

BUSINESS NEWS



Rob Andrews

Year off to busy start

A specialist commercial law firm in Shropshire says it has seen a flurry of activity in business sales, purchases and mergers at the beginning of the new year.

Andrews Law, based in Bridgnorth, has seen businesses looking to restructure in a variety of ways, and Rob Andrews, managing director of the practice, believes the economic climate is a key factor in explaining the trend.

Mr Andrews, says it is crucial that businesses are provided with practical legal

advice to ensure that any sale or purchase is right for them and that the deal is structured to ensure that the client's requirements are understood and covered in the agreements.

Key

He said: "My view is that preparation is key. The process of buying or selling a business is not straightforward but if issues are identified at the outset the process can be managed effectively and efficiently for the benefit of both buyer and seller."

Company's contract with National Trust

A growing waste management company in Telford has signed an agreement with the National Trust to provide its services across the organisation's network of properties.

Reconomy, based on Stafford Park, has signed a five-year supplier framework agreement with the Trust to deal with its general waste, mixed recyclables and glass, washroom services, and ad hoc hazardous waste.

Tamzin Phillips, waste advisor for the National Trust, said: "The National Trust has sites in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, including some very remote locations and it was important for us to find a partner with the resources to service such outposts."

"The link between the Trust's commitment to a local strategy and Reconomy's drive to use local providers from its extensive pre-approved supply chain is a major benefit."

Confident

"We are confident that our objectives of enhanced sustainability, lower environmental impact and reduced costs will be achieved and we're already seeing an improved waste service provided by Reconomy."

In 2008 Reconomy carried out a feasibility study, since when it has been working with a number of individual properties. This has now blossomed into a national agreement.

Reconomy is to help the Trust find more cost-effective waste management while helping it fulfil its legal requirements for waste management, and will use its online portal which provides real-time data on waste management.

Neil Baldwin, Reconomy's regional account manager responsible delivery



Neil Baldwin, regional account manager for Reconomy; David Hinton, divisional director of Reconomy; Tamzin Phillips, waste advisor for the National Trust and Steve Harland, procurement manager with the National Trust

of the new agreement, said: "This is a highly prestigious contract for Reconomy."

"What makes this relationship a success is the ethos within each organisation driving a desire to conserve. In the case of the National Trust it is to conserve national treasures for the benefit of the nation and in the case of Reconomy, to conserve our natural resources and cost-effectively reduce waste."

Reconomy is currently in the midst

of an expansion drive which could see its turnover double to £80 million over the next five years.

The National Trust employs over 5,000 full-time staff, has more than 61,000 volunteers, and is an independent charity with over four million members.

Its portfolio includes more than 350 houses, gardens, woodlands, monuments, nature reserves and parks, 710 miles of coastline, and 630,000 acres of land.



Bodytech directors Nick Blackburn, Peter Metcalfe and Jeff Anderson

Membership boom

A health club in Shrewsbury which hopes to open franchises across the UK has seen a 20 per cent growth in membership over the last year.

Bodytech's Shrewsbury club, which added 200 new members to the 1,000 it had at the beginning of 2011, is now aiming to increase by a further 20 per cent during 2012.

Owner Jeff Anderson said: "We think we have the right package in today's economy to attract people who are looking to get fit and maintain fitness levels in a sensible and fun way without it costing them the earth, and we believe that is why we are growing as a business."

"We have invested heavily in premises and equipment to ensure that we offer the best on the market and that is now beginning to pay off as more and more people realise what is on offer at Bodytech clubs."

The company, which also has health clubs in Oswestry, Whitchurch, Market Drayton and Chester, launched a franchising arm just before Christmas and is looking for entrepreneurs all over the country to take out a franchise of the successful formula.

The business model works on around 500-600 members a year and will return a profit of over £50,000 a year, with an annual turnover of around £180,000.

Head office

Mr Anderson founded Bodytech in 1998 when he opened his first club, now the company's head office, in Shrewsbury.

Along with his business partner Peter Metcalfe, he opened the second club in Market Drayton in 2006, followed by Whitchurch and Chester in 2007 and Oswestry, which recently doubled in size, in 2009.

Business failures increase

More than 5,000 companies entered insolvency in the last quarter of 2011, new figures have shown.

Analysis of the latest national corporate insolvency figures showed that 5,331 collapsed in the final quarter, an increase of 6.9 per cent on the same quarter of 2010 but a decrease of 1.1 per cent compared to the previous quarter of 2011.

The cumulative total insolvencies for all of 2011 were 4.2 per cent higher than the whole of 2010.

Matthew Hammond, partner in the business recovery services practice at PwC in the Midlands, said: "The 2011 full-year insolvency numbers highlight the worrying trends in the economy."

Construction

"Reflecting the picture here in the Midlands, the most exposed areas are in the construction and retail sectors, where administrations increased by 8.7 and 10.7 per cent respectively in 2011. Nationally, receiverships in the property sector also increased by 8.4 per cent."

He added: "The proportion of insolvencies accounted for by liquidations increased by one per cent - suggesting that smaller companies are suffering more."

"Historically, first quarters are peak periods for insolvency volumes and anecdotal evidence suggests that 2012 is following this trend."

"Our advice to companies remains constant - be realistic about sales, undertake robust cash flow planning and keep your stakeholders informed."

Practice's new online facility

A law firm has set up a free online legal and business information resource for Shropshire businesses.

FBC Manby Bowdler LLP has signed up for exclusive use in and around Shrewsbury and Telford, for the Law Donut, a national website which provides business users with a wealth of legal information, checklists, tools and resources.

The information on the site is designed to be a useful starting point to help business people looking to solve their legal problems. It also provides links to specialist solicitors at the county law firm to provide specific professional legal advice on any issue.

More relevant

Stuart Rea, corporate partner in FBC Manby Bowdler's Shrewsbury office, said: "The information on Law Donut allows business people to learn more about potential legal issues before they contact one of our lawyers, so it should help ensure that the inquiries we get are more relevant, saving both us and our clients time and money."

"We hope that businesses will use it as an information resource and to stay up to date with new regulations, as well as the starting point to speak to one of our experts."

The Law Donut has information on corporate and commercial law, litigation, commercial property, employment, as well as personal law, and can be accessed via the online resources section of FBC Manby Bowdler's website www.fcbmb.co.uk.



Stuart Rea

Smokehouse lands award

A smoked-food provider, which specialises in local meats and cheeses, has been landed an environmental award.

Ludlow Traditional Smokehouse underwent an environmental audit and showed it had ambition to further improve its practices to pick up the Green Achiever scheme silver status.

Developed by environmental consultancy E4environment and promoted through a pilot project with Heart of England Fine Foods in Shrewsbury, the Green Achiever scheme allows businesses or organisations to show off their green credentials.

Martyn Emsen, owner of the Ludlow Traditional Smokehouse, said: "Our process from start to finish is imaginative and green."

Weed killer

"The brine cure is used as a weed killer once the process has been completed. The wooden boxes that the fish is delivered in are chipped and used to light the kilns. Our drying room is designed to incorporate ceiling and wall shutters to create natural, free airflow, with no need for any artificial sources of power."

"The kiln itself is powered by a good, old fashioned match, using the traditional draught method, with no electric fans. There are no timers, just the skill of the artisan kiln-master."

Deborah Cairns, operations manager at E4environment, added: "Ludlow Traditional Smokehouse is one of the first businesses to take part in the project when it was launched towards the end of 2011. "It is proving to be popular and the response from other HEFF members involved so far is that the easy-to-understand, administratively-light and very positive Green Achiever experience is already providing substantial benefits to their businesses."

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