

Est. 2001



Torfaen Business Voice

Llais Busnes Torfaen

Celebrating 21 Years of Business Connections

MAY 2022

**Next Event:
23rd June, 4.30pm**



<http://bit.ly/twitter-TorfaenBiz>



<http://bit.ly/Facebook-TorfaenBiz>



<http://bit.ly/youtube-TorfaenBiz>

PAGE 3

21 Years for Torfaen Business Voice

PAGE 5

Benefit from Fully Funded Opportunities for your Business

PAGE 6

Is your Business based in Pontypool or Blaenavon?

PAGE 7

Businesses Embracing Digital Outperform the Rest

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

JUNE

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

SEPTEMBER

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

NOVEMBER

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

NOTES FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

It's been a successful start to the year for Torfaen Business Voice with members renewing and new businesses taking the opportunity to join. Our first meeting at Pages was enjoyable especially as we were all able to get in the same room. It was good to see everyone reconnect with their business contacts in a relaxed atmosphere to gain leads and ideas.

As it's the 21st anniversary of Torfaen Business Voice, our June meeting will be a celebration of our local business club and the businesses who have benefited over the years from being part of a bigger support network. The meeting on 23rd June will be in the marquee in the grounds of Greenmeadow Golf Club and promises to be a packed afternoon and evening of networking, with a hog roast and entertainment.

It really couldn't be a better time to re-join or join up for what we expect will be a lively and enjoyable event.



Ashley Harkus

Chairman,
Torfaen Business
Voice

BE PART OF THE CLUB!

Membership from £48 for the year for all the benefits!

What do you get from your All Inclusive Membership:

- A place at all our face to face and online meetings
- Quarterly digital newsletter with articles, tips and business events and information tailored for local Torfaen businesses.
- Varied networking opportunities
- E-mail bulletins with relevant, vetted information
- Advance notice of other Torfaen County Borough Council business events and opportunities, including business breakfasts, workshops & seminars
- Your company details listed on the business voice membership section. See our current members list [here](#).
- Exclusive sponsorship and advertising opportunities for member companies to reach the local business market



Sign up and join today!

21 YEARS FOR TORFAEN BUSINESS VOICE

Torfaen Business Voice is Torfaen's thriving business club, which was formed in 2001. Over the last two decades, it has touched many local businesses making a difference to individuals looking to start up and established businesses wanting to gain leads and generate sales.

There have been hundreds of businesses that have signed up over the years across a wide range of sectors from printers to caterers, web designers to hr advisors and the club continues to support the local economy year on year.

The club is run by a committee of local business people, which is an integral part of its success. These committee members are keen to make a difference and steer the club in a direction decided by them. Acting in an entirely voluntary capacity, the club is grateful for the commitment and energy shown by committee members past and present.

Our June meeting on 23rd June 4.30pm at Greenmeadow Golf Club, (outdoor marquee) will be a celebration of the club's strong and enduring support for the local economy. There will be the usual facilitated networking to start followed by a hog roast and entertainment going into the evening.

If you have yet to renew or have been thinking about joining now is the best time to become a member. You will find so many different avenues to benefit your business in a friendly, supportive environment.

No additional fees a one-off payment of £48.00 for new members and renewals start from £60.00 for the whole of 2022.

Come and **join us** for what is planned to be an excellent evening.



2001

2006

2011

2021



INVOICE SCAMS

Businesses warned to be vigilant when paying bills or switching suppliers as invoice scams make up 55 per cent of money lost to scammers



- Nearly nine in 10 (85 per cent) owners are worried about the effect the upcoming price hikes will have on their business, which could leave them open to invoice scams as they search for the best deals

- Barclays is urging businesses to stay vigilant as data shows invoice scams account for 55 per cent of all money small businesses lost to scammers¹

- Barclays data has also shown that the average value of funds stolen has increased 13 per cent

06/04/22: Businesses are being urged to stay vigilant when paying their bills or changing supplier, as new data¹ from Barclays reveals that in the last three months, fraudsters stole the most money from SMEs through invoice scams.

Invoice scams are when fraudsters divert genuine invoices or payment instructions sent by email, often from a familiar supplier or contact, and send a replica email with the with bank details changed to an account controlled by them. Barclays data has shown that this type of scam accounted for 55 per cent of all money lost by SME clients in the last three months, up six per cent year-on-year, with an average loss of £2,100.

The overall amount stolen from SMEs has gone up 13 per cent over the last year, despite the volume going down, indicating that scammers are succeeding in fewer, higher value scams, and business owners are at risk of making greater losses.

A recent poll of UK businesses² reveals that 85 per cent are worried about the effect the upcoming price hikes and increased operating costs will have on their business. Over half (56 per cent) said it will have an impact on their bottom line.

Nearly 9 in 10 (85 per cent) said they would be willing to switch to a supplier they haven't heard of before if they were offering a better price. Barclays is warning business owners to be on their guard as they look to switch suppliers to find the best deal, as fraudsters may impersonate suppliers and provide updated bank details or information for payment.

Whilst invoice scams have been the most profitable for scammers in the last three months, purchase scams, where businesses buy items that do not arrive, were the most common type. This was followed by impersonation scams, where fraudsters pretend to be from trusted organisations.

Ben Lebus, founder of healthy recipe website **Mob Kitchen** said: "As a business owner myself, I understand the pressures of running a company. Naturally, you look to save on costs wherever and whenever possible. Particularly at the start of the financial year, all outgoings can feel especially difficult to manage, but it's important to stay vigilant when thinking about changing suppliers or providers.

**Continues page 5*



Spending extra time researching in the early days, will save you time and money in the long run. I am always cautious when making big decisions that determine the future of the business, and I am similarly cautious when making the smaller decisions around spending."

Joe Cooksey, Head of Business Digital Education at Barclays, said: "Businesses are under a huge amount of pressure at the moment as they prepare for the new financial year and navigate additional challenges wrought by rising costs. We know that fraudsters will be looking to take advantage of busy business owners and will ramp up their efforts."

Scammers really are social engineers of the highest order, so it's vital that business owners and their staff remain vigilant, and if doubt, double check with their bank or a source they know is genuine."

Barclays has provided a checklist of key things to watch out for in common invoice scams:

1. Do your research - When looking to use a new supplier or purchase from a new seller, make sure you do the relevant background checks. Our research showed that 57 per cent of businesses review overhead costs intermittently throughout the year as they try to keep outgoings down. When considering a new supplier, remember that if a deal seems too good to be true, it probably is.

2. Know your suppliers - It can be hard to spot altered emails or invoices, especially if it's from a familiar supplier. Calling your supplier to check any new or updated bank details could stop your business being scammed. However, always find the number via a separate internet search or your own records to ensure it's correct. Our research highlighted that 14% of businesses call the number on the invoice to confirm, meaning they could be playing right into the scammer's hands.

3. Links and attachments - If you get an unexpected message or email asking you to follow a link or open an attachment, use a different method to check this before doing anything. Our research highlighted that nearly one in five (19%) open attachments before reading the email, again leaving them open to being targeted."

For more information on how to keep your business safe from fraud or to learn more about how Barclays is supporting small businesses, visit the [Barclays Business Health Hub](#).

- 1. Barclays data of reported business scams December 2021 - February 2022
- 2. Mortar research of 515 business owners and decision makers, March 2022
- 3. This year Barclays launched a package of support aimed at boosting small businesses, with the bank set to host 50 masterclasses a month this year, which will focus on managing cash flow, business growth and support for wellbeing. The classes are open to all small business owners, with national events focused on the hospitality and care home sectors.

BENEFIT FROM FULLY FUNDED OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Organisations across Torfaen and wider south Wales are being urged to take advantage of fully funded business support and a career development programme for women staff - which are soon due to come to a close.

Chwarae Teg's Business Programme is open to SMEs who are looking for support with recruitment, retention and development procedures to ensure they are centred around equality, diversity and inclusion. The programme involves Chwarae Teg working with SMEs over nine months to develop and implement an action plan, with up to 42 hours of support from its team of experts. Client employees also have access to a number of relevant training workshops on best practice in key areas.

Chwarae Teg also runs a Career Development Programme for eligible women staff which so far has helped thousands achieve their ILM Level 2 accreditation, grow in confidence and gain managerial skills. The programme was established and designed to improve the representation of women at a managerial

level across Wales - and to date has had overwhelmingly positive results.

Both programmes are part of Chwarae Teg's Agile Nation2 offer which is fully funded by the European Social Fund through Welsh Government.

However, funding comes to an end soon, so to avoid disappointment please get in touch with Leigh Beere on Leigh.Beere@ChwaraeTeg.com or **07776 596126**. Or you can simply find out a bit more about the [Business Programme](#) or the [Women's Career Development Programme](#).



WHAT WE DO



Y Prentis employs apprentices across industry, giving them the opportunity to gain experience while they work towards an apprenticeship Framework. By working with a variety of high quality partners the scheme meets the skills needs and challenges now and for the future. By pooling shorter-term work opportunities through a wide range of host contractors, Y Prentis delivers sustainable apprenticeships. These opportunities would not be utilised without the collaboration of partners. The added value of the model is that provides apprenticeships with a varied work experience with more than one Partner company.

Y Prentis is in a unique position to access the opportunities available for Shared Apprenticeship participants as well as offering support to small businesses to capitalise upon demonstrating social value through productive employment.

The scheme covers all the traditional costs and resources required that are involved when employing an apprentice, including:

- Recruitment and process
- HR and Payroll
- Supply a toolkit worth over £200

The only cost to companies is the apprentice's wages, and a weekly hosting fee of £32.

Companies may not have continuity of work to employ an apprentice in a specific role for a full three-year apprenticeship period. The shared model allows the flexibility to choose how long contractors wish to host an apprentice for, without having to commit to a full term. Host placements can be for a period of a minimum of ten weeks and a maximum of three years.

The mobile nature of some sectors and temporary contracts mean the shared model is an invaluable tool to assist in capturing apprenticeship opportunities which would not happen by utilising the traditional apprenticeship approach.

Contractors and their supply chains do not consider taking on apprentices from their area due to the short-term nature of the work. Should they decide to do so apprentices would be displaced at the conclusion of the periods or a best asked to travel unreasonable distances to the next contract. Y Prentis works to ensure this does not happen by providing sustainable apprenticeships that are "Better jobs close to home".

Want to find out more? Check out our brand new website at: www.yprentis.co.uk, email: darryl.williams@yprentis.co.uk or phone: **01495 745913**. Stay up-to-date with all the latest news from Y Prentis and [sign up to our e-newsletter](#).

IS YOUR BUSINESS BASED IN PONTYPOOL OR BLAENAVON?

You may be eligible for up to £300 to spend on marketing for your business! The UK Government funded 'Marketing Support grant' via Torfaen County Borough Council is aimed at helping to grow local businesses through increasing accessibility to outsourced marketing activities and includes branding services, advertising, website design, printing and social media promotions up to a value of £300.

All foundational economy start-ups and small enterprises of fewer than 49 employees may be eligible to receive the marketing grant, to support the promotion and development of foundational economy businesses.

ARE YOU CONSIDERING LOCATING YOUR BUSINESS IN PONTYPOOL OR BLAENAVON TOWN CENTRES?

If you're setting up a new business, or thinking of relocating your business to Pontypool town centre (including the indoor market) or Blaenavon town centre, UK Government funding via Torfaen County Borough Council is available to help you trade. The grant is

available to all start up businesses and small enterprises, and covers up to 6 months rent, rates and utilities. For more info on both the marketing support grant and business rate relief funding, please email: Katie.Hancock@torfaen.gov.uk with an expression of interest. Terms & conditions apply.

UK Government Wales
Llywodraeth y DU Cymru

Foundation Economy
Torfaen

Funding available to help
**Advertise
your business**
Apply now*

BUSINESSES EMBRACING DIGITAL OUTPERFORM THE REST



ABIGAIL HANNAH MAKEUP

Businesses are looking for more ways to communicate with customers online and increase sales in 2022. Technology has played a vital role in helping businesses adapt to digital and grow their online presence during the pandemic. Up to 41% of small business owners say their business would not have survived without digital tools, according to the Centre for Economics and Business Research.

In 2021, Superfast Business Wales provided free support to 1,097 businesses to help them create sales, save time, maximise resource and build digital confidence.

One of these was Abigail Hannah, owner of Torfaen-based Abigail Hannah Makeup. Abigail increased customer satisfaction and had more than 30 wedding bookings in 2021 by giving her website a new digital makeover.

“In my mind I was thinking quite small and that it would take a huge amount of time to build the business up, but Superfast Business Wales made me realise the potential,” she said.

Realising **Abigail Hannah Makeup’s** bright future, the entrepreneur is allowing herself to dream big with a five-year growth plan underway. She credits Superfast Business Wales for helping her grow the business.

“I don’t think I’d be where I am now without the support and guidance from Leon, my business adviser, and Superfast Business Wales,” Abigail concluded.

Looking to grow your business and make use of digital this Spring? Look no further. Search online: Superfast Business Wales or **get in touch** today.

SUPERFAST BUSINESS

WALES MADE ME REALISE

THE POTENTIAL

Nevertheless, 39% of small businesses feel overwhelmed by the amount of digital tools available and 32% want to make more use of digital but are unsure how to start or where to go for advice.

Perhaps your business needs a hand getting found online, targeting the right audience, or turning prospects into loyal customers. Either way, the Superfast Business Wales team is ready to help, with free webinars and tailored one-to-one advice.



Embrace an age-inclusive workforce

Through Age at Work.



BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY: AGE AT WORK

It has never been more pertinent that businesses take action to ensure their workplace culture is positive and supportive, to attract, retain and develop the best people for a successful and sustainable business. The aged-over-50 cohort is a mostly untapped talent pool with a wealth of knowledge, experience and skills to share, and can bring real value to a multi-generational workplace.

Successful organisations are those that build age-inclusion into their health and wellbeing and diversity and inclusion strategies. Businesses that can adapt and respond to the needs of an ageing population, directly addressing key workplace issues that are more likely to affect older workers including: the menopause, caring responsibilities, financial wellbeing, flexible working, and planning for retirement.

Responsible business network Business in the Community and Age Cymru have come together for the Age at Work programme which supports businesses to help build a culture where older workers can thrive.

The programme works with organisations in Wales to help them to recruit, retain and train an age-diverse workforce. The Age at Work programme is available FREE to businesses of all sizes and sectors, thanks to funding from the National Lottery Community Fund, and offers the resources and practical support listed below:

- A simple **business age audit** to highlight strengths and identify where businesses need to take action to build a more age-inclusive workplace
- An **age-inclusive employer toolkit** which provides tips, recommendations, good practice examples and more
- **Mid-career review webinars** for over 50s, to help them reflect on key areas in their life and consider their options, so they can take action for a positive future
- An **Age-Inclusive Learning Network** where your business can connect and learn from others, discuss challenges, share best practice and develop an age action plan.

Join other businesses who are benefitting from an age diverse workplace and find out more [here](#).
or contact Jill Salter, Age at Work Programme Manager, BITC Cymru at: jill.salter@bitc.org.uk

“**THE PROGRAMME WORKS WITH ORGANISATIONS IN WALES TO HELP THEM RECRUIT, RETAIN & TRAIN AN AGE DIVERSE WORKFORCE**”