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Editor's Comment

**LIKE much of the world, here in Warrington we are going through unprecedented times during a global pandemic and our second national lockdown.**

Like many towns and cities, Warrington has seen infection rates much higher than during the first wave and most of us will now know someone who has been impacted by COVID-19 - and yet a minority still seem intent on ignoring the rules and advice with social media also full of conspiracy theories.

Having covered the outbreak since day one in the local news and also running a business in the town connected to many other local businesses, I have seen first-hand the devastating impact this disease has had on lives and businesses.

The infection rates, while thankfully showing a downward trend at time of press, are still much higher than during the first wave, although a lot more testing is also taking place. Meanwhile news of a vaccine is also on the horizon, so hopefully, there is light at the end of the tunnel and we can look forward to the Spring with some optimism.

Many small businesses especially in the hospitality and leisure industry have again been forced to close after doing so much hard work to create COVID secure premises and while grants are again being made available, they do little to replace lost revenue.

Thankfully throughout the pandemic, we have been blessed with an "army" of volunteers across

the community helping those most in need and it has been uplifting reporting on the many youngsters who have helped those in need.

I have no doubt Warrington will prevail and come good in the New Year as we thankfully entered the pandemic with a strong economy so hopefully, we will be in a good position to bounce back.

Now as we approach the season of goodwill I call upon all the politicians in our town to put aside their political differences and work together for the good of our community.

I am sure most people enter politics to help make a difference in their local communities and it is important they all work together

and pull in the same direction. Having covered local politics for more than four decades it seems to have got more toxic than ever and while we have seen the best of people during the pandemic we have also seen the worst.

Let's look forward to celebrating Christmas the best we can and move forward into the new year all pulling in the same direction for the good of our town.

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Craft in Mind help fund free Christmas dinners

WARRINGTON based Craft in Mind, who have been working hard providing free food to those who would otherwise go without have raised over £1,200 to help provide 200 free Christmas dinners to deserving people and families around the town.

As Christmas draws nearer, Craft in Mind is aiming to provide around 200 families and individuals with a Christmas Dinner to prepare at home with Christmas crackers and gifts.

They also want to find the most deserving people of Warrington to give Christmas Dinners to. Those who will find Christmas hard due to

job losses, waiting for benefits and hardship caused by the pandemic. They are asking for people to nominate a family or individual.

Nominations can be returned to Craft in Mind by the 1st December 2020. Everyone who has been selected will be contacted on the 7th December to inform them if they have been chosen and they can

collect in-store from their premises at the Cockhedge Shopping Centre.

Director John Wilson said: "We have already raised over £1,200 for Christmas dinners and have many more people and businesses getting on board to help us."

"We are hoping to reach our target of £3,000 with everybody's help and make Christmas very special for those that would otherwise go without."

"We want to bring lots of

positivity and happiness to our wonderful town of Warrington."


Email the Name of Person Nominated with a Contact telephone number and the reason why you think this person should be nominated for a Christmas Dinner to Craffinmindcic@gmail.com

Meanwhile anyone who would like to make a donation towards a Christmas dinner can do so by visiting <https://uk.gofundme.com/> and search Craft in Mind.




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Wednesday 23 rd December	
Thursday 24 th December	Normal Service (school holidays with earlier evening finishes)
Friday 25 th December	No Service
Saturday 26 th December	
Sunday 27 th December	Sunday Service
Monday 28 th December	Sunday Service
Tuesday 29 th December	Saturday Service. Service 47 & 48 will operate a Mon - Fri Timetable
Wednesday 30 th December	
Friday 31 st December	Saturday Service (with earlier evening finishes) Service 47 & 48 will operate a Mon - Fri Timetable
Friday 1 st January	No Service
Saturday 2 nd January	Normal Service
Sunday 3 rd January	
Monday 4 th January	Normal Service (school day timetables)



Warrington's
town bus

The Nest midwife-led unit opens at Warrington Hospital

The Nest Midwifery-Led Unit is to open this month at Warrington Hospital, at the ground floor of Croft Wing.

The Nest is the latest addition to the range of birth options available to women including birthing options for home, in the Obstetric-led Birth Suite and the Birth Suite active birth rooms.

The Nest offers four en-suite birth rooms, each with its own birthing pool and two having outside access to the garden area. The state-of-the-art rooms have been designed to

promote active, upright labours in a calm and relaxed environment.

The equipment available reflects the Maternity team's ethos of promoting physiological labour, utilising birthing couches, birthing stools, mats and positioning pillows. Specialist lighting, Bluetooth speakers and projectors allow personalisation of the space to help create a home-from-home

feel.

There are also facilities for mothers to stay for up to 24hrs in their own room, as well as the option of early discharge home. There is a large and inviting kitchen area for patients and staff use, as well as refreshment facilities in each room. Future plans include developing a private outside garden area for ladies to utilise during their labour.

A broad range of pain management options are available including complimentary therapies and pharmaceutical medications.

Who can use The Nest?

Women with uncomplicated pregnancies or individualised care plans will be allocated their labour care onto The Nest unless they choose to opt for alternative areas of birth. They will be cared for by experienced Midwives and Maternity Support Workers, who aim to provide 1:1 support throughout the labour and help each woman to birth her baby with as minimal intervention as possible.

To book to have your baby at Warrington Hospital, or for more information, visit <https://whh.nhs.uk/services/maternity>

Charlotte Nichols MP
Warrington North

If you live in Warrington North and have an issue you need help with or would like to book a surgery appointment, please get in touch.

0207 219 3000

CharlotteNicholsMP.com

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Promoted by Charlotte Nichols at Orford Jubilee Neighbourhood Hub, Jubilee Way, Orford, Warrington, WA2 8HE.



Midwifery Led Unit - Opening this month

Midwife-led Centre offers even more choice for mums-to-be with four state-of-the-art birthing suites and pools, aromatherapy, acupuncture and massage all promoting a calm, peaceful and a completely personalised birth experience



Pregnant? You can self-refer to our Maternity Service of the Year using this link:

www.whh.nhs.uk/services/maternity or call our Community Midwives on 01925 662092 between Monday - Friday, 9:00am and 5:00pm

The Best Start in Life Starts Here

Help us raise money for our new Birth Centre & help turn a great birthing experience into an outstanding one for our mums, partners and their families. Visit whhcharity.org.uk/birthcentre or call 01925 662666.

Scan the QR code



Neighbourhoods team launch Christmas Toy Appeal

WARRINGTON Council's neighbourhoods team is running its Christmas Toy Appeal for an eighth consecutive year.

The initiative helps families who are struggling to buy presents for their children. The team is asking for donations of new toys, chocolates, sweets, books and gift vouchers suitable for children up to the age of 16 – all gifts will be accepted.

All of the families who receive a present will have been referred to the service by health and wellbeing partners across the borough.

Residents can drop off their donations at Orford Community Hub, Festival Avenue between 9am – 4pm, Monday to Friday. Residents can contact the centre on 07775 024840 with any queries.

Cllr Tony Higgins, cabinet member for leisure and community,

said: "Over the last seven years, our communities have rallied together to donate gifts to ensure children of families, who may be struggling or facing hardship, receive a gift at Christmas.

"This year more than ever we need to continue to support one another. The pandemic has truly shone a light on the very best of our communities, and it would be fantastic if people could donate gifts, so that our children can receive a present and have a Christmas to remember."

For more information, contact the neighbourhoods in Warrington team at christmastoyappeal@warrington.gov.uk or call 07775024840.



BAS to partner with Cyclehouse

BAS Vehicle Adaptations are thrilled to be partnering with Cyclehouse in Warrington, where they will be providing one of the largest displays of Thule products in the North West.

Located in central Warrington, Cyclehouse is a large modern independent cycle centre. Stocking a wide range of bikes, they are the area's main dealers for Whyte bikes, GT bikes and Cannondale bikes. Established in 2006, Cyclehouse is a family-owned and run company, something which they share in common with BAS.

Cyclehouse's large open plan showroom contains a wide range of bikes on display from some of the best brands in cycling. They put customer service at the heart of everything they do and that is why every single bike is 100% fully assembled before being received by the customer, in addition to receiving a free service within the first 3 months of owning the bike.

For more than 75 years, Thule has been creating solutions to simplify life's adventures. Their aim has been totally focused on developing smart, stylish products

that are environmentally sound, high quality, safe, and easy to use. All so that you can bring the things you care most about. Whatever your passion, whatever your pursuit. Wherever you're going, whatever you're bringing. With Thule, you're free to live your active life to the full.

BAS are extremely excited by this new partnership and the products on display and offer at Cyclehouse will include:

- Bike Racks
- Roof Bars and Racks
- Roof Top Boxes and Cargo

- Carriers
- Winter Sports Racks and Boxes
- Water Sports Racks and Boxes
- Bike Trailers
- Towbars and Towing Accessories

Fitting Service for all Thule products, Towbars and Accessories. BAS will shortly be updating their website <https://basnw.co.uk/> with all of the products available, so keep your eyes peeled for further information. In the meantime, please feel free to contact the office on 0161 776 1594 and one of the team will be more than happy to help!

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Hat-trick of new clients for No Brainer

AWARD-winning Warrington based PR and digital marketing agency, No Brainer, has welcomed three new clients to its roster, further solidifying its growth in the north-west.

No Brainer's new clients include a soon-to-open, pandemic-themed visitor attraction called 'Sick to Death' in Chester, a virus-killing protection spray from Protection Zone, and award-winning IT software consultancy, Synyega.

Protection Zone, an approved UK retailer of revolutionary virus-killing protection spray Liquid Guard®, has appointed No Brainer to handle its PR and social media strategy to help build brand awareness around the launch of the business and its products, as well as driving sales with both B2B and B2C audiences.

No Brainer is delivering PR and media relations support around the launch of 'Sick to Death' in Chester, the UK's first visitor attraction to delve into the nation's gory history of medicine and pandemics. The immersive experience, featuring the city's infamous Plague Doctor, is set to open later this year, subject to government announcements regarding COVID-19.

The agency is also now working with award-winning software licencing consultancy, Synyega following a competitive pitch process, to develop an integrated B2B campaign to raise brand

awareness and accelerate company growth through PR, social media, content marketing and SEO.

Gary Jenkins, co-owner and Managing Director at No Brainer said: "We're delighted and proud to welcome a further three clients to No Brainer, which come hot on the heels of a recent award win and some strong industry rankings for the agency."

"Many of the brands we're speaking to are finding that the old ways of PR and marketing simply aren't working for them anymore, and instead they are looking for an agency partner that understands how to deliver intelligence-led creative campaigns that focus on driving meaningful change, not just focusing on outputs. It's this approach that has helped us win new clients and consistently deliver for our existing clients."

"The pandemic has been challenging for our industry and agencies in particular, but to be able to generate new business during that time is recognition for the hard work our team puts in every day."

"It's also a testament to the clients who have put their trust in us, utilising our skills and knowledge as an extension of their teams. We're looking forward to long and fruitful relationships with them."

This summer, No Brainer was awarded Medium Consultancy of the Year at the PRCA Dare Northern

Awards, as well as being named as one of the top 20 PR agencies in the north-west by Business Insider, and one of the top 50 PR agencies in the north by Prolific North.

No Brainer's client base spans

leading regional and UK businesses and organisations, including FTSE 100 listed company HomeServe, Liverpool-based Appreciate Group, MBNA, Optionis and Cash Converters.



Optionis Group named in the top 10 apprenticeship employers in the UK

WARRINGTON based professional services provider Optionis Group has been named 7th in a list of the UK's top 100 apprenticeship employers by the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

Optionis Group, which is headquartered on Centre Park, has supported more than 550 employees to gain an apprenticeship, providing job opportunities and development in a range of roles including accounting, payroll, and tax.

Optionis was the only North West-based firm to make the top 10, with major national employers such as the Royal Air Force, HMRC and BT also making the list. The British Army took the top spot for 2020.

Achievement rates for those studying an apprenticeship at Optionis have also been high, with a pass rate of more than 90 per cent for the first round of individuals going through end-point assessment on the newly implemented AAT (Association of Accounting Technicians) Apprenticeship.

For more information about Optionis and the range of apprenticeships available, visit: www.optionis.co.uk/apprenticeships/

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Some positives in the gloom of another lockdown

by Stephen Fitzsimons

HERE we go again – another national lock down and more weeks of anguish for our embattled businesses.

It's really difficult to maintain a professional and objective outlook on this latest effort to curb the virus. Too many people felt that the rules didn't apply to them and that Covid would not be a big deal if contracted.

This was not helped by mixed messages from government, such as encouraging people to eat out to help out and then blaming them for rising infections. The last few weeks have been even more frustrating.

Scientists and political leaders across the North pressed for a 2 week "circuit break" for half term.

Due to indecision from Westminster, the closure period has now doubled and hospitality businesses have wasted thousands of pounds getting ready to provide "substantial meals", a plan which was obsolete within a week.

Despite the gloom, we must try and look for the positives. Warrington has received £4.2m to directly assist those companies forced to close and colleagues at the Council are working as quickly as possible to allocate this accordingly.

Looking further ahead to brighter times in 2021, we were thrilled to receive confirmation that Warrington was successful in its Town Deal

application. This will result in £22.1m for several transformational projects across the town including an electric bus depot, health & social care academy and a remastered Pyramid. A big thank you to Matt Crompton from Muse as the Chair and all who contributed towards a fantastic result. As always, government was impressed with the local partnership working between the public and private sector. They also know that if they ask Warrington to deliver something, they can take it as done.

Last time I spoke about the sad passing of Warrington Chamber of Commerce CEO, Colin Daniels. It's now my honour to take over from him at the Chamber, whilst maintaining a foot in the regeneration activities of Warrington & Co and the Council. We are lucky to have so many organisations wanting the best for local residents and businesses and I look forward to supporting this in the future.

November is going to be a month to forget (despite my birthday!), however let's look forward to getting this virus back under control and a more positive Christmas.

Warrington & Co.
The partnership for driving growth



Stephen Fitzsimons
Investment & Growth

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Chamber of Commerce appoint new Chief Executive



WARRINGTON & Vale Royal Chamber of Commerce has appointed Stephen Fitzsimons as its new Chief Executive.

Following the recent death of the former Chief Executive, Colin Daniels, Stephen joins the Chamber on secondment from Warrington & Co – the growth and regeneration arm of Warrington Borough Council. He has worked in the town for nearly two decades in a variety of different sectors, including heading up membership and external affairs in the North West for Make UK, the national trade body for manufacturing.

Commenting on his appointment Stephen said: "It's a huge honour to be taking over from Colin, during what will be a challenging period for businesses approaching 2021 – in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic and outside of the EU.

"There are lots of exciting initiatives we will be introducing and I look forward to supporting businesses in one of the strongest economies in the North."

The Chamber's President, Nigel Schofield, said: "We are excited with Stephen's appointment to Chief Executive as he shares the board's passion for helping local businesses to prosper.

"We're certain that Stephen

will bring a lot to the role, greatly supporting Warrington and Vale Royal's businesses. We look forward to seeing the Chamber continue to grow in the future."

Warrington Borough Council's Chief Executive, and Chamber Board member, Professor Steven Broomhead MBE, added: "It's really important for the public and private sectors to be working together to drive Warrington forward, so we were delighted to enable this appointment to support local businesses."

"We wish Stephen great success in his seconded role and know he will be of great support to the Chamber."

The Warrington Chamber of Commerce and Industry was established in 1876 and has been serving local businesses for 130 years. It is a local, independent, non-profit making and non-party political organisation that supports and represents local businesses, funded by membership subscriptions.

The Warrington Chamber of Commerce supports local exporters, primarily in Warrington and Vale Royal by producing internationally accredited certificates and authentication documents.

More information about Warrington Chamber of Commerce can be found at warrington-chamber.co.uk

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Students set sights on UK's top universities

STUDENTS from Priestley College, Warrington, are still aiming high despite uncertainty surrounding university and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

By the deadline for early applications, 25 students at Priestley College had applied for places at Oxford, Cambridge and degrees in Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science.

Tutor Ian Hughes, who supports Priestley's university hopefuls, said the figures were encouraging and reassuring.

"With so much uncertainty at the moment it is great to see so many young people with big plans for their futures," he said.

"We have students applying for universities all over the country and they are vying for some of the most competitive places, which shows their focus and determination to succeed."

As well as applications for Oxbridge, students' other first choice next destinations include Edinburgh, Bristol, Imperial College, London, as well as other Russell Group universities.

They are looking to study degrees as varied as French & Arabic, Law, Experimental Psychology, History and Natural Sciences.

Applications for these universities and courses have to be submitted early because the competition for places is so fierce.

Daniella Glenn, who hopes to study Law at Cambridge, said submitting applications during uncertain times had been difficult.

"To even consider aiming high

and applying for university when we barely know what tomorrow holds has been tough, but it is important to still focus on working towards our goals" said the former Culcheth High pupil.

"I have had a lot of support from everyone at college in person,

email or video chat. Although it has been harder, we have found ways to overcome the difficulties and still meet the deadlines."

Priestley has a team dedicated to helping raise aspirations of young people so they know the country's finest universities are within their reach.

It works in partnership with OxNet – an outreach programme

run by the University of Oxford – to ensure Year 12s can make competitive applications.

"We still have students coming to Priestley who believe the doors to certain universities are closed to them, but that is simply not the case," said Ian.

"Our message is loud and clear: If you have the talent and the aptitude, then nothing is beyond your reach."







IT'S TIME TO APPLY

Now is the time to secure your place at college for September 2021. This will give you some certainty in these uncertain times that your place at Priestley is safe pending your results next year, no matter how they are determined.

To reserve your place go to apply.priestley.ac.uk

If you are nervous or have any questions about the college admissions process email us at admissions@priestley.ac.uk or call **01925 415415**. One of our team will be happy to answer your questions.

Our main message is clear, don't worry. Apply now and then focus on getting the best results possible in your GCSEs.




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Council announce latest plans for £212m Western Link road

THE latest plans for the controversial Western Link road have been revealed by Warrington Borough Council as a period of public consultation gets underway.

The project will see investment of around £212 million in the Borough, improving the local road network and creating jobs, while providing a major economic boost.

A public engagement period is now underway to allow local residents, businesses and other stakeholders to view the proposals and make their views known to the Council. This follows a comprehensive consultation

exercise in 2017, in which local communities were asked to give their views on six possible routes and the Red Route was selected.

Plans have now been developed for the preferred route and residents have an opportunity to comment on the proposals.

The new Western Link road will tackle congestion, improve traffic flow, unlock key development land, and improve the quality of life for

residents within the borough, which can be delivered through significant funding from Government.

The project will see significant investment in Warrington, improving journeys for those using cars, reducing the amount of congestion on the roads and making it easier to get from A to B, and it goes much further than this. The route will see new, on-road cycle lanes and pedestrian walkways and provide links to off-road paths and cycleways. It is about building on existing infrastructure, improving

connectivity within the borough, and investing in the future.

Warrington Borough Council wants to hear what local people have to say and, in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and current social distancing guidelines, has launched a fully-interactive digital engagement platform for local residents to view the proposals, interact with the wider project team and provide feedback.

The Council will also be hosting an interactive session over video and text chat to give the opportunity for local people to put their questions to the team. The dates for these will be announced on the project website.

You can get involved in the following ways:

- Visit the project website at warringtonwesternlink.co.uk
- Email feedback and questions to warringtonwesternlink@havingyoursay.co.uk
- Call a dedicated Community Information Line on 0333 358 0502 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5.30pm). Local residents can also request hard copies of the materials on display online by getting in touch via one of the channels outlined.

Investment

Warrington Borough Council's Cabinet Member for highways and transportation, Cllr Hans Mundry (pictured below), said: "Bringing forward the latest proposals for the Warrington Western Link is a key milestone in this significant investment in our future. A new road is necessary to ease congestion and improve journey times, but this project is about so much more than that."

"Investment in key infrastructure brings with it new jobs and new opportunities, opening up previously locked sites for development, creating an even bigger benefit for our local economy."

"This engagement period gives us the chance to talk to local people about the proposals and we are looking forward to hearing what they have to say. This is a tremendous opportunity for Warrington, and we are excited about delivering for the future."



St Rocco's Christmas Tree Collection Warrington

Saturday 9th January 2021

Our volunteers will collect and recycle your real Christmas tree in return for a donation to St Rocco's Hospice

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How to improve cash flow

By Nigel Garner



Sound Familiar?

At MBM Capital we offer Invoice Finance as a means to helping businesses improve cash flow by releasing the cash that is tied up in unpaid sales invoices.



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Alternatively, if you already have an Invoice Finance facility in place and are looking for a comparison, email proposals@moorebizmgt.co.uk and we'll provide you with a quotation.



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£22m Town Deal funding provides major boost



WARRINGTON has received a major boost after being revealed as one of the first areas to receive Town Deal funding worth more than £22m to help to utilise vacant spaces and restore a vibrant town centre.

The plans will include launching an advanced construction training centre and a health and social care academy as well as a health and well-being hub in the town centre and an active travel programme.

The Town Deal for Warrington announced by the Government will support Warrington Borough Council and MP Andy Carter in their ambitions to improve the town, make the area more attractive for residents, businesses and visitors and have a positive impact on the local economy through skills and employment.

The plans include helping to revitalise unloved and underused buildings, such as those that are vacant, by transforming them into new office space and community hubs. This would include locations where residents would have the opportunity to learn new skills and gain health and wellbeing advice.

The council and local businesses will use some of the funding to invest in more environmentally friendly public transport, such as an all-electric bus fleet depot as well as updates to pedestrian areas and green spaces.

Welcoming the news Warrington South MP Andy Carter said: "The bid submitted by the Town Deal Board was really excellent, it ticked so many boxes and having spent the last few weeks pushing Ministers hard to support Warrington, this is fantastic news. This funding will help us boost footfall in the town centre, giving local businesses such as retail and hospitality the chance to grow and thrive – creating new jobs for people who live locally."

"I sat down with the Secretary of State in Westminster to press

the urgent need for this funding. Coronavirus has unfortunately presented us with some brutal realities, so we must do everything we can to create an environment that is attractive to both residents and businesses.

"I made a pledge to fight hard for Warrington when I was elected last year, this funding will really allow us to power ahead with the plans to bring new life to the town centre."

The Council and local stakeholders will now have the opportunity to implement innovative and forward-thinking proposals submitted to the Government's £3.6 billion Towns Fund, designed to tap into the economic potential of 101 shortlisted towns and drive future growth and prosperity across the country.

This latest funding builds on the Government's wider package of unprecedented measures to help protect and support communities, business and jobs through the coronavirus pandemic, to ensure that nobody is left without hope or opportunity.

Leader of the Council, Cllr Russ Bowden, added: "I am delighted to see that we have been successful in securing this level of funding for our town centre, which will help us to deliver a string of truly transformative projects."

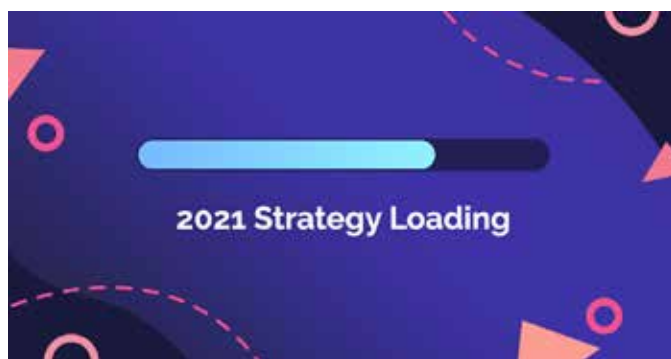
"Whilst the sum awarded is a little less than the £26 million we initially bid for, we are happy with this funding award, especially in the current climate. It's great news for Warrington and will give our economy a real shot in the arm at a crucial time."



Step Up Your Marketing Strategy In 2021

2020 has been a milestone year, forcing businesses to step out of their comfort zone and adapt; resulting in a fundamental shift in how companies are marketing their business. As 2021 is fast approaching, there's a minimal amount of time left in 2020 to implement a plan.

Now is the time to get ahead of the competition and for your business to make plans for the future. Let's look at what your marketing strategy should look like in 2021:



1. Increase your online presence

With most people preferring to shop online this year, and it's a pattern that looks set to continue into next year. Increasing your digital footprint can be done in several ways. To start with, it's important to open the lines of communication with your audience, firstly by creating social media accounts, and secondly emailing your database. It not only allows you to talk directly with your customers, but it generates traffic to your website too. It can also help take your business online if you don't have a digital shopfront (website).

Other ways to increase your online presence are SEO – a cost-effective method of locating your business in search results and on Google Maps – whilst PPC positions you right at the top of the search engine results page. Utilising your database with email marketing is also a great tactic. You have a bank of email addresses and knowledge you can use to push your business message. Whether it's an event, product or something else you want to drive customers to, email is the way to do it. By utilising the more cost-effective marketing options, you can set yourself up to move into the tactics that will help your business grow.

2. Automate your marketing

Automation is not only an agile way to reach your customers, but it can save you time that you could spend doing other things. By using automation, you can achieve more; it will benefit you financially and efficiently. It's not only cost-effective but a highly strategic way of sending targeted messages to a particular segment of your audience.

Did you know that you can not only automate but personalise emails, messaging and advertising to your target audience? But not only that, you can tailor messages to suit each individual customer, giving them a hyper-personalised experience. More

advanced digital experience platforms allow you to build marketing automation directly on your website. So, you can send personalised messaging to your audience and even chat to them using their first name.

Marketing automation can prompt your customer at every step of their user journey and speed up conversion. By using it, your business will be in the forefront of a customer's mind, so that when they do decide, they'll choose your business. It can also be used for upselling and remarketing further down the line, so it's worth including in your 2021 marketing strategy.

3. Improve your website performance

Your website is essentially a customer's impression of your business. If it's slow, full of bugs and broken links, customers won't return. Creating a user-friendly website is key to creating a better journey and customer experience, that ultimately results in a better customer retention rate and more sales. A staggering 46% of people say they would never return to a slow website. You can't afford to ignore your website performance. If you're interested in how we can optimise your site for mobile, create excellent navigation and improve your user experience get in touch with us.



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Work set to start on £6.5 million Youth Zone



FOUNDRY Street, Warrington is to be closed to traffic for 18 months – paving the way for work to start on the construction of the town's £6.5 million OnSide Youth Zone.

A joint venture between national young people's charity OnSide and Warrington Borough Council, the project will see a purpose-built facility which will raise aspirations, enhance prospects and improve health and wellbeing for young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds in Warrington.

It will offer affordable activities in sports, arts, music, employability and mentoring to young people

aged from eight to 19, or up to 25 for those with a disability, every day of the week.

When completed, the building, next to the University Technical College, will also become home to Warrington Youth Club.

The £6.5 million capital cost is being funded by the borough council and a number of additional generous funders who are keen to see Warrington benefit from an OnSide Youth Zone.

Salute George – for the help he gives to the vulnerable

A SCHOOLBOY posted his phone number through the letter boxes of vulnerable people offering help during lockdown.

Now George Ralphs, a Year 9 pupil at Sir Thomas Boteler CE High School, Warrington has "regulars" that he helps weekly.

The youngster, who is also an Army cadet, made his offer back in March when the lockdown first started. He put a note through the letterboxes of local bungalows occupied by vulnerable people.

He said if ever they needed anything to give him a call – and quite a few did.

School publicity manager Alice Roberts said: "Young people like



George are an inspiration to us all and we are so proud of him, his kindness and his tremendous sense of community. Well done George."

George's mum Katy said: "Through lockdown George has been amazing, and still is. I'm extremely proud of him."

ANDY CARTER MP

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Andy

Contact Andy

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Charity set to launch appeal for support in its 30th anniversary year



Internationally acclaimed, Warrington Disability Partnership (WDP) is appealing to businesses, organisations and individuals, to support their 30th anniversary in 2021.

WDP, one of a handful of local charities that have continued to deliver vital support services throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic, has been hit hard during the past eight months.

Chief Executive and co-founder Dave Thompson explained that the charity's income had been badly affected, such as their accessible caravans in North Wales and Wizard narrowboat. Dave explained that mooring and site fees, and insurances still had to be paid which has resulted in huge losses.

He added: "We attend or hold over 150 community engagement and fundraising events, but due to the lockdowns and social distancing regulations, the programme has been decimated.

WDP's annual Charity Dinner has already been cancelled, and it is likely their Santa's Grotto will also be cancelled for the first time in 16 years."

In true WDP problem-solving tradition, this year they took their flagship event, Disability Awareness Day, virtual and against the odds, together with design partners, 4WardFutures, they delivered an amazing web-based version that has led the country in terms of mobility and independent living events.

WDP aim to relaunch its Legacy Appeal, aimed at supporting jobs for young disabled people. If you or your organisation can help, please contact Dave on 01925 240064 or email davethompson@disabilitypartnership.org.uk

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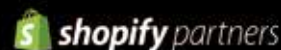
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By David Watkinson

Rapid change for support through the Coronavirus epidemic

Support for businesses during the current Coronavirus epidemic is subject to rapid change. In fact, over the past few weeks we have been caught out by things changing between writing an article and its publication. Therefore, we list below the main three items of support available to individuals and small businesses at the date of writing, 12th November.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme ("CJRS")

The CJRS has now been extended to cover the whole period to 31st March 2021, meaning that the government will meet some or all of the costs of retaining workers who are "furloughed" as their employment is affected by the Coronavirus pandemic. However, the scheme is not uniform throughout this period.

One major difference is that for periods up to 31st October it was necessary for an employee to have previously been furloughed prior to 1st July to be eligible. However, for periods from 1st November an employee can be furloughed even if they have not been previously furloughed. However, they must have been on the payroll on 30th October, and a PAYE RTI submission in respect of that employee must have been made between 20th March and 30th October.

We have previously provided details of the scheme up to 31st October and claims for this period must be made before the deadline on 30th November.

Under the new scheme from 1st November employees can either

- Be fully furloughed, in which case they cannot undertake any work for the employer; or
- Be flexibly furloughed, in which

case a pattern of work can be agreed but, again, they cannot undertake any work for the periods during which they are furloughed. Employees will receive normal pay for hours worked, and 80% of pay for hours furloughed, although employers can make the pay up to normal for these hours if agreed.

Any changes necessary to the contract of employment must be discussed beforehand. Employees must be notified in writing of any periods of furlough, and a record made of all hours worked and furloughed. This record must be kept for 6 years from the date of the claim.

All claims must cover a minimum period of 7 calendar days, but for flexibly furloughed employees there is no minimum for the number of hours furloughed during that period.

For the 3 months from 1st November to 31st January 2021 the grant will revert back to 80% of the employees normal pay up to the monthly maximum of £2,500 per month (for the month of October the grant was only 60% and the employer had to contribute 20%). However, there will continue to be no government contribution to employer NIC or pension contributions.

A CJRS calculator has been published to assist employers calculate the figures needed to make a claim under the scheme, and this is available at <https://www.tax.service.gov.uk/job-retention-scheme-calculator/start>. Full detailed guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>

Self Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS)

In line with the CJRS scheme, the

SEISS has been similarly extended.

As previously announced there will be a 3rd grant covering the period 1st November to 31st January 2021, with a 4th grant covering the 3 months to April 2021.

The conditions for claiming the 3rd grant are that individuals or members of a partnership must:

- Have been eligible for the 1st and 2nd SEISS grants, although they do not need to have claimed them; and
- Declare that they intend to continue to trade and are either actively trading but are impacted by, or are temporarily unable to trade because of, Coronavirus.

The conditions for claiming the 1st and 2nd grants have been published previously and include the requirement that you were self employed prior to 5th April 2019 and had notified HMRC of that fact and had completed a 2019 self assessment tax return.

However, whilst the above was previously known, it has now been announced that the 3rd grant will be calculated at 80% of 3 months trading profits, capped at £7,500, compared with the previously announced 55%. The grant will be paid in one lump sum and, as previously, will be subject to tax and NIC.

Claims for the 3rd grant will open on 30th November.

Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLS)

The BBLS is designed to help small and medium sized businesses. They can borrow between £2,000 and 25% of turnover, up to a maximum of £50,000. Originally due to finish on 30th November, the scheme has now been extended to 31st January 2021.

The conditions for eligibility remain the same. You can apply for a loan



Margaret Black and David Watkinson

if your business:

- Is based in the UK
- Was established before 1st March 2020
- Has been adversely affected by Coronavirus.

Other conditions remain as previously published.

The loan is for a 6 year period, but you can repay early without having to pay a fee. You can also apply for later repayments to be interest-only in periods of 6 months up to a maximum of 18 months, or to pause repayments for up to 6 months.

The government guarantees 100% of the loan, and no personal guarantee is required. No fees or interest will be payable during the 1st 12 months of the loan, and interest thereafter will be at a rate of 2.5% a year.

If you have already received a loan under the BBLS but it is less than the maximum available then you may apply for a top-up. The total of the original loan and the top-up must be within the loan limit. Again, any top-up ceases to be available on 31st January 2021.

There are 28 lenders participating in the scheme including most high street banks, and you should approach a lender direct. You will need to complete a short online application form and self-declare that you are eligible. A full list of lenders is available at <https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/ourpartners/coronavirus-business-interruption-loan-schemes/bounce-back-loans-for-businesses-and-advisors/>

WatkinsonBlack have considerable experience in all areas of taxation and business services, including the provision of a very cost-effective payroll bureau service. If you want to arrange a no-obligation initial meeting on any business matter then please contact us. Please note that these ideas are intended to inform rather than advise and you should always obtain professional advice before taking any action.

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Lymm's 'Double Take!'

BACK in 2019 Lymm Photographic Society, and Carol Sparkes in particular, approached the Heritage Centre with the suggestion of a joint project to be titled "Double Take".

The idea was for the Centre to provide photographers with a set of pictures of old Lymm. They would then set about recreating the images in a modern setting, in the same locations and with similar line-ups of people. Along the way everyone would learn a bit about local history and there would be a lasting record of village life for the next generation.

The team from the Centre's digital archive "LyDiA" came up with a wide range of photographs from bishops to bakers and barbers to butchers.

What no-one had reckoned with was the huge impact that coronavirus would have on village life with businesses shut and events cancelled. Yet somehow the whole project, initially put on hold, came together with pictures taken as and when rules and opportunity allowed.

The whole collection has now been brought together in book form by Alan Williams from the Heritage Centre, with the same title, Double

Take. Old and new pictures sit side by side, supported by brief stories giving fascinating insights into village history.

"This was never intended to be a book about the Coronavirus crisis" explained Alan "and it has much wider appeal than that. Nevertheless for people picking up the book in years to come it will certainly offer glimpses at how life changed in 2020".

The Photographic Society are donating all profits from the book to the Heritage Centre charity to sustain it through what could still be a difficult time ahead for all indoor venues.

The book goes on sales in mid-November at Lymm Post Office and will also be available at the Heritage Centre once it is able to reopen.

Alternatively take a look at the Centre's online shop which has several new products for Christmas, including a new Lymm jigsaw. www.lymmhc.co.uk



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