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*"Christmas is coming, the geese are getting fat  
Please put a penny in the old man's hat  
If you haven't got a penny, a ha'penny will do  
If you haven't got a ha'penny, then God bless you!"*

*Traditional nursery rhyme*

Can you believe we're talking about Christmas already? It only seems like yesterday we were taking the office tree for recycling and boxing up the baubles and tinsel.

However, in this issue of Surrey Business News our corporate hospitality feature, on page 14, tells you how to get your office party swinging with a piece about using Windlesham Golf Club as a venue.

But the article also looks at other venues as well, and for other occasions, because entertaining your staff and clients isn't a once-a-year investment.

The rewards of being able to show either your team or your customers 'the time of their lives' will continue to pay dividends for a long time to come.

On both sides of the coin, investment in the care of consumers and welfare of employees is a continuing project – like a marriage or an employment contract.

If you want either of them to work, these activities require a degree of compromise – although not to the extent that someone feels they are being forced to do something against their will – and our Employment Law feature on page eight confronts this sensitive topic head on.

The feature stresses how 'employment is a two-way street', and like the nursery rhyme above, sometimes you will be kindly putting the money in the old man's hat and sometimes you will be that old man.

**Philip Jones**, Editor

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*Front cover image: Read about Windlesham Golf Club in the Corporate Hospitality feature which starts on page 14.*

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## News

## On the road to success

Cranleigh Freight Services (CFS), the logistics carrier, has secured a joint finance package from NatWest and Lombard to replace four new lorries, allowing them to continue providing the correct transport solutions to their customers.

A £235,000 funding package was provided to replace four lorries, which are now on the road and fully operational. At this time CFS felt it was also the right time to transfer their full banking facilities to NatWest to work in line with the £13m annual turnover business.

David Wells and Graham Young, Directors of Cranleigh Freight Services, said: "Managing a successful business spanning over three decades required a bank on board to support our full business requirements. NatWest and Lombard have been instrumental throughout the whole process and provided us with the correct funding solution that allows us to part-replace our fleet of lorries allowing us to meet customer demands."

Jo Cater, Senior Relationship Manager at NatWest, added: "Cranleigh Freight Services is a recognised name throughout Europe for their reputation and reliability, which was reflected in their 2009 Business Award."



## Castle keep open to the public following major restoration

*KEEP GOING: Jeremy Hunt, MP and Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport officially re-opened Farnham Castle's 12th Century keep to the public, following a major restoration programme. Farnham Castle is one of the South East's most important historical buildings, and a Heritage Lottery Fund grant of over £700,000 has enabled the completion of this final phase of the restoration project. This now means the keep will be open free of charge to visitors, seven days a week, throughout most of the year.*

## Woking-based FM services provider secures new funding

Managed Support Services, which has its head office in Woking, has secured a working capital facility of £2 million from Lloyds Banking Group, to further expand the business.

Following a number of acquisitions, AIM-listed Managed Support Services PLC, was looking to switch its banking services to a bank that understood the company's growth potential and could provide the necessary support for further expansion.

The business approached Lloyds TSB Corporate Markets, which took on its day-to-day banking. The bank team also introduced the company to its asset based finance division, Lloyds TSB Commercial Finance, which provided a £2 million

funding line to allow Managed Support Services to execute its expansion strategy by releasing the value of its sales ledger.

Piers Wilson, Group Finance Director, Managed Support Services, commented: "Lloyds Banking Group has been a trusted advisor, pro-active and extremely supportive of Managed Support Services as we invest in our business, to maximise growth and develop our long-term strategy. We were looking for a supportive banking partner that understood the business and could provide the necessary assistance for future acquisitions."

Tim Tostevin, Relationship Director, Lloyds TSB Corporate Markets, Gatwick and South East, who led the deal, said:

"We built a strong relationship with Managed Support Services to get to know the business and find a solution to meet the company's banking needs. The company has a strong growth strategy and we're proud to be working closely with the management team to enable them to build on their existing success."

Managed Support Services provides total building solutions across the lifecycle of a property.

The company offers in-house delivery of a range of building and hard Facilities Management services including HVAC, M&E, fabric maintenance, energy management, health and safety consultancy, environmental compliance and interior fit-out.

## News

# Grundon retains Elmbridge and Spelthorne recycling contract

Elmbridge and Spelthorne Borough Councils have signed a seven-year deal for the renewal of their materials recycling contract with Colnbrook-based Grundon Waste Management Ltd. The deal, worth an estimated £0.5m per year, came into effect on 1 April.

In a bid to reduce administration and cost, Elmbridge Borough Council teamed with neighbour and fellow Surrey Waste Partnership member Spelthorne Borough in framing a joint approach to the renewal of their respective Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) contracts.

More than 26,000 tonnes per year of mixed recyclables are included in the deal, which is expected to result in savings to Elmbridge Council of £175,000 and to Spelthorne of around £100,000 in the coming year.

This is the first major joint procurement of a waste contract in Surrey. Elmbridge Council acted as lead authority in preparing contract documents and establishing the procurement framework.



*CLEANING UP: (L to R) Anthony Jeziorski, Head of Environmental Care, Elmbridge Borough Council; Richard Skehens, Managing Director, Grundon Waste Management Ltd; and Dr Sandy Muirhead, Head of Environmental Services, Spelthorne Borough Council, at the official contract signing*

In keeping with procurement law and the councils' procurement strategies and following a highly competitive tendering process, the winning bid was submitted by incumbent supplier Grundon Waste Management.

Key to Grundon's success was its detailed understanding of the requirements based on previous experience, and the close proximity of their Colnbrook MRF which will keep waste vehicle movements to a minimum. Another factor weighing heavily in

the company's favour was the offer to include additional materials for recycling when its rebuilt MRF comes into operation.

Following a serious fire in May 2009, Grundon elected to build a completely new, state-of-the-art facility rather than renovate the existing plant. The new MRF will incorporate seven 'Redwave' optical auto-sorters. Each auto-sorter can be programmed to extract any one of a wide range of materials, for example plastics, glass, paper or cardboard.



## Exam success? Holly would – in a 'minnett'!

Dorking company Brodie Plant Goddard is celebrating the success of another of its graduates who has passed her final assessment to become a fully qualified chartered surveyor.

Holly Minnett has been with the company for five years and has been undergoing an intensive training programme to assist her on the way to becoming chartered.

The success adds strength to the existing surveying team which now has ten chartered surveyors.



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## News



### Modfather gives charity concert you can't refuse

Mod music legend Paul Weller returned to his home town of Woking, to play a one-off gig in aid of the Woking Hospice, which raised more than £55,000.

Held at the Woking Leisure Centre, the 'Wake Up Woking' concert was sponsored by Consult Hyperion.



### Third gold for Birdworld!

Staff at Birdworld have received a third gold award from the Green Tourism Business Scheme. The awards judge tourist attractions and accommodation providers based upon their attitude and actions in the interest of sustainable business and environmental practices.

## Whiteoaks – still number one



Farnham-based The Whiteoaks Consultancy Ltd has climbed four places up this year's PR Week Technology League Tables, the industry-recognised measure of success in the technology PR sector.

Up to sixth place from tenth in 2009 in the UK-wide tables, Whiteoaks has retained its position as the number one technology PR consultancy outside London for the sixth year running.

The consultancy reported fees of £2.64 million, a 41 per cent increase compared with the

corresponding period in 2008.

"In tough market conditions, clients are focusing even more on gaining tangible returns on their investment in PR," said Whiteoaks Managing Director, James Kelliher. "Whiteoaks demonstrates a link between PR and sales performance. This has resonated strongly in the market and given us a real advantage. I'm confident that this focus will bring continued success in 2010."

Thanks to its business growth, Whiteoaks continues to recruit new staff. In the last twelve

months, ten new starters have been welcomed to the business and significant internal promotions have also been made. Two new account managers, a senior account manager and two account directors have been appointed in recent months.

"Whiteoaks has had an extremely successful year and is continuing to see significant growth," says Kelliher. "With that comes the need for further recruitment and the consultancy is continuing to look for creative, talented PR professionals."

### Public sector pensions need radical reform

Business leaders in Surrey have backed calls for a radical reform of public sector pensions, which they say are currently overburdening the taxpayer.

The Institute of Directors and the Institute of Economic Affairs have teamed up to set up the Public Sector Pensions Commission which has called on the Government to dramatically change the way pensions for NHS

staff, teachers, police, civil servants and other public employees, are delivered.

Guildford-based Rodger Broad, Director for IoD South, said: "This is not about the private sector knocking the public sector, but a matter of simple economics. Many people who are saving towards their own retirement must be wondering why the majority of the workforce is supporting other people's pensions through their taxes.

"The value of public sector pensions stands at over 40 per

cent of salary, compared with about 20 per cent for workers in the private sector. In reality public sector workers are only putting away 6 per cent and their employers 14 per cent, with the remaining sum being met by the taxpayer.

"It was traditionally argued that public servants were rewarded with golden pensions because their salaries were low by comparison. But now that they match, and in many cases exceed, the salaries paid in industry, that argument no longer holds water."

## News

## Surrey businesses say stop late payments 'scandal'

A group of Surrey entrepreneurs is calling on the Government to strengthen existing laws to ban late payments from business clients.

One in four county members of Business Network International (BNI), the world's biggest business referral and networking organisation, said that it was the largest problem their companies face.

A survey among the 550 BNI members in Surrey pointed to other small businesses as the main culprits with just 14 per

cent of offenders among firms with more than 250 employees.

Most BNI members who took part in the survey said they paid their bills on time but it was common for more than half of the invoices they issued to be paid late. For one in five members taking part in the survey, only a quarter of their business clients paid invoices on time.

As a result, 63 per cent of respondents want the Government to take more action to outlaw late payments beyond

30 days' grace.

Barry Starling, Guildford BNI Chapter Director and Director of Dorking-based branding company, Love Your Logo, said: "Cashflow is a particularly serious threat to all businesses - especially to small ones. Late payment is the major cause of cashflow problems and no wonder that BNI members in Surrey want the Government to strengthen legislation to remove the practice."

Meanwhile, BNI members in Surrey say that trade is

reasonably buoyant with 44 per cent reporting that trade increased last month compared with the previous month. Another four out of ten reported that nothing had changed in that time and only 16 per cent said that business had worsened over the past two months.

This performance by Surrey micro businesses is broadly the same as that of November 2009 when half the companies taking part in the BNI survey said that things had improved.

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# Employment is a two-way street

Ensuring that you have the right workforce often entails compromise – the trick is to ensure that both sides are covered in case the relationship sours.

Surrey Business News has spoken to a number of the county's foremost employment lawyers on the latest developments, and necessities, in this delicate area.

## Protect yourself and your staff

For most businesses its employees are its main asset. It cannot succeed without them. It's therefore perhaps surprising that employers often don't have contracts of employment in place that adequately protect the business in relation to disputes with employees, writes David Seals of Morrisons Solicitors. Without such protection the business may be significantly exposed.

### For example:

When key employees leave the business there is often the potential for losses to the business where an employee takes clients/business, and sometimes other staff, with them often to work for a competitor. Well drafted restrictive covenants in the contract can prevent them doing this. Similarly, comprehensive provisions relating to the company's trade secrets, confidential information and intellectual property rights will provide significant protection for the business in the event of a dispute.

Good drafting can give the business appropriate flexibility regarding such things as employees' duties, their method of working, place of work and requirement to undertake business travel. Rigid provisions



will often make it difficult to later make changes as business needs dictate.

Increasingly widespread use amongst employees of email and internet at work has been accompanied by increasing levels of abuse of employers' IT systems. This regularly includes excessive personal emails, surfing the net for non-work purposes during business hours and

viewing inappropriate websites such as those containing pornography. Employees have a certain degree of rights to privacy at work in this regard relating, for example, to personal emails so prudent employers will have provisions within the contract of employment that allow appropriate monitoring of their systems to prevent abuse.

The recent recession resulted

in many redundancies but employers often tried to avoid redundancies by laying off staff temporarily or reducing hours or pay, sometimes to save the business. Such changes might be in breach of contract if not catered for in the contract of employment. Employers can be better able to deal with such issues in future by having appropriate flexibility built into contracts of employment in the event of future downturns.

**For further advice please contact David Seals at [david.seals@morrlaw.com](mailto:david.seals@morrlaw.com) or another member of the employment team at Morrisons Solicitors of Redhill and Woking**

### Why compromise?

A 'Compromise Agreement' is a legally binding agreement that an employer provides to an employee as a mechanism for terminating their contract of employment, while preventing the possibility of any claim being made in the future, explains Richard Land of Owen White & Catlin Solicitors.

In short, on termination an employee is paid a sum of money over and above that which he would normally be statutorily entitled to and signs an agreement that states he will not pursue any claim against the

employer. For the employee, pursuing a claim costs nothing and if only the statutory minimum is paid there is little to lose.

**Regulatory hurdles**

Dismissing an employee is a minefield of regulatory requirements that can result in a claim against an employer simply because they have failed to comply with the regulations. There are particular procedures that must be followed when making redundancies. These include:

- Writing to employees in a specific format;
- Consulting with employees prior to making the decision;
- Selecting employees for redundancy in accordance with a specified matrix;
- Meetings with employees to

discuss alternative employment possibilities. Each step must be correctly followed as failure to do so can result in a dismissal being deemed automatically unfair.

As an employer it is necessary to obtain proper legal advice to defend a claim to a tribunal which can be several thousand pounds in addition to the cost of having employees attend and prepare for the hearing itself.

**The benefits of Compromise Agreements**

If an employer can enter into a Compromise Agreement with an employee, this excludes the bringing of most claims and secures a certain position.

There are also additional benefits to Compromise Agreements, namely:

- There is a duty on the

- outgoing employee to keep all trade secrets confidential;
- A duty not to make derogatory or disparaging comments about the company;
- Restrictive covenants preventing employees from working for competitors or poaching current employees;
- Agreements can often foster good relations with ex-employees, which in turn engenders good relations with current employees.

Companies will have to pay employees' legal fees (usually capped at £300 - £500), in addition to their own legal cost (which is a similar amount again). However upon signing the Compromise Agreement, a provision can be put in the accounts and the matter put to

bed, rather than having a nightmare that rumbles on for six months to a year.

**Richard Land is a Partner at Owen White & Catlin Solicitors, with offices in Surrey and West London. He can be contacted on 0208 600 2207 and at richard.land@owc.co.uk**

**Manage sickness absence so your firm doesn't catch a cold**

Employee sickness absence is an issue that affects businesses of all sizes and recent developments make this a good time to review your policies and approach, according to Anthony Sakrouge, Partner at Kingston-upon-Thames' Russell-Cooke.

On 6 April sick notes were replaced with 'fit notes'. On the

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old sick note, an employee's GP indicated that the employee was either fit for work or should refrain from work. The GP now signs the new note to indicate that the employee is not fit for work or may be fit for work providing certain adjustments are made, such as a phased return to work or a change to hours.

The aim of the fit note is to encourage employees and employers to focus on what the employee can do, rather than what he or she cannot do, in the hope that this will help employees get back to work more quickly.

If the GP suggests adjustments which the employer cannot

implement, statutory sick pay is payable and no new note needs to be obtained.

However, an employer should always give the feasibility of suggested adjustments, including their impact on other employees, proper consideration. If adjustments cannot be implemented, this should be discussed with the affected employee.

An employee who is absent from work through sickness is not entitled to full pay, if this is not provided for in the employment contract. However, most employees are entitled by law to statutory sick pay after four days' absence.

Employees on sick leave continue to accrue holiday entitlement, can take holiday and are entitled to be paid for it at their usual holiday pay rate. Employees whose employment terminates whilst they are on sick leave are entitled to payment in lieu of untaken holiday.

Keeping absence policies up to date is central to managing sickness absence effectively. Your sickness absence policy should cover practical issues, for example, who employees should contact when they are ill, as well as how capability procedures will apply in cases of longer term sick leave.

Failing to maintain and

implement absence policies can lead to an increased risk of unfair dismissal and disability discrimination claims. On the other hand, an up to date absence policy provides a framework for dealing with absence issues fairly and consistently, encouraging good attendance and contributing to a good working relationship between employer and employees.

**For more information contact Anthony Sakrouge on 020 8394 6504, email [anthony.sakrouge@russell-cooke.co.uk](mailto:anthony.sakrouge@russell-cooke.co.uk) or visit [www.russell-cooke.co.uk](http://www.russell-cooke.co.uk)**

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## News

## Roffe Swayne launches share valuation service



Roffe Swayne, the Godalming-based firm of chartered accountants, has launched a share valuation service.

Led by Corporate Finance Associate Partner, Matthew Katz, the service provides share valuation reports for a wide range

of purposes including resolution of shareholder disputes, negotiations with HMRC (for example as part of an employee incentivisation scheme or inheritance tax), divorce and transactional purposes.

Roffe Swayne's track record for agreeing valuations with third parties is excellent. The majority of values are agreed on the basis of the report alone, without subsequent discussions and negotiations, thus minimising additional costs to clients.

Matthew Katz said: "In any 12 month period we have historically been valuing 30 to 40 businesses for both our existing client base and contacts. We feel that we now have the experience and credentials to offer our service to the wider market."

Matthew is supported by Mark Leigh and Holly Williams from the

Corporate Finance team, who have in excess of 30 years' valuation experience between them.

Roffe Swayne has 11 partners and 70 staff providing extensive experience gained through a background in multinational accounting practices. Roffe Swayne is a full service accountancy firm and in addition to corporate finance and valuation services can also provide audit and assurance, accounting services, corporate and private tax services, management accounts and payroll services.

***For further information on our share valuation service, or any other of Roffe Swayne's services, please contact Matthew Katz on 01483 416232, or email [mkatz@roffeswayne.com](mailto:mkatz@roffeswayne.com)***

## RocketRoute shortlisted for £50,000 award

Surrey University graduates Kurt Lyall and Justin Coelho have been named as a regional finalist in The Barclays Business 'Take One Small Step' competition.

The competition aims to reward the 10 freshest business ideas up and down the country with a prize of £50,000 to put towards making their dream a reality.

Their product – RocketRoute – is one of three shortlisted in the South East from more than 3600 entrants across the country. RocketRoute will now need the public to vote for the company to stand a chance of winning

£50,000 in cash to develop the business.

RocketRoute provides a low-cost flight planning service for pilots – saving time and fuel. RocketRoute also makes it easier to change routes – ideal for when volcanic dust affects travel. What TomTom did for the motorist, helping them plan routes, RocketRoute will do for any pilot who does not have the luxury of their own flight operations team.

Kurt said: "RocketRoute allows pilots to plan and file their flights easily, saving time and fuel. It's an innovative idea designed to

solve a real point of frustration among pilots. Winning the competition would make a big difference to the company, allowing us to employ more people and invest in sales and marketing to drive growth. It would also be a real validation of the company and our concept and a real boost to our hard working team. Our ambition is to have lots of pilots using our service not just in the South East but across Europe and America."

Kurt and Justin have used the University's incubation service, called SETsquared, at the Surrey Technology Centre based in

Guildford on the Surrey Research Park to get their idea started.

Sarah De'Lacy, Incubation Director, SETsquared, Surrey Technology Centre, added: "The UK really needs to start rebuilding industry and its economy, and small businesses provide a vital source of money and employment. The Barclays' competition is a good way not only of providing funding to new businesses but also helps business owners promote their ideas."

***For more information visit [www.rocketroute.com](http://www.rocketroute.com)***

## News

# Quality + quality = inspiration

Two of the UK's leading business development organisations have been inspired to join forces in a move that will see organisations across the South East benefit from a broader range of services and expertise.

Quality South East (QSE) is merging with Capital Quality Ltd (CQL) to form Inspiring Business Performance Ltd (IBP), which will be responsible for delivering the Investors in People Standard across the South East and London.

IBP will be responsible for managing some 7,000 organisations that are currently recognised as Investors in People, 28 per cent of the 25,000 recognised in the UK. Key clients include Sainsbury's, McDonald's, Fujitsu, Kent County Council, Thomas Cook Holidays, The Dorchester, Alliance Healthcare, landscape gardeners Gavin Jones and Thomson Directories.

Investors in People provides a framework for continuous improvement that can help organisations of all sizes and sectors meet goals and adapt to change.



*Trish Fraser and John Telfer, Joint Managing Directors of IBP*

John Telfer, Joint Managing Director of IBP and formerly of CQL, said: "We are delighted to have created an organisation with such a commitment to excellence and customer satisfaction. CQL and QSE have always shared the same values so it made sense to form IBP, knowing that it could benefit thousands of organisations across London and the South East. There will be increased opportunities for networking which will allow organisations to learn from each other. Whether you are a huge multinational or have only a few employees, you can always learn something from

another organisation."

Investors in People is recognised, and internationally respected, as a business improvement framework. Some 60,000 organisations are working with Investors in People, which equates to 30 per cent of the UK's workforce.

Trish Fraser, Joint Managing Director of IBP and formerly of QSE, commented: "The fact that we can now offer our clients a broader range of services, including additional consultants meaning access to a greater variety of expertise, can only be a positive move. Organisations are operating in a difficult climate

but highlighting and understanding the challenges that you face as an employer is essential. Working with our consultants can make the process easier as they will help you to plan a strategy that will support your business goals."

Benefits of working with Investors in People include increased productivity and sales, greater staff retention and employee engagement, increased motivation, reduced absenteeism, improved HR systems and an increased ability to adapt to change.

As well as Investors in People, IBP will also offer: Lexcel, the Law Society's practice management standard; the Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative (SFEDI) accreditation for business advisers; e-Survey; and 360 appraisal which is a way of unlocking employees' potential.

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## News

## Wildlife on parade



The Surrey Care Trust Big Yellow Duck Race 2010, with its team of supersized, 2ft-long yellow plastic ducks, brought a splash of colour to Guildford along the River Wey, as visitors and wildlife basked in June at its cloudless best.

The supporting companies included Lexis Nexis, the Wates Group, Baker Tilly, Russell-Cooke Solicitors and Allianz. The Surrey Care Trust board of trustees also backed a duck and the event is expected to raise £1,500.

The winning duck was sponsored by Wates, who receive the Duck Race trophy, followed in very close second by the Lexis Nexis duck.

## Greenfields sparkles

Dorking's Denbies Wine Estate has been awarded the Good Housekeeping Food Awards 2010 'Best English Sparkling Wine' for Denbies Greenfields Cuvée.

"Just the right amount of bubbles not to obscure the flavour," said judge Jane Asher of Greenfields.

The wine is bottle fermented and made using the classic grape combination of pinot noir, pinot meunier and chardonnay.

The award was presented by Michelin-starred TV chef Richard Corrigan to Christopher White, the General Manager at Denbies.

Greenfields Sparkling Cuvée was served to HRH Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall at the finals of Great British Menu which is currently being aired on BBC 2.

Denbies Wine Estate, set in 265 acres of vines, is England's largest vineyard. Denbies currently has a range of 12 wines, including four sparkling, and produces over 450,000 bottles of wine per annum.

**For further details on Denbies Wine Estate call 01306 876 616, email [info@denbiesvineyard.co.uk](mailto:info@denbiesvineyard.co.uk) or visit [www.denbies.co.uk](http://www.denbies.co.uk)**



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# “I’ve had the time of my life, and I owe it all to you...”

Everyone has big events they look forward to. Be it a social event, like the Christmas party, or something more formal, like an Annual General Meeting, it is crucial that the people entrusted with organising these functions get it just right.

Surrey Business News has spoken to a couple of local venues about this important topic.

## **Businesses should make the most of Bewl**

Surrey businesses searching for a new and exciting venue to host events from should look no further than the newly refurbished Lakeside Suite at Bewl Water. From team building to private lunches, exhibitions or conferences and meetings, Bewl has something to suit every one, including unusual teambuilding activities to give your employees



a day to remember.

Sitting on the Kent and East Sussex border and with easy access of the A21, the Lakeside Suite at Bewl Water is approximately an hour away from many Surrey towns, and has already hosted events from businesses as far away as London and Brighton.

The Lakeside Suite offers companies the flexibility to use the space available in the best way to suit their function, as well as providing a terrace for outdoor reception and drinks, a separate entrance with plenty of free parking for cars and coaches, built-in projector and screen, air conditioning, private bar and toilets and the opportunity for formal dining for the guests, all competitively priced.

Businesses wanting to improve team morale during these challenging economic times can

also use the outdoor activities on site at Bewl. There are superb team building packages with half or full day options, from the action packed High Adrenaline Zone and hydroballing, to fly fishing. Alternatively, make the most of the water at Bewl and take your team raft-building, river crossing and canoeing.

Bewl Hospitality can also cater for delegates with a selection of dishes, ranging from bacon sandwiches to something more exotic from the menu of lite bites and bowl food, so companies can select the food to match the nature of their event.

Katy O'Neill from Bewl Hospitality, said: "Bewl's flexibility in terms of what it can offer businesses in Surrey for their corporate hospitality events is what makes it such a valuable and unique venue for people to be aware of. The Lakeside Suite is

light and self contained, with beautiful views overlooking the water, and the fact that you have a meeting venue, catering and outdoor activities all in one place is what sets Bewl apart from our competitors."

**For more information on the Lakeside Suite, or to book a corporate event at Bewl Water, please contact Katy O'Neill on 01892 893923 or email [katy@bewlhospitality.co.uk](mailto:katy@bewlhospitality.co.uk)**

## **Ensuring your party goes with a swing**

Windlesham Golf Club is known for its fine dining and hospitality and its Christmas parties offer tailored packages, with lunches and private evening functions throughout December.

A spokesman for the venue said: "We are absolutely mindful of the fact that you will

be hosting a significant company event and we will arrange a party that reflects your standards of care and attention. We recognise just how important your Christmas party can be and we will take time to develop an event to suit your specific requirements."

The golf club's Exclusive Party Nights are a great way to celebrate with friends and colleagues and all events are tailored to the client's individual needs.

Windlesham Golf Club offers a variety of function rooms and its dedicated team will ensure that your event is a success.

The Nineteen Restaurant is also available throughout December for intimate lunches, with a daily festive a la carte menu. Tables can be booked



online or by calling the club on 01276 452220.

The spokesman concluded: "From your initial enquiry, right up to your last guest leaving the club on the day of your event, we aim to excel in every area, providing you with the peace of mind that your day will be a truly memorable occasion."

**For more information on Windlesham Golf Club or to book a corporate event call 01276 452220**

**or email [admin@windleshamgolf.com](mailto:admin@windleshamgolf.com)**

**Location, location, location**

When it comes to booking

venues for company meetings, AGMs or conferences, any organiser will tell you that the venue has the potential to make or break a successful event.

Finding somewhere that is not only big enough to accommodate all the attendees, but that also has good road access, catering facilities and

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plenty of parking is not an easy task. But for those companies looking for a venue in the heart of Surrey/Sussex, then the South of England Centre (SoEC) has the answer.

With acres of space and plenty of parking, the South of England Centre has much to offer. And, as the home to the South of England Agricultural Society, the centre has seen its fair share of Annual General Meetings (AGMs).

As Deborah Barber, Director of the South of England Centre explained: "For many companies, their Annual General Meeting is a major highlight of their business year, we understand this perfectly. Not only do we hold the Society's AGM here every March, but in November we also hold the annual conference. As



such we have a unique insight into what a professional venue needs to deliver and this is reflected in the package that we, at the South of England Centre, can offer."

Set in 150 acres in the heart of Sussex, yet only 15 minutes away from the M23 and close to Gatwick, the South of England Centre is one of the most flexible and unique venues in the

country. Its peaceful, rural location is the perfect setting for any business meeting and, with its stunning views, is bound to aid creativity, making it an ideal place to hold business meetings and seminars, large or small.

The Norfolk Pavilion has a range of function rooms available, suitable for a variety of large and small business meetings, AGMs, public

meetings, conferences, seminars and office parties. Available to hire at competitive rates, the Pavilion is ideal for those wishing to escape the confines of the office and enjoy some fresh air.

**For more information or to make a booking at the centre, contact the SoEC on 01444 892048, email [seas@btclick.com](mailto:seas@btclick.com) or visit [www.soec.uk.com](http://www.soec.uk.com)**

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# Advice opened right 'Daws'

Nobody was more surprised than Byfleet-based electrician Steve Daws when he was called up to the stage at a prestigious national awards ceremony by newscaster Kirsty Young to receive the Which? Local Business of the Year Award 2010.

"I'd already been pretty surprised to win the South East regional award, but this was national," he said. "So I was a bit shocked to be honest, but it means a great deal to me and my business to be recognised by my customers and by an organisation with such an outstanding reputation."

Steve, who launched his business – SMD Electrical Services Ltd – in 2005, received so many favourable reviews from his domestic and business customers for his good humour, professionalism and honesty that his victory came as no surprise to Business Link Adviser Irving Levy.

According to Irving, who has been advising Steve on marketing and communications for two

years: "The reason why Steve went into business on his own says it all about his attitude.

"This was when the Government was planning the current compulsory registration scheme for electricians. While others were moaning about state control, Steve immediately recognised that this was a very positive step towards rooting out the cowboys. That's the attitude he still has today, with a particular focus on electrical safety, and his customers love him for it."

Steve remembers: "I only went to see Irving in the first place in 2008 because he told me that doing so was free and would take just 90 minutes of my time. I thought, 'What have I got to lose?' But I knew as soon as he started talking that I'd made the right decision."

While Irving was extremely impressed by the company's progress during its first three years, he felt that Steve could improve his marketing. "What he told me to

do was to target the kinds of customer who would really appreciate good customer service and value, and then help me build the business through word-of-mouth recommendation," Steve continues.

"He also strongly suggested that I should have a website offering different payment options, and that I gain as many qualifications and certificates as I could to underline my quality credentials."

Steve followed Irving's advice; his website ([www.smdelectricalservices.co.uk](http://www.smdelectricalservices.co.uk)) emphasises the company's commitment to service and safety, and highlights its membership of the National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC), on both its Approved Contractor and Domestic Installer schemes. It is also TrustMark approved and registered with the Surrey County Council Trading Standards 'Buy with Confidence' scheme.

## Survey findings prompt launch of free e-marketing guide

Although more than nine out of 10 companies consider Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) to be of importance to their business, many risk missing out on the benefits because of lack of knowledge and fear of spiraling costs and wasteful investments.

This is the conclusion of a Business Link report based on a survey of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

Feedback from respondents prompted Business Link to produce a free 28-page guide on e-marketing to encourage SMEs to make more of ICT developments and try out e-marketing with confidence.

According to the survey, nearly half of all respondents said that keeping up with technology is a major challenge for their business, although three-quarters of all SMEs report having a website. Significantly, uncertainty over business benefits and concerns about cost are seen as the major barriers to future investment in ICT. Those respondents who are not planning such investment within the next year but are interested in using e-commerce more (66%) are especially hindered by not knowing how to direct such investment to best effect.

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## News

## Jelf Insurance's rapid growth plans for Guildford office



Following recent investment, the Jelf Group, an independent full-service insurance consultancy, has announced details of its fresh vision and commitment to build the presence of its Guildford office within the local and regional business community.

The Jelf Guildford team will deliver clients all the benefits of dealing with a large broking house without compromising on local service and personal relationships.

Jelf's Guildford office, formerly known as Pendleton May and Goss & Co, has been serving the local business community since 1996. Today it is one of the Group's fastest growing offices.

One of the team's immediate objectives is to maximise its expertise in the corporate sector and target larger organisations, in addition to the traditional SME customers.

The Guildford office is in a position of strength to build its profile in this way by

virtue of its demographic footprint, the skills and experience of its team, its heritage in Guildford and the diversity and support of the Group.

"The office, under this new direction, has the vibrant buzz and feel of a start up, but with extremely strong foundations because of the experience of the employees and the existing relationships within the local business community and the insurance market," said Mike Halldearn, Managing Director at Jelf's Guildford office. "We're ambitious about where we want to be. We already have some excellent clients and are now looking to double the size of our business over the next three years by creating a positive and productive environment in which to work and by being one of the best insurance brokers to do business within the South East of England. It's as simple as that."

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## What is going on in the commercial property sector?

Values going up – values going down. Investors seeking secure income streams – the market wanting risk. A mismatch in supply and demand. A weak occupational market, but a lack of occupational space in some areas.

Although all of the above is true because of the huge variety of factors influencing the commercial property market, the perception is often that there is a direct link between price trends in the residential and commercial sectors.

So what are these key drivers and where are they going? Prices have continued to rise for quality property with yields for some as low as 4.5 per cent, largely driven by re-rating of the entire asset class. Investors have returned to the sector to chase the attractive initial yields that can be secured on long contracted rental streams. But the rise in demand for property has not been met by an adequate supply. Vendors do not want to sell at the bottom of the market, forcing a supply mismatch and a rapid price rise.

As prices rise, supply is rising, leading to a reduction in competition and we believe that this will gradually lead to a general levelling of prices.

Many properties are in a different part of the cycle with the two overriding factors being concern over re-letting should a building become vacant and the lack of bank finance. In our



*Vail William's Mark Sherwood*

experience, banks are increasing their lending to the property sector, but this isn't happening as quickly as the market would like, constrained by prudent loan to value criteria. Yields are continuing to move beyond 10 per cent.

But what of the future? During the last two years, many property investors breached their loan to value covenants, resulting in the banks controlling significant property portfolios. Historically, this might have produced fire sales, driving the market down further. But in 2009 the bank didn't react in this way and now, as prices stabilise, there are indications that banks are reviewing the future of these properties, with many of their commercial property assets being sold over the next couple of years. This will result in a

significant rise in supply and may cause a dip in values.

In considering commercial property assets, we can't ignore wider economic factors that are creating a highly deflationary environment. The spectre of uncontrolled inflation is hovering just over the horizon and although experts are divided on Governments protecting equity markets and commodities whilst reducing the value of their monstrous debts by inflating them away, there is a pervasive logic to it. Traditionally property has been viewed as an inflation hedge.

A further concern is the precarious position of sterling, with overseas investors becoming attracted as it falls, but being unlikely to invest until they believe sterling has reached a floor.

So is there any good news? In my role as an advisor I meet many people who tell me their business is improving. As company's earnings continue to stabilise and rise, this is gradually resulting in the return of occupier demand. We have seen significant new lettings and rising rents in the City of London and there are other rising location-specific demands. It is the rental streams from the occupiers that are the principle attractions of the commercial investment market.

Macro factors and supply demand mismatches will continue to cause undulations, but at present the market is trending slightly upwards. Over the next year these undulations are likely to continue, but it is also likely that the upward curve will steepen as confidence and the availability of finance return to the market.

**For further information contact Mark Sherwood on 020 7393 4040, email [msherwood@vailwilliams.com](mailto:msherwood@vailwilliams.com) or visit [www.vailwilliams.com](http://www.vailwilliams.com)**

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