



# Early Summer 2026 edition CHAMBER CHATTER

BY LOCAL BUSINESS, FOR LOCAL BUSINESS

ALL THE LATEST NEWS FROM THE TAUNTON BUSINESS COMMUNITY



## Celebrating 50 Years: Building Better Futures

As we celebrate Arc's 50th Anniversary, we're absolutely thrilled to launch our brand-new anniversary micro-site!

The site shares our plans for this milestone year, looks back at 50 years of supporting people experiencing homelessness in Somerset, and highlights how you can get involved in the exciting events and campaigns ahead.

A huge thank you fellow Taunton Chamber of Commerce member Gecho Agency who very generously designed and built the website free of charge. We're so grateful for the creativity, time and care that's gone into bringing this to life.

Take a look and find out how you can be part of our 50th year celebrations...



### *In this edition:*

- Read about the fantastic local businesses recently taking up membership.
- Book tickets for upcoming events: opportunities to network, make new connections and top business tips.
- Catch up with good news from across our membership.

# Upcoming Events Programme

Don't miss out on the following opportunities across to meet with fellow members, make new connections and learn something new!



Corner house

HOTEL, BAR &  
RESTAURANT  
TAUNTON



## BREAKFAST BUZZ

3RD JUNE & 26TH AUGUST: 7:50AM, £12

A relaxed opportunity to catch up with all the latest from the local business community over hot drinks and pastries PLUS pick up some top tips from industry experts as we share knowledge across our membership.

### Breakfast Buzz at Mr Miles Tearooms

26th August, 25th November

### Breakfast Buzz at The Cornerhouse Hotel

3rd June, 23rd September



Community  
GARDEN  
Party

FRETHEY HOUSE & ARIA CARE

## COMMUNITY GARDEN PARTY

25TH JUNE, £5

An afternoon of delicious refreshments, networking and community connections in the stunning countryside grounds of Frethey House.

A perfect opportunity to get to know some of the wonderful organisations supporting those who live, work and do business in Taunton.



Cuppa & Cake

## CUPPA & CAKE RELAXED NETWORKING

9<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 3<sup>RD</sup> SEPTEMBER, 5<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, £8.50

Taunton's best value networking!

Delicious home-made cakes, hot drinks and a great opportunity to catch up with all the latest from the local business community and to make some new connections at the same time.



Summer  
Party

WHITE HORSE INN  
TRAFFORD ON TONE

BLACK  
BEAR  
BREWERY

## SUMMER PARTY AT THE WHITE HORSE INN

16<sup>TH</sup> JULY 6PM - 9PM, £20

Say hello to Summer at our relaxed social event in the pretty surroundings of one of the area's best loved village inns. Raise a glass with fellow members and make some new connections!

Enjoy a delicious buffet from the **White Horse Inn** team, along with a welcome drink, included.

You'll hear from the **Black Bear Brewery** Head Brewer Tom. There's also the chance for some informal skittles and boules should you fancy it!

## HOW TO BOOK OUR EVENTS

Unless otherwise stated, all our events are bookable via the following Eventbrite link:  
[www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/taunton-chamber-of-commerce-15354648391](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/taunton-chamber-of-commerce-15354648391)

Plus, you can click to 'follow' our Eventbrite page, which means you'll get a handy notification into your inbox whenever we add a new event!





**Hi I'm Anastasia, a financial strategist who helps established service-based business owners turn their numbers into a plan for growth.**

Think of me as the person who sits in your corner and helps you make smart, confident decisions about your money. Not the person who files your accounts once a year, but someone who looks at your business strategically: what to charge, when to hire, how much to pay yourself, and what it actually takes to grow profit (not just revenue).

My clients are often founders running successful service businesses who are looking to scale while building the life they want. They know their numbers are the missing piece for their next stage of growth, and they want someone to help them make sense of it all in plain English.

I work with them through one-off deep dives, Elevate, my six-month 1:1 programme, and ongoing strategic partnerships.

I originally trained as an accountant at a Big 4 firm after a Chemistry degree at Oxford, but I left corporate to build something more human. When I'm not working with clients, you'll find me at Pirzwell Barn, our family-run wedding venue just over the border in Devon.

If you want your business numbers to work harder for you, I'd love to chat.



## YMCA TAUNTON

**YMCA Taunton is a local, independent charity dedicated to transforming lives. While many know us for our facilities, our heart lies in community impact, from our Community Pantry combating food poverty to our specialist support for Young Carers. We are delighted to join the Chamber and are eager to explore meaningful partnerships with local businesses who share our passion for Taunton's future.**

Our centre is a hive of activity for all ages. We provide vital School Holiday Activity Clubs, a nurturing Preschool, and youth-focused sessions in Parkour, Judo, and Breakdancing. For those looking to stay active and connected, we offer everything from Walking Football and over-50s fitness to our brand-new climbing wall.

Our versatile facilities include a squash court, dance studio, astro pitch, and table tennis, alongside our sports hall for basketball, badminton, pickleball, and short tennis. Beyond the movement, we are a place to connect. Our social area, complete with a pool table and foosball, is the perfect spot to chill after a class, while our meeting rooms offer professional, flexible spaces for local hire. As a charity, we thrive on collaboration.

Whether through team-building days, event sponsorship, or facility use, we invite you to reach out. Let's work together to keep Taunton active, supported, and connected.



**Apex Medical and Rescue is a Taunton-based provider of professional event medical cover, specialist rescue services and high-quality first aid and pre-hospital care training. Founded in 2023, the company brings together extensive experience from the emergency services and Mountain Rescue community, combining clinical expertise with the ability to operate effectively in challenging and remote environments.**

Operating across Somerset and nationwide, Apex supports a wide range of events: from sporting fixtures and festivals to endurance challenges and remote expeditions, delivering tailored medical solutions to match the scale and risk profile of each occasion. Its teams include qualified first aiders, paramedics, nurses and doctors, all equipped to provide rapid, high-level care in both urban and hard-to-reach locations.

In addition to event cover, Apex is a recognised training provider, delivering accredited first aid and pre-hospital care courses designed to equip individuals and organisations with life-saving skills. With a strong emphasis on realism and practical application, its training reflects real-world scenarios and the latest clinical standards.

The organisation is well established within the local events community, already working alongside fellow Taunton Chamber of Commerce members Channel Events CIC and Prosper Events to help ensure participant safety. Apex also recently provided medical support for the revival of the Taunton Half Marathon, demonstrating its capability once again, to deliver reliable, professional cover at large-scale events.

Driven by a commitment to excellence, safety and community collaboration, Apex Medical and Rescue continues to grow its reputation as a trusted partner for event organisers, businesses and organisations seeking dependable medical and rescue provision across the South West and beyond.

[www.apex-mr.co.uk](http://www.apex-mr.co.uk)



**Headway  
SOMERSET**

**One moment, someone is going about their everyday life — driving to work, playing sport, or walking home. The next, everything changes. A fall, a stroke, or an accident can leave a person and their family facing challenges they never expected.**

That is where Headway Somerset steps in.

Headway Somerset is a local charity supporting adults affected by acquired brain injury across Somerset. More than a service, it is a lifeline - offering understanding, rehabilitation and hope.

Brain injury is often described as a “hidden disability.” Many survivors may look physically well, but live with memory loss, fatigue, emotional changes, or difficulties with communication. These challenges can impact every aspect of life, leaving individuals and families feeling isolated and unsure where to turn. Headway Somerset provides that support.

Through specialist programmes, structured activities, and a welcoming community, individuals are helped to rebuild confidence, regain independence, and reconnect with others who understand their journey. The charity also supports families and carers, offering guidance and reassurance during what can be an overwhelming time.

The impact is clear — lives rebuilt, confidence restored, and hope renewed.

But this work relies on community support. By donating, volunteering, or raising awareness, you can make a real difference. Because brain injury can happen to anyone — and together, we can ensure no one faces it alone.

[info@headwaysomerset.org.uk](mailto:info@headwaysomerset.org.uk)  
[www.headwaysomerset.org.uk](http://www.headwaysomerset.org.uk)



## Lanier South West – Redefining Office Technology for the Modern Workplace.

Lanier South West is proud to join the Taunton Chamber of Commerce, bringing decades of experience as the South West's longest-standing office technology provider. As a second-generation, family-run business, Lanier has built a strong reputation based on trust, service excellence and long-term customer relationships across Somerset and beyond.

Specialising in photocopiers, printers, and advanced scanning systems, Lanier supports organisations of all sizes, with a particularly strong presence in education. The company supplies around 37% of local schools, making it the area's largest education provider—an achievement reflecting its reliability and consistent service in demanding environments.

Lanier stands out through its service-led approach. The Lanier Performance Promise ensures that if a system fails to meet expectations, it is replaced at no charge. This is supported by a 24/7 helpdesk, rapid response times, and proactive maintenance to minimise downtime and maintain productivity.

Its Flat Rate Billing Solution offers a fixed monthly cost with unlimited use, removing the unpredictability of traditional cost-per-copy pricing and giving customers full budget control.

Beyond print, Lanier provides VoIP telephone systems on flexible 30-day rolling contracts, enabling businesses to modernise communications without long-term commitments.

With a strong local presence, a commitment to innovation, and a customer-first mindset, Lanier South West is helping organisations across the region work smarter, reduce costs, and future-proof their operations.

[info@laniersouthwest.co.uk](mailto:info@laniersouthwest.co.uk)  
[www.laniersouthwest.co.uk](http://www.laniersouthwest.co.uk)



# TAUNTON EATS

## Download the App today!



**After spending hours walking the streets of Taunton and visiting every restaurant, takeaway, café and bar, it is apparent that there is an army of hardworking and talented entrepreneurs deserving of our support and recognition. Their dedication to achieving success comes at a price - the loss of an evening family and social life, compounded by the ongoing economic challenges affecting the food, drink, and hospitality sectors.**

Since Covid, the food delivery sector has expanded at a rapid and highly lucrative rate, an area that is dominated by the global digital marketplace platforms. Their domination has resulted in very high commission fees that small independent businesses are compelled to pay in order to survive in a highly competitive market.

Taunton Eats is here to change all that. We offer a service powered by technology that matches the best in the industry. Additionally, our local presence enables us to build trust and strong relationships with our takeaway partners. We provide unrivalled and personal customer support because we are based locally. We also give free social media advertising and, in doing so, we sense we are building a special community of suppliers and consumers.

By charging much lower commission with no hidden fees and charges, our aim is to support and champion independent restaurants and small businesses. In turn, the takeaways and restaurants can not only charge less to the customer but pass on savings by offering discounts and loyalty programmes. It empowers business owners to retain more of their profits, fostering growth and sustainability within the area.

[www.tauntoneats.co.uk](http://www.tauntoneats.co.uk)



# TALISMAN

AI LTD  
Growing Your Business with Intelligence

**Talisman AI, based in the Quantocks, was founded on a simple belief: AI should feel accessible, useful, and grounded in real business needs — not overwhelming or over-hyped.**



Founder Roger Wilson brings an unusual background to that mission. Alongside a career in UK intelligence, he has served as a Director at Northamptonshire County Cricket Club; experience that has shaped a collaborative, friendly, professional, and solution-oriented way of working.

For Roger, Talisman was born from a genuine belief in helping people and organisations develop pragmatic, grounded solutions to real challenges. "I started Talisman because I believe in helping people and organisations find clear, practical ways forward," Roger explains. "It doesn't need to be complicated. With clarity, structure, focus and the right support, AI can make a genuinely huge difference to organisations of any size."

That ethos drives everything Talisman does. Working closely alongside local businesses, they use their structured AI Wayfinder approach to help organisations understand where AI adds real value, build confidence and capability, and embed it meaningfully into everyday workflows.

The Wayfinder Academy supports individuals and teams in getting practical with AI through structured, progressive learning, while Talisman's AI Playbooks, workshops, and Wayfinder Orchestrate provide clear guidance and workflow automation to unlock real efficiency.

Roger welcomes open, informal conversations with anyone curious about where to start.

[www.talisman-ai.co.uk](http://www.talisman-ai.co.uk)



**Pauls Promotions is the leading provider for all types of events & promotions in and around Somerset. Predominantly based in Taunton, Paul has organised and hosted events all over the Somerset area.**

Having been trading for over 25 years, the Managing Director, Paul Goodyer has the experience and knowledge to ensure any event or promotion organised and hosted by Paul's Promotions is the best it can be.

With great enthusiasm and attention to detail Paul has grown his business to become potentially one of the largest promotions companies in the area. His portfolio not only includes tribute acts, food & gift fairs but also the prestigious and renowned weekly car boot sale at Prockters Farm. The Sunday sale alone generates on average 5000 visitors buying and selling their items.

Peace of mind and a stress free journey are part of what we offer all our clients. We ensure all our staff have been vetted and DBS checked as standard. Fully trained, uniformed and armed with the knowledge needed to guide you through your journey. All our staff ooze experience, but we put our clients first. We listen to your needs, we agree on a budget and we organise and reorganise until you - our clients - are not only happy, but over the moon and as excited as we are for your upcoming event.

If you would like to speak to Paul regarding organising an event or promotion then please contact us.

[ppeventsltd@hotmail.com](mailto:ppeventsltd@hotmail.com)  
Paul - 07900 621199



# THE CHAPEL

*Bar ✕ Pizza ✕ Kitchen ✕ Coffee Shop*



# THE CHAPEL Tap

**The Chapel is a family-run pub and restaurant in the heart of Cotford St Luke, offering a relaxed and welcoming space for everything from casual drinks to special occasions. Set within a beautiful Grade II listed building, the venue combines historic character with a welcoming, modern hospitality experience.**

Since taking over in December 2022, Steve and Tracey Elliott have focused on creating a place that brings people together - from local residents to visitors and the wider community. With a hands-on approach, they pride themselves on friendly service and making every guest feel comfortable and at home.

Currently open Tuesday to Saturday from 9am and from 12pm on Sundays, The Chapel serves a variety of food and drinks. They have menus available throughout the day and into the evening. Guests can enjoy everything from breakfasts and light lunches to an evening menu, stone-baked pizzas and traditional Sunday roasts, all freshly prepared to suit a wide range of tastes. Regular live music and events help create a vibrant, social atmosphere.

In addition, the venue offers flexible spaces for private hire, making it an ideal setting for celebrations, meetings and community events.

Blending character, versatility and a strong community focus, The Chapel continues to grow as a go-to destination in the Taunton area for dining, socialising and hosting events.

**The Chapel Tap is a relaxed, rustic bar in the heart of Taunton town centre, brought to you by the family behind The Chapel in Cotford St Luke. Designed as a space to sip, savour and socialise, it offers a laid-back setting focused on quality drinks and an easy-going atmosphere.**

Championing local makers and independent producers, The Chapel Tap features a rotating selection of craft beers, Somerset ciders, curated wines and speciality spirits. From well-known names such as Sheppy's, Utopian and Quantock Brewery to smaller, emerging producers, the drinks offering continues to evolve throughout the year.

By day, it's a great spot for coffee or informal meetings, serving a growing selection of sweet treats through collaborations with local favourites Dough Bros and Crumb Coat Bakery. With no kitchen on site, patrons are encouraged to buy a drink and bring food in from other local businesses - supporting the wider town centre.

Regular live music and events add to the atmosphere, while the central location makes it an ideal stop for after-work drinks or weekend catch-ups. The space is also available for private hire, and works well for celebrations, clubs, groups and business meet-ups looking for a relaxed and informal setting.

The Chapel Tap brings a fresh, independent feel to Taunton's town centre.

[www.thechapelcotfordstluke.co.uk](http://www.thechapelcotfordstluke.co.uk)

[www.thechapel Tap.co.uk](http://www.thechapel Tap.co.uk)



**Vagabond Events is a community-driven events company rooted in a deep appreciation for nature, connection, and authentic experiences. We create and host our own distinctive gatherings, while also offering fully curated event packages. Bringing people together in meaningful and memorable ways. Every Vagabond event is shaped by an ethos: creating spaces for connection, music and atmosphere with a natural aesthetic.**



Our Vagabond Markets, bringing together local produce, natural wares, and artisan makers as a central part of the experience. By creating a platform for independent traders, artists, and craftspeople, we actively support the local community bringing markets and entertainment together. Our themed events build on this further, blending music, setting, and market culture into intriguing spaces that spark creativity and explore community culture.

With our rural mindset, our events embrace natural surroundings and a rustic atmosphere that encourages people to slow down and settle into the ambience. Whether set in open countryside, woodland clearings, or thoughtfully transformed venues, each experience is designed to feel organic and immersive. The support of local musicians and live music sits at the core, backed by a well-crafted bar, extensive catering and an environment that invites shared experience.

Collaboration and support is key to our approach, through tailored partnerships and consistent reliability, which allows us to combine creative expression with local character, ensuring our events feel both grounded and unique.

[www.vagabond-events.com](http://www.vagabond-events.com)



**WORLD  
OF  
BEARS**

**In the heart of Taunton Independent Quarter lies a remarkable and quietly enchanting place known as the World of Bears, a space where memory, comfort, & community come together through one simple, timeless object: the teddy bear.**

#### **A World Built on Bears**

Step inside and you'll discover a collection that is nothing short of extraordinary: over 18,000 bears, each with its own story, personality, and past. From vintage companions worn soft by decades of love to newer arrivals carrying fresh memories, the range reflects generations of care, nostalgia, and human connection.

These are not just toys. They are keepsakes. Symbols of childhood, comfort in difficult times, and reminders of people and moments that matter.

#### **Elaine's Vision**

At the centre of this world is Elaine and her team, whose passion and dedication the understanding that even the smallest objects can carry immense emotional weight.

#### **More Than a Collection**

The World of Bears brings people together in ways that extend far beyond the shop it themselves, for example its fund raising and donations to Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance, a vital local charity that provides lifesaving emergency care across the region. Operating without direct government or lottery funding, the service relies heavily on public generosity to continue its work.

[www.worldofbears.com](http://www.worldofbears.com)

# Member Good News

## AN EXCITING SIXTEENTH YEAR FOR MEMBERS MR MILES TEA ROOMS

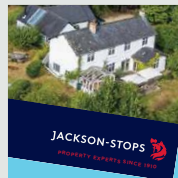
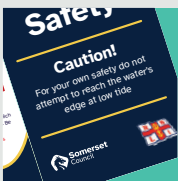
We have just celebrated our 16th Birthday and are looking forward to a bright Summer of 2026. As part of our drive to provide Taunton residents and visitors with a welcoming environment to meet family, friends, and colleagues, we are now pleased to announce an additional offering for you to enjoy. We acquired the services of our current Head Chef Luke Pegler last July and with his experience and that of his new kitchen team we have launched a monthly evening “Fine Dining” event. The first two of these in March and April have both been sold out with very positive feedback from those attending.

For those who have yet to try this, we can announce that the next two will take place on Friday 22nd May and Friday 12th June. So, if you would like to treat yourself or someone else, then make sure you check our Facebook or our website to see what delights you can enjoy. Then, if you would like to book, just pick up the phone and call us on 01823 322288 to reserve a table. We expect, from recent experience, that the evenings will fill up quickly so don't delay.

Another milestone we have reached is that we now have 3500 customers signed up to be “Friends of Mr Miles” this is an exclusive but growing group of regular guests who enjoy the benefits of discount off all purchases of our wide range of fresh-roasted coffee beans and ground coffee, along with other offers and a monthly newsletter informing members of events and new products.

Finally, it is our pleasure to announce a major partnership with Chamber members Taunton Brewhouse Theatre. We are sponsoring their Monday Cinema Club, supplying buffet lunches for their corporate meetings, and cream teas for a number of other events taking place throughout the year.

[www.mr-miles.co.uk](http://www.mr-miles.co.uk)



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## ACTIVATE FITNESS 24/7 IS CELEBRATING 10 YEARS IN BUSINESS

Activate Fitness 24/7 is celebrating 10 years in business, marking a major milestone for founder Tom Auton and his community-focused gym.

In an interview with the Somerset County Gazette, Tom reflects on launching the business at just 20 years old, taking a significant risk despite having limited experience. Driven by determination and a passion for fitness, he established Activate Fitness with the aim of creating a welcoming, non-intimidating environment for people of all abilities.

Over the past decade, the gym has grown steadily, building a loyal membership base and a strong reputation within Taunton. Tom credits much of this success to the supportive community atmosphere he has worked hard to foster, ensuring that both beginners and experienced gym-goers feel comfortable and encouraged.

The journey has not been without challenges. Like many businesses, Activate Fitness faced difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic, but Tom adapted by focusing on maintaining member engagement and preserving the sense of community that defines the gym. His resilience and willingness to evolve have been key factors in sustaining the business.

Tom also highlights the importance of consistency, hard work and customer relationships in running a successful independent gym. Rather than competing directly with larger chains, he has focused on offering a more personal experience, which has helped the business stand out.

Looking ahead, Tom remains committed to developing Activate Fitness while continuing to support the local community. Reaching the 10-year milestone is both a reflection of his dedication and a sign of the gym's lasting impact in Taunton, with plans to build on this in the years to come.

You can read the full interview with Phil Hill here = <https://www.somersetcountygazette.co.uk/news/26020929.interview-tom-auton-success-activate-fitness/>

[www.activatefitness.co.uk](http://www.activatefitness.co.uk)



## APPLE FM MOVES FORWARD WITH NEW HOME AND FRESH APPEAL FOR LOCAL BUSINESS SUPPORT

Apple FM, Taunton's vibrant community radio station, is proud to serve Taunton with a dedicated team of volunteers. Operating as a Community Interest Company (CIC), Apple FM upholds Ofcom's broadcasting standards, delivering trusted local content and entertainment.

Listeners can tune in to Apple FM on 97.3FM across Taunton, online, smart speaker, or through the station's APP, with DAB digital radio coming soon. This ensures that everyone in Taunton and the surrounding area can access the station's wide range of programming, wherever you are.

Apple FM traces its roots back to 1969, when it began life as Taunton Hospital Radio, after many years at Musgrove Park Hospital, the station is now relocating to Ina's Cottage at Miller's Yard, thanks to the generosity of Mambo Taunton. This move marks a new chapter in the station's commitment to serving the local community.

From lively weekday Breakfast & Drive shows to a carefully curated mix of easy listening favourites, Apple FM offers something for everyone. Its schedule reflects the interests and tastes of Taunton residents, creating a welcome space for all.

Although Grants can be found from Projects and Equipment we need funds for running costs to cover music and broadcast licenses, insurance and utilities and are looking for support from businesses within Taunton to advertise, sponsor and work with us to keep Taunton's only Community Radio Station broadcasting for many more years...

**If you are interested in working with us for a better Taunton email; [sales@applefm.co.uk](mailto:sales@applefm.co.uk)**



## HELP TAUNTON BREWHOUSE LIGHT THE FUTURE OF THEATRE IN SOMERSET

As we look ahead to our 50th anniversary in 2027, we're really pleased to share that Taunton Brewhouse has been awarded £527,000 from Arts Council England to support an upgrade of our auditorium and studio lighting, much of which has been in place since we first opened our doors in 1977.

**This is a huge moment for us, and one that will make a real difference to both our audiences and the artists we welcome to our stages.**

### A BRIGHTER, MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

This project will see the electrics in both our Main Auditorium and Studio Theatre replaced with modern, dynamic LED systems. As well as improving the quality of what you see on stage, these new lights are far more energy-efficient – helping us to reduce electricity use, lower our environmental impact, and manage long-term costs at a time when theatres everywhere are facing increasing financial pressures.

Our Executive Director, Vickie Robbins, said: *"We are absolutely thrilled and extremely grateful to Arts Council England to have our contribution to the cultural life of Somerset recognised like this. It is wonderful that this long-overdue upgrade will be achieved during our 50th anniversary year. We can now look forward to another 50 years, underpinned by sustainable, state of the art lighting systems."*

### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

Beyond the environmental benefits, this upgrade will also transform what's possible on stage. The new lighting will allow us to create more vibrant, immersive, and dynamic experiences – bringing performances to life in ways that previously required hiring in specialist equipment. In short, it means even more exciting, visually engaging shows for you to enjoy.

### LOOKING AHEAD – FIT AT 50

This lighting upgrade is the first step in our Fit at 50 campaign — our wider initiative to modernise the Brewhouse and make sure it's ready to serve the people of Somerset for many years to come.

### Future plans include improvements to:

- Roof surfaces
- Insulation and heating
- The Brewers House building
- Accessibility across the venue

## HOW YOU CAN HELP?

To complete this first phase, we still need to raise £20,000 in match funding. We're therefore inviting our audiences, supporters, and local community to help us reach this goal. If you've ever enjoyed a show here, taken part in a workshop, or simply value having a theatre like ours in your community, we'd love you to be part of this next chapter.

*"If 1,000 people each contributed £20, we will achieve this goal," says Vickie. "However, we truly appreciate any donation, big or small, as every gift helps us continue to improve our facilities for audiences and performers alike."*

**TAUNTON  
BREWHOUSE**

You can donate via [www.tauntonbrewhouse.co.uk/support-us/fit-at-50/](http://www.tauntonbrewhouse.co.uk/support-us/fit-at-50/) or donations can also be made in person at the Box Office (weekdays 10am–4pm, Tuesdays 10am–2pm) – we'd love the chance to thank you properly. Any businesses interested in corporate giving can contact Vickie Robbins at [vickie@tauntonbrewhouse.co.uk](mailto:vickie@tauntonbrewhouse.co.uk)

## SUCCESS BUILDS ON SUCCESS AT BLACKDOWN FINANCIAL

Blackdown Financial has continued its strong upward momentum in recent months, demonstrating a clear success-after-success model built on people, service, and results.

The latest chapter began with the appointment of Melissa Chambers as Operations Manager, a move that strengthened the firm's operational foundations and supported its continued growth. Melissa joined with a focus on enhancing processes, supporting advisers, and ensuring clients receive a seamless, stress-free experience at every stage of their journey.

Shortly after, Blackdown Financial received national recognition, as Director and Chartered Financial Planner Simon Cutler, along with Mortgage and Protection Adviser Emma Hamilton, were named Top Rated Advisers by VouchedFor. Both advisers will be featured in The Times as part of the Top-Rated Financial Advisers Guide. Simon has achieved this status every year since 2014, while Emma has been recognised annually since 2022 - an achievement driven by consistently outstanding client feedback.

Commenting on the recognition, Simon said: *"I'm very proud that our services receive so much positive feedback from clients, this is testament to the collective effort & excellent work from the entire team."*

The positive momentum didn't stop there. March became Blackdown Financial's best month on record, with the highest level of monies banked since the firm's inception - an achievement reflecting growing client trust and demand for clear, reliable financial advice.

At Blackdown Financial, the focus remains unchanged: taking the stress out of finances so clients can relax knowing it's all in hand. With a strengthened team, award-winning advisers, and record-breaking results, the future looks exceptionally bright.

[www.blackdownfinancial.co.uk](http://www.blackdownfinancial.co.uk)



## SOMERSET WEB SERVICES: BUILDING WEBSITES THAT WORK THE WAY PEOPLE NOW THINK

Established in 2002 and based in the heart of Taunton, Somerset Web Services has been supporting local businesses with their websites for over 20 years.

Known for stepping in when websites aren't performing as they should, the team has built a reputation for turning around slow, confusing or underperforming sites and making them work properly again. Their newly launched website is a clear example of this approach in action, built to reflect how people now engage with content online.

*"It's not just about how a website looks anymore," says the team. "It's about how quickly someone understands it and whether it makes sense the moment they land on it."*

With attention spans shrinking and AI increasingly influencing how content is interpreted, traditional approaches to website design are starting to show their age. Long pages, heavy layouts and keyword-driven content are giving way to something much simpler and easier to engage with. Somerset Web Services has embraced this shift. Their work now centres on structure, speed and ease of use, building websites that are straightforward to navigate, quick to load and immediately understandable, both for visitors and for the systems that now help guide them.

Alongside this, the team has developed particular expertise in accessibility and compliance. They build and manage websites for town and parish councils, where meeting strict accessibility standards is essential, giving clients confidence that their websites are inclusive and fit for purpose.

The result is not just better-performing websites, but more effective businesses behind them. *"We're not here to overcomplicate things,"* they say. *"We're here to make sure your website actually does its job."* For Somerset businesses looking to make sense of a changing digital world, that approach is proving to be exactly what's needed.

[www.somersetwebservices.co.uk](http://www.somersetwebservices.co.uk)





## BUSINESSWOMEN UNLTD EXPANDS INTO SOMERSET IN ITS 15TH YEAR!

Businesswomen UnLtd expanded into Somerset at the end of 2025, with two new networking groups launching in Taunton and Chard. This exciting development followed the purchase of the well-established networking community, Somerset Ladies in Business.

Founder and entrepreneur Debbie Gilbert moved to the area in 2023 and had been attending the groups. After the owners, Fiona and Kim, decided to sell, she purchased the groups and brought them into Businesswomen UnLtd. This ensured that local businesswomen could continue to benefit from supportive, high-quality networking opportunities.

Founded in 2011, Businesswomen UnLtd has built a strong reputation across the UK for delivering welcoming, award-winning networking events. With no membership required, the organisation has created an accessible and inclusive platform where women in business can connect, collaborate, and grow.

The groups in Taunton and Chard have built on strong foundations already in place locally. By taking on the existing groups, Businesswomen UnLtd is committed to maintaining the sense of community and continuity that members value. At the same time, it introduces fresh energy, new opportunities, and a wider network of connections. At the heart of Businesswomen UnLtd is a simple but powerful ethos: to create spaces where women

feel supported, inspired, and empowered in their business journeys. The Somerset groups offer regular monthly structured events that combine informal networking with expert speakers, practical insights, discussions and meaningful relationship-building.

This transition also strengthens ties with the Taunton Chamber of Commerce, connecting local businesses and raising the profile of female entrepreneurship.

Focusing on collaboration over competition, Businesswomen UnLtd supports women at every stage of business, from start-up to established enterprise.

Taunton and Chard groups are vibrant hubs, continuing a strong legacy and opening doors to more growth and success for women in Somerset business.

In addition, attendees gain access to the UK-wide online meetings when they attend in person and opportunities to promote their business across the network. Plus, they have their own Shining Star Awards open to anyone who has attended a group more than once in the past year. These awards will be presented at the Summer Celebration Lunch on 1st July at Cricket St Thomas Golf Club and will bring together both the Chard and Taunton areas to celebrate the achievements of the attendees and the 15th Birthday of Businesswomen UnLtd.

**More information [www.businesswomenunltd.co.uk](http://www.businesswomenunltd.co.uk)**



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# Member Directory



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Best SME Awards  
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Black Bear Pub Group  
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Blackdown Hearing  
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Bredons Sewing Machine Centre  
Brewhouse Theatre & Arts Centre  
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The **SOLD OUT** 40th edition of the Taunton Half Marathon made a spectacular return in 2026, marking a milestone year with one of the most successful events in its history. The exciting move to the town centre proved to be a resounding success, transforming the heart of Taunton into a vibrant hub of activity. Thousands of spectators lined the streets, creating an electric atmosphere and delivering a wonderful sense of community for runners and visitors alike.

A total of 1,780 runners proudly crossed the finish line in the half marathon, while the new Kids' Kilometre saw an impressive 127 young participants complete the course. Adding a light-hearted and memorable touch to the day, the mascots race was warmly received, bringing fun, colour and laughter to the packed event programme.

Running alongside the races, the Independent Market was a standout feature. It attracted significant footfall throughout the day, and many traders reported selling out by mid-afternoon. The event also delivered a strong economic boost to the town centre, with local shops, cafés and restaurants enjoying fantastic Sunday takings as visitors flocked into Taunton.

The success of the 2026 event would not have been possible without the incredible support of local businesses as sponsors, suppliers, and stakeholders. Special thanks go to members of the Taunton Chamber of Commerce, including: **Porter Dodson, Ballantine Wealth Management, Queen's College, Activate Fitness, Stephens Scown, AC Mole, Lentells, Biddys By Soph, Lloyd & Whyte, Gecho Agency, Imprints, Townley Insurance Brokers, UCS Taunton College, Apex Medical and Rescue, Channel UK Events CIC and Prosper Events.**

With its renewed energy, strong community spirit and outstanding local backing, the Taunton Half Marathon has firmly cemented its place as a highlight of the region's sporting calendar and 2027 is shaping up to be bigger and better than ever!



If you're a runner, mark  
28th February 2027 in your race  
calendar and secure your place at  
[www.activesouthwest.co.uk](http://www.activesouthwest.co.uk)  
...see you on the start line?

