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A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

This will be the last full issue I work on as editor before I head off on maternity leave. It's been a joy and a privilege to bring you the stories, people, and places that make Leicester so remarkable. I'll be back before you know it, but in the meantime, I'm thrilled to hand the reins over to our brilliant senior journalist, Emily Miller, who will be stepping up as editor from our October–December issue. I know she'll do an incredible job, and I can't wait to see where she takes things next.

Sadly, it also means I'll be missing one of the biggest nights in the Niche calendar: the Niche Business Awards, taking place on September 5 with an extra dash of drama this year thanks to its Bollywood theme. I hope you have a fabulous night celebrating the amazing businesses and individuals who help our economy thrive.

What's very special about this issue is our front cover. It's immersive! If you're unsure what that means, hover your phone's camera over the front of Niche Magazine and you'll see what it's all about... our cover stars will come to life! Have a go and meet The Health Suite, a forward-thinking clinic changing the future of health as we know it. Alongside this, we feature a piece on the growing role of private healthcare.

In this issue, we take a trip to Welland Valley – the rural jewel in our county's crown – and explore the surge in summer sports interest, with tips on how to get involved locally after the excitement of watching live sporting events on TV.

You'll also find a fascinating human interest story about a local man who's sent spacecraft to the moon... from his parents' kitchen table! Plus, there's vital advice on grant funding for small businesses, along with plenty of updates from our logistics and manufacturing sectors. We also proudly include a section dedicated to Black-owned and Black-led businesses with insights into their professional and personal journeys.

And we're already talking about Christmas! We chat to the general manager of the Belmont Hotel about festive plans and hospitality trends heading into the colder months.

I hope you enjoy everything we've packed into this varied issue!



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Business

LEICESTERSHIRE News

LEICESTER'S NET-CARBON ZERO 'INNOVATION HUB' SECURES A LANDMARK TENANT

Dock 3-5 – Leicestershire's first net carbon-zero workspace development – has leased 17,077 sq ft – the entirety of its Dock 4 office building – to innovative retail marketing firm Array UK.

Array UK enhances the physical retail experience with complex merchandising solutions, supporting global brands such as L'Oreal, Maybelline, Givenchy and Boots. The firm currently employs 87 people in the UK and was previously based in Leicester's Friars Mill Business Centre. The move comes after international recognition of the firm's commitment to innovation and sustainability, with Array UK earning nearly 150 industry awards across Europe.

Anthony Gosse, CEO of Array Marketing, commented: "We are pleased to have found the right place to further strengthen our presence in the UK and EMEA [Europe, the Middle East and Africa]. Our Leicestershire hub plays a key role in driving sustainable and innovative retail solutions for our clients. In EMEA, our production facility in Warsaw, with its comprehensive cross-functional team, works hand in hand with our UK employees to deliver expertly crafted, high-quality solutions. This strategic setup allows us to continue shaping the future of retail experiences while reinforcing our commitment to sustainability and industry-leading innovation."

Leicester City Mayor Sir Peter Soulsby said: "I'm delighted to welcome this award-winning business to join the mix of other innovative businesses in our latest Dock workspace."

The company joins inaugural tenants Kazzoo IT Solutions, Somerbys IT, IN Focus ITS, Employee Zero, World Products, Translatr, Impact Venture, and The VoIP Shop, building out an impressive roster of occupants at Dock 3-5 and strengthening its community.

The Dock development is on track to house 120+ businesses and over 600 employees once fully occupied.

Since opening in October 2024, 3-5 has been a finalist for both a national ESG award and the ProCon Leicestershire Awards. The Dock estate is part of the Space City Enterprise Zone and is positioned alongside the National Space Centre and Leicester University's research and development campus.

Leicester-based firm Brackley Property Developments served as the development partner, with construction carried out by county-based Wilten Construction Ltd. Dock 3-5 is owned and run by Leicester City Council.

Crystal Carter, workspace development manager at Dock, added: "Achieving 40% occupancy in just six months is a testament to the market demand and quality of serviced workspace that we've built with this Dock extension. We're excited to welcome Array UK, a leader in retail marketing innovation, to our growing community."



Peter Chandler, Leicester City Council; Sally Robertson and Peter Deacon, Array Marketing; Sir Peter Soulsby, City Mayor; Lisa Thomas and Robert Shelvey, Array Marketing; Crystal Carter, Leicester City Council



Sagar Haval The Simulator Company; Aman Chawla, Healthcare & Life Sciences at DBT India; Louise Stock, Healthcare & Life Sciences Sector lead – DBT Midlands; and Mark Sankey, International Trade Adviser, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire & Rutland.

SIMULATION TECH FIRM HOSTS UK AND INDIAN REPRESENTATIVES FOR DEPARTMENT FOR BUSINESS AND TRADE

The Simulator Company, manufacturers of advanced circulatory therapy simulators, has welcomed representatives from the UK and Indian Department for Business and Trade (DBT) to its UK headquarters in Coalville, Leicestershire.

The DBT visit provided an opportunity to explore deeper international expansion in the healthcare and life sciences sector, with a particular focus on India and other key regions across the world.

The pioneering British enterprise exports its cutting-edge clinical simulators to hospitals, clinics and medical training providers around the world, including Europe, the USA, Australia, the Middle East and Asia.

Sagar Haval, Inventor, CEO and Managing Director of The Simulator Company, commented: “From the UK to critical care teams across the world, The Simulator Company remains committed to improving lives through high-impact, life-saving training solutions.

“The DBT team has been consistently supportive throughout our journey, and we’re grateful for their ongoing guidance and enthusiasm as we continue to scale and bring our next-generation simulation solutions to healthcare professionals around the globe.”

FREEMANS LEISURE PARK ACQUIRED BY INVESTMENT FIRM AEW UK REIT

AEW UK REIT plc has purchased Freemans Leisure Park for £11m. The 8.4-acre freehold site in the centre of Leicester occupies a prominent position close to the University of Leicester’s student campus, and totals 108,771 sq ft across five units along with service yards and 582 car parking spaces.

Commenting on the purchase, Laura Elkin, Portfolio Manager of AEW UK REIT said: “We are very pleased to have completed this acquisition, which returns the company to a fully invested position. Freemans Leisure Park offers an accretive income profile, as well as being defensively priced relative to surrounding alternative-use land values. We continue to actively monitor a pipeline of investments and remain optimistic about the attractive opportunities for investment in the current market.”

The property is fully let to a well-known group of national tenants including Odeon Cinemas Ltd, Mecca Bingo Ltd, Spirit Pub Company Ltd and Nando’s Chickenland Ltd, providing a weighted average unexpired lease term to expiry of greater than eight years.

Freemans Leisure Park presents various short-to-medium term asset management opportunities, including rental growth prospects through upcoming rent reviews; the possibility of an EV charging letting; and appraising alternative uses, such as hotel and restaurant, for areas of the site that have not already been developed.

The acquisition completes AEW UK REIT’s redeployment of sale proceeds from the disposal of Central Six Retail Park in Coventry. In seeking to deploy these proceeds, the company has also identified a pipeline of attractively priced potential investments available for purchase in the current market.



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East Midlands Chamber Newsroom

Your invitation to EMC President's Celebration of Success

DAWN ▶
WHITEMORE



East Midlands Chamber president Dawn Whitmore is looking forward to bringing together the region's business leaders for her 2025 Celebration of Success this autumn.

Taking place at The Renaissance at Kelham Hall, Nottinghamshire on Thursday, October 9, the event will be an opportunity for businesses to network with drinks and canapés and reflect on their successes so far in 2025.

Dr Jo Salter MBE, Britain's first female jet fighter pilot and someone who was voted one of the BBC's 50 most inspiring women in the world, will be guest speaking at the celebration. Rejected twice by the RAF – when women weren't allowed to fly – she was instrumental in changing the test policies for allowing new recruits into the air force. She eventually went on to help create a stronger and more modern RAF as the first female leader of an all-male squadron. The icing on the cake was when she was personally asked by Tom Cruise to the UK premiere of Top Gun Maverick as she was one of his inspirations for the film.

The evening will also include the announcement of the finalists for the three Chamber business awards covering Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. Each of

those named will go through to the three awards nights set to take place next February and March.

Chamber president Dawn said: "I'm really looking forward to hosting this year's event and to raising a glass to everyone that does so much to make this region so vibrant. It's an opportunity to share with members our achievements over the previous months – and plans for the coming months – and a chance for the region's business leaders to get together and network. Above all that, it's a chance for us all to celebrate the region as a whole and the Chamber's vital role within it."

To attend the President's Celebration of Success, visit the events page on emc-dnl.co.uk. For sponsorship opportunities, email the Chamber's head of commercial partnerships Caroline Lucy at caroline.lucy@emc-dnl.co.uk.

'Entrepreneurship and high growth go hand in hand'

An exclusive strategic partnership with the University of Derby centred on entrepreneurship and high growth has been entered into by East Midlands Chamber.

The collaboration will see the Chamber and university work together on areas such as decarbonisation, innovation, joint

bidding for public sector business support and development of funded programmes for firms in Derby and Derbyshire.

The university is headline partner of Generation Next – the Chamber-powered network for inspiring and building the confidence and connections of young professionals and future leaders in the 18-35 age group.

Chamber chief executive Scott

Knowles said: "Entrepreneurship and high growth go hand in hand, and as a region known for innovation, making and producing, it makes sense to turbocharge those strengths. I'm certain this new chapter of our collaboration will bring even greater benefit to Derby, Derbyshire and the wider East Midlands."

University of Derby Associate Provost of Industry Engagement Matt Snowden said: "We are proud to have a longstanding relationship with the Chamber and this new partnership is set to strengthen this even further."



SCOTT ▶
KNOWLES

‘Reset’ talks come with positive outcomes for British businesses



▲ LUCY GRANGER

The outcomes of the UK and EU ‘reset’ talks have been welcomed by East Midlands Chamber, which says the agreements made will help ease some of the challenges businesses have faced since Brexit.

The recent UK/EU summit concluded with a number of positive outcomes for British businesses including: the removal of routine checks on plant and animal products; sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) agreement on food and drink import and export; closer cooperation on emissions; British steel exports protected from EU tariffs; and use of fast track eGates at EU borders being opened to British passport holders.

Chamber head of international trade Lucy Granger said: “After such

a prolonged and frustrating time for firms importing or exporting goods with the EU, where moving even small amounts of goods has been prohibitively expensive and reams of unnecessary paperwork time-consuming, these agreements are a welcome step forward and pave the way for further improvements.

“Getting agreement and removing most routine checks on animal and plant products will make a big difference to businesses trading with the EU, as will the sanitary and phytosanitary deal that enables everything from burgers to sausages to be shipped without costs getting in the way.

“There’s still more that can be achieved – a return to the Pan Euro Mediterranean Convention would mean alignment on rules for components and raw materials, taking out another cost and an exemption on fiscal representation on VAT in the EU would remove another hurdle for businesses, so it’s essential the government build on this first stage of talks.”

The workforce of the future

A ‘comprehensive skills framework that can deliver the workforce of the future’ should be top of the list, according to the Chamber, in reaction to publication of the Government white paper on reducing migration into the UK.

New restrictions set out in the white paper include:

- Skilled worker visas restricted to graduates
- English language requirement for skilled workers and workers
- Qualifying period for UK settlement increased to 10 years
- Graduates limited to 18-month stay after completion of studies
- Closure of care worker visas

Chamber director of policy and insight Richard Blackmore said:

“Businesses always try to fill roles from their local and regional workforce first, but shortages in labour and skills continue to present a huge challenge.

“In the East Midlands, nearly seven out of 10 firms that tried to recruit struggled to find suitable candidates – at both skilled and non-skilled level – as evidenced in the Chamber’s Quarterly Economic Survey for the region.

“It’s clear that the level of qualified candidates for the roles available needs to increase, but how this is approached is critical.

“To deliver the workforce of the future, there must be a comprehensive skills framework that supports education and businesses to deliver on the demand; for example, delivering the reform to the Apprenticeship Levy to give business the much-needed



▲ RICHARD BLACKMORE

flexibility that mirrors the need of the workforce.

“It is also essential that changes don’t hamper business operation or particular sectors, such as care or construction, by closing the door on available talent that meets their needs at this time.”



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THE DISPATCH

YOUR INSIDE TRACK ON LEICESTER'S LOGISTICS AND MANUFACTURING MOVES

'MILESTONE MOMENT' FOR TRANSLINK EXPRESS LOGISTICS AS IT SECURES RECORD £5M CONTRACT

Translink Express Logistics Ltd has signed a landmark £5m, five-year contract with the Midlands' leading supplier of cleaning and hygiene solutions Ramon Hygiene Products. It reinforces a thriving 17-year partnership between the two Leicester-based businesses.

This major deal marks the largest in Translink's history and underlines the continued success of their long-term collaboration.

John Greenwood, Director at Ramon Hygiene, said: "We're proud to work with a trusted local partner like Translink Express. Their service has been exceptional, and this new agreement reflects the confidence we have in their continued support as we grow our business."

As part of the agreement, Translink will continue to provide nationwide warehousing and logistics support, handling over 100 pallets per day for

Ramon Hygiene as part of its broader operation, which sees the company manage more than 1,500 pallets daily across the UK.

Chris Hobbis, Director at Translink Express Logistics, added: "This contract is a milestone moment for us. Our investment in technology, scalable

warehousing, and reliable national delivery through the UK's most trusted pallet network 'Pallet Track' enables us to provide Ramon - and all our clients - with a complete end-to-end logistics solution that evolves with their needs. We're excited for the future of this partnership."



NEW MELTON MOWBRAY FACTORY TO CREATE 250 JOBS

Saint-Gobain UK has announced a major investment in the UK with plans for a new multi-million pound, low-carbon stone wool insulation manufacturing factory at the former Holwell Foundry Works in Melton Mowbray.

The new factory is targeted to begin production in 2027 and has the potential to deliver 250 new jobs when at full capacity.

The facility will invest in all-electric melting technology, helping customers reduce the embodied carbon of construction projects and

support Saint-Gobain's goal to be a net-zero carbon business by 2050 across scopes 1, 2 and 3.

It will initially produce 50,000 tonnes of high-performance stone wool insulation products under the Saint-Gobain Isover brand. The insulation,

made from abundant, mostly volcanic natural rock, will help meet increasing demand for sustainable construction solutions for new construction, the growing need to improve the insulation levels of existing housing and support the UK's net-zero carbon targets.





MOUNTPARK BREAKS GROUND ON GOLDEN TRIANGLE DEVELOPMENT

Mountpark has commenced construction of its new 1.46 million sq ft logistics park, Mountpark Hinckley, located in the heart of the UK's Golden Triangle (an area in the Midlands known for its high volume of distribution facilities).

The milestone follows Mountpark securing approval of a complex hybrid planning application by Rugby Borough Council, Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council and Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council. Detailed consent has

been granted for the development of a 491,926 sq ft unit, which has been pre-let to a major supermarket retailer.

Mountpark has appointed Winvic Construction to deliver the infrastructure and enabling works, as well as the vertical build of Unit 1, which is scheduled for practical completion in spring 2026. To support growing market demand, Mountpark has also submitted Reserved Matters Applications for the two remaining plots, which will offer 514,100 sq ft and 258,000 sq ft of high-spec logistics space respectively.

"This marks an exciting step forward, with construction now underway on site at Mountpark Hinckley, following over five years of dedicated work by our planning team to bring the development to fruition," said Tom Kilmister, Senior Development Director at Mountpark.

"This project reflects our commitment to unlocking new sites, our continued investment in the East Midlands' logistics infrastructure and our ability to deliver high-quality space that supports market demand for our customers. The pre-letting of Unit 1 is a testament to our customer-focused approach, working closely with occupiers to deliver tailored solutions that align with their operational needs and long-term growth ambitions."

Mountpark's infrastructure work

for the park will increase the height clearance of the A5 Watling Street bridge, addressing safety and reliability concerns for what was once dubbed 'Britain's most bashed bridge'. The site is strategically positioned alongside the A5 with excellent connectivity to the M69, M1 and M6 motorways.

"Mountpark Hinckley will remove the long-standing low clearance issue of the infamous Watling Street bridge, a well-known bottleneck for freight and logistics traffic," added Tom.

"By resolving this constraint, we will improve connectivity, reduce delays and enhance the overall efficiency of regional and national distribution networks. This investment will not only benefit businesses operating within the park, but also enhance the overall efficiency of the local and national road network."

It aims to prioritise responsible development, sustainability and community integration. Almost 50% of the site is expected to be allocated for green space, incorporating native hedgerows, trees, a new wetland, over 2.5km of footpaths, and a trim trail with outdoor fitness equipment. The properties will target EPC 'A+' ratings and BREEAM 'Excellent' accreditation, creating an attractive landscaped environment supporting diverse wildlife.

Units are planned to be available from September 2026.

Dean O'Sullivan, Managing Director of Saint-Gobain's Interior Solutions businesses said: "Light and sustainable construction solutions are growing in demand – driven by the need to reduce the impact of buildings on the environment and our own goals to meet our business' target to become a net-zero carbon business."

As part of the planned facility, the site will be regenerated, natural habitats will be restored and enhanced, and more than 100 local jobs created in the first phase.



TILLEY'S TAKE

Sue Tilley's manufacturing update

LOGISTICS IN MOTION: WHY THIS QUIET SECTOR IS CRITICAL TO BUSINESS SUCCESS

As someone who closely follows the work of the Institute of Couriers (IoC), I've seen first-hand how much the logistics sector has evolved, and how central it has become to the health and agility of UK business. From the corridors of Westminster to the streets of our cities, logistics is no longer just about getting goods from A to B. It's a dynamic, tech-enabled, sustainability-driven industry shaping the way the economy works.

Under the leadership of long-serving Chair Carl Lomas, the IoC has been a vocal and proactive force in championing innovation, sustainability, and professionalism across the courier and logistics sectors. In 2025, their work is more relevant than ever, particularly here in the Midlands where manufacturing, retail and digital industries rely on strong delivery networks to stay competitive.

Sustainable final-mile delivery

One of the most exciting developments is the rise of cargo bikes as a serious, scalable solution for urban logistics. The IoC has launched a national

working group to set out best practice for these vehicles, recognising their role in reducing emissions and congestion on the final mile of delivery. For businesses, this means faster and greener deliveries, which are critical as consumer expectations and climate commitments converge. And it's not just London; cities across the Midlands are seeing rapid growth in this area.

Smarter, leaner operations with AI

The logistics sector has also been quietly undergoing a digital revolution. AI and real-time data are being harnessed to optimise routes, manage inventory, and predict customer demand. The result is greater efficiency, lower emissions, and more responsive service.

This kind of intelligent infrastructure isn't just for the big players. Scalable solutions are now within reach for SMEs, levelling the playing field and enabling more agile supply chains

Decarbonising delivery

The IoC is also leading efforts to decarbonise logistics, supporting operators to transition to electric vehicles, explore alternative fuels, and invest in greener warehousing. This work is critical – not just for environmental reasons but also for commercial resilience – as sustainability becomes a key metric in procurement and brand trust.

Keeping pace with regulation

In the post-Brexit trading environment, regulation and compliance continue to evolve. The IoC's work in supporting the sector through complex customs changes is invaluable, particularly for firms operating across borders or navigating new international markets. Up-to-date, sector-specific guidance has never been more important.

Future-proof warehousing

Meanwhile, the concept of the 'warehouse of the future' is becoming a reality. With automation, energy efficiency and AI at the core, these facilities are enabling faster fulfilment and more flexible operations. For Midlands-based businesses, this represents a huge opportunity to rethink supply chains and reduce costs.

Logistics may not be the loudest voice in the room, but it's arguably the most essential. As Carl Lomas often says: "Without delivery, there is no economy." And as someone who follows this sector closely, I'd argue it's time we recognised logistics not as a background service, but as a critical enabler of business success.



ABOUT SUE

From founding 'Classy Rags' to driving regional economic development in Leicester and Leicestershire, Sue's journey has been fuelled by a passion for innovation, manufacturing, collaboration and sustainable growth. Sue recently won the Outstanding Senior Female Executive award and was named Overall Winner Inspirational Female Leader in the 2024 East Midlands Women's Awards. Find more at suetilleyassociates.co.uk.

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Our high client retention levels – many customers have been with us for decades – is testament to the quality and standard of work we deliver.”

Steve will continue to oversee the planning, strategy and growth of the business as CEO. He'll hand over its day-to-day running to new Managing Director Lewis Combey, who joined Quiet Storm as an apprentice, aged 17, in 2015.

Lewis Combey commented: “I'm delighted to be taking on this new challenge and steering Quiet Storm through the next exciting phase of our journey.

“We've built an exceptional team of talented individuals who share our commitment to innovation and excellence.

“Our bold new branding reflects this. We're aiming to build upon the strong foundation Steve and the founding team have established while bringing fresh perspectives to the business challenges that matter most to our clients right now.”

Amy Heath, who joined as Project Manager in 2018, takes on the role of Company Secretary. Several team members have also taken up share options, meaning the business is now 100% employee-owned.

Steve added: “The transition to 100% employee ownership was five years in the making. It creates a genuine stake for our team in the company's future success, which will directly benefit our clients through enhanced creativity, customer service and dedication.

“We've always been big investors in people. Our vision was to build a business that could run without me and my co-directors – my wife, Kathy and my brother, Phil. We've spent years bringing in the right people and developing their talents, and we're now in a position to hand over the reins to a new generation to inject some fresh energy, thinking and innovation.

“Our clients will still receive the same high levels of service, care and support they've come to expect from Quiet Storm as we continue to adapt to emerging technologies and deliver clever solutions that solve real-world business, sales and marketing problems.”

Quiet Storm enters a new era

THE NEW ERA BRINGS ABOUT A BOLD NEW BRAND, NEW MANAGING DIRECTOR AND NEW COMPANY STRUCTURE

One of the East Midlands' longest-established digital agencies, Quiet Storm Solutions, has unveiled a bold new brand, leadership team and ownership structure.

Quiet Storm founder Steve Megson said: “These changes mark the next exciting chapter in the Quiet Storm story and will secure the future of the business as we continue to develop and grow.”

The Coalville-based firm, established in 1987, designs and creates ecommerce platforms, websites, business management tools and digital engagement activities across all business sectors. Over the years, the multi-award-winning business has worked with clients including Breedon Group, Aggregate Industries, Culina Logistics, the International Paralympic Committee, LG Electronics, the Rail Delivery Group and the NHS.

“Our strengths have always been in digital innovation,” Steve added. “Our industry-leading team have a vast amount of knowledge and expertise in doing clever things with technology to solve our clients' problems and help them achieve their business objectives.

“ WE'VE SPENT YEARS BRINGING IN THE RIGHT PEOPLE AND DEVELOPING THEIR TALENTS, AND WE'RE NOW IN A POSITION TO HAND OVER THE REINS ”



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Leading with legacy

BLACK-OWNED BUSINESSES TRANSFORMING OUR COMMUNITIES

BLACK ENTREPRENEURS THROUGHOUT LEICESTERSHIRE ARE DRIVING CHANGE AND REWRITING THE RULES.

EMILY MILLER SPOTLIGHTS THEIR STORIES OF RESILIENCE, INNOVATION AND PURPOSE, AND CALLS FOR LASTING RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT

Across Leicestershire, Black-owned and Black-led businesses are driving change, sparking innovation and reshaping the economic and cultural fabric of our communities. In this special feature, we are proud to spotlight some of the inspiring individuals leading this charge. Their stories are about success in the face of adversity, vision, determination and the relentless pursuit of excellence.

With over 27,000 members, the Black community in Leicestershire forms a vital part of the region's social, cultural and economic identity. Black entrepreneurs contribute across every sector, from the creative industries to education, hospitality, wellness, tech, and consultancy. Yet despite these contributions, many continue to face systemic barriers: limited access to funding, unequal representation and deep-rooted stereotypes that too often underestimate their capabilities.

It's important to be honest about these challenges. For too long, Black-owned businesses have had to work harder to gain visibility, recognition and the same opportunities afforded to others. But within those struggles lies something powerful – resilience, resourcefulness and a determination to carve out space, not just to survive but to thrive.

The following pages are about recognising that strength. Rather than wait until Black History Month to share these stories, we've chosen to spotlight Black business excellence now, because these voices deserve to be heard year-round. What we've

uncovered are narratives that inform, inspire and provoke vital conversations about equity, inclusion and support in our local economy.

You'll read here about entrepreneurs who are building leadership consultancies rooted in cultural awareness and empathy, creatives who are reclaiming history through education and community engagement, founders developing playful and empowering tools for children of all backgrounds, and business owners who are blending heritage with hospitality to create meaningful, place-based experiences.

Each of these individuals brings something unique to the table, but what connects them all is a deep commitment to change. Many of them are leading movements. Their ventures reflect personal journeys, community values and bold ambitions to shift systems and rewrite the rules.

Importantly, this is not just a celebration, it's a call to action. As consumers, collaborators, funders and fellow entrepreneurs, we each have a role to play. Supporting Black-owned businesses is about recognising talent, investing in potential and working toward a more inclusive and equitable future for everyone in Leicestershire.

By listening to these voices, we begin to understand what's possible when barriers are removed and support is given. And in amplifying these stories, we honour not just their work, but their legacy – a legacy that's being built now, in real time, by people who are refusing to wait for permission to lead.

These are the changemakers shaping Leicester's next chapter...

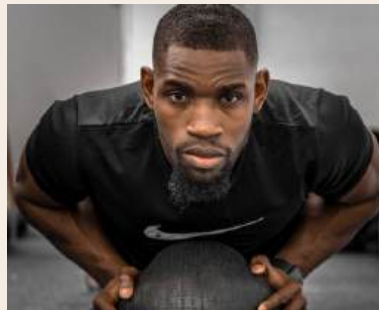
Voices from the community

Each of these perspectives captures an individual journey and a wider narrative about progress and perseverance. Together, they offer a compelling reminder that, with the right support and recognition, the future of Leicestershire's business landscape is brighter, more inclusive and full of potential.

NICHE: What support or initiatives would you like to see to help Black-owned businesses grow?

Lee Ndlovu, LAX Fitness:

"More education and practical knowledge. Everything I know, I've learned on the job – from taxes to cash flow management. I wasn't taught this anywhere, and that lack of access put me on the back foot. Kuljit Toor of Manor Wood Cars, has been such a mentor for me. He's a business owner of colour who has guided and inspired me from day one. He has taught me so much, changing my mindset and approach to business completely. His guidance helped me realise I didn't have to figure it all out



alone. I'd love to see more business training and support made accessible for Black entrepreneurs, especially initiatives that offer mentorship, community learning and real-life tools, not just theory. The hunger to succeed is there, we just need the right doors to open."



NICHE: How do you see the landscape for Black-owned and led businesses changing in the next five years?

Gina Samuel-

Richard, AGR Law:

"There's definitely a growing awareness and hunger for change. We're seeing more Black-owned firms breaking through – and we hope that momentum keeps building. However, we need more than visibility – we need access, support and real investment. The next five years could be transformative if the right structures are put in place."



NICHE: What advice would you give to aspiring entrepreneurs in Leicestershire?

Ashiedu Joel, Ashioma Consults:

"Network with

intent, have an open mind and attitude towards learning, growth and personal development. Never be afraid to be different and, last but not least, strive always to lead with compassion and engage with curious humility. These qualities are critical – not only in helping a business to stand out, but in building one that lasts. The journey isn't easy, especially for those of us from marginalised communities, but staying focused on your values will always bring you back to your purpose."



NICHE: What role has the local community played in your business journey?

Sanchez, Roots and Play:

"The local community

has been at the heart of everything. From the African Caribbean Centre's Empower Biz programme, to being invited to showcase my products at Leicester City FC's community day, the support has been immense. The visibility these opportunities have given me has been invaluable. It's about more than just business transactions, it's about people believing in your vision. The encouragement I've received has reminded me that building a business is as much about community connection as it is about strategy."



NICHE: How do you hope your business inspires the next generation of business leaders?

Tara Munroe, Opal22:

"I hope the young people who see our work understand that we're not so different from them. What we do at Opal22 is rooted in passion and belief. If they see that we can create spaces for Black history, run national exhibitions and still stay grounded in our community, they'll realise they can do it, too. The future is theirs to shape – and they should never underestimate their power to create change. Take up space. Be unapologetic. That's where the shift begins."

Black History Month in Leicester

Dates for your diary

This October, Leicester celebrates Black History Month with a vibrant programme led by Opal22. From live performances and creative workshops to heritage tours and powerful talks, the city will be buzzing with events that honour Black history, culture and identity

OCTOBER 1, 2025

Event: Highcross Black History Month Launch with Opal22

Location: Highcross Leicester, 5 Shires Lane, Leicester LE1 4AN

Price: Free

Format: Live performance & experience

Description: Kick off BHM with a stunning showcase of dance and poetry with a moving journey through history inside the Highcross.



OCTOBER 16, 2025

Event: Britain Rewritten: Decolonising the Archive

Location: Brookfield, University of Leicester, 266 London Road, Leicester LE2 1RQ

Price: £30

Format: Panel Discussion & Keynotes

Description: Emma Dabiri and Robert Beckford join a powerful conversation about colonial legacies in archives and how we reclaim hidden histories.

OCTOBER 23, 2025

Event: Pick Your Nose – Kids' Workshop

Location: Highcross Leicester, 5 Shires Lane, Leicester LE1 4AN

Price: Donations

Format: Creative Education Workshop

Description: Kids explore identity through African statues and make their own. Fun, hands-on and educational.

OCTOBER 25, 2025

Event: Leicester Black History Bus Tour

Location: Starts at African Caribbean Centre, Maidstone Road, Leicester LE2 0UA

Price: £25

Format: Bus Tour

Description: Ride through Leicester's Black heritage on a red double-decker, discovering untold stories and landmarks.

OCTOBER 31, 2025

Event: Black Star Mystery – Murder Mystery Train

Location: Great Central Railway, Great Central Road, Loughborough LE11 1RW

Price: £70

Format: Immersive Theatre with Dinner

Description: Solve a murder on a moving train, guided by Black icons from the past. Includes a three-course meal with cocktails available to purchase.

THROUGHOUT OCTOBER AT HIGHCROSS

Highcross Black History Trail

Pick up a booklet and follow a self-guided trail around the shopping centre to



uncover key moments in Black history. Complete it for a free goody bag!

Flashback Podcast

Tune in on Spotify, YouTube or your favourite platform for bold, insightful conversations exploring Black identity and heritage. ▶



The space for authentic Black and Brown creativity

In a city as vibrant and diverse as Leicester, the arts have a powerful opportunity to celebrate the full spectrum of voices that make up its community. Black and Brown creatives are bringing fresh, authentic perspectives that enrich the cultural landscape, without compromising on who they are.

The arts have long played a role in reflecting the identity of the communities they serve. In cities like ours, where cultural diversity shapes everyday life, there's increasing recognition of the need for creative spaces to truly represent all voices, particularly those that have historically been under-represented.

“THERE'S NO POINT TELLING OUR STORIES IF WE HAVE TO WATER THEM DOWN FOR A DIFFERENT AUDIENCE”

Tara Munroe, a cultural producer based in Leicester and founder of Opal22, has long championed this kind of expression. “I started Opal22 because there was a real need for an authentic organisation that could not only be part of the community, but also hold its own within mainstream arts and heritage spaces,” she says. Her experience working in the museum sector revealed a noticeable gap in

representation. “There weren't many people who looked like me talking about Black history.”

What's emerging across the UK – and in Leicester particularly – is a desire for cultural work that speaks both honestly and specifically. “There's no point telling our stories if we have to water them down for a different audience,” she adds. “Authentic expression through art is powerful, and we won't compromise on that.”

This approach has seen a growing appetite for projects rooted in real community narratives. From exhibitions exploring complex social histories to events co-created by the communities which they represent, there's an ongoing push to widen the lens through which culture is explored and valued. National interest in projects like *Casta: The Origins of Caste* and the response to recently held creative conferences show that there is an audience and a need for these stories.

However, while the creative ambition is strong, practical challenges remain. Long-term funding is often uncertain, and many community-rooted projects rely on a patchwork of support from grants, volunteers and occasional partnerships. Events like Opal22's Windrush Tea Party, much loved by local residents, don't always receive the funding they need.

There's growing discussion about how institutions and businesses can engage meaningfully. Rather than



▲ TARA MUNROE

symbolic support, some are calling for tangible investment in the kind of work that builds cultural equity. “Supporting initiatives like these isn't about ticking a box,” Tara reflects. “It's about recognising the value of lived experience and giving it space to flourish.”

What's clear is that Black and Brown creatives are not waiting for permission. Across the UK, they are building networks, creating platforms and shaping narratives that reflect their realities. The question now is how communities, cultural organisations and funding bodies respond – not just in words, but in action. Speak to Tara about funding on 0116 248 7196.

No seat at the table?

These women built their own

Shut out by a system where prejudice remained, Gina Samuel-Richards and Ruth Goward founded AGR Law, a firm where empathy leads, representation matters and Black women are firmly at the table. When Gina and Ruth talk about law, they don't speak in corporate code. They speak in truth. About people. Pain. Power. And about the radical act of being seen.

Before AGR Law existed, they were seasoned professionals, talented and respected, but always kept just outside the inner circle.

"We'd hit that invisible wall," says

“A TABLE OF BLACK LAWYERS AT AN EVENT OFTEN GETS DOUBLE TAKES. A TABLE OF WHITE LAWYERS RARELY DOES. IT'S A QUIET REMINDER OF THE WORK STILL TO DO”

Gina. "You bring results, show up, work hard, but you're still not invited to the table. It wasn't overt. It was just always... there."

For Black women in law, that sense of exclusion isn't rare. But it is exhausting, the pair say. So, in 2017, they stopped asking for permission and created AGR Law in Leicester, and have since opened a branch in Northampton. It's a firm built on fairness, empathy and authenticity, and welcomes all who shared their values. "We made our own table – and we pulled up more chairs," Ruth adds.

AGR Law was more than a business. It was a declaration. A space where values weren't just slogans, but everyday standards.

"We wanted to build the kind of law firm we'd have trusted during our own hardest times, and that we had always wanted to provide to our clients when we worked for other firms," says Gina. "Human. Accessible. Real."

Their approach struck a chord. Amongst other awards and recognitions, they've since been recognised as Small Law Firm of the Year and shortlisted for awards by the Law Society and Business Masters. But it hasn't come easy.

Funding was tough. Support was limited. And the scrutiny – relentless. Gina explains: "We didn't have financial backing or investors. We had spreadsheets, grit and each other."

And yet, some differences in perception remain. As Ruth gently points out: "A table of Black lawyers at an event often gets double takes. A table of white lawyers rarely does. It's a quiet reminder of the work still to do."

But instead of shrinking, they show up and they mentor young people. "If someone had told us early on that we could lead our own firm, like we tell our team and young lawyers, we'd have got here faster. So now we're that voice for others," Gina says.

They credit leaders like Velma Ferdinand, being one of, if not the first Black woman to own her own law firm in Leicester and I. Stephanie Boyce, the Law Society's first Black President, as key inspirations. But they're also blazing their own trail.

"Our goal is to grow. More services, more outreach, more mentoring, but never at the cost of our values," explains Ruth.



▲ GINA SAMUEL-RICHARDS



▲ RUTH GOWARD

Gina and Ruth didn't just walk away from a system that held them back. They reimagined it. In doing so, they've created a legacy where more Black women don't just practise law, they lead it.

To find out more about the law firm with no glass ceilings, visit agrlaw.co.uk

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HE'S DEVELOPED GLOBAL TELESCOPE INSTRUMENTATION, SUPPORTED JAPANESE LUNAR LANDINGS AND DIRECTED NASA OPERATIONS FROM A FLYING TELESCOPE. YET NOT ALL OF DR SAM RICHARDS' MOST DIFFICULT MISSIONS TOOK PLACE ON THE CELESTIAL STAGE. ONE UNFOLDED WITHIN HIMSELF WORDS BY EMILY MILLER

“ I WAS LITERALLY SENDING SPACECRAFT TO THE MOON FROM MY PARENTS' COUCH

The Founder and Director of Meridian Space Command, now calls Leicester his home. His interest in space began while growing up in a small Cornish village, inspired by his grandfather's old science books. A PhD in astrophysics followed, then leadership roles in Australia, the US, and Japan. By his 30s, he was directing missions for NASA's SOFIA observatory and supporting lunar operations across continents with ispace. But at the height of his international career, his health began to falter.

Diagnosed with Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (PSC; a rare and incurable liver disease) in his late teens, his condition deteriorated rapidly in recent years. "I went from chasing the stars to struggling to get out of bed and get through the day," he recalls. "It felt like the life clock was ticking down."

Returning to the UK wasn't exactly planned, but it was essential. Immensely supported by his loving wife, he moved in with his parents in Leicester in 2022, quietly battling a disease few understood, while still coordinating space missions from the living room. "I was literally sending spacecraft to the Moon from my parents' couch," he laughs.

It took until April 2025 for Sam to receive a life-extending gift: a new liver from a living donor dear to him. It

changed everything. "The transplant didn't just save my life. The clock went from ticking down to ticking up."

Sam continues to lead his elite consultancy from its base at Space Park Leicester, supporting a wide range of global clients, from interplanetary missions and hypersonic platforms to home-compute, e-mobility, and agri-tech innovation. While his reach is international, his focus is on building systems that are sovereign, resilient, and future-ready.

"Space isn't about astronauts and billionaires anymore, it's about food systems, logistics, national security, and climate and disaster resilience. My job is to make that infrastructure viable, sovereign, and accessible to all."

Additionally, he supports founders tackling everyday challenges with the same systems thinking, rigour, and swift execution used in space exploration.

And while his focus remains technical, his experience with PSC has added something else to the mission. "In space we chase the extraordinary, but surviving this reminded me how powerful the ordinary can be," Sam says.

Between mission planning and mentoring founders, he's found time to reflect on what it means to truly recover – not just physically, but with renewed direction.

"I may well have worked on missions that go beyond Earth, but this was the one that brought me back to life".

To learn more about PSC or register as an organ donor, visit pscsupport.org.uk and organidonation.nhs.uk, and to follow Sam's missions, visit meridianspacecommand.com.



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The power of podcasting

HOW ARE WE HERE IN THE EAST MIDLANDS MAKING SURE WE ARE HARNESSING THE POWER OF PODCASTING? NICHE JOURNALIST **EMILY MILLER** FINDS OUT



With over 21 million regular podcast listeners in the UK, and audio content now a staple in business and creative strategy, podcasting is no longer something to dabble in: it's essential. Harborough Innovation Centre is tapping into this surge with a new professional podcast room, giving local voices the tools to be heard on a national stage. Just off the A6, the business hub is quietly supporting a wide mix of local businesses. Its newest addition, however, reflects a growing shift toward digital communication: a podcast room designed to help people explore and share their ideas through audio.

"We wanted it to feel accessible without losing that sense of professionalism," said Carly Rose, Operations Manager at the centre. "Some will come in with a clear goal; others might just want to explore. Either way, the space is there to support those conversations."

The new room features sound-

treated walls, high-quality microphones and headphones, and the ability to live stream or pre-record content. It's designed to cater to a broad spectrum of users, from first-time creators to seasoned communicators. And it's not just about the kit. Free expert-led training sessions throughout June will help people feel confident stepping behind the mic, while ongoing technical and creative support will ensure quality output.

There's an intentional simplicity; everything from the layout to the booking system is designed to remove barriers. The Innovation Centre also has its own on-site café, Ground Up, the ideal place where ideas can be warmed up with a coffee before going live on air.

The podcast room isn't reserved for 'tech people' or media professionals. It's open to anyone with something to say, businesses looking to boost their marketing with audio content, such as interviews, thought leadership, community groups sharing local updates, or individuals with a passion project they want to get off the ground.

"Podcasting isn't just a trend, it's a way to build trust, share stories, and connect with your audience in a really human way. Having a space like this on our doorstep here in the East Midlands? It changes the game."

“ SOME WILL COME IN WITH A CLEAR GOAL; OTHERS MIGHT JUST WANT TO EXPLORE ”

The initiative aligns with the centre's wider mission to nurture innovation and collaboration across the local area. Harborough Innovation Centre has long championed fresh thinking and community-minded growth, and this new facility is a natural evolution of that ethos.

Whether you are a solo creator with a powerful story or a business ready to explore thought leadership through audio and video, the opportunity is now here, and it's right in the heart of Harborough Innovation Centre in Market Harborough.

Visit harborough-ic.co.uk for more information or to book a taster session.



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Leicestershire businesses can secure grant funding to fuel growth

LOCAL ORGANISATIONS ARE BEING OFFERED VALUABLE GUIDANCE THROUGH FULLY FUNDED SUPPORT DESIGNED TO HELP OVERCOME GROWTH BARRIERS AND INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY **WORDS BY KERRY SMITH**

Three unique business growth programmes aim to inject fresh momentum into local enterprises by combining expert advice and diagnostic tools. Delivered by Exemplas, which is known for designing, delivering and managing business support programmes for SMEs across the country, participation in the programmes is completely free.

The three Exemplas-run programmes are the Leicester Productivity Programme, funded by Leicester City Council; and two LBAS Scale-Up Programmes, funded by Charnwood Borough Council and North West Leicestershire District Council.

Businesses can receive up to £2,000 in match-funded grants to

hire an expert, coach, or consultant to implement their business improvement strategy through the LBAS Scale-Up Programme in Charnwood and North West Leicestershire.

Additionally, Leicester City-based businesses can access up to £2,000 in grant funding for consultancy or capital expenditure to drive productivity enhancements through the Leicester Productivity Programme.

Participating businesses will undergo a comprehensive assessment process to evaluate their ambition, capacity, and potential for growth. Exemplas programme leaders then highlight the key areas in the business where improvements can be implemented by leveraging an industry-leading growth diagnostic tool rooted in academic research.

Mark Taft, Scale-Up Manager at Exemplas, leading on these programmes, said: "I bring over 30 years of experience working with entrepreneurs and scaling businesses, working on strategy, account management, and business development to support SMEs across Leicestershire. My role focuses on identifying businesses with growth ambitions, diagnosing critical barriers, and collaboratively developing actionable growth plans. I help business owners overcome challenges and accelerate sustainable growth by leveraging funding opportunities and engaging external expertise."

Backing Exemplas' approach, Mark Taft added: "Our purpose is making a positive difference to businesses and communities through our people and the work we do."

Participation in these programmes is completely free for SMEs, with the only requirement being that businesses must operate within the Leicester City, Charnwood Borough, or Northwest Leicestershire District.

To take advantage of one of the funding available to help your business scale effectively through one of the three programmes available, register your interest at lbsas.online or leicesterproductivity.co.uk.



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What happens to inheritance on divorce?



GAYLE ROWLEY ▲

MANY ASSUME THAT INHERITANCE AUTOMATICALLY STAYS WITH THE PERSON WHO RECEIVED IT. HOWEVER, THIS IS NOT ALWAYS THE CASE. **GAYLE ROWLEY**, PARTNER & SOLICITOR AT NELSONS, EXPLAINS THE COMPLEX PROCESS OF DIVIDING FINANCES WHEN A MARRIAGE ENDS, ESPECIALLY WHEN INHERITANCES ARE INVOLVED

In divorce, the court's first consideration is the needs of both parties and any children. Whilst inheritance is often treated as separate from matrimonial assets, this depends on how it has been treated during the marriage and whether the parties' needs can be met without using it.

Ringfencing inheritance

If an inheritance has been kept separate, for example, in a personal savings account or property held solely in the recipient's name, it may be easier to argue it should be excluded from the matrimonial pot, so long as there are sufficient 'matrimonial' assets to meet both spouses' needs. However, if the asset has been mingled with marital property (such as using an inheritance to buy a family home, paying off mortgages, or using it for family expenses), it can become harder to claim it as 'non-matrimonial.'

Needs trump everything

Even if an asset is considered non-matrimonial, the court can still order that it be taken into consideration if that is necessary to meet the housing and income needs of both spouses and any children. For example, if one spouse has received a substantial

inheritance and the other assets are limited, the court may consider it fair that the parties use some of the inherited assets to meet their needs.

How to protect inheritance on divorce

Pre-nuptial or post-nuptial agreements:

These agreements can set out how inheritance should be treated on divorce. Whilst such agreements are not legally binding, they can be upheld by the court if entered into correctly.

Keeping assets separate: Avoid mixing inherited assets with joint funds where possible.

Clear evidence: Keep documentation showing the source of the inheritance and how it was used. This can help prove that the inheritance should be considered non-matrimonial.

In summary

The court generally won't invade inherited property unless there are insufficient assets to meet the parties' needs. A court has a wide discretion when it comes to considering how inheritance should be treated on divorce, and each case will be determined depending on its facts.

NEED ADVICE?

Should you need advice on family law matters contact Gayle on 0116 214 6692 or email gayle.rowley@nelsonslaw.co.uk

How restructuring your business can protect your valuable assets

NICK ►
WRIGHT



PROTECTING BUSINESS ASSETS IS SOMETHING MANY SUCCESSFUL OWNER-MANAGED BUSINESSES OFTEN OVERLOOK. **NICK WRIGHT**, HEAD OF CORPORATE TAX WITH JERROMS MILLER SPECIALIST TAX, EXPLAINS THAT A SIMPLE RESTRUCTURE MIGHT BE ALL THAT'S NEEDED

Leaving cash and other valuable assets in the trading company – so it's all in one pot – can mean greater exposure to commercial risk, if things go wrong and the business is being sued, for example. A simple business restructure, though, can provide the protection you need as well as certain tax advantages.

With interest rates as they are, as an owner-managed business (OMB), you won't want to take money out of your company savings just to pay dividends, so you leave it in the trading company. Or, you take cash out of the business and put it into property or stocks and shares instead.

But by doing so, the problem you're now left with is a business that's not a trading company. This means when you sell, you won't qualify for Inheritance Tax business relief or BADR – Business Asset Disposal Relief – which even at the new rate of 14% is worth having. The immediate issue, though, is your trading status as your assets are all on the table, unprotected.

An easy solution to this is to create a holding company for your assets, with the trading company sitting underneath it. That way, if someone wants to sue you, your assets are safe as those pursuing you can only go down the chain, not up (except in exceptional circumstances such as where serious fraud is suspected).

Share-for-share exchange

With a share-for-share exchange, you can form a holding company without tax implications, but you should write to HMRC first to get clearance. HMRC will see that you want to transfer your shares for genuine commercial reasons; not to avoid paying tax. Where share exchanges are concerned, HMRC must respond within 30 days, so the whole transaction shouldn't take longer than two to three months. Assets you're looking to protect can be transferred to the new holding company free of tax, as group reliefs should be available. And, when you come to sell your business, you'll be able to sell just the subsidiary (possibly tax free as well) and retain the cash in the holding company, or a further restructure to separate the trading company may be possible prior to sale.

“PROTECTING VALUABLE ASSETS IS AN ONGOING CONCERN... EVEN FOR SOLE SHAREHOLDERS WHOSE RENTAL PORTFOLIOS ARE MAKING A DECENT PROFIT”

Setting up a group structure also gives you the opportunity to consider which assets you want to hold within the group and which you'd rather hold independently. Non-trading assets – such as a rental property a prospective buyer is unlikely to want – might be better off held outside the group, as it could delay a sale.

Protecting valuable assets is an ongoing concern for any business, even for sole shareholders whose rental portfolios are making a decent profit. The obvious course of action would be to establish a holding company from day one – but if you haven't done that, it's never too late to restructure.

NEED HELP? Get in touch with Nick on nickwright@jerromsmiller.co.uk or call 0121 693 5000.

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Innovation Pays: R&D Tax Relief Opportunities

WITH MAJOR R&D TAX RELIEF REFORMS LOOMING IN 2026, TIME IS RUNNING OUT FOR BUSINESSES TO MAXIMISE THEIR CLAIMS UNDER THE CURRENT RULES. SHAZIN TAYUB, DIRECTOR AT HAINES WATTS LEICESTER EXPLAINS WHAT'S CHANGING, WHO STILL QUALIFIES, AND HOW TO UNLOCK THE FULL VALUE OF INNOVATION

With sweeping changes to Research & Development (R&D) tax relief on the horizon in 2026, now is the time for innovative businesses to take stock, take action, and maximise their claims before the window begins to close. Whether you're developing new products, advancing software, engineering solutions or manufacturing processes, R&D tax relief remains one of the most powerful (and underused) incentives available to UK businesses.

What's Changing?

From April 1, 2024, HMRC merged the existing SME (Small Medium Enterprise) and RDEC (Research and Development Expenditure Credit) schemes into a single unified R&D incentive scheme. While this has simplified the system in some ways, it has also ushered in stricter reporting requirements and narrowed eligibility for certain costs, especially subcontractor expenses and overseas R&D activities.

But the bigger shift is still to come. By 2026, further reforms will introduce a more streamlined, digital-first framework. While it promises efficiency, it may also limit the types of claims that qualify, particularly for smaller, service-based or software-focused firms.

So, if your business is innovating now, don't delay. The current rules may offer more generous relief than what's coming next.

Who Can Still Benefit?

R&D tax relief isn't just for high-tech labs or big manufacturers. You might qualify if you are:

- Developing or are significantly improving products, processes or systems
- Creating or applying technology in a unique way
- Resolving technical or scientific uncertainties

This means industries like construction, manufacturing, engineering, software, renewable energy, clean tech, and even life sciences may be eligible. At Haines Watts Leicester, we've supported businesses in uncovering valuable tax incentives for innovative work to support continued innovation and growth for our clients.

What Should You Be Doing Now?

1. Assess your eligibility

Even if you've never claimed before, now is the time to revisit recent projects. An experienced R&D advisor can identify qualifying activities you might have overlooked.

2. Review your financial years

Relief is available for up to two prior accounting periods. So, the sooner you act, the more value you can unlock.

3. Get your records in order

The new rules require more robust



▲ SHAZIN TAYUB, DIRECTOR

technical documentation, project tracking, and digital submissions. Setting up the right processes now ensures your claims are future proof.

Innovation is the engine of growth and R&D relief is designed to fuel it. But with upcoming reforms likely to restrict eligibility and access, waiting could cost your business more than you think.

At Haines Watts Leicester, we specialise in helping owner-managed businesses and high-growth companies make the most of their innovation. Our team of advisors work closely with you to identify qualifying activity, document your projects to meet HMRC's expectations, manage submissions and HMRC correspondence, and maximise claims while staying fully compliant. Talk to us on 0116 396 0900 to find out if your business qualifies for R&D tax relief before the 2026 changes make it harder to claim.



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DIVORCE IS OBVIOUSLY AN EMOTIONAL, CHALLENGING TIME, AND THE LEGAL PROCESS CAN FEEL ISOLATING. THANKFULLY, MORE PROFESSIONALS LIKE DANIEL RYAN, THAT FAMILY LAW GUY, ARE PRIORITISING THE EMOTIONAL LANDSCAPE

WORDS BY EMILY MILLER

Prioritising the emotional landscape in divorce

Daniel Ryan's legal approach is one that puts empathy and heart at its core. His practice, McKenzie Picave, has grown from supporting a colleague at a single court hearing into a busy, award-winning service with 140 active clients and a 30-person waiting list.

"It's not about process for us. It's about people." Daniel tells me, with feeling.

Rather uniquely, Daniel's practice does not present clients with hourly fees and complex legal language. Instead, he offers a simple subscription model, where clients gain unlimited access to support with no hidden fees, no clock-watching.

"Most people can manage the paperwork," he explains. "It's the emotional chaos that undoes them."

His availability reflects this philosophy. Clients are able to reach out at any time of day or night. It's not a gimmick; it's a reflection of what many people facing separation truly need: reassurance, guidance, and a calm, steady voice in the early hours when worries loom largest.

Daniel's approach recognises that the family court system, while designed for due process, often feels cold and clinical to those within it. Although he hasn't experienced the system in his own

personal life, his professional experience within it has shown him the need for emotional as well as practical support.

"The family courts aren't built for humans. They're built for procedure. People come to us feeling terrified for their children and unsure about their future. What they need is someone who understands."

Small gestures reinforce this care-driven ethos. At Christmas, Easter, Eid and Diwali, Daniel sends chocolates to the children of his clients, along with personalised letters from Santa. These thoughtful touches, though simple, can mean the world to families feeling adrift.

Many of his clients go on to become friends, with some even asking him to be a godparent to their children – not once, but twice so far – a reflection of the trust and deep bonds formed through difficult times.

Around 30% of Daniel's work is delivered pro bono. In cases where clients cannot afford representation and are at risk of being unfairly disadvantaged, he personally funds barristers to ensure they have support.

"Some of these people would be picked on if nobody stepped in," he says. "I do it because someone has to."

Support in tough times doesn't always come from legal textbooks or formal advice. Sometimes it comes from a simple question often posed to Daniel when he takes calls 24/7, even if it is 4am: "How do you feel? How can I help?"

Daniel hosts a free weekly YouTube livestream, answering anonymous questions about child arrangements and finances. Search 'That Family Law Guy' on YouTube.



DANIEL RYAN ▲

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‘I won’t ever need a criminal defence solicitor... will I?’

MOST PEOPLE DON'T THINK THEY'LL NEVER NEED A CRIMINAL DEFENCE SOLICITOR – UNTIL THEY DO. **KERRY SMITH** GETS THE ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS PEOPLE OFTEN ASK TOO LATE

“ HAVING A SOLICITOR DOESN'T MAKE YOU LOOK GUILTY; IT ENSURES YOU UNDERSTAND THE PROCESS AND YOUR RIGHTS ”

Whether it's a knock at the door, a call from the police, or a letter from court, legal problems often come out of nowhere. Kally Sahota, Director at Sahota & Sahota Solicitors based in the city centre at 25 New Walk, answers the key questions on most people's minds in times such as these.

1. I've been asked to attend the police station voluntarily; should I still get legal advice?

Yes. A voluntary interview is still under caution and what you say can be used as evidence. Having a solicitor doesn't make you look guilty; it ensures you understand the process and your rights. Representation at the police station is free. Take it... something quite trivial could develop into something serious without the right advice.

2. I have a court date; do I really need a solicitor?

Even if the charge seems minor, the consequences of a conviction can be serious. It could affect your job, travel and family life. A good solicitor will

review the evidence, advise on your options and present your case clearly in court. We often find legal or procedural issues that clients don't spot on their own, and we appear in criminal courts up and down the country.

3. Can I get legal aid or is it all private now?

Legal aid is still available for criminal cases, depending on the seriousness of the offence and your financial situation. We help clients check eligibility straight away. If you don't qualify, we offer clear advice on fixed fees so there are no surprises.

4. Do I still need a solicitor if I haven't done anything wrong?

Yes! Especially then. Many people think they can explain it all away. But police investigations don't always work like that. You may be treated as a suspect before you even understand the full allegation. If you've done nothing wrong, we'll work to protect your position, challenge weak evidence and try to stop things going further.

5. What types of cases do you deal with?

We cover the full range of criminal defence work including drugs, assault, theft, fraud, driving offences and more serious crime like murder and conspiracy. We also represent professionals in regulatory proceedings. Whether it's a police interview or Crown Court trial, we're by your side throughout.

6. What's your best advice for anyone facing a legal issue?

Get advice early. Even a quick call can help you understand what you're dealing with. Choose a solicitor who's experienced, responsive and genuinely cares about getting the right result. That's what we aim to deliver at Sahota & Sahota Solicitors.

7. Can I call you outside office hours?

Yes. We offer 24/7, 365 emergency advice. If you've been arrested or need urgent help, call us 0116 255 5155. We offer a free telephone consultation, and if you don't need a solicitor, we'll be sure to let you know.



Bhimika Parmar, Director

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There's no magic formula," says Compact Business Coaching founder Juliet Stonehouse, smiling. "But there is huge value in taking the time to really think about what matters to you, untangling the thoughts that are holding you back, and giving yourself permission to do things differently."

Juliet, with a knack for helping people cut through the overwhelm, helps Leicestershire business owners find clarity and set realistic, achievable goals.

"Coaching with me is structured and goal-oriented. It's about looking

feels more achievable and as a result is much less overwhelming."

With over three decades of leadership experience and a rich blend of qualifications including NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming), Business Coaching, Hypnotherapy, Mindfulness Teaching, and EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique), Juliet has shaped an approach that blends deep expertise with a results-driven coaching style.

Juliet isn't about a cookie-cutter, hustle-harder kind of setup. Coaching here is grounded and personal. It's part mindset, part strategy, part behaviour change and completely shaped by what each individual actually wants for themselves, not what they think they should want.

People come to Juliet for all kinds of reasons. Some are starting out. Others are stuck. Some have simply lost their spark and need to reignite it.

Whatever the reason, Juliet's focus is helping people grow in ways that feel honest, sustainable, and true to who they are. Less noise, more listening. Less pressure, more intention. "I don't help people chase more," she says. "I help them choose better - better decisions, better relationships with their work.

"I'm not here to fix anyone. I love holding a mirror up to people and getting to the bottom of why they do the things they do and how they do them. I love seeing patterns in people's behaviour. My job is to help them spot those patterns too, and then use the resources they already have inside of them to achieve the goals they set for themselves."

Through a mix of group workshops, one-to-one coaching, and specific problem-solving support, Juliet is quietly proving that sometimes slowing down your thinking is the fastest, most powerful move you can make.

In a world that's always urging us to go bigger and faster and solve it all at once - maybe the real strength lies in breaking it down and tackling things with deliberate intent.

Visit compactbusinesscoaching.com and book in a free chat with Juliet for more insights into human behaviour in business leadership.

Human behaviour in business leadership

AFTER YEARS IN LEADERSHIP AND TRAINING ROLES, BUSINESS COACH JULIET STONEHOUSE SHARES HER FASCINATION WITH HUMAN BEHAVIOUR AND HOW THEY AFFECT BUSINESS SUCCESS **WORDS BY EMILY MILLER**

ahead, improving skills, and achieving specific objectives - whether that's career progression, business growth, or personal development. Through questioning, strategic planning, and honest feedback, Juliet helps her clients move forward with clarity and accountability. Her programmes are short-term and tightly focused on achieving tangible results fast.

"It's not about doing more," Juliet explains. "It's about figuring out what's actually worth doing for that individual personally in the first place. When you zoom out and really look at the bigger picture, you realise it can be overwhelming to start to think about tackling everything at once! Not everything needs to be done right now, all at the same time. By choosing one thing to focus on at a time, the journey

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Leicester employers reinventing work experience

YOUNG PEOPLE
'UNBOX' CAREERS
IN LEICESTER'S
REAL-WORLD WORK
EXPERIENCE SCHEME

Over 2,500 local young people got hands-on with businesses across the region last year as part of the Leicester and Leicestershire Careers

Hub's 'Unbox Your Future' project. The organisation now wants to give that chance to more young people and involve more businesses.

Unbox Your Future is an innovative and impactful take on traditional work experience and is designed to connect groups of young people with the local business community. The project is designed to be high impact, with low time commitment. It's formed around a workplace challenge or project and helps young people better understand the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed in the workplace.

A Wyggeston and Queen Elizabeth I College student commented on their experience at Scope Construction: "It was a very nice and thoughtful project; I really enjoyed doing group work as it truly enhanced my creativity, decision making and time management skills. I am really thankful for such an opportunity and would be more than welcome to undertake another opportunity like this."

Teachers and staff from more than 40 local schools participating in the project shared that the experiences helped develop their students' essential skills. With schools now preparing to incorporate more work experience for students, it's important to explore flexible and innovative approaches to creating these opportunities.

Through this project, businesses will inspire the next generation, helping some of Leicestershire's most disadvantaged young people see what they are capable of. Companies working with Leicester and Leicestershire Careers Hub have said it is a fantastic opportunity for staff to develop new skills and feel like they are making a positive difference for them and the students.

Email ean@llep.org.uk to get your business involved.

“ IT TRULY ENHANCED MY CREATIVITY, DECISION MAKING AND TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS ”

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AI: What's the mystery?

AS AI RESHAPES HOW BUSINESSES WORK, CAN LOCAL COMPANIES HARNESS THE POWER OF SMART TECH AND DRIVE GROWTH WITHOUT LOSING SIGHT OF WHAT MAKES THEM HUMAN?

WORDS BY EMILY MILLER

AI might be the buzzword of the decade, but for many small business owners it still feels a bit like science fiction – the idea of actually using artificial intelligence to grow your business can seem, at best, overwhelming. At worst? Totally irrelevant.

But according to Suja Shyamsundar, founder of Leicester-based 4S Business Support, it doesn't have to be. "AI isn't just for big tech giants," she says. "It's for your local logistics company, your family-run café, your regional marketing agency. The key is making it usable and accessible.

"We work with small teams who are juggling everything from sales to marketing and processes. They don't need a thousand-page AI strategy. They need practical support that works today, within their budget, and is secure and sustainable."

Suja has expanded her team globally, with a strong base in India where top-level tech and IT specialists support UK businesses at a fraction of the typical cost. "We're building trusted partnerships that combine local insight with global talent. I'm based here, but I've got people I trust at the top of the game over there. It means we can offer serious innovation without the usual price tag."

And for businesses who think AI begins and ends with ChatGPT, Suja urges them to think bigger. "Chatbots are great, but that's just the start. By creating automation systems that help streamline processes, businesses can scale up and open multiple branches in the UK without



worrying about high staffing resource costs or complex processes."

It's not just about 'writing a few automated emails or creating a few marketing bits and pieces'. She suggests it's about using AI to understand your customers, track trends, generate leads, and plan campaigns that actually convert. "These things change constantly. We help our clients stay one step ahead."

For Leicester businesses navigating inflation, skill gaps, and fast-moving competition, Suja says innovation is essential. "People often think AI is too expensive or too complicated. But with the right team, it's not. We make it affordable, effective, and human."

She laughs when asked if she ever feels like a translator between the tech world and the business world. "All the time! But that's what I love. It's about listening to what businesses need, not pushing them on what they don't."

And with more companies asking how to do more with less, the demand for smart, cost-effective solutions is growing. "This city is full of smart, ambitious people. They just need the right tools and the right support."

For businesses wondering whether now is the right time to embrace AI, her answer is simple: "Don't wait. The longer you wait, the further behind you fall. Start where you are. And let someone help you get where you want to be."

Suja invites Niche readers to contact her on 07771 638842 for a quick AI pep talk.

“ BY CREATING AUTOMATION SYSTEMS THAT HELP STREAMLINE PROCESSES, BUSINESSES CAN SCALE UP ”



Alumni honoured and a bold future unveiled

THE UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER'S ALUMNI AWARDS DINNER 2025 PAID TRIBUTE TO REMARKABLE GRADUATES AND SET ITS SIGHTS ON THE FUTURE WITH A £100M FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN LAUNCHING IN 2026
WORDS BY KERRY SMITH

One of London's most historic venues, Middle Temple, set the stage for the University of Leicester's (UoL) 2025 Alumni Awards Dinner on May 17.

Alumni gathered from across the world, including representatives from the university's American Friends and distance learning graduates, for a reunion of recognition and reflection. Showcasing the breadth of talent nurtured in Leicester, the awards recognised individuals making a lasting impact across fields and communities.

"Celebrating our graduates is indicative of the success of the university," explained Steve Corbett, Director of Advancement at the University of Leicester. "And they're all invited each year to join us in celebrating how amazing our alumni are, the winners of our awards, and the amazing things they've gone on to do. A university is only as successful as its students go on to be. So, it's a

time to celebrate that and broaden the conversation."

One such celebration brought the room to its feet. Keynote speaker Lucy Dawson shared her inspiring story. Diagnosed with autoimmune disease encephalitis during her third year at UoL, she was forced to pause her studies. Years later, she returned to complete her criminology degree with the support and adaptations made by the university. Now a disabled model and influencer, Lucy moved the audience to a standing ovation with her honest speech. Watch the moving moment on Instagram @leicester_alumni.

The venue, steeped in tradition and grandeur, added to the sense of occasion. "Middle Temple has such a strong sense of history," Steve noted. "You don't get to go to events in places like that very often. I hope it was a memorable evening for our alumni."

The annual dinner, which alternates between London and Leicester, will

return to its home city in 2026. “We had such a great turnout when we held it on campus for our centenary in 2021. It was a different group of alumni from those who typically attend in London and showed us the value of varying the location to reach different parts of our community.”

It’s a community the university is working hard to grow and nurture. With 200,000 graduates around the world, the Alumni Awards Dinner is just one part of a broader programme of activity to reconnect. “Any graduate, from any course, any year, wherever they are, they’re all invited. We reach out through newsletters, LinkedIn, and word of mouth, and every year we welcome people who haven’t attended before.”

Beyond the celebration, the university is also preparing for one of its boldest initiatives yet. In January 2026, UoL will publicly launch 2121: Founders of the Future, its first large-scale fundraising campaign, aiming to raise £100m by 2030.

Named to mark what will be the university’s bicentenary in 2121, the campaign honours its philanthropic roots when local people pooled resources in 1921 to create a place of learning in the aftermath of World War I.

“We were founded through philanthropy,” said Steve. “Now, we’re asking a new generation of supporters – individuals, charitable trusts, and corporate donors – to help us shape the next 100 years.”

While the campaign officially launches in January 2026, momentum is already building. The team has been working quietly in collaboration with their academic colleagues over the past two years and have already raised £30m towards the target. It aims to highlight the role universities play in addressing the world’s biggest challenges, especially in an era of limited public funding.

That spirit of giving back is already evident in the university’s growing alumni mentoring network, where experienced graduates guide current students into the world of work. “We find alumni who are well established in their careers are keen to get involved in mentoring current learners. It’s a



▲ ACTIVIST ESUANTSIWA JANE GOLDSMITH RECEIVED THE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



▲ DISABLED MODEL LUCY DAWSON WAS THE KEYNOTE SPEAKER

rewarding way to give back, and is transformative for the students.”

Looking ahead to 2026, the return of the Alumni Awards Dinner to Leicester promises to be another milestone moment of celebration and connection, and an opportunity for local alumni to see first-hand how their support, time and talent are shaping the future of their university.

For those wishing to reconnect at the Alumni Awards Dinner 2026, become a mentor or learn more about the 2121 campaign, visit the UoL alumni website le.ac.uk/alumni. For informal enquiries about collaboration or sponsorship opportunities related to the 2026 event, contact Alumni Relations Manager Kelly McCormack at kelly.mccormack@leicester.ac.uk.

THE WINNERS 2025

Mary Attenborough Award for Volunteering – Oliver Nunn

Dr Mark Sims Memorial Award for Public Service – John Neville and Nick Johnson

Future Leader Award – Francesca Bavis

Alumna of the Year – Dr Ffion Davies

Lifetime Achievement Award – Esuantsiwa Jane Goldsmith

Alumni Association Graduating Student of the Year – Amardeep Sidki

Rhoda Bennett Philanthropy Award – Catherine Wigdor

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Samosas in hand, nominees, sponsors, and judges gathered at the impressive offices of PPL PRS in May for the big reveal of this year's Niche Business Awards finalists. Now in its 11th year, the awards celebrate local talent across many industries. The Bollywood-themed ceremony promises a spectacular night of colour, culture, and celebration. We hope to see you there on Friday, September 5 at Athena.

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COMMUNITY
CHAMPION NOMINEE
CHRIS SHAW
CONTINUES TO DRIVE
SOCIAL INNOVATION IN
LEICESTER WORDS BY
KERRY SMITH



As nominees for the Niche Business Awards 2025 are announced, Chris Shaw stands out in the Community Champion category. The news comes as Social Innovation People CiC – which Chris co-founded to deliver support for social entrepreneurs that want to tackle social problems in Leicester – completed its first ever Social Innovation Accelerator programme.

With a career spanning over four decades, Chris Shaw is widely recognised as a leading figure in Leicester and Leicestershire's social enterprise and voluntary sector. Leicester born and bred, since his first foray into the world of work in 1985 Chris has been unwavering in his commitment to empowering communities, building impactful partnerships, and unlocking funding to drive social change.

From his early work as a youth leader at Northfields Adventure Playground to key roles at Leicester City Council, The Prince's Trust, EMDA, and the University of Leicester, Chris has continuously asked: "How can I make a difference?" That question has fuelled his drive to support some of Leicester's

most disadvantaged communities and champion inclusive economic development across the city and county.

As the founder of three ventures – Think Funding, Ethical Business Exchange, and Social Innovation People CiC – Chris continues to shape the region's community and social enterprise landscape. Think Funding has become a trusted partner for charities and social enterprises seeking tailored business development, funding strategy, and impact evaluation support.

Chris established Ethical Business Exchange (EBE) to promote collaboration. For example, EBE has led the development of the Positive Communities Partnership – a consortium of seven grassroots organisations – securing over £1.4m to support individuals furthest from the labour market. EBE is also a delivery partner for ExSEL (Expanding Social Enterprise in Leicester), which supports local social enterprise by creating an investment fund for Leicester, and the company recently played a key role in VentureVersity, a university-led initiative to commercialise academic research into new ventures.

In 2023, Chris co-founded Social Innovation People CiC (SIP), a new platform for incubating grassroots changemakers. Its first accelerator programme helped launch six new ventures led by women, community leaders, and environmentalists all committed to building a fairer, more inclusive city. SIP is now aiming to establish the Leicester Centre for Social Innovation, a potential landmark initiative that will provide shared workspaces, support programmes, and community-driven collaboration for mission-led enterprises.

Over his career, Chris has helped unlock over £100m in public and philanthropic investment for Leicester, Leicestershire and the wider East Midlands. But more than just numbers, his legacy lies in the lives changed, the organisations strengthened, and the new ideas he continues to bring to life. His achievements were recognised in 2023 with the Award of Fundraiser of the Year at the Voluntary Action Leicestershire Awards.

Find out more about Social Innovation People at socialinnovationpeople.org.



Hollingsworths eyes the future as AI transforms the legal sector

THE LAW FIRM SHARE THEIR VIEW OF AI IN LAW AS A KEY EMPLOYEE RECEIVES RECOGNITION IN THE NICHE BUSINESS AWARDS **WORDS BY KERRY SMITH**

“ I SEE MY ROLE AS SUPPORTING THE DELIVERY OF THE LEGAL ADVICE, AND MAKING SURE THAT THE CLIENT FEELS VALUED AND CARED FOR ”



As the legal profession and those who operate within it work through the complexities and challenges of introducing AI processes into their business, Leicester firm Hollingsworths is embracing it head-on, and with a rising star at the forefront. Mandy Bradbury, recently nominated in the Rising Star category of the 2025 Niche Business Awards, is playing a key role in preparing the firm for the rise of artificial intelligence, the biggest shift the sector has seen in decades.

“The big thing in law at the moment is AI, and how it will change the way legal services are delivered,” says Greg Hollingsworth, Director at Hollingsworths. “This is something Mandy has been working on, and she wants to make sure that the firm, despite being small, is geared up to use AI in a way best suited to our clients.”

While AI tools offer efficiencies and new ways of working, Greg and the team remain grounded in their people-first approach, a trait that has helped define the firm’s identity and success. “Much of our success has been built on relationships. Mandy leads on client care and client relations, so that personal side of why people use us is so important.”

That dedication to client care is central to Mandy’s vision. She said: “I am still focused on making the client experience as pleasant as possible. It isn’t easy, because we are often dealing with individuals and businesses who are in challenging situations. They come to us because they have a problem, and it’s our job to solve it. I see my role as supporting the delivery of the legal advice, and making sure that the client



▲ MANDY BRADBURY

feels valued and cared for as the matter progresses.”

Mandy’s nomination is a celebration of her personal achievements, but also allows for a moment of pride for the entire team. Greg said: “We are so proud of her nomination. We’ve known for years how amazing she is! As a firm, we’ve never won a Niche Business Award, so for Mandy to possibly do that is incredibly exciting for us all.”

Beyond technology, Hollingsworths is also making waves with its commitment to wellbeing in the legal sector. Both Mandy and Greg, and the firm in general, are advocates for good mental health in the workplace. They are heavily involved with the Leicestershire Law Society’s (LLS) mental health agenda. Mandy, a Wellbeing Champion for LLS, has supported local charity Lamp for years, while the firm’s advocacy even helped prompt a national round table discussion by the national Law Society during Mental Health Awareness Week, as well as Greg having an article published in the Law Gazette.

Hollingsworths looks set to play a leading role in shaping the future of legal services. Keep up to date with them at hlegal.co.uk.

LEICESTERSHIRE
LAW SOCIETY
PRESIDENT GREG
HOLLINGSWORTH
IS PROUD THAT THE
SOCIETY 'REMAINS
RELEVANT' AFTER 165
YEARS IN THE LOCAL
COMMUNITY WORDS
BY KERRY SMITH



Legal elite celebrated in style at Leicestershire Law Society Awards gala



The Leicestershire legal community came together in Rat Pack era style on Friday, May 16 for the prestigious Leicestershire Law Society Awards 2025 ceremony, held at the iconic Athena.

The annual awards evening honoured outstanding legal talent and community impact across 12 competitive categories, showcasing the very best that Leicestershire's legal sector has to offer. From junior rising stars to seasoned professionals, large solicitors' practices to community champions, the event recognised those individuals and businesses who have made a lasting difference in law and society over the last 12 months.

President of the Leicestershire Law Society, Greg Hollingsworth, praised the winners and the broader legal community for their dedication and resilience: "Our awards demonstrate the strength and quality of legal services available in Leicestershire and Rutland from our Leicestershire Law Society members and our wider legal community.

"I am delighted for all the winners, and congratulate them all, as well as the very worthy finalists across all the categories. To have so many people in attendance on the evening shows how relevant our society remains, even in its 165th year."

Gavin Dilkes, Managing Director at Synergy Personnel Services, which was the headline sponsor for the Leicestershire Law Society Awards 2025, said: "Being involved in the awards has been a brilliant experience. We've loved being the Headline Sponsor this year because it's allowed us to meet new people at the events and see some of the people we've placed into jobs recognised for their achievements."

A respected and distinguished panel of judges – including local judges District Judge Nahied Asjad, Her Honour Judge Dewinder Birk and Deputy District Judge Linda Lee, alongside LLS Past President Gina Samuel Richards, YMCA Leicestershire Chief Executive Paul Brown, Head of De Montfort Law School Alan East, Associate Professor at University of

THE LEICESTERSHIRE LAW SOCIETY AWARDS 2025

Leicester Steve Evans, society patrons Bhavin Gandhi and Gavin Dilkes, and Hollingsworths' Practice Manager and 2024 LLS award winner Mandy Bradbury – all lent their expertise and insight to the judging process, ensuring the most deserving candidates were recognised.

“The Leicestershire Law Society Awards highlight success stories and career achievements, which helps attract legal talent to Leicestershire,” Gavin added. “They spotlight outstanding legal talent, which are exactly the kinds of professional we seek to place or connect with employers. The awards and Synergy place great value on excellence, integrity and professional development and as such, this shared ethos strengthens the authenticity of this partnership.”

The event also helped raise £3,510 for the Society’s charity partners YMCA Leicestershire and LAMP, which are the President’s chosen charities for 2024–2025, with further events planned to raise vital funds for both charities.



THE WINNERS ARE:

TRAINEE/PARALEGAL OF THE YEAR Sponsored by Richstone Park Financial Planning

Emma Symes-Goodman Smith Partnership Solicitors

LEGAL EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR Sponsored by Minakshree Patel Consultancy

Faizal Essat Essat & Ridgway

JUNIOR SOLICITOR OF THE YEAR Sponsored by Secure Trade Windows & Doors

Simran Kang Shakespeare Martineau LLP

SUPPORT STAFF OF THE YEAR Sponsored by Jay Webb Consultancy

Louise Hill Holland Family Law

BARRISTER OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by Furnley House
Heather Pople, No5 Barristers Chambers

CHAMBERS OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by Marsh

2 New Street Chambers

LARGE LAW FIRM OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by ReviewSolicitors

Freeths

SMALL LAW FIRM OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by Insight Consultancy

Johnson Astills

SOLICITOR OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by Giga Ops

Steven Mather, Steven Mather Solicitor

COMMUNITY CHAMPION

Nicola Kitchener Affinity Law

LONG SERVICE AWARD

Prakash Suchak (posthumously)

PRESIDENT’S AWARD

Linda Lee





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PETE MARTIN
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Big ideas and bold movers

CELEBRATIONS TOOK PLACE FOR THE WINNERS OF THE EAST MIDLANDS REAL ENTREPRENEURS' AWARDS 2025 IN APRIL

WORDS BY KERRY SMITH

The East Midlands Real Entrepreneurs' Awards 2025 took over the Leonardo Hinckley Island Hotel, celebrating the region's dynamic business leaders on April 10. Now in its fourth year, the event recognised outstanding entrepreneurial talent from Leicester, Derby, and Nottingham.

Jenny Cross, Founder of The Real Entrepreneurs' Club and its awards, said: "Entrepreneurial success is not solely defined by profitability, but by the capacity to drive transformative change. It is an honour to organise an event that shines a spotlight on such big ideas and bold movers."

A highlight of the event was the Pitching Platform, sponsored by Nelsons, where three startup founders presented their ventures. The audience voted for their favourite to receive legal and marketing mentorship from a non-executive board comprising Rik Pancholi (Partner, Pattersons Commercial Law) and Jenny Cross (CEO, Cross Productions). This year's Pitching Platform winner was SallyAnne Kirk, founder of Leicester Fashion District, who impressed the audience with her ambitions and actionable plans to create a mapped fashion district in Leicester. The two other inspiring pitchers were Nikki Croxall of Rescue Partners, and Robert McKinna

of Inclus Design.

Co-Founder of the Pitching Platform, Rik Pancholi, Partner and solicitor at Nelsons, said:

"What SallyAnne's doing is pretty amazing and could have a really long lasting impact, so I'm going to be really proud to work with her. It's great to have such an ambitious project of this scale to work on and I'm looking forward to seeing what comes next from SallyAnne."

SallyAnne Kirk said: "I just love Leicester and I don't want to see our fashion industry die. For me, this is a legacy piece, so after I'm gone, that fashion district will be there and everyone will benefit from it for years to come. It's time to flip the switch and have a new fresh direction for fashion in Leicester. To other entrepreneurs, I'd say... be authentic. In a world where everything's so fake and you don't know what to believe, authenticity is the new black, guys."

On the night, guests also helped to raise £1,000 during the event for The Real Entrepreneurs' Awards charity partner The Zinthiya Trust. The money will be used to provide school uniforms for 50 local children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Go to realentrepreneurs.co.uk to find out more about the Real Entrepreneurs' Club, awards, and Pitching Platform.



Double award winner Tania Gerard (centre) with category sponsors Keeley Baigent of ksabLAW and Chris Cain of Kazzoo IT



SallyAnne Kirk (centre) with new non-executive board members Rik Pancholi and Jenny Cross

THE 2025 AWARD WINNERS

ENTREPRENEUR FOR GOOD

Sponsored by Kazzoo IT

Tania Gerard, Tania Gerard Digital
ENTREPRENEURS' ENTREPRENEUR

Sponsored by AGR Law

Zinthiya Ganeshpanchan,

The Zinthiya Trust

SCALE-UP ENTREPRENEUR

Sponsored by End2End Support
Solutions

Thomas Cropper, Tuk In Foods

ENTREPRENEURIAL COLLABORATOR

Sponsored by Voyager

Jane Hearst, National Centre for
Creative Health

INTERNATIONAL ENTREPRENEUR

OF THE YEAR Sponsored by

Solicitors4Landlords

Karen Mosley, KranLee Logistics

START-UP ENTREPRENEUR OF THE

YEAR Sponsored by Reason8

Rebecca Holders, Holders Estate
Agents

INNOVATION IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Sponsored by LBC Mentoring

Rahul Sabbarwal, Luxe 360 Booths

YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR OF THE

YEAR Sponsored by SAS Accounting

Solutions

Henry Brogan, BidScript

ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATOR

Sponsored by ksabLAW

Tania Gerard, Tania Gerard Digital

Alternative Business Awards Celebrate Leicester's lighter side of business

WINNERS ACCEPTED
THEIR AWARDS FROM
A WISECRACKING
COMEDIAN ON
STAGE IN FRONT OF
A RAUCOUS CROWD
AT THE Y THEATRE
**WORDS BY KERRY
SMITH**



The Y Theatre in Leicester was host to a lively and laughter-filled evening on Wednesday June 11, 2025, as the Alternative Business Awards returned for its seventh instalment.

Bringing together the city's business community, the event once again shone a spotlight on Leicester's more playful professional side.

Hosted by comedian Patrick Monahan, the night was filled with jokes as local professionals were recognised in a series of comical and unconventional award categories. Far from the standard corporate accolades, the awards celebrated the city's camaraderie and character, all while raising money for Big Difference, the charity behind the awards, Leicester Comedy Festival and The UK Kids' Comedy Festival.

Backed by returning associate sponsors ER Recruitment and Red Monkey Play, the evening carried a strong sense of community support. Niche Magazine, once again the official media partner, helped amplify the event's reach.

Guests at the ceremony had the chance to see their peers and colleagues celebrated for everything from the most avid networker in the Top Table Favourite category to the most mischievous pair in the Double Trouble! category.

As nominees took to the stage – some surprised, some cautious in their acceptance – the night served as a reminder that even in the most professional environments, there's always room for fun, humanity and a good-natured punchline.

THE 2025 WINNERS

IN AT 9, GONE BY 5

Sponsored by East Midlands Chamber (Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire)

Ayesha Fay

SWITCHED ON

Sponsored by Michael Smith Switchgear

Laura Kearsley

GLASS HALF FULL

Sponsored by Sarah J. L. Higgins Corporate Coaching

Sam Hagger FBII

TOO HOT TO HANDLE

Sponsored by Chutney Ivy Restaurant & Bar

Sarah Thomson

CONTENT CATALYST

Sponsored by Niche Magazine

Pete Martin

FUN WHERE YOU'D LEAST EXPECT IT

Sponsored by TorrWaterfield

Richard Humphreys

TOP TABLE FAVOURITE

Sponsored by MJR Accountants

Nash Chhatralia

DOUBLE TROUBLE!

Sponsored by Red Monkey Play

Stephen Goddard & Philip Brooks-Stephenson at KuKu Connect

ALTERNATIVE BUSINESS PERSON

Sponsored by Juice Creative Design

Chris Greenwell

TEAM WITH THE ROAR FACTOR

Sponsored by Furnley House

Charnwood Nursery Group/The Hub

CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMUNITY

sponsored by ER Recruitment

Nick Taylor

Making the most of summer in Leicestershire

When the summer holidays roll around, it's easy for excitement to turn to mild panic - six whole weeks to fill! But fear not: Leicestershire and the wider East Midlands are packed with exciting, affordable, and memory-making activities to keep children happy. Here's your ultimate guide to creating a summer packed with smiles, without the stress

WORDS BY EMILY MILLER



SLEEP UNDER THE STARS

If you're craving a getaway without the airport queues, family glamping could be the answer. Swap hotel corridors for fresh air and starry skies at one of the region's many beautiful sites.

Brook Meadow in Market

Harborough (brookmeadow.co.uk) offers safari tents and lakeside lodges where kids can roam freely and you can enjoy a slower pace. **Squirrel's Nest** near Melton Mowbray provides a magical woodland setting, perfect for a digital detox. Think campfires, nature trails, and the novelty of sleeping under canvas - but with proper beds and hot showers. Win-win.

Glamping makes a brilliant mini-break without breaking the bank and gives families a chance to reconnect with nature and each other.

BIG DAYS OUT - WITH BONUS FREE RETURNS!

Maximise your days out (and stretch your budget) by choosing attractions that offer free repeat visits.

West Midlands Safari Park

(wmssp.co.uk) promises a full day of excitement, from drive-through safaris packed with giraffes and lions to amusement rides and a dinosaur trail. Even better, your ticket allows a free return visit within six months - perfect if the weather wasn't on your side the first time.

Closer to home, **Twycross Zoo** (twycrosszoo.org) is famous for its primate collection - the zoo offers discounted or free return tickets, making it a great place to revisit





throughout the summer.

For something a little different, **The National Space Centre** in Leicester (spacecentre.co.uk) is a must-visit. With a Rocket Tower, Planetarium shows, and interactive exhibits, it's the perfect rainy-day option - and your ticket gets you free returns for a whole year!

Top Tip: Pre-book your return tickets early to avoid missing out on busy summer weekends.

TAKE TO THE WATER

Fancy a more peaceful pace? Canal boat trips offer a unique day out that kids absolutely love.

Companies like **Union Wharf Narrowboats** in Market Harborough (unionwharf.com) let you hire boats by the hour or the day.

Children can help open locks, spot ducklings, and even have a turn at steering under supervision. Plus, it's a chance for a proper picnic on board - an adventure in itself! No boating experience needed - just a sense of adventure and a slower mindset.

STEAM TRAIN ADVENTURES

Transport your family back to the golden age of travel with a ride on the **Great Central Railway** (gcrailway.co.uk), Britain's only double-track heritage railway. Steam trains run between Loughborough and Leicester North, and include themed events and dining events to add even more excitement.

Children can explore vintage carriages, wave at the engine driver and enjoy the simple pleasure of an old-fashioned train journey through beautiful countryside.

Insider tip: Book a First-Class ticket for a small extra charge; the plush seats and service make it extra special without a huge price tag.

CASTLES, KNIGHTS, AND HISTORY

Fuel kids' imaginations with a day exploring a castle.

Belvoir Castle (belvoircastle.com) near Grantham offers tours, beautiful gardens, adventure playgrounds, and outdoor events like falconry displays, all in a stunning fairytale setting.

For all-out medieval action, head to **Warwick Castle** (warwick-castle.com), about an hour's drive from Leicester. Expect daily jousting tournaments, an



incredible birds of prey show, dungeons (for the brave!), and an epic playground called The Zog Playland based on the popular Julia Donaldson books.

These trips aren't just fun; they sneak in a bit of history too - and kids rarely even notice they're learning.

FARM PARKS AND ANIMAL ADVENTURES

There's nothing like a hands-on farm experience to thrill little ones. Leicestershire is spoilt for choice when it comes to family-friendly farms.

Stonehurst Family Farm (stonehurstfarm.co.uk) in Mountsorrel lets kids feed lambs, cuddle rabbits, and enjoy tractor rides. Plus, there's a small motor museum for car-mad youngsters (and their parents).

Manor Farm Park and Woodlands (manorfarm.info) near East Leake offers a brilliant day out with indoor play barns, mazes, zip lines, and lots of animal encounters. These parks offer real value for money and give kids a healthy dose of the great outdoors.

A LITTLE TREAT FOR PARENTS TOO

Let's face it: parents deserve a treat after a day of non-stop activity. A quick stop at **Space NK** in Leicester (spacenk.com) can help you stock up on summer skincare essentials or find a little indulgence to enjoy once the kids are tucked up in bed.

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FROM LEFT TO RIGHT;
FATEMA CONTRACTOR,
DR DOMINIC GREENYER
AND DR ASIYA MAULA

Futureproofing your wellbeing

As interest grows in proactive, whole-person health, Leicester is home to forward-thinking practitioners redefining what healthcare looks like. Niche met with the experts who are changing the future of health **Words by Emily Miller**

Private healthcare in the UK is often misunderstood as merely a shortcut to faster treatment than the NHS. But the reality is far more complex. As the strain on public services continues to grow, private healthcare is increasingly filling a gap by offering something the system often can't: time, space and a more holistic view of wellbeing.

Preventative care is at the heart of this approach. This vision for healthcare sees the human being as more than a set of organs or conditions. It understands health as an interplay of physical, emotional, spiritual and lifestyle factors.

In Leicester, access to this kind of care is closer than many might think. Highly trained, world-class skilled practitioners equipped with both traditional medical expertise and complementary approaches are working to shift the focus of healthcare toward the root causes of illness. Clinics like The Health Suite are not only delivering patient care but also prompting wider conversations about the future of health services.

This team includes GPs, therapists, nutritionists, and complementary therapy practitioners who work collaboratively across physical,

emotional and psychological health needs. As I meet the team – including one doctor who was fresh from the red-light therapy machine! – it feels like the future.

“At the core of what we do is the belief that no one practitioner has all the answers,” says Fatema Contractor, one of three directors at The Health Suite. “That’s why we work together and

They offer a spectrum of services designed to support different life stages and conditions, from perimenopause to postpartum recovery and chronic fatigue. Alongside GP services and minor surgery, patients can access personalised nutrition, mental health support, pelvic floor rehabilitation and treatments like red-light therapy and hyperbaric

“*At the core of what we do is the belief that no one practitioner has all the answers. That’s why we work together and learn from one another*”

learn from one another. The human body is intricate and layered, and care should reflect that.”

Rather than waiting for disease to manifest, their shared philosophy is rooted in early intervention. “We ask not just what’s wrong, but why it’s wrong,” Dr Asiya Maula tells me as I sip on my adaptogenic coffee, “And then we work with the patient to address the root causes, whether that’s inflammation, hormonal imbalance, unresolved trauma or any other health concern.”

oxygen therapy (technologies often used by elite athletes and biohackers to promote cellular healing).

These options are backed by clinical evidence and regular review. “We use the technology ourselves and assess everything for its merit, not trends,” says Director Dr Dominic Greenyer. “Healthcare has to be accountable, especially when it’s this personalised.”

There’s also a strong emphasis on education. Clients are guided through



“The cost of absenteeism or poor productivity due to untreated health issues far outweighs the investment in preventative measures”

their treatment options, given time to understand them and supported to make informed decisions. This level of personalised attention can be particularly valuable for individuals navigating complex or ongoing health concerns.

Preventative care is also making waves in the corporate sector. With rising awareness of employee wellbeing, many Leicester-based and national companies are seeking solutions beyond standard occupational health. The Health Suite has developed corporate wellbeing packages that combine health checks,

nutrition advice and mental health support tailored to organisational needs.

Fatema says: “Investing in staff health isn’t just ethical, it makes economic sense. The cost of absenteeism or poor productivity due to untreated health issues far outweighs the investment in preventative measures.”

As these conversations become more mainstream, there’s a growing recognition that holistic, person-centred care is not a luxury but a necessity. “We need to stop firefighting and start futureproofing,” explains

Dr Maula. “So many chronic conditions can be prevented or managed far more effectively with early intervention and a deeper understanding of the individual.”

The Health Suite may be based in Leicester, but its outlook is global. Its clinicians travel regularly for training, collaborate with international peers and attract clients from across the UK and beyond. Dr Greenyer added: “We’re proud to be part of a growing community redefining what healthcare looks like.”

Dr Greenyer, who has advanced training in the use of Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT), which delivers pure oxygen in a pressurised setting to promote rapid tissue repair, reduce inflammation, and aid recovery from injury and surgery. It’s a celebrity favourite, with patients able to rest comfortably in a reclining position while undergoing treatment. He said: “The HBOT chamber offers an incredibly effective, non-invasive treatment that supports the body’s natural healing processes in ways which are difficult for traditional therapies to achieve.”

Alongside HBOT, the clinic also provides advanced diagnostic ultrasound equipment, a surgical theatre and holistic wellness services, aesthetic treatments. With the team keen on technology that works, to say the least, it’s ever growing. “We don’t invest in equipment that we don’t use on ourselves and fully believe in,” Fatema tells me. “We love having access to this tech!”

For those inside the clinic’s sunlit rooms, where practitioners meet weekly to reflect and grow together, this is not a trend or a business strategy, it’s a philosophy. A belief that health is something to be built, nurtured and respected.

As the demands on healthcare systems continue to rise, the lessons from places like The Health Suite may prove crucial. Preventative, personalised, holistic care might just be the future we need. Check their lists of specialities at thehealthsuite.co.uk.

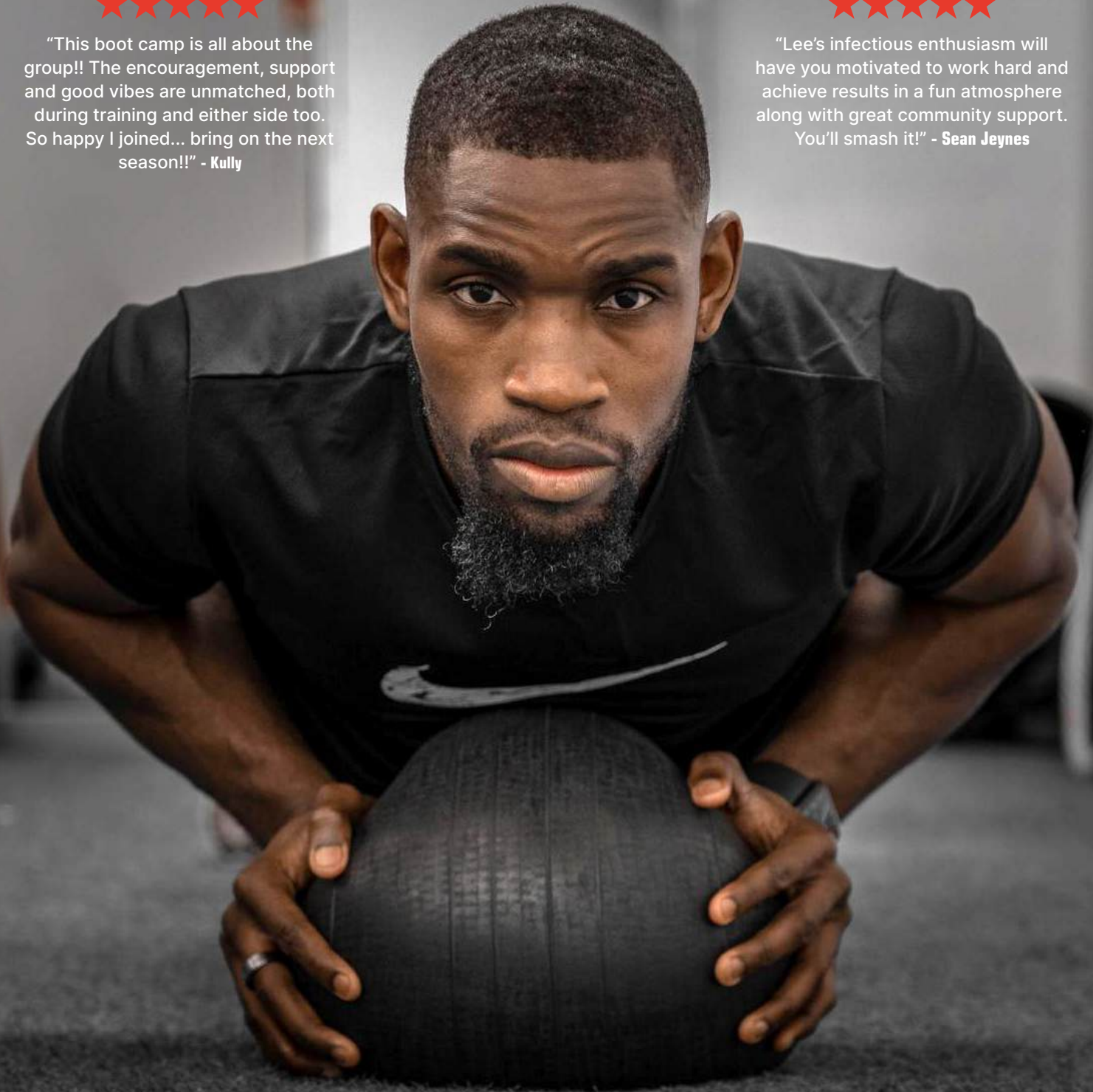
Call it biohacking, call it ageing backwards, call it investment in your health, whatever you want to call it, like I said at the start, it feels like the future – and that’s exciting.



"This boot camp is all about the group!! The encouragement, support and good vibes are unmatched, both during training and either side too. So happy I joined... bring on the next season!!" - Kully



"Lee's infectious enthusiasm will have you motivated to work hard and achieve results in a fun atmosphere along with great community support. You'll smash it!" - Sean Jeynes



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Why more people are choosing to go private for their health

While once considered a luxury, private healthcare is increasingly seen as a strategic investment in health and wellbeing, and the ripple effects go far beyond individual benefit

WORDS BY EMILY MILLER

As NHS waiting times continue to stretch and strain, a growing number of people across Leicester and the wider Midlands are turning to private healthcare as a practical solution to access timely and efficient care.

The Independent Healthcare Providers Network's Going Private 2024 report found that 67% of people say they'd consider using private healthcare. Over one third of people surveyed said they'd pay for treatment in the next 12 months if needed. This rises to almost half (44%) of 25-34-year-olds who expected to use private healthcare in the coming year.

Reasons people may be choosing to go private

The most immediate advantage is speed. Private healthcare can dramatically cut waiting times, providing quicker access to diagnostics, consultations and treatment. For patients dealing with pain, uncertainty or progressive conditions, fast intervention can directly affect outcomes and long-term health.



Patients can also experience a more personalised approach to care by going private. Longer appointment times, direct communication with specialists, and greater flexibility around scheduling mean people are more involved in their treatment journey, bringing a sense of control and reassurance.

With the NHS under historic pressure, every person who chooses to fund their own care, even for a single treatment, helps to ease the burden on the public system. Some may like contributing to freeing up appointments, reducing waiting lists, and allowing those who need critical care most urgently to access it more quickly.

In that sense, going private can be viewed as a dual benefit: supporting personal wellbeing while contributing to the collective resilience of the healthcare system. This redistribution of demand could help balance the scales.

There's also increasing awareness of the range of services now available privately. Preventative screenings, specialist mental health support, women's health clinics, dermatology, physiotherapy, and advanced imaging are all becoming more accessible through private providers, sometimes

within days of enquiry.

As healthcare becomes more tailored and technology-driven, private providers are often able to integrate the latest advancements more rapidly, from AI-assisted diagnostics to robotic-assisted surgery. The result is faster, more accurate outcomes in facilities designed for patient comfort and streamlined service.

Of course, cost remains a barrier for some. But with the rise of payment plans, health subscriptions, and tailored insurance packages, more people are finding ways to access the support they need without large upfront fees. For many, the decision to pay for healthcare is no longer about prestige, it's about peace of mind, proactivity, and preventing long-term complications.

With a growing number of private clinics and services emerging across Leicester, the Midlands is rapidly becoming a hub for modern, patient-focused healthcare. And as more people weigh the cost against the potential benefits, both personally and societally, the value of private healthcare continues to reshape how we think about looking after our health.

Robotic joint surgery *now in Leicester*

A surgical robotic-arm is transforming joint care at Nuffield Health Leicester, offering faster recovery, less pain, and greater precision for knee and hip replacements

WORDS BY EMILY MILLER

Patients in need of joint replacements now have access to surgery which uses advanced and innovative robotic technology. Nuffield Health Leicester Hospital has introduced the Mako Robotic-Arm Assisted Surgery System, making it the only private hospital in the Leicester area to currently offer the technology.

Mako's arrival is more than just an upgrade. It places Leicester at the forefront of robotic-assisted orthopaedic care. And for many, it offers renewed hope for mobility, pain relief, and faster recovery.

Unlike traditional surgery, the Mako system uses a combination of

The benefits are clear. "Because Mako-assisted procedures are more precise, patients often experience significantly less pain post-operatively and can begin moving again within hours or days. Some patients are able to return home the same day."

"We're seeing people get back on their feet sooner, with better functional outcomes," another consultant added.

The investment forms part of Nuffield Health's wider transformation strategy to position Leicester as a regional hub for orthopaedic excellence. It follows a national £200 million partnership with GE Healthcare to introduce AI-enabled diagnostics

eligible patients. It's an option that requires no upfront payment and is framed as an investment not only in physical health, but in long-term quality of life.*

"This isn't about technology for technology's sake," said Mr Arijit Ghosh. "It's about helping people move forward, literally and figuratively, with confidence, dignity, and less pain using technology, rehabilitation and personalised care that supports the whole person."

Nuffield Health Leicester is now uniquely positioned to deliver best-in-class orthopaedic care, combining human skill with technological precision.

In a healthcare landscape where innovation can often feel out of reach, Mako is bringing the future of joint care to Leicester. And for patients across the Midlands, that future just got a lot closer to home. Find more information at nuffieldhealth.com/hospitals/leicester.

“Because Mako-assisted procedures are more precise, patients often experience significantly less pain post-operatively”

detailed CT scans and 3D modelling to help consultant surgeons create a personalised surgical plan. During the procedure, the robotic arm guides the surgeon with incredible precision, removing only the damaged bone and cartilage and placing the implant with sub-millimetre accuracy.

"This is a really exciting development," said consultant Mr Arijit Ghosh, who has been performing hip and knee replacements for decades. "The robotic arm doesn't replace us, it refines us. It allows us to tailor every procedure to the individual."

in Nuffield Health's hospital network. Together, these developments show a clear shift toward technology-driven, personalised care.

Mako's precision matters most for the people it serves. For those living with chronic joint pain, the technology can mean a return to the everyday pleasures often taken for granted - walking without discomfort, playing with grandchildren, dancing, gardening, or climbing stairs.

To make this care more accessible, Nuffield Health offers a 0% interest payment plan across 24 months for



*Acceptance is subject to status, terms and conditions apply. Finance is arranged through Chrysalis Finance Limited (FRN 631193). Nuffield Health (FRN 712694) is a broker, not a lender. All parties named above are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

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FROM REACTIVE



TO PROACTIVE

Why more people are taking charge of their health

There was a time when private healthcare felt like a luxury. Something for urgent treatment or one-off procedures. But more and more people are rethinking that mindset - and finding that it's not about luxury, it's about control. It's about the peace of mind that comes from knowing your health is in your hands.

For Dr Sumit Virmani and the team at The One Clinic in Leicester, that shift is the heart of what they do. "Private healthcare shouldn't feel out of reach," says Dr Virmani. "We want it to feel like the natural first step when something doesn't feel quite right - or even better, when nothing's wrong, but you want to keep it that way."

A new kind of patient journey

Tucked away on De Montfort Street, The One Clinic offers a space where health and wellbeing are looked at holistically. Their team treats a range of everyday medical concerns - from mole checks to joint injections to blood

tests - quickly, professionally, and with a warm welcome.

But what stands out is the journey they offer. Rather than reacting when something goes wrong, patients are choosing to become proactive by booking in regular checks, minor surgical procedures like removals of lumps, and moles, joint injections, looking at their weight management, investing in long-term skin and aesthetic care, or simply getting trusted advice without the weeks of waiting.

Their approach appeals to individuals and families alike. "We're seeing a lot of people who want clarity - not just about symptoms, but about their options," says Dr Virmani. "And they want continuity - someone who remembers them and understands their needs over time."

Choice, continuity and confidence

What's driving the move toward private care? For many, it's about access and reassurance. "It's not that people don't value the NHS - they absolutely do,"

Dr Virmani explains. "But there's a growing appetite for speed, for feeling heard, and for knowing you've got time to talk through everything properly."

The One Clinic's model allows for that. Appointments are flexible and thorough. Treatment plans, including membership plans are tailored and there to help keep on top of health and wellbeing. And whether you're coming in for a quick scan or a long-term plan, you leave feeling supported.

Try it for yourself

If you've never experienced private healthcare before, The One Clinic invites you to find out what it's like - without pressure or commitment. They're currently offering a complimentary 10-minute initial consultation to help new patients understand what's available to them.

Want to see what's involved? Their patient experience hub breaks it down clearly: what to expect, how to prepare, and what makes their approach different.

Health is personal. So is your care.

A new way to future-proof your body in midlife?

We are living longer, but are we living well? Many of us feel those familiar midlife aches: stiff backs, creaky knees, slower energy. Fit20 talk gaining strength to support our bodies **WORDS BY EMILY MILLER**

This journalist has learnt that muscle mass quietly starts to decline each decade. A shift that, if left unchecked, I found out, can chip away at strength, energy, and balance. Without regular resistance training, we can lose up to 8% of muscle per decade. Underneath, it's often our muscle mass telling the story. Known as sarcopenia, age-related muscle loss is a key contributor to frailty, falls, and

joint issues in later life.

Strength training, once the domain of bodybuilders, is now being embraced by people in midlife and beyond. Not just to stay fit, but to feel empowered. Staying strong isn't about aesthetics, it's about protecting our bones, independence, and quality of life.

That's where fit20 Leicester steps in, suggesting a radically simple solution: just one 20-minute session a week.

No mirrors, no loud music, no calorie-busting mantras. Just tailored, focused strength work.

"The approach is very precise and personalised," explains Nish Pattani, who runs the Birstall studio along with his wife (and fitness fanatic) Rups. "We work one-on-one with clients, using specially designed equipment to slowly and safely fatigue the muscles. That's when the real strength gains happen, especially in people who've never lifted weights before."

The concept flips fitness on its head. It's not about quantity or pain. It's about consistency and efficiency. And the results speak for themselves.

"It's not about trying to look like you did at 25," Nish says. "It's about moving better, standing taller, easing back pain, and building strength that supports everyday life. We've had people in their 70s tell us they feel better than they did ten years ago."

For many, the simplicity of the once-a-week model is what keeps them coming back. When so many fitness regimes fall away with time, fit20 might just be a sustainable alternative – especially for those juggling work, family, or health concerns.

The benefits extend beyond strength. As muscle mass increases, the body burns more calories at rest, forming the foundation for sustainable weight loss. "People often come in wanting to lose weight," says Nish. "But we show them that strength is the key to long-term change – no crash diets, no quick fixes, just real resilience."

In a time when the NHS is under strain and the cost of ongoing treatments adds up, strength training may be one of the simplest forms of preventative health.

"Physio, massage and chiropractic care more than have their place, especially for acute symptoms," Nish says, "but consistent, sustainable strength training can go a long way to prevent longer term issues. What we see here is people taking control. Strength is proactive, not reactive and it can truly be life changing."

"Why wait until something breaks? Strength is something we can all build at any age. Come to us for a free trial and we'll show you how!"





**Glebe Farm House Main Street
LEIRE LE17**

A seamless blend of heritage and modern Living, positioned within the conservation area of the delightful Leicestershire village of Leire, Glebe Farm House is a six bedroom detached residence on Main Street. EPC D

Offers over £1,950,000



**The Rectory Church Walk
BRUNTINGTHORPE LE17**

The Rectory is tucked away on the edge of the highly sought after village of Bruntingthorpe combining the joys of country living with the convenience of commuter links. EPC exempt

Guide Price £1,325,000



**The Stables Earl Shilton Road
THURLASTON LE9**

A beautifully converted barn in the heart of Leicestershire's open countryside. Located in western Leicestershire, The Stables is a luxurious four bedroom barn conversion in an open countryside setting. EPC C

Guide Price £995,000



**Newtown Grange Farmhouse
NEWTOWN UNTHANK LE9**

An impressive country home, abounding with character. Newtown Grange Farmhouse is a home that has been restored and refurbished by its present owners over a period of ten years. The result is a distinguished property. EPC D

Guide Price £1,250,000



Knighton Road LEICESTER LE2

Nestled on a prime corner plot in Stonegate, Garth is a beautifully extended 4-bed detached home blending elegance, privacy, and space. With wrap-around gardens, luxurious interiors, and a standout kitchen extension, this is family living at its finest. EPC D

Offers over £775,000



**Peatling End School Lane
PEATLING MAGNA, LE8**

Striking modernist home with approx 4,000 sq.ft of light-filled, flexible living. 4 beds, 3 baths, 4 receptions, stunning open-plan kitchen and ½ acre with countryside views. EPC C

Offers over £1,130,000



**The Beeches Hall Gardens
GREAT GLEN, LE8**

An exceptional detached home set within an exclusive private development in Great Glen, beautifully refurbished and occupying a mature plot of around 0.55 acres. EPC C

Guide Price £1,099,950



**The Old Farm House Mayns Lane
BURTON OVERY, LE8**

Beautifully renovated 5-bed farmhouse in Burton Overy with stunning gardens, heated pool, 4-bed holiday home, traditional shepherd's hut & 3.5-acre paddock (STM). Ideal for multi-generational living or a commercial venture. EPC D

Guide Price £2,100,000



**Old School House East Farndon,
MARKET HARBOROUGH LE16**

A stunning mid-century home in East Farndon, beautifully renovated blending period charm with contemporary design. Spacious, flexible living, landscaped gardens, and countryside views – perfect for modern village life. EPC B

Guide Price £1,200,000

East Midlands Premium housing market update



Luxury estate agency Fine & Country has released its summer 2025 report. Director *Harry Singh* shares his insights

Leicester and the wider East Midlands housing market are experiencing a shift, not a boom or a bust, but a steady, cautious adjustment. As we head into the second half of 2025, a mixture of economic changes and global uncertainty is shaping how people buy and sell homes.

The biggest headline for many is that interest rates are finally easing. The Bank of England recently cut its base rate to 4.25%, the fourth reduction in less than a year. As a result, mortgage rates are gradually falling, with some buyers now able to access sub-4% deals. This, combined with looser lending rules, is giving hope to first-time buyers and movers alike across Leicester and beyond.

But while affordability is improving, confidence in the economy is still shaky. Global trade tensions and a subdued economic outlook are keeping many cautious. Consumer confidence (although better than during the 2022 cost of living crisis) dipped slightly in April; a sign that many are still wary.

In terms of property prices, the picture is mixed. Average asking prices rose by 1.4% in April, slightly above seasonal expectations (Rightmove). However, high levels of available stock – the highest in a decade for this time of year – mean sellers need to price realistically. While there was a flurry of sales earlier in the year due to the end of a Stamp Duty exemption, this has now cooled. The East Midlands saw a spike in sales, and Derby is currently leading the region in terms of market performance.

Leicester's housing market, like the rest of the region, is adjusting to this new normal. Transactions have slowed slightly since the March surge, and mortgage approvals dipped again in April. But agents remain optimistic, with many expecting activity to rise over the next 12 months.

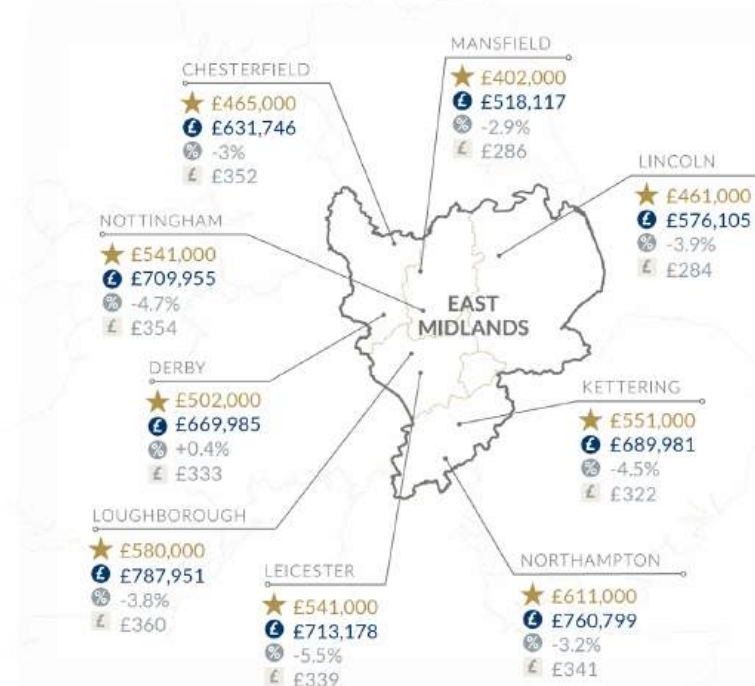
The average time to find a buyer in the East Midlands has dropped to 71

days (Rightmove). This is a noticeable improvement since the start of the year. It's a sign that, despite the bumps, people are still moving.

For Leicester homeowners, buyers, and investors, this is a market built on balance. Expect steady growth, realistic pricing, and a continued easing of financial pressure as the year goes on.

Top 5% East Midlands Premium Market

★ PREMIUM PRICE THRESHOLD	£ AVERAGE SALES PRICE	% ANNUAL % CHANGE	£ AVERAGE PSF
5% of sales were above this level	Average sales price over the past 12 months of all sales above the premium price threshold	% change in average price of properties in the last 12 months compared to the previous 12 months	Average price per square foot of all sales above the premium threshold



SOURCE: DATALOFT, LAND REGISTRY



Church Lane, Ravenstone LE67 2AF

Welcome to The Barns, at Church Lane. Two unique homes finished to an uber high, stylish standard with nothing but design in mind.
EPC TBC

Offers over £1,150,000



Gregory Way, Wigston, Leicester LE18 3UT

Welcome to Gregory Way, a handsome four bedroom family residence ideally situated within the ever popular Wigston Meadows development.
EPC B

Guide Price £425,000



Woodlands Court, Oadby LE2 4QE

On offer is this handsome four bedroom extended home boasting over 1400 sqft within the ever popular Oadby Grange development
EPC C

Offers Over £375,000



Fernie Close, Oadby LE2 4SJ

This handsome four bedroom home boasting one of the Oadby Granges' largest plots. Owned for over 30 years the property is the ideal family home with endless potential. EPC C

SOLD £550,000



Highfield Drive, Wigston LE18 INN

A handsome detached bungalow boasting an enviable position on a wide, desirable road within the sought after town of Wigston.
EPC C

SOLD £495,000



Paddock Way, Great Glen LE8 9HL

Welcome to Paddock Way, a stylish detached home with high end finishes positioned within the highly sought after village of Great Glen.
EPC B

SOLD £725,000



Raywell Road, Hamilton, LE5

Rent: £1,995 PCM : 4 Bedroom House



Birstall Meadow Road, Birstall, LE4

Rent: £1,750 PCM : 4 Bedroom House



Windlass Drive, LE18

Rent: 1,595 PCM : 4 Bedroom House



Pine Tree Avenue, LE5

Rent £2,995 PCM : 5 Bedroom House



Elliot Close, Oadby, LE2

Rent: £1,395 PCM : 4 Bedroom House



Fox Pond Lane, Oadby, LE2

Rent £1,395 PCM : 4 Bedroom House



Aylestone Lane, Wigston, LE18

Rent: £1,300 PCM : 4 Bedroom House



Smith Avenue, Thurmaston, LE4

Rent: £950 PCM : 2 Bedroom House

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Why buyers want move-in ready living

As material and labour costs rise and moving gets more expensive, a growing number of buyers are seeking homes that don't need a top-to-bottom transformation WORDS BY EMILY MILLER

There was a time when the 'project property' was all the rage, an unloved home waiting for someone to strip it back, rewire it, replumb it and start again. But today, many of us are cost-conscious and living a fast-paced lifestyle, so those romanticised renovation dreams are increasingly being swapped for something simpler: a home that's already done.

According to Rebecca Holders, founder of Holders Estate Agents in Leicester, buyers now want more than just a house. "People are looking for homes. They want to be able to imagine themselves living there with just a lick of paint and their furniture, not a to-do list as long as their arm."

This shift in mindset is being driven by a number of factors, not least the rising cost of building materials and labour. With tradespeople in high demand and quotes climbing ever higher, many prospective homeowners are simply opting out of the renovation race. Instead, they're looking for properties that feel welcoming and liveable from day one; homes they can grow into and enjoy without the stress of constant upheaval.

Rebecca adds: "We used to see buyers willing to take on a kitchen refit or bathroom upgrade as part of the journey. Now, more often, they're asking if it's already been done."

This doesn't mean sellers need to embark on a full-scale renovation just to make their property appeal. A fresh coat of neutral paint, decluttered rooms and a tidy garden can significantly influence

a buyer's emotional response. Rebecca notes: "Just adding a couple of outdoor planters or fixing that creaky gate can make your property feel more cared for."

Internally, buyers are leaning towards calm, functional layouts with space to work from home, host family or simply relax. "Open plan still has its place," says Rebecca, "but what we're seeing now is more value placed on flexible rooms. A dining room that could also be a home office. A spare bedroom that feels like a useful space.

"People are buying homes to stay in now. They're not jumping on the ladder



“When someone walks into a home that's light, clean, calm and ready to live in, they're more likely to fall in love with it”

and then straight off again. The idea is to find somewhere you can enjoy for five, ten years or more."

For sellers, this trend is actually good news. You don't need to spend tens of thousands on renovations. You simply need to understand what buyers value and how to present your home in a way that invites them to imagine their own future there.

"When someone walks into a home that's light, clean, calm and ready to live in, they're more likely to fall in love with it. And at the end of the day, that's what really sells a home, not the granite worktops or fancy light fittings, but the feeling that it could be theirs."

Holders' house-to-home hints

- Declutter each room
- Give walls a fresh lick of paint in a neutral colour
- Tidy up the garden and add outdoor planters
- Fix things like creaky gates
- Aim for light, clean and calm



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Family business goes from strength to strength

Leasing Made Simple: A New Era for Vehicle Leasing in the Midlands

In the ever-evolving landscape of vehicle leasing, where innovation meets customer-centric service, one family-run business is making waves with a fresh identity and a renewed commitment to excellence. After 11 successful years as Vehicle Consulting Midlands, Paul and Jayne Stephenson have rebranded their company as Leasing Made Simple (Midlands) Ltd, marking a significant milestone in their journey.

A Family Legacy

At the heart of Leasing Made Simple is a family ethos that prioritises personal relationships and exceptional service. Paul and Jayne, both directors of the company, have infused their passion for customer satisfaction into every aspect of their business. Their hands-on approach ensures that clients receive tailored solutions to meet their unique needs, making the leasing process straightforward and truly enjoyable.

Since launching the rebranded company last October, Leasing Made Simple has experienced remarkable growth. "We've gone from strength to strength," Paul shares, reflecting on the journey. "Our focus has always been on providing the best deals and outstanding customer service, and our new name embodies that commitment."

A Fresh Start with a Clear Vision

The decision to rebrand was not made lightly. After over a decade of building a reputation in the Midlands, Paul and Jayne recognised the need for a name that better reflects their mission and values. "Leasing Made Simple encapsulates what we strive to achieve for our customers," Jayne explains. "We want to demystify the leasing process and make it accessible to everyone, whether they are individuals or businesses."

The new name also aligns with their vision of expanding their offerings. With an extensive range of vehicles available, from compact cars to luxury SUVs, Leasing Made Simple is poised to cater to a diverse clientele. The company ensures customers get competitive pricing and high-quality vehicles.

Customer-Centric Approach

What truly sets Leasing Made Simple apart is its unwavering commitment to customer service. The Stephenson family

understands that leasing a vehicle can be a daunting task. Their aim is to simplify the process, providing clear guidance and support.

"Our customers are at the heart of everything we do," Jayne emphasises. "We take the time to listen to their needs and provide personalised solutions that fit their lifestyle and budget."

As word spreads about their exceptional offerings, Leasing Made Simple has seen an increase in demand, allowing them to expand their fleet and enhance their services. "We're thrilled to be able to offer more vehicles and better deals than ever before," Paul adds.

Looking Ahead

As Leasing Made Simple continues to grow, Paul and Jayne remain committed to their core values of integrity, transparency and family-oriented service. With their rebranding complete and a solid foundation in place, the Stephenson family is excited about the road ahead. "We're just getting started," Paul says, with a smile. "Our mission is to make vehicle leasing simple and enjoyable for everyone – and we can't wait to see where this journey takes us."

In a world where customer service often takes a back seat, Leasing Made Simple (Midlands) Ltd is steering the industry in a new direction – one that prioritises the customer experience and embraces the values of a family-run business. As they embark on this new chapter, one thing is clear – the future of vehicle leasing in the Midlands has never looked brighter.



Paul Stephenson

40 years in the automotive industry at management level



Jayne Stephenson

Jayne comes from a family that has been in the Automotive industry for over 70 years



Leasing Made Simple (Midlands) Ltd

Contact Paul Stephenson: paul.stephenson@afl.co.uk or **0116 366 9502**



SERGE PIZZORNO

Kasabian star designs elephant for Stomp Round Leicester

The design will be kept secret until the art trail launches on July 14 Words by Kerry Smith

LOROS Hospice has unveiled a special celebrity supporter of its new Stomp Round Leicester art trail. Artist Daft-apeth, aka Serge Pizzorno, lead singer of Leicester rock band Kasabian, has designed one of the 40 giant elephants that form the art trail.

Serge said: "When I visited LOROS I found it simply breathtaking. From the receptionists to the physios to the healthcare assistants, everyone works to make families feel cared for and loved. They make the most difficult part of your life as easy as possible. It's one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen.

"I've had family members cared for at LOROS and my Elephant is a way to say thank you to everyone who works there for helping so many families like mine over the years."

Serge has a successful career as an artist, under the pseudonym Daft-apeth. It's under this persona that he's designed and created his elephant sculpture, which is sponsored by local business PPL PRS. His design will be kept secret until the trail goes live on July 14.

Clare Bloomfield of LOROS Hospice said: "Our five-foot elephants are probably one of the bigger canvases Serge has designed. His art is quirky and fun, and we can't wait to see where

his imagination has taken him!

"We're also hoping Serge's involvement will open up the trail to lots of people who show their support and make a donation to LOROS Hospice. Serge really cares about all things Leicester and LOROS is a big part of that."

Stomp Round Leicester will be the biggest public art event Leicester has ever seen and is being brought to the city by LOROS Hospice and Wild in Art, in celebration of the hospice's 40 years. At the end of the 10-week trail, the 40 Elephant sculptures will be auctioned, with the proceeds going to fund LOROS's care for patients and families.

Greg Aiello, Managing Director at PPLPRS said: "We are really honoured,

and excited, to be able to support and work with LOROS, a charity that is so dear to all of us at PPLPRS... The care that LOROS provide for patients and their families is so invaluable, and to be able to support them in this way really does mean a lot to us here at PPL PRS. As a business which champions and supports the future of music, and being based in Leicester, it is so exciting that the elephant we have sponsored has been designed by Kasabian front man, Serge, and we hope everyone who is out and about in the city this summer takes part in the trail and enjoys seeing the amazing elephants in all their glory."

Stomp Round Leicester runs from July 14 to September 21.



SERGE WITH LOROS NURSES



CULTURE

A SPECTATOR'S SUMMER OF SPORT

AND HOW TO JOIN THE ACTION

Words by Kerry Smith



It's sunshine and strawberries as the calendar enters a Great British three months of spectacular summer sports. From the perfectly trimmed lawns of Wimbledon to the roar of Silverstone's grandstands, July to September promises a feast of televised sporting drama. But what if, instead of just watching, you fancied having a go yourself?

THIS SUMMER'S LIVE SPORT

First up: **Wimbledon**. The Championships serve up tension and tennis whites from June 30 – July 13 as the world's best descend on London. Then the action shifts to St Andrews for the 152nd **Open Championship** (July 14–21), where golf's elite will battle the bunkers and sea breeze for the Claret Jug.

Cricket lovers are in for a treat, too. England's men face India, South Africa and Ireland, while the women take on New Zealand and India. And, of course football barely takes a breath. **The Premier League** returns on August 16, promising another season of VAR controversy. Motorsport, meanwhile, screeches into view with the **British Grand Prix** at Silverstone on July 4–6.

Now sit back, reach for the remote... or lace up your trainers.

GETTING INVOLVED

Whether you're inspired by the tactical tennis of Djokovic or the raw pace of England's seam attack, Leicestershire offers a host of ways to swap screen time for sweat.

Anyone for tennis?

Leicester Forest East Tennis Club and Rothley Ivanhoe Tennis Club are great places to start. Many clubs offer pay-and-play sessions or friendly open days over the summer. For a more casual knock up, Victoria Park and Knighton



Park both include public courts that you can book via their websites or the ClubSpark app.

Cricket for all

Leicestershire County Cricket Club may be your go-to for watching the professionals performing in whites, but if you'd rather wield the willow yourself, Broomleys Cricket Club in Coalville and Barrow Town CC both offer competitive and social cricket. The ECB's All Stars Cricket and Dynamos Cricket schemes provide perfect taster sessions for younger players to have a go at the crease.

Hit the fairway

Golf more your pace? Our region is home to scenic courses like Kirby Muxloe Golf Club and Rothley Park. For newcomers, Leicester Golf Centre in Thurmaston runs beginner lessons and has a Toptracer driving range, ideal for social sessions with friends.

Motorsport without the millionaire budget

You don't need to drive an F1 car to feel the thrill. Try Stretton Circuit just outside Leicester, where you can go karting for a day. Or check out TeamSport Indoor Karting in Leicester city centre for fast-paced, accessible fun.

Football's coming home

As the Premier League gears up, local grassroots football is thriving. Leicester City in the Community runs sessions for all ages and abilities, and Leicestershire & Rutland County FA has a brilliant online portal to help adults and juniors find local teams or recreational leagues. For something more relaxed, the Goals Leicester f5v-a-side centre welcomes casual bookings all summer.

NO EXPERIENCE? NO PROBLEM

One of the joys of summer sport is that it welcomes dabblers and die-hards alike. Many clubs run 'have a go' events during the school holidays or host festival-style taster days. Whether you're looking to commit to a team or just fancy a sociable afternoon outdoors, Leicestershire's sports scene is wide open.

So yes, settle in with strawberries and centre court. Shout at the umpire from the beer tent. Argue about the offside rule. But then, maybe step outside and serve, drive, bowl or dribble for yourself.



STRETTON CIRCUIT KARTING

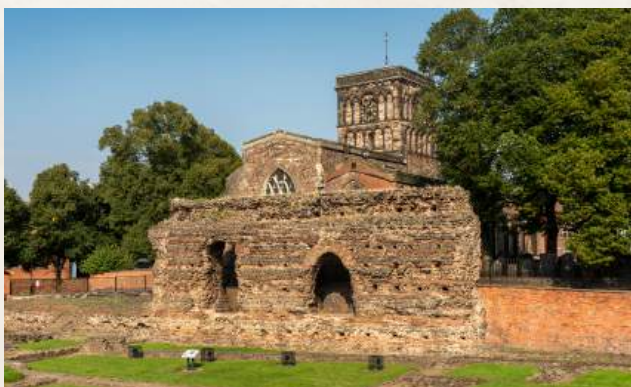


IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE JEWRY WALL - ROMAN EXPERIENCE

IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE JEWRY WALL: MATT SHORT

STEP INTO ROMAN LEICESTER

The reimagined Jewry Wall Museum allows us to discover Leicester's Roman past in a new, immersive experience with hands-on exhibits and remarkable archaeological finds. City Centre Director [Sarah Harrison](#) highlights how this state-of-the-art attraction brings the city's Roman history to life



History is set to come alive in Leicester like never before. Opening on July 26, 2025 AD, Jewry Wall invites visitors to step into the sights, sounds, and stories of Roman Leicester, right beside the ruins of one of Britain's largest surviving Roman walls.

Jewry Wall is a site of deep historical resonance. The museum stands on the remains of a 2nd-century Roman bathhouse which once served Leicester's civilian population. Lost to time for centuries, the site was dramatically rediscovered in the 1930s by pioneering archaeologist Dame Kathleen Kenyon. Today, these remains offer crucial insights into Roman urban life in Britain and are recognised as one of the largest surviving examples of Roman civic architecture in the country.

Set in a striking 1960s Brutalist building, this reimagined museum delivers a real Roman experience through immersive storytelling, hands-on exhibits, and extraordinary archaeological finds. Over 100 original Roman artefacts, including beautifully preserved mosaics and painted wall plasters are brought to life through digital games, 3D models, films, and a specially commissioned poetry installation.

A highlight is a powerful multi-wall immersive projection that guides visitors through Roman Leicester through the eyes of a child, inspired by the Roman archaeology found in the city and real Roman objects on display in the museum including ancient footprints found in Roman tiles. Developed with

JEWRY WALL: LEICESTER CITY COUNCIL

family appeal and accessibility in mind, the experience blends live-action storytelling, expressive animation by artist Scott Tetlow, and expert archaeological input from the University of Leicester.

At the heart of the museum is a world-class exhibition showcasing more than 100 original Roman objects, all unearthed in Leicestershire. These include some of the finest mosaics and painted wall plasters ever discovered in Britain, presented alongside an array of digital games, physical interactives, 3D models, short films, and artistic reconstructions of life in Roman Ratae Corieltavorum, Leicester's ancient name. A specially commissioned poetry installation and tactile replicas for hands-on exploration further enhance the visitor experience, making the space as engaging as it is educational.

The museum is housed within the striking Grade II listed Trevor Dannatt building, a Brutalist icon from the 1960s. Thoughtfully reimagined for a new era by Hayley Sharpe Design, Heritage Interactive and Leicester Museums & Galleries, the building's stark modernism now frames a vibrant, ancient story creating a compelling story between past and present.

Snacks and souvenirs are also up for grabs. Located in St Nicholas Circle, the entrance to Jewry Wall Museum leads directly into the Jewry Wall Café, reception area, and shop which can be accessed without having a ticket.

Jewry Wall's launch represents a significant step forward in Leicester's heritage narrative. For visitors of all ages and backgrounds, the museum offers an unforgettable chance to step into Roman Leicester. Book tickets jewrywall.com.

TICKET PRICES

Enjoy unlimited entry for 12 months to the Jewry Wall with the Roman Explorer Pass

TICKET TYPE

Adult (16+)	£12.50
Child (5-15)	£6.25
Family Ticket	£32.00
Concession	£11.50

Book your tickets in advance

- Booking in advance is recommended to avoid disappointment. Tickets are for timed entry and booking in advance is the only way to guarantee entry at the time you have booked.
- Select the date of your visit using the calendar, then choose the time you wish to visit.
- The museum opens at 10am. Spend as long as you wish exploring the exhibitions or relaxing in the café.



KATHLEEN KENYON (CENTRE RIGHT) AND HER EXCAVATION TEAM AT JEWRY WALL

EXCAVATION OF JEWRY WALL: STORY OF LEICESTER

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THE BELMONT HOTEL RACKING UP FESTIVE BOOKINGS

The sun might be shining, but July's the time to start thinking about Christmas gatherings with many venues booked up in advance.

Kerry Smith talks to Robert Wormall, general manager of The Belmont Hotel, about the festive hospitality period

It might feel far too early to be thinking about crackers and party hats, but The Belmont Hotel is already setting the stage for Christmas 2025.

Robert Wormall, general manager at the historic Belmont Hotel, says: "As bookings open for festive events, meals and getaways, we're encouraging families and businesses to plan ahead. An influx of bookings come in July from businesses and even families, and our tables and rooms can fill up quickly from this time, but many book in with us as early as December the year before."

The Belmont has long held a place in Leicester's hospitality scene, dating back to its early years in the 1930s when it was first opened as a family-run guesthouse. Today, it's a four-star independent hotel in New Walk, retaining its historic character while offering contemporary comforts. It's also no stranger to recognition and is currently a nominee in the Niche Business Awards 2025 Hospitality category, highlighting its continued relevance in the city's business and leisure landscape.

This July, The Belmont, known for its blend of Victorian charm and independent spirit, is offering a range of Christmas experiences to suit all types of celebrations. Private parties are available for groups of 40 people or more, or guests can join one of the party night packages with other like-minded groups. Smaller groups and families can still enjoy the season in style, with festive dining options available in the hotel's restaurant or

one of its private dining rooms any day of the week.

On Christmas Day itself, although The Belmont has many guests who book the same table each year, guests can choose between the main restaurant or the recently refurbished Rose Room for a full traditional dining experience complete with flowers to take home and gifts for children. And for those wanting to fully escape the washing up and late-night drive home, the hotel is offering overnight stays from Christmas Eve through to Boxing Day, with arrival treats, a Christmas Eve gourmet buffet, Christmas lunch and more.

"The early bird approach might just help avoid the November-December panic"

Afternoon tea gets a seasonal twist too, with festive editions returning; a popular choice for those looking to treat a friend or make a family outing feel that little bit more special. Gift vouchers are also available, including for afternoon tea, Christmas dining, overnight stays or flexible monetary amounts.

"While most people are still focused on summer plans, our team at The Belmont is already decking the halls," Rob laughs. "With venues booking up earlier each year, the early bird approach might just help avoid the November-December panic."

With Christmas at The Belmont officially on the table, go to belmonthotel.co.uk to find out more about packages or to make an enquiry.

THE PARMAR COLLECTION: CELEBRATING 18 YEARS OF CHRISTMAS MAGIC

For nearly two decades, The Parmar Collection has brought elegance and excitement to festive celebrations with opulent décor, exquisite dining and exceptional entertainment.

This Christmas, we unveil fresh themes, innovative menus, fantastic music and our signature beautifully adorned ballrooms.

Here's a sneak peek at what awaits you this **Christmas 2025** across our stunning venues:

THE CITY ROOMS



The City Rooms will come alive this festive season with a range of events and experiences designed to make your Christmas unforgettable! Here's what you can expect at The City Rooms:

- **Shared Party Nights:** Join us for festive fun from 27th November to 21st December.
- **Take That Tribute Night: Sunday 21st December** Celebrate the season with a tribute to one of the UK's most iconic bands.
- **Christmas Conference Delegate Packages:** Add some holiday cheer to your corporate events.
- **Festive Afternoon Teas: Sunday 14th & 21st December** Indulge in traditional Christmas treats in an elegant setting.
- **New Year's Eve Party:** Ring in 2026 with a spectacular celebration.

WINSTANLEY HOUSE

Winstanley House will be hosting an array of festive events, ensuring there's something for everyone. Here's what to look forward to:

- **Shared Party Nights:** Available from 27th November through to the 3rd January.
- **Take That Tribute Night: Thursday 27th November** Sing and dance to your favourite hits this Christmas.
- **Christmas Conference Delegate Packages:** Make your business meetings merry.
 - **Afternoon Tea with Santa: 21st 22nd 23rd & 24th December**
A magical experience for little ones to meet Santa himself.
- **ABBA Christmas Party Night: Sunday 21st December** Dance the night away with the sounds of ABBA.
- **Black Iron Festive Menu:** Enjoy seasonal dining at Black Iron from 17th November.
 - **Christmas Day at Black Iron and in Our Grand Ballroom:** Experience the ultimate Christmas Day feast.
- **Festive Afternoon Teas at Black Iron:** A festive twist on our award-winning fare.
- **Black Iron at Home Christmas Boxes:** Available to order from 27th November – 20th December for collection on 23rd and 24th.
- **New Year's Eve Party:** Ring in 2026 with a spectacular celebration.
- **January Party Night:** For those in the industry, enjoy a post-Christmas bash on Saturday 3rd January.



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THE SOUNDTRACK FOR LIFE

Music builds confidence, creates connection, belonging and a passion that tends to stick around for life. Leicestershire Music urges Leicester businesses to help to continue to fund lessons, events, and instruments to spark a musical flame in children's lives *Words by Emily Miller*



For many children, access to music lessons, instruments, and performance opportunities can be the turning point that uncovers musical potential, builds resilience, and lays the foundation for a lifelong love of the arts. But what happens when those opportunities are out of reach?

"Without access to lessons in school, affordable instruments or a musical family background, it can be incredibly difficult for a young person to even consider a career in music," says Sarah Barton-Wales of Leicestershire Music, an organisation dedicated to removing these very barriers. "Our job is to ensure that every child in Leicester & Leicestershire has the chance to explore their musical potential, regardless of their background or circumstance."

Leicestershire Music, lead of the Leicestershire Music Hub, works in partnership with schools, families and community groups to offer a wide range of accessible and inclusive music programmes. From whole-class instrumental teaching to choirs and orchestras, the initiative serves not just as a training ground for aspiring musicians, but as a safe space for self-expression and connection.

Studies consistently show that music education can improve academic performance, boost self-esteem, and forge key life skills. These benefits are especially pronounced in young people who may not otherwise find a sense of

belonging in traditional academic settings.

"We've seen students grow in confidence, make new friendships and find a sense of identity through music," Sarah shares. "For many, it's more than a hobby. It's an outlet, a source of joy – and often the first time they feel truly seen and heard."

Parents can find out more through the organisation's website, which details the options available for subsidised music tuition, instrument hire and details of events and concerts their children can be part of.

"We need businesses to step up and be part of the cultural future of this county. Supporting young musicians isn't just philanthropy, it's an investment in the social and creative fabric of Leicestershire."

This isn't just about producing professional musicians. While some young people do go on to study music at higher levels or work in the industry, for many, the value lies in what music brings to everyday life – forever.

Sarah sums it up best: "Music is a cultural right. Every child should have the opportunity to experience it, not just as a listener, but as a creator. Whether they go on to perform at Glastonbury, produce music, manage bands, make lifelong friendships or simply find comfort in playing an instrument in their bedroom, the impact socially is profound."

In championing accessibility, inclusivity, and community spirit, Leicestershire Music is not only nurturing musical potential, it's shaping better futures. And that's something worth making noise about. Parents and businesses can find out more at leicestershiremusic.org or [@leicsmakemusic](https://www.instagram.com/leicsmakemusic).





THIS OCTOBER, JOIN NUPUR ARTS FOR...

NARTAN FESTIVAL

Hey, it's Smita and Shreya here, Artistic Director and Associate Director (and mother-daughter duo) of Leicester's leading South Asian Dance Academy, Nupur Arts.

This year marks 35 years since Smita moved over from India and started pioneering the Classical Indian dance style Bharatanatyam in Leicester. You may have seen our company's performances at big city festivals like Light Up Leicester, An Indian Summer and Mela. Looking ahead to this Autumn, we warmly invite you to the 11th edition of our annual Nartan Festival, a celebration of South Asian arts. Here's the programme...

We will kick off the festival with an evening talk, 'The Origins of Indian Performing Arts', by Dr Maddalena Italia, Associate Lecturer at UCL and Sanskrit Senior Lecturer at SOAS. No prior knowledge is necessary to enjoy the talk, just a curiosity about Indian cultural heritage.

Book your ticket through our website (Pay as you Wish) and join us on Tuesday, October 7 at the Adult Education College. Rumour has it there will be chai as well.

Talking of chai, as part of the festival this year we will be spicing things up with an exciting music night. More details to be announced soon.

'Dancing through the Streets' will display chosen artworks from youngsters aged 11-18 answering the question, How does dancing make you feel? You can find them in windows across the Cultural Quarter this October. Please encourage youngsters to enter the competition (instructions on our website).

On the afternoon of Saturday, October 11, we'll be running family-friendly craft workshops at Curve as part of the popular Cultural Quarter Earlies programme. Join us to make a Diwali lamp (diya) from clay and decorate it with dazzling gems and sequins.



This is a free event. Be sure to book at curveonline.co.uk to avoid disappointment.

As a dance company, the event we get super excited for is Ānartam, a showcase of Classical South Asian dance styles. This year we will be treated to vibrant performances of Bharatanatyam, Mohiniyattam, Kathak and Sri Lankan Kandyan Dance. Get ready to be swept away by ancient, mythological storytelling. Book your ticket now at curveonline.co.uk and join us at 4pm on Sunday, October 12 at Curve.

We hope to see you in October!
Smita and Shreya

To book your event tickets visit: nupurarts.org.uk/shows
Instagram and Facebook: @nupurarts
Twitter: @nupurartsDA

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THE JEWEL

IN LEICESTERSHIRE'S

CROWN

A 'where to' guide for the Notswolds' celebrated Welland Valley *Words by Tim Relf*

Countryfile magazine published an article earlier this year which had the headline 'The Forgotten Valley'. Leicestershire residents may well have recognised the photo under it – a mist-shrouded shot of the Haringworth viaduct. The article eulogised about the Welland Valley, a lesser-known spot in the south east of our county described as 'a lost world straight out of storybooks in the heart of England where castles, medieval manor houses and ancient inns await'.

This area also hit the headlines in the spring when *The Sunday Times* published its Best Places to Live 2025 list and included Market Harborough for the third year running. It was the only town in Leicestershire to appear in the list and the write-up highlighted the pretty Welland Valley countryside.

Meanwhile, a raft of articles in the national press have sung the praises of the so-called 'Notswolds' – a section of Leicestershire, Rutland, Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire as beautiful as the Cotswolds but 'without the price tag or pretentiousness'.

The Welland Valley is a small corner of the 'Notswolds'

flanking the River Welland on the Leicestershire-Northamptonshire border. There's debate about where, exactly, it starts and ends, but the stretch from Market Harborough to Haringworth seems as good a definition as any.

This is indeed a world from storybooks where history and culture abound, a world of unspoilt countryside and charming villages. Perhaps the epicentre (spiritually, if not exactly geographically) is the village of Medbourne, which *The Sunday Times* dubbed 'one of the best addresses in Leicestershire'.

It's become familiar to a lot of people over the past couple of years as a result of the Nevill Holt Festival, an exciting multi-genre event which takes place just a mile away in May and June each year. But it's a great spot for a visit at any time. In many ways, Medbourne is the quintessential English village – full of picture-postcard-pretty houses, an ancient church, a small shop-cum-post office, a sports club and a charming country hotel and pub called The Nevill Arms. The village is a great base from which to explore Leicestershire's 'forgotten valley' if you're unfamiliar with it...

WELLAND VIADUCT: MARATHON - GEOGRAPHY.ORG.UK

Where to visit in and near The Welland Valley

Market Harborough has a friendly, bustling high street where you can eat, drink and shop. It's full of well-known stores such as Joules, Jigsaw and Jo Malone, plus lots of independent retailers. Perhaps its most iconic structure is the 'Old Grammar School' – a Grade 1 building standing on 'stilts' which dates back to 1614.

Rockingham Castle, which 'celebrates 950 years of living history', was built on the instruction of William the Conqueror.

Lyddington Bede House, an English Heritage property, was by 1600 an alms house for the poor if they were 'free of lunacy, leprosy or the French pox'.

Eyebrook Reservoir is a haven for wildlife and popular with birders, but in 1943 was used by Lancaster bombers as a training ground for the famous World War II 'Dambusters' raid.

Rutland Water is a great spot for fishing, sailing, cycling and other outdoor pursuits.

Burghley House (the site of the annual world-famous horse trials in September), Deene Park, Kirby Hall, Kelmars Hall and Gardens and Boughton House are all beautiful venues.

Foxtan Locks, dating back to 1810, are Britain's longest, steepest staircase flight of locks. Rising 23 metres up a steep escarpment, they comprise two sets of five locks.

Harringworth Viaduct is the longest masonry viaduct in the UK at 1.17km long. It has 82 arches, each with a 12m span.

Where to stay

The Nevill Arms is a boutique country hotel and pub in Medbourne which is midway (seven miles from both) between Market Harborough and Uppingham. This Grade II listed building, constructed of the local honey-coloured stone, stands beside a brook. The venue is a blend of stylish, cosmopolitan hotel and traditional country hostelry. *Country Life* described it as a 'stunning venue' and *The Times* called it 'one of the cosiest places to stay in the UK'. It has 10 bedrooms, a restaurant, a bar, a private courtyard with a Jospoer bar and grill, and a 'river terrace'.



BEDROOM AT THE NEVILL ARMS

Where to eat

The Sun Inn A village pub in the historic village of Great Easton, close to the borders of Leicestershire, Rutland and Northamptonshire. With its focus on using local ingredients, including meat from its own farm just a few hundred yards away, this pub has become a destination for discerning diners, while remaining at the heart of its community. Inside it's characterful and cosy, while outside the garden is full of flowers and has an ancient olive tree, making it the perfect place to while away warm afternoons and evenings. It also has two private dining rooms.

No. 23 Travel the short distance from the Welland Valley to the historic market town of Uppingham (just across the border in Rutland) and you'll find this bistro-style restaurant. It offers great service and a delicious menu, alongside refined cocktails and a carefully curated wine list. It's in a 300-year-old Grade II Listed building, which has recently been restored to its former glory. Outside there's a terrace and a Garden Room giving up to 10 guests the chance to enjoy a private dining experience.

The Red Lion Set in the heart of the picturesque village of Great Bowden, this country pub has recently been refurbished, with the interiors and decor reflecting the surrounding countryside. Sustainability, seasonality and good quality meat are at the heart of the offering, with many of the kitchen ingredients coming from Leicestershire suppliers.

WHY LEICESTER NEEDS WESLEY HALL NOW MORE THAN EVER

For over a century, Wesley Hall has offered dignity, hope and practical help to Leicester's diverse communities. Here's why this lifeline needs your support to continue making an impact **Words by Emily Miller**



In a world where headlines divide and public opinion often polarises, Leicester's Wesley Hall quietly continues its century-long mission: helping people not just survive but belong.

Based in one of the city's most deprived and diverse areas, Wesley Hall is more than a community centre. It's a place where someone fleeing conflict can find advice, where a young mum gets parenting support, and where an older resident can share a hot meal and a smile.

"We don't just offer services; we build relationships," says CEO Anita Rao. "Whether someone is here for antenatal classes or needs help with a visa application, we meet them exactly where they are."

This ethos, rooted in dignity, inclusivity, and warmth, threads through everything Wesley Hall does. From ESOL and IT classes to mental health support, food pantries to legal aid, every service is delivered with the simple but powerful belief: nobody should be left behind.

Wesley Hall's Monday community meal and food pantry are lifelines for families facing food insecurity, but they offer more than nutrition. "It's not just about food, it's about dignity," explains a volunteer. "People come not just to eat, but to feel part of something."

The centre is a place of possibility, teaching skills, supporting emotional wellbeing, and helping families rebuild lives. But to keep doing this work, it needs support from the wider community, especially from local businesses and individuals who care about Leicester's future.

Wesley Hall is a beacon in challenging times, reminding us that immigration isn't just about policy, it's about people. It's about showing up, with compassion and consistency, no matter someone's story or struggle.

As Anita Rao puts it, "We aim to empower people with the skills and confidence they need. It's about building a strong foundation, from birth and way, way beyond."

To donate, volunteer, or partner with Wesley Hall, visit www.wesleyhallcc.co.uk. Because everyone deserves a place to feel safe, seen, and supported.



HOW YOU CAN HELP WESLEY HALL THRIVE:

DONATE - Every pound helps Wesley Hall continue offering food, legal aid, language lessons and more.

VOLUNTEER - From mentoring to meal prep, your time can change lives.

PARTNER AS A BUSINESS - Fund services, sponsor workshops, or match employee volunteer hours.

SPREAD THE WORD - Share their story. Host a fundraiser. Champion their cause.

IMPACTFUL AND MEANINGFUL WAYS TO MEET YOUR CSR

Leicestershire businesses are finding more meaningful ways to support grassroots causes; offering time, skills, and resources where they're truly needed, and building real connections with the communities around them

In a city where community need often outweighs resources, there's a quiet movement helping to bridge the gap, not through fanfare or photo ops, but by making sure that when businesses want to give back, their support actually lands where it matters.

Recently, Hastings Direct worked with this local connector to explore how their staff could contribute time, skills, and energy to the causes that need them most. It's a growing model for how businesses in Leicestershire can do the same, not with a generic CSR template, but with something more bespoke, more human.

"Lots of businesses like Hastings Direct are looking to support local causes, but they don't always know where to start," says Kevin Allen-Khimani, Chief Executive of Voluntary Action Leicestershire. "We help them figure out what they're good at what they actually can give and then we connect them with a charity or project that needs exactly that."

It's not about forcing square pegs into round holes. One small construction company, for instance, didn't have a donation budget but had joiners between jobs. Through the right introduction, they refitted a kitchen in a women's refuge that had been on a waiting list for months. For the women who used the space daily, it was transformational. For the business, it was a way to help that felt authentic.

Another example? A local business offered free workshops for grassroots charities struggling to manage their bookkeeping. "They didn't have hours to spend on volunteering, but what they shared in two short sessions has already helped those charities reach more people online," Kevin explains.

It's that kind of targeted, thoughtful approach that sets



this work apart, the idea that it's not about doing something but doing the right thing.

"When businesses feel personally connected to where their time or skills are going, the impact is huge," says Kevin. "It builds team morale, it deepens their sense of purpose, and it genuinely strengthens our communities."

The truth is, Leicestershire's voluntary sector is packed with unsung heroes doing incredible work every single day, from food banks feeding families in crisis, to youth clubs giving young people safe spaces to grow, to grassroots mental health groups supporting those who fall between the cracks. But they can't do it alone.

Their resources are stretched, their staff are often volunteers, and demand rarely slows down. That's where businesses come in. The invitation is simple but powerful: don't just 'give back.' Plug in. Show up. Offer what you have, whether it's time, tools, talent, or training. And let that effort be guided by someone who understands the real landscape. Because when businesses and charities connect in the right way, the impact runs deeper than a donation, it changes lives on both sides.

"When it's done right," Kevin adds, "everyone wins."

Chat to Kevin and find meaningful ways to meet your CSR.



10 QUESTIONS FOR... POSY STERLING

As she prepares to star in the hot new indie film *Lollipop*, actress, who was raised in Market Harborough, Posy Sterling answers our all-important 10 questions

1 What's a funny memory from your childhood that still makes you smile?

My grandparents were always very funny, very entertaining and very loving. Even the way they would row was hilarious. The way my grandpa would pull a face at me to make me laugh, and then my grandma would pull one back in mock outrage. Any time I think of them I smile.

2 What's your biggest pet peeve?

Drivers who beep their car horns at people or other drivers. It really grinds my gears! It's not nice to be beeped at!

3 If you could have any superpower for a day, what would you choose and why?

Time travel would be a good choice; less of a burden to only do it for a day. I'd use it to see loved ones who've passed, like my grandparents, and tell them all I've been up to. Let little me show them she made it.

4 What's a guilty pleasure you just can't give up?

Sugar. I'm getting better... but I love a sweet treat. I'm coeliac, so any time I see something gluten-free that usually isn't, like a donut, I have to get it. I had a field day in New York this spring. A chocolate-topped vanilla éclair was so good it made me cry.

5 Who's the most interesting person you've ever met?

I've met a lot of inspiring people, but human to human, I think my brother is up there. He has a very interesting brain. I have four brothers, so I won't say which one, to avoid drama!



6 What's the nicest compliment you've ever received?

I'm working on receiving them better. To me, the best compliments are about character. I'm told I have a good heart, I'm a good friend and auntie. And apparently I'm very funny.

7 What's a little lie you've told recently that you don't feel bad about?

I did a stealthy exit the other day. Someone asked if I was leaving, I said I was going to the bathroom, but I actually snuck home and went to bed! I felt bad for a second, but knew if I started goodbyes, I'd be stuck an hour.

8 Where's your favourite place in Leicester, and why?

Phoenix Cinema. I did *Barbenheimer* there – it was my favourite day out in Leicester so far. And I'll be back soon for *Lollipop*! (Special Q&A screening on June 16)

9 What's been the holiday of your lifetime so far?

A solo trip to Bali was special. But Majorca has my heart. I go to slow down, even if I'm working. Sunrises, caves, hikes... that's my dream.

10 What's your current recent TV show/film/book/podcast?

Books: *Becoming Supernatural* by Joe Dispenza and *My Brilliant Friend* by Elena Ferrante. Podcast: *Blindboy* or *Almost 30*. Film: *Hustle*, I love an underdog story. TV: Waiting impatiently for season three of *Outlast* (and *Physical 100*). Obsessed.



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