of four business and hospitality professionals to support him in his venture.

The team comprises: General Manager Kim Maher, the former Operations Manager at Wirral's 5-star Hillbark Hotel; Head Chef, Gary Fletcher and marketing and business development specialists Jen Pownall and David Wright.

Dominic said: "Since launching we have had exceptional feedback and bookings are coming in thick and fast for celebrations, conferences and private dinners. The Cellar Bar and Cafe will add another dimension to 4748, offering a more relaxed setting to eat and drink with family, friends, colleagues and clients."

Visit www.4748.co.uk or call 0151 601 9479 for bookings and information.

White Winter Guaranteed at Thornton Hall as Hotel Unveils New Luxury 'Snow Cave'

Thornton Hall Hotel and Spa in Wirral is opening a unique 'snow cave' as part of Phase Two of a £300,000 investment in luxury new spa facilities.

The snow cave is the first of its kind in the North West, creating real snow at temperatures of between -5°C and -7°C. It will hold a variety of health benefits and will be free for hotel guests and spa club members to use.

The four-star hotel in Thornton Hough has built the new snow cave as an extension to its existing thermal zone facilities – the extension will also feature a 'snail shower' and heated seating area to create a 'thermal journey' for guests.

Hotel General Manager Geoff Dale said: "The snow cave is a fantastic new facility, creating a year-round winter wonderland with real snow and will hold up to 6 people at one time.

"This is a Scandinavian-style treatment that is great for people of all ages. It is known to improve the skin, muscles, circulation and breathing and is also recognised as an excellent way of helping people to recover from injury.

"Guests may want to use the snow cave for its health benefits, but we also imagine a lot of people will want to try it simply as a unique and fascinating experience. Alongside the snow room we already have a large sauna, steam room, outdoor and indoor hydrospa pools and Rasul, which formed part of Phase One of our spa development. These

facilities together form our thermal journey experience."

The hotel has worked with Liverpool-based Rigo Spa on the design and installation of the luxury facility – believed to be one of only handful across the UK – while Wirral plumbing and heating specialists Par One have completed all the plumbing and electrical works.

Andrew Thompson, Chairman of Thornton Hall Hotel & Spa, added: "This is a fantastic development for the hotel with even more facilities to add to our award-winning spa, which is already widely regarded as one of the finest in the region.

"These new facilities include the luxury Rasul treatment rooms – based on a traditional Arabian cleansing ritual using thermal muds – and a state-of-the-art boutique make up studio which offers a range of beauty treatments including nails, hair, make-up and accessories.

"We are constantly looking at innovative ways to improve our guests' experience. Whether it be a pamper afternoon for friends or a spa hen party – our guests can treat themselves to a huge range of beauty and holistic treatments all under one roof."

For more information on Spa Break packages and treatments visit www.thorntonhallhotel.com or call 0151 336 3938.

ESTHER MCVEY MP VISITS WIRRAL'S SPECIALIST SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

Wirral's specialist sixth form college welcomed Wirral West MP and Employment Minister Esther McVey to enjoy a tour of its new facilities.

Birkenhead Sixth Form College is investing £3.5m in new buildings, including a unique Learning Support Centre which is assisting a wide range of students with support needs such as autism, Asperger's, dyslexia and dyspraxia, as well as students with mental health, emotional or behavioural problems.

Ms McVey was shown around the centre, which has facilities specifically to enhance the educational experience of students, including fully-equipped Learning Assistance Base, quiet areas and a sensory room. She was met by a number of students to talk about how they are accessing its innovative support.

Ms McVey also met with Principal Kathryn Podmore who showcased the college's new School of Arts and Design, Wilfred Owen Humanities Building and science laboratories.

Ms McVey said: "It was great to meet students who are benefitting from the College's excellent new Learning Support Centre and finding out how they are being helped with their studies and also within their own personal development.

"Birkenhead Sixth Form College has created a challenging and stimulating environment which clearly nurtures the students and helps them to realise their ambitions. The college also does a fantastic job in preparing students for the next step of their lives, whether it is university, Apprenticeships or the world of work."



SCHOLARSHIP FUND LAUNCHES AT BIRKENHEAD SCHOOL

Birkenhead School is launching an innovative scholarship fund to open up its exceptional education to talented boys and girls across Wirral and wider Merseyside.

The Access Scholarship Fund sees alumni coming together to 'sponsor' a pupil through their time in the senior part of the school, which regularly tops the academic tables in the region and had the best A level results in Wirral and Merseyside last summer.

A unique feature of the scholarships is the option for group sponsorship, a collaborative way of funding a bright pupil who may normally be denied such an opportunity on the grounds of cost.

The Access Scholarship Fund has already received the support of a number of individuals and 'year groups', who are coming together to raise the money to support a pupil through their school career, from Year 7 through to Year 13.

Headmaster John Clark said: "These scholarships aim to assist more talented Wirral children to take advantage of the potentially life-changing education we offer. We would be delighted to hear from any parents, guardians or indeed teachers who know a local child who could benefit from one of these scholarships."

For information email headmaster@birkenheadschooL.co.uk or call 0151 651 3009 (Debbie Roberts, Headmaster's PA)



A NEW YEAR'S REVOLUTION FROM DOCUMENT DIRECT

Martyn Best is CEO of the fast growing Liverpool-based digital transcription business Document Direct.

Martyn acts for a number of Atlas members and reflects upon how your new year's resolution could revolutionise the efficiency and profitability of your business.

"We all live in a world of change, and whether we like that or not, our ability to recognise and embrace this can have a powerful impact on our lives.

We have all seen significant change affect us over the past five years, in terms of economic change and technological change, and how we react to this during 2014 will influence how successful we will be in taking advantage of the opportunities that will be available to us all.

The legal sector in which Document Direct have a strong presence has seen significant change occur with events such as the Legal Services Act, the Jackson reforms, legal aid changes, increased competition and the increased intervention and impact of the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA).

In a nutshell – the legal sector has changed forever, and so what New Year's resolutions could an astute law firm have?

The key issues must focus on performance, efficiency, cost management and client

service. Get these issues right, and profitability will follow.

What may have been a cosier world of hourly rates, long-standing relationships and traditional access to legal services has changed, and so there is a compelling need to question how we operate and what can be done to ensure long term survival and success.

I am seeing some significant trends as to how law firms operate internally, and how they ensure that client service is maintained and indeed enhanced, by the intelligent use of IT, of outsourcing secondary support functions and of embracing better business practices.

My own business, Document Direct, delivers typing and document production services at around 50% of the traditional cost, with a service capability that meets the needs of today's fee earners, rather than the restrictions of a traditional 9-5 office based, inflexible high cost.

Other areas to consider are the use of mobile devices, tablets, home-based working for fee-earners and the whole wider world of social media. The use or relevance of cloud computing and more efficient use of your servers should be reviewed.

The New Year is upon us, and whilst we don't need a revolution, we should all embrace the change that is around us and create and deliver some very positive New Year's Resolutions."



NEW MEMBERS FOR MERSEY MARITIME

Birkenhead-based trade body Mersey Maritime has welcomed a raft of new members as it celebrates its 10th anniversary.

Over the past three months a range of businesses have joined up, including financial services firm KPMG, law firm Brabners and Liverpool Football Club. The companies will benefit from Mersey Maritime's range of business support services and networking opportunities.

Mersey Maritime chief executive Jim Teasdale said: "Mersey Maritime represents more than 1,700 businesses of all sizes, from a very broad range of sectors. No other membership body in the entire North West focuses on the maritime sector like we do.

"This puts us in a unique position to help our members win business, network, secure funding and stay bang up to date with the dynamic maritime sector locally, nationally and internationally. We urge firms to get involved and the best place to start is Mersey Maritime."



FLOODS FORCE WIRRAL CHARITY TO RELOCATE

Advocacy in Wirral (AIW), the peninsula's largest provider of mental health advocacy services, has relocated to new premises after the charity's headquarters at Woodside Business Park suffered significant damage in the December storms.

AIW delivers more than 28 mental health contracts across the North West and delivers many services here in Wirral. AIW contracts include Hospital Advocacy, Primary Care Advocacy, Community Advocacy Service, Drugs and Alcohol Advocacy Service and Wirral Bridges.

AIW has more than 60 staff located in its offices which include the senior management team, social service therapists, the community advocacy team and its drug and alcohol team. The charity provides its services to more than 6,000 people every year and its headquarters houses one of the charity's advice points where service users visit the centre to see the AIW team.

AIW has moved to a new unit at Woodside Business Park with immediate effect to ensure that its services remain uninterrupted over the coming months.

AIW Chief Executive Chris Shaw said: "The team at AIW worked around the clock to ensure that our services were not disrupted over Christmas and New Year. The winter months can be a particularly difficult period for our service users, who can feel isolated or may be suffering from added financial pressure.

Our staff work tirelessly to provide them with the correct support to help them through these difficult periods."

One in four people will be affected by mental illness at some stage in their lives.

To find out more about Advocacy in Wirral and its services visit www.aiw.org.uk



STEVE LOWE IS A DIRECTOR AND CHARTERED INSURANCE BROKER AT LEADING INDEPENDENT BROKER RISK SERVICES (NW) LTD. HERE, HE TELLS US WHY BUSINESS INTERRUPTION INSURANCE COULD BE THE MOST IMPORTANT POLICY YOU EVER TAKE OUT.

Business Interruption (BI) Insurance has often been seen as a luxury – one of the first covers that gets dropped when times are hard.

However, it could be one of the most vital policies a business takes out. BI cover protects companies from financial loss which could mean the difference between survival or sinking when it cannot operate.

This could be for a range of reasons such as explosion, fire or flooding, making it particularly important for companies which operate in an industrial or manufacturing capacity dealing in potentially hazardous areas or materials.

BI Insurance enables a business to deal with these effects and could mean the company's survival when it cannot operate. Weeks or months without sales (or reduced sales) will certainly affect the cash flow once all the income in respect of goods already despatched is received.

A BI Insurance Policy will pay for the increased costs necessary and reasonable to keep the business running, such as funding the cost of renting alternative premises, staff overtime, subcontracting work or buying in alternative products.

For more information contact Steve Lowe at Risk Services (NW) Ltd on 01244 351724 or email steve@riskservicesnw.co.uk





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