

April 2026

Chamber



Business of the Year Award Winners 2026

Full report on page 14

Events Calendar

Thursday Thirty 21st May 2026

8.30am – 10.00am
North West Air Ambulance,
The_Space, 35-37 High Street,
Congleton, Cheshire, CW12 1AX

Annual Golf Day 17th June 2026

10.00am – 9.00pm
Vale Royal Abbey, Vale Royal Drive,
Whitegate, Cheshire, CW8 2BA

Thursday Thirty 2nd July 2026

8.30am – 10.00am
Chaffinch
Ravenscliffe, First Avenue,
Newcastle-under-Lyme, ST5 8QX

Thursday Thirty 13th August 2026

8.30am – 10.00am
Luxury Hub,
13 High Street, Congleton,
Cheshire, CW12 1BN

Thursday Thirty 3rd September 2026

8.30am – 10.00am
Talbots Law
The Wheatsheaf, 1 Hightown,
Sandbach, Cheshire, CW11 1AG

Your Financial Future: A Practical Workshop with Franklyn

15th September 2026
8.30am – 12.30pm
Astbury Golf Club, Peel Lane,
Congleton, Cheshire, CW12 4RE

Thursday Thirty 24th September 2026

8.30am – 10.00am
Petty Pool Trust,
Pool Lane, Northwich,
Cheshire, CW8 2DR

Annual Clay Shoot 14th October 2026

10.30am – 4.30pm
Cloudside Shooting Grounds,
Red Lane, Congleton, Cheshire, CW12 3QG

Thursday Thirty 5th November 2026

8.30am – 10.00am
Majestical
New Life Church,
Danesford Community Centre,
West Road, Congleton,
Cheshire, CW12 4EY

Annual Christmas Lunch 4th December 2026

12.00pm – 5.00pm
Pecks Restaurant, Swan Bank,
Congleton, Cheshire, CW12 1JR

Christmas Thursday Thirty 10th December 2026

8.30am – 10.00am
The_Space, 35-37 High Street,
Congleton, Cheshire, CW12 1AX

Thursday Thirty 14th January 2027

8.30am – 10.00am
Available

Thursday Thirty 25th February 2027

8.30am – 10.00am
Available

Annual Business Awards 19th March 2027

6.30pm – 1.00am
De Vere Cranage Estate,
Byley Lane, Holmes Chapel,
Cheshire, CW4 8EW

Thursday Thirty 15th April 2027

8.30am – 10.00am
Available

If you would like to host a Thursday Thirty, and would like further information or to express your interest for 2027, please contact Liz at the Chamber - liz.longmore@eastcheshirechamber.co.uk

Events can be found on our website 'Events Page'
www.eastcheshirechamber.co.uk/events

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Thank you to our patrons for your continued support



Welcome From The Chief Executive

Welcome to the April 2026 Edition of the Chamber Magazine!

It has already been a dynamic and fast-moving start to the year, and we are delighted to bring you another edition of the Chamber Magazine as we continue to evolve and create even more opportunities for our members. There is a real sense of momentum building across the network, with new ideas, new connections, and plenty still to come. We are continuing to introduce new initiatives and refine what we offer.

Our Thursday Thirty networking events remain at the heart of that activity, continuing to grow in popularity and impact. These sessions are bringing businesses together from across the region, sparking meaningful conversations, fresh collaborations, and tangible opportunities.

One of the standout moments so far has been the 2026 Annual Business Awards, a brilliant celebration of the innovation, resilience, and success within our business community. The evening brought together an inspiring mix of businesses, partners, and sponsors, and we are incredibly proud of everyone who took part. For a full recap of the awards evening, take a look at pages 14-17.

We are preparing for our ever-popular Annual Golf Day, kindly sponsored by Ironmarket Risk, taking place on Wednesday 17th June at Vale Royal Abbey Golf Club. Full details can be found on page 7.

The ongoing fuel crisis continues to drive up energy and transport costs across the UK, placing significant pressure on businesses of all sizes. Rising fuel prices are increasing operating expenses, particularly for sectors reliant on logistics and manufacturing, while also contributing to wider inflation and reduced consumer spending.

As a result, many businesses are facing tighter margins, difficult pricing decisions, and ongoing uncertainty in an already challenging economic climate.

As always, we are here to support you - whether that is through international trade, business support, events, or opportunities to raise your profile. If you would like to get involved or feature in a future edition of the magazine, please do not hesitate to get in touch with myself or Liz.

Here is to a year of progress, opportunity, and stronger connections across our business community.

Jackie Randles
East Cheshire Chamber of Commerce



Welcome To Our New Members

The Chamber extends a very warm welcome to the following new members:



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Astbury Golf Club, ranked among Cheshire's top 20 courses, offers superb parkland golf, a welcoming community, a modern clubhouse and a new practice range, creating an ideal setting for members, visitors and local businesses to meet.

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www.circus-starr.org.uk

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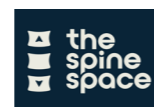


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The Spine Space

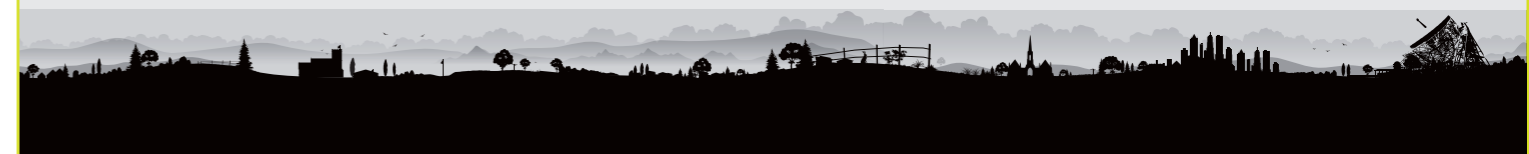
The Spine Space offers expert chiropractic and osteopathic care focused on personalised, hands-on treatment. Their patient-centred approach targets the root cause of pain, helping you move freely and maintain long-term health and wellbeing.

www.thespinespace.co.uk

Tel: 01260 711070
Unit 14 The Retreat, Congleton Market Quarter
31 Mill Street, Congleton, Cheshire, CW12 1AB

Interested in joining the East Cheshire Chamber of Commerce?

Please contact Liz for further information:
liz.longmore@eastcheshirechamber.co.uk





LUNCH AT PECKS

Pecks Restaurant provides an exceptional setting for corporate dining, offering a refined environment suitable for executive meetings, client engagements, and VIP hospitality.

Our carefully curated three-course set lunch menu, available Wednesday to Saturday between 12:00pm and 3:00pm, showcases seasonal ingredients prepared to the highest standard.

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CHAMBER ANNUAL Golf Day



VALE ROYAL ABBEY GOLF CLUB

The Annual Chamber Golf Day will take place on Wednesday 17th June 2026 from 10.00am onwards at Vale Royal Abbey Golf Club, Whitegate, Northwich, Cheshire, CW8 2BA.

- 10.00am - Registration and Breakfast
- 11.00am - 12.00pm - Putting Competition
- 12.30pm - 16.30pm - Golf Tournament
- 16.30pm - 17.30pm - Drinks Reception
- 17.30pm - Two-course Dinner and Prize giving

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ANNUAL CHAMBER BUSINESS

AWARDS

2027

FRIDAY 19TH MARCH | 6.45PM ONWARDS

De Vere Cranage Estate,
Byley Lane, Holmes Chapel, CW4 8EW



THE Big Lift

Help power The Big Lift

The Big Lift is a bold new initiative designed to bring businesses together to support lifesaving care.

By contributing to our match fund pot, your organisation will help double the value of community fundraising. Together, we have the opportunity to raise more than £100,000 to fund vital missions across our region.

It's a simple idea with powerful results and a clear way to demonstrate your commitment to communities across the North West.

Join us today as a Big Lift partner. Please get in touch with Danny on danny.daynes@nwairambulance.org.uk or 07738 498188.



It has finally arrived! Maybe not to loud cheers, but after many delays, amendments and redrafts, Making Tax Digital became **live** on **6th April**.

If you had a combined turnover of £50,000 or more from all your self-employed and property income in 2024/25 then this applies to you. Partnerships are excluded. The threshold is due to reduce to £20,000 by 2028/29 bringing more people into MTD.

What does this mean? It means that you will have to submit a return each quarter for each source of income from HMRC approved software. So, a sole trader with £40,000 of turnover and a rental property with

£20,000 of income, will be required to submit two returns each quarter. And we are talking turnover not profit! The quarters are the calendar quarters.

Will I need to get software for this? Yes and HMRC are not providing any free software. Most of the major software providers are gearing up for it but running the business will cost you more than previously, especially if your accountant is going to make the submissions for you.

What information will I need to submit? There are just three figures to provide. Income, expenses and profit. They have to be as accurate as possible.

Will I need to pay tax each quarter? Thankfully No! HMRC will just give you an estimate of any likely tax liability. The payment dates for tax will remain the same...*for now!*

The above is just a very brief overview of what is involved and it can get very complicated. You may wonder why this is being imposed on small businesses just now, especially when there is no change to the tax payment dates. HMRC have said they want information on a more regular basis than once a year for those affected, but you can make up your own minds... As always, if you need any more help with this please get in touch.

get in touch!



Celebrating International Women's Day at Beartown Brewery

In the lead-up to International Women's Day, Chamber members were delighted to take part in a special early celebration hosted by Beartown Brewery, a business well known not only for its craft beers, but also for its strong community focus and commitment to bringing people together.

While the official date fell on the 8th March, the brewing process meant celebrations began a little earlier, offering a unique and memorable way to mark the occasion. Guests were welcomed for a behind-the-scenes experience, gaining insight into the craft of brewing while also taking part in a day centred around connection, collaboration, and recognising the role of women in business.

A standout moment of the day came from Connie, a brewing student who was in the midst of completing her final exams, and whose passion and expertise were evident throughout. She led the creation of a bespoke beer, Smokeshow, from initial concept through to design, including the cask clip artwork. Connie also guided attendees through the brewing process, sharing her knowledge and encouraging a hands-on approach. Her confidence and achievement in what remains a traditionally male-dominated industry provided an inspiring example of the opportunities opening up for women across all sectors.



The event brought together a diverse group of women from across the Chamber network, creating a supportive and engaging environment for sharing experiences, building relationships, and celebrating success. Alongside the brewing activities, guests enjoyed a relaxed lunch, sampling a selection of beers and taking part in a light-hearted quiz, adding to the sense of community and enjoyment throughout the day.

Events such as this highlight the ongoing importance of International Women's Day - not only as a moment to celebrate achievements, but also as an opportunity to recognise progress, encourage inclusion, and support the continued growth of women in business. Creating spaces where women can connect, learn from one another, and be inspired remains an essential part of building a stronger, more diverse business community.

The Chamber extends its thanks to Joe Manning, Ella Burton, and the wider team at Beartown Brewery for hosting such a thoughtful and engaging event, and for their commitment to championing women in business.



BEARTOWN
53°09'49.8"N 2°12'18.0"W



A Message from Franklyn

Everyone's future looks different but having a plan in place makes all the difference.

At Franklyn, we work with individuals, families and business owners to bring clarity and confidence to their financial decisions. Whether you're looking for help to grow your wealth, protect what matters most, or plan for the years ahead, we're here to support you every step of the way.

So you can focus on living today, knowing your future is taken care of.

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SJP Approved 21/04/2026



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11th June 2026

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2026 Business Conference

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To reserve your place, visit digital-cheshire.co.uk

11th June 2026
8:30am - 4:30pm | The Space, 35-37 High St, Congleton, CW12 1AX

SAS Daniels Debt Recovery Seminar: Top Tips and Event Success

In March, we hosted an engaging event with SAS Daniels, where attendees gained a practical and insightful look into the complexities of debt recovery and credit management. The session saw a brilliant turnout, reflecting a strong appetite among businesses to better understand how to protect themselves financially and respond effectively when issues arise. The level of engagement throughout the event was clear, with attendees contributing questions, sharing experiences, and taking part in meaningful discussions around real-world challenges.

We heard from Anna Sharp and Jodie Sumner, who shared valuable perspectives on the realities of managing debt, the challenges of chasing payments, and how quickly situations can escalate. Their insights reinforced just how important it is for businesses to remain vigilant at every stage of the customer journey - from initial onboarding and credit checks through to ongoing account management and recovery processes.

A key takeaway from the session was the importance of staying alert to early warning signs. What may initially seem like a minor delay or miscommunication can often signal deeper financial difficulties. By acting early and decisively, businesses can significantly improve their chances of recovery and reduce exposure to risk. Anna and Jodie highlighted that vigilance, consistency, and having robust processes in place are essential in preventing small issues from becoming major financial problems.

The presentation highlighted how even the smallest details can have a significant impact, both personally and in business and reinforced the importance of carrying out thorough due diligence to avoid potential risks. It also served as a reminder that strong internal processes, combined with timely professional advice, can make a significant difference to outcomes.



Jodie Sumner
Litigation & Dispute Resolution Executive
jodie.sumner@sasdaniels.co.uk
0161 475 7606

Top Tips for Successful Debt Recovery:

Act quickly - The older the debt, the harder (and more expensive) it becomes to recover. Don't wait.

Enforce your terms - If your payment terms allow you to stop supplying after non-payment - do it. Don't let the debt grow unnecessarily.

Document everything - Keep solid records of invoices, signed delivery notes, emails, contracts, and your standard terms and conditions.

Don't ignore red flags - Delayed communication, vague disputes, or contact from an insolvency practitioner should be treated seriously and acted on promptly.

Follow the legal process - Stick to the pre-action protocols, issue proceedings where necessary, and ensure your actions are compliant and documented.

Get professional advice early - Involving a solicitor or recovery specialist at the right time can prevent costly mistakes and improve your recovery chances.

In conclusion: Speed, strategy and structure win the debt recovery game.

For advice and guidance, contact Jodie Sumner and the team at SAS Daniels.





Business Awards 2026

The East Cheshire Chamber of Commerce Annual Business Awards returned in style on Friday 20th March 2026, held at the elegant De Vere Cranage Estate, delivering another standout evening of celebration. Chamber Members, Sponsors and Nominees gathered to recognise and applaud the exceptional achievements of businesses across the region.

Guests were warmly welcomed on arrival by Verity Deaville and Wayne Linaker of Deaville & Co, while Adam Schofield from Cheshire Photography Co. captured the evening's opening moments. A Champagne Reception, kindly provided by De Vere Cranage Estate, set a sophisticated and celebratory tone.

Chief Executive Jackie Randles opened proceedings, extending her thanks to the event's sponsors for their continued support. The evening was expertly compered by Tim McCloud of TMC Strategic Communications, Rebecca Medcalf from Talbots Law, and Jackie Randles, who together ensured a polished and engaging programme throughout.

“Congratulations on the awards night being such a success – we all really enjoyed the evening.”

Paul Woolliscroft, Talbots Law

Following a three-course dinner, the much-anticipated Awards Ceremony got underway. Winners were presented with a glass trophy, certificate, and a pack of Peak Wildlife Beartown Beers, from Beartown Brewery.

The first accolade of the evening, Charity of the Year, was presented by Julie Woolmer of Franklyn to Danny Daynes and Adrian Steinkamp from North West Air Ambulance, named the Chamber's Charity of the Year for 2026/27.

The Young Person of the Year Award proved one of the evening's most inspiring highlights. Judge, Jessica Peake of TMC Strategic Communications addressed the audience before revealing the winner:



Chief Executive recognised for incredible dedication to Chamber

“Over the course of seven days, I had the genuine pleasure of meeting eight exceptional young people from across Cheshire East who, without doubt, have left a lasting impression and reshaped how I view our next generation.”

Without exception, every nominee was confident, compelling, caring, consistent, and utterly inspiring. From what I have seen, our business community should be very optimistic about the future, because it is clearly in very capable hands. Each of these nominees has set an outstanding benchmark for what young talent looks like today.’

Following a closely contested process, the award was presented to Wendy Elwood of Rossendale Trust.

“Thank you for a great night on Friday at Cranage, Andy, I and the wider Franklyn team really enjoyed ourselves.”

Charlotte Chatterton, Franklyn

The Excellence in Customer Service Award, a category that consistently attracts strong entries, was awarded to the team at Sienna's, presented by Paul Woolliscroft of Talbots Law.

The International Trade Award, returning by popular demand, recognised outstanding global business success. Presented by Jake Pear of Pear Hospitality, the award went to water treatment specialist's H2O Innovation.

The Contribution to the Community Award, now in its second year, again saw a high calibre of entries. Petty Pool Trust were named winners, with Kerry Shea of Everybody Health & Leisure presenting the award.

The Training & Development Award was awarded to DPC Accountants, recognised for placing people at the heart of their business. The award was presented by Steve Burns of Ironmarket Risk.

In the Leisure & Hospitality category, The Lion & Swan in Congleton took top honours, with Danielle Sullivan from Hammond McNulty presenting the award to Jake Pear and the team.

Heamar Company Limited were awarded The Employer of the Year Award which was presented by Chris Bentley from Harts Limited. The Professional Services Award followed, presented by Richard Morrell of De Vere Cranage Estate to Harts Accountants.



Prickly Peach Films
Small Business of the Year Award



Jackie Randles & Liz Longmore
from East Cheshire Chamber
of Commerce

The Small Business of the Year Award, which saw a record number of entries, was presented by Christine McClenaghan of Thornycroft Solicitors to Lauren Burnham and Emily Kirkham of Prickly Peach Films.

The evening's top accolade, Business of the Year, was presented by John Stewart from Senior Aerospace Bird Bellows to Franklyn, following what judges described as a particularly difficult decision.

“Their remarkable success is built on a foundation of outstanding customer service, achieved through investment in their amazing team of people, continuously enhanced by innovative initiatives, including a comprehensive streamlining program.”

Before the evening moved on to its fundraising activities, the Chamber board surprised Jackie Randles with a presentation of flowers and a commemorative vase in recognition of her ongoing dedication.

Tim McCloud said: *“Jackie's leadership, resilience, and commitment have made a lasting impact on so many businesses and individuals. She has been, and continues to be, a true inspiration.”*

The event concluded with an auction and raffle in aid of East Cheshire Hospice, raising an impressive £7,250 on the night and bringing the total for 2025/26 to £9,148.50.

The fundraising effort was supported by generous contributions from a range of organisations, including Astra Zeneca, Andrew Collier Photography, Agri-Ad, The Manor House Hotel & Spa, De Vere Cranage Estate, Goostrey Graveyards, Franklyn, and Pear Hospitality, alongside numerous raffle prize donors.

Celebrations continued into the early hours, bringing to a close a memorable evening dedicated to recognising business excellence across the region.



North West Air Ambulance
Charity of the Year Award 2026/27



Harts Limited
Professional Services Award



Petty Pool Trust
Contribution to the Community Award



Cheque presentation to
East Cheshire Hospice



H2O Innovation Ltd
International Trade Award



Wendy Elwood, Rossendale Trust
Young Person of the Year Award



Sienna's
Excellence in Customer Service Award



Franklyn
Business of the Year Award



“ Both Adrian and I had such a wonderful evening, you guys sure know how to put on an incredible event, so thank you for allowing us to be part of it.

Danny Daynes, North West Air Ambulance



The Lion & Swan
Leisure & Hospitality Award



“ We wanted to say a very big thank you for such a great awards evening on Friday! Everything felt so thoughtfully put together, the food was excellent and the Cranage team were also fantastic.

Verity Deaville, Deaville & Co.



Thank You To All Our Suppliers And Sponsors



DPC Accountants
Training & Development Award



Hearmar Company Limited
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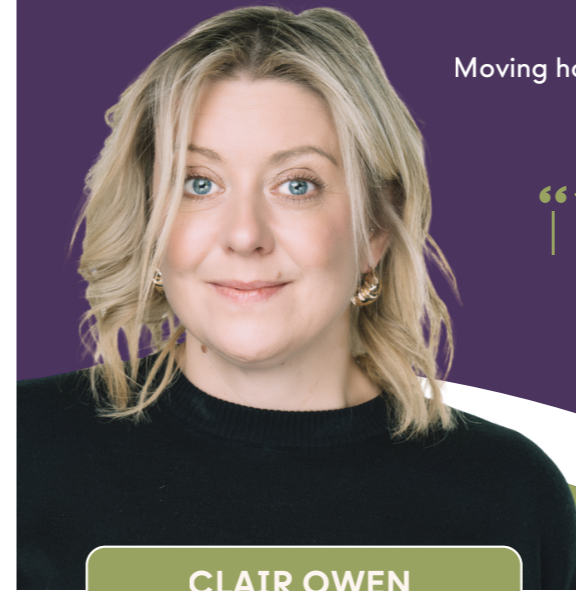
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DIRECTOR & HEAD OF SANDBACH RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY

Moving home is often described as one of life's most stressful experiences – but with the right support and guidance, it doesn't have to be.

“We have just completed our move with the help of Talbots Law and it was the easiest, least stressful law firm we have ever used when moving house. Nothing was too much trouble and all staff responded quickly to any questions we had.”



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INTRODUCING TALBOTS LAW'S NEW DIRECTOR AND HEAD OF SANDBACH PROPERTY DEPARTMENT:

Meet Clair Owen, Director & Head of Sandbach Property Team at Talbots Law, as she discusses her career, explores the property chain, and offers practical advice for buyers and sellers in the area.

What drew you to a career in conveyancing?

I knew from a relatively early age that I wanted to work in a legal environment. After I completed my law degree, I joined a local firm to gain some experience. I enjoyed my time in the conveyancing team so much that I decided I didn't want to do anything else, and fast forward 20 years later I'm still loving helping people with their properties.

Moving house is known for being stressful. Why is that?

There are so many components to a Conveyancing transaction that can cause stress; third-party delays, missing documents, or unexpected queries from lenders or local authorities. My job is to anticipate those bumps before they become stressful, and keep the chain moving.

Sandbach has a unique property market. What should local buyers and sellers know?

Sandbach has a mix of period homes and modern developments, and that can sometimes lead to complications, especially with older properties that need additional searches or checks. Buyers here should always consider the need for local authority searches and allow time to make appropriate enquiries. Sellers, on the other hand, should always

ensure title deeds and property documentation are accurate and up to date.

What's one quirky or memorable case you'll never forget?

Having previously worked with developers, I'm used to a fast-paced environment, but even I was taken aback when I was asked to complete on a property less than 48 hours after receiving the initial instruction... we managed it though! This is most definitely an exception rather than the rule though!

How does Talbots Law approach conveyancing differently?

We combine national legal expertise with a localised, service, so every client knows exactly what to expect. As "Conveyancing Firm of the Year", we put clients first. We understand the Sandbach community – it's not just about completing the transaction, but also being there when clients need us, both in person and digitally.

What's a common misconception people have when buying or selling a property?

It's fair to say there are lots of misconceptions, but from my experience one of the most common is that lawyers just 'delay' the conveyancing process. I think this often comes from a breakdown in communication between conveyancers and the chain. We are doing a really important job for our clients, but things aren't always straightforward and problems can arise. The majority of people may only move house a few times over the course of their whole lives, so it is an

unfamiliar process to them. There can be periods of time where there is no update, and I think it can be assumed that no news means nothing is being done. This is why communication is something I am passionate about with my team and the people that we help – I can't always make a move happen in the timescale people would like, but I will always ensure clients are kept up to date on what is happening – even if things are progressing slowly.

Finally, do you have any personal tips for moving day?

I think everyone says this but always have the kettle (& wine) somewhere easily accessible! It can be a long day, particularly if you are in a chain, and refreshments will definitely be needed. When I have moved house, I also like to keep a box of useful things in my car separate from all of the other boxes, containing things like a phone charger, scissors, first aid kit that might be needed. I also pack an overnight bag so I'm not having to unpack lots of boxes on that first night just to find toothbrushes!! Lastly, label your boxes clearly... it will make life so much easier for you or your movers and reduce the risk of anything precious being mistaken for rubbish!

At Talbots Law, we're committed to making your move as smooth as possible. As "Conveyancing Firm of the Year" for the Midlands 2026, your move is in safe hands with Clair Owen leading the Conveyancing team here in Sandbach. Joining from a highly respected firm, Clair brings local knowledge, expert legal guidance and a genuinely personal approach – proving that, with the right people by your side, moving home doesn't have to be stressful.

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Upcoming Thursday Thirty's in 2026

For further details please contact
liz.longmore@eastcheshirechamber.co.uk



21st May 2026
08.30am – 10.00am
North West Air Ambulance



2nd July 2026
08.30am – 10.00am
Chaffinch



13th August 2026
08.30am – 10.00am
Luxury Hub



3rd September 2026
08.30am – 10.00am
Talbots Law

majestical.

5th November 2026
08.30am – 10.00am
Majestical



24th September 2026
08.30am – 10.00am
Petty Pool Trust

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Thursday Thirty Reports



Our Thursday Thirty networking events have continued to grow in popularity, providing valuable opportunities for members to connect, share insights, and build meaningful relationships. Over the past few months, we have seen a range of well-attended and engaging events, each offering something unique for those involved.

We rounded off 2025 in style in December with our final Thursday Thirty of the year. Hosted at The Wheatsheaf, the event was kindly sponsored by Andrew Pear and Jake Pear of Pear Hospitality in support of My CWA (Cheshire Without Abuse). Members gathered on The Terrace for an enjoyable morning of networking, followed by an inspiring talk from Helen Mitchell, who shared more about the charity's vital work across Cheshire. Her insights into the support services provided were both thought-provoking and warmly received by all in attendance.

Our first event of 2026 took place in January at The Lion & Swan in Congleton. It was a pleasure to welcome both familiar faces and new members. The session featured contributions from our hosts, IronMarket Risk and IronMarket Wealth, with Rob Heath, Ash Desai, and Stephen Burns offering valuable perspectives on the importance of managing both wealth and insurance. The morning was complemented by an excellent breakfast, with the oatcakes proving particularly popular among attendees.

In February, we were delighted to be hosted by Caudwell Children for a truly memorable session. With over 30 attendees, the event combined networking with an insightful and interactive discussion on neurodivergence, exploring how it can be better understood and supported within the workplace. Guests were also given a tour of the organisation's impressive facilities, making for an engaging and inspiring experience.

April saw Chamber Members DPC Accountants host another successful event, with a fantastic turnout and a lively atmosphere throughout. Attendees heard from Esther Hancock, who delivered an informative update on the latest developments in UK tax and highlighted key opportunities for businesses to consider.



As the year progresses, it is clear that Thursday Thirty continues to thrive, offering an accessible and valuable platform for all Chamber Members.

If you are interested in hosting a Thursday Thirty event in 2027, please contact Liz at the Chamber to discuss available dates and venue options.





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Beyond the Noise: Why the Next Strategic Move in Your Marketing is the Most Important

In the world of business, success is rarely the result of a single action. It is the cumulative effect of a well-considered sequence - a strategy that anticipates market shifts, understands the competitive landscape, and keeps a firm eye on long-term growth.

For many East Cheshire businesses, the digital environment has become increasingly crowded and complex. The traditional approach of making 'noise' through vanity metrics such as likes, shares, and clicks is no longer enough to guarantee a return on investment. Today's market requires a transition from reactive tactics to a proactive, strategic mindset.

Defining Your Identity

Every successful campaign begins with a strong foundation. In digital terms, your brand is your most vital asset. If your brand identity is weak or inconsistent, every subsequent marketing effort becomes vulnerable to being overlooked.

True branding goes beyond a logo or a colour palette; it is about building 'Brand Equity'. By uncovering your unique value proposition and articulating the 'why' behind your business, you create a shortcut in the customer's mind. A strong brand builds trust before a single word is spoken, turning casual observers into loyal advocates and making every pound spent more effective.

Your High-Performance Digital Hub

Think of your website as your digital headquarters. It is the only space online where your business has total control. In an era of fleeting attention spans, a website must be more than just an aesthetic brochure; it needs to work as a high-performance team member.

The modern customer journey prioritises a 'people-first' architecture. This means removing friction by minimising load times, ensuring seamless mobile browsing, and creating intuitive navigation. A website should not just be a destination; it should be a lead-generation engine that works 24/7 to provide a secure, fast, and professional platform for growth.

The Shift to AI and Authentic Search

The landscape of search is currently undergoing its most significant shift in decades. It is no longer sufficient to simply rank on the first page of Google. As AI tools change how information is consumed, businesses must aim to be the 'trusted answer' rather than just another listed link.

The future of SEO lies in mastering technical foundations while leaning heavily into E-E-A-T (Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness). This is the quality evaluation framework used by Google to determine which websites deserve to be seen by users. By focusing on these four pillars, you ensure your content provides genuine value and stands up to the scrutiny of modern search algorithms. In the age of AI, authenticity and reliable information are the new currencies of visibility.

Community Over Clutter

Social media is often viewed by busy professionals as a digital chore. However, when approached strategically, it becomes a modern storefront where your brand's personality comes to life. The goal is not to post for the sake of activity, but to be consistent, valuable, and human.

By moving away from 'talking at' an audience and toward starting genuine conversations, businesses can build a level of trust that standard advertising cannot reach. Whether positioning a director as a thought leader on LinkedIn or sharing your brand's story on Instagram, a vibrant social presence signals to the market that you are responsive, helpful, and worth doing business with.

The Power of Meaningful Content

In the 'Attention Economy', people are tired of being sold to, but they love being helped, and while content is the fuel for all digital activity it must be purposeful. High-impact assets whether deep-dive guides, infographics, or helpful blog posts should act as a library of value to your customers.

By using data to understand where your customers are facing challenges and then providing the solutions, you rise above the noise. At its core, marketing is about outmanoeuvring the competition through clarity and expertise, ensuring your business isn't just another choice in the market, but the obvious one.

Exclusive Member Offer

As proud members of the East Cheshire Chamber of Commerce, Chess Marketing is committed to supporting the local business community. We are currently offering fellow members a complimentary digital audit. To claim your audit or learn more about our strategic approach, contact the team directly on 01625 720324 or email hello@chess-marketing.com.



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Shaping Skills, Strengthening Business:

An LSIP Update

For many businesses across Cheshire & Warrington, finding and developing the right talent remains one of the biggest challenges to growth. The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is helping employers turn that challenge into an opportunity.

At its heart, the LSIP brings Cheshire & Warrington's businesses, educators and local leaders together to align skills with growth. By turning employer insight into action, the plan is helping to build a future-ready workforce, improve access to good jobs and ensure the region continues to thrive in a changing economy.

South & North Cheshire Chamber of Commerce leads this work as the designated Employer Representative Body for the area. Our role is to ensure that the voice of employers sits at the centre of how local skills and training provision evolves.

Turning Employer Insight into Action

Businesses across the region have recently contributed their views through surveys, consultations and sector discussions. These insights are helping build a clear picture of workforce challenges, skills gaps and future demand.

This evidence is already informing discussions with education and training providers, shaping how courses, apprenticeships and training programmes respond to the real needs of employers.

The next LSIP Report, due in summer 2026, will bring this intelligence together and set out updated priorities to support productivity, workforce development and economic growth across Cheshire & Warrington.

However, the LSIP is more than a report, it is an ongoing partnership between business and education. Employer insight is essential to ensuring skills development reflects what organisations need now and in the future.

Apprenticeship Levy Changes

Businesses should also be aware of changes to the apprenticeship levy coming into effect from 1 April.

While the reforms introduce greater flexibility in how levy funds can be used and transferred, they also shorten the timeframe for spending levy contributions. Funds will now need to be used within 12 months rather than the previous 24 months.

This means levy-paying employers will need to plan their levy use more actively. Funds that remain unspent after 12 months will expire and return to the Treasury.

One option is levy transfer, where businesses can share unused funds with other organisations, including SMEs and supply chain partners. This helps support apprenticeships locally while ensuring levy contributions are put to productive use.

The LSIP team can support levy-paying employers who want to explore transfer opportunities, helping connect organisations and ensure funding is used where it can have the greatest impact.



Supporting Local Skills and Talent

Businesses play a vital role in shaping the region's skills landscape. Your voice helps ensure training and workforce development meet local needs, strengthening both individual organisations and the wider business community.

By working together we can grow talent, address skills gaps and secure a stronger future for Cheshire & Warrington.

Get Involved

To find out more about the LSIP or discuss apprenticeship levy opportunities, contact the LSIP team:

LSIP@sccci.co.uk



What has changed in UK Tax this year, and how it affects you and your business

Following our recent Thirty Thursday with East Cheshire Chamber members, Esther Hancock explored the latest UK tax developments and, importantly, the opportunities they present for proactive and well-advised businesses.

While the tax landscape continues to evolve, the key takeaway is that those who plan ahead and stay informed are best placed to navigate the ever-changing tax arena. Although thresholds and allowances remain frozen which brings more businesses and individuals into higher tax brackets, this creates a clear incentive to review structures, optimise remuneration, and ensure tax efficiency is maintained.

For companies, corporation tax remains competitive for smaller profits, and while dividend taxation requires careful consideration, it also presents an opportunity to revisit how profits are extracted. Regular reviews can ensure business owners are making the most of available allowances and strategies.



Capital allowances continue to offer valuable reliefs, with measures such as full expensing and the £1 million Annual Investment Allowance supporting investment in growth. With some changes to rates and reliefs, thoughtful timing of capital expenditure can unlock significant tax advantages.

Planning for the future was another key theme. Whether considering succession, sale, or long-term growth, early planning allows business owners to structure effectively and maximise available reliefs, even as rules evolve. Similarly, with inheritance tax becoming more relevant, there are still meaningful opportunities to protect wealth with the right advice in place.

HMRC's move towards increased digitalisation, including Making Tax Digital for income tax from April 2026, reflects a broader shift towards real-time, data-driven reporting. For many businesses, this is a positive step - encouraging better record-keeping, improved visibility, and more informed decision-making.

Tax no longer can be a once-a-year exercise. It should be part of your ongoing business strategy. We're offering all Chamber members a free 30 minute Tax Health Check Review. Please contact us, quoting East Cheshire Chamber, and we'll do the rest.

DPC is a medium sized accountancy firm with offices in Stoke-On-Trent and Nottingham. We joined Sumer, a National accountancy firm in 2024, with a shared goal of championing SME clients.

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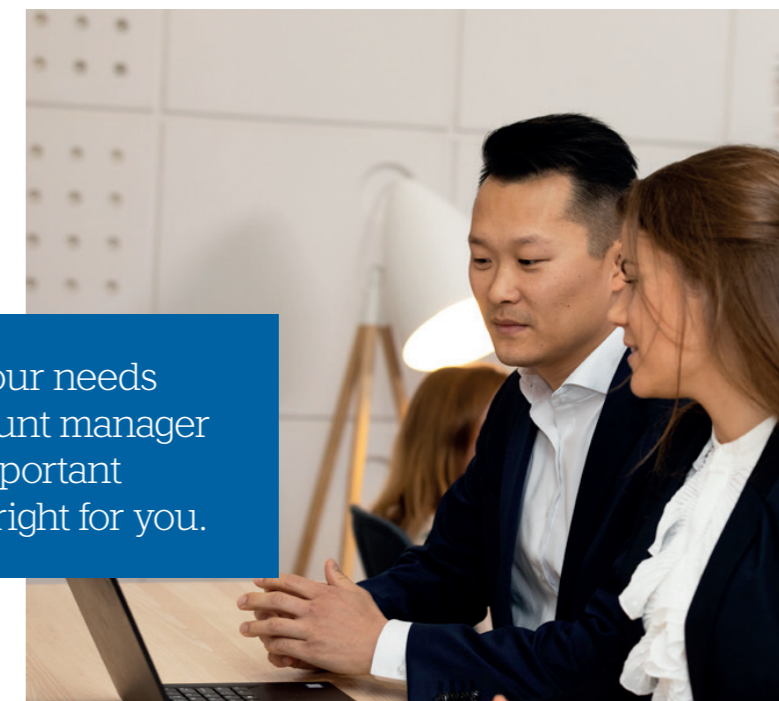
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- 13.00pm - Clay competition
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SJP Approved 15/04/2026