

Recognising Excellence merges with GWE

Recognising Excellence Limited agreed a merger between itself and GWE Business West Ltd. This will create a larger and stronger organisation offering an enhanced range of business services across the South West.

Established in 1993, Gloucester-based Recognising Excellence is a leading advice and assessment centre offering a range of quality standards, such as Investors in People, ISO, Lexcel, SFEDI and Committed to Equality. The company started investigating merger opportunities early in the New Year and saw GWE Business West as a natural choice that would provide opportunities, flexibility and operational freedom.

The merger was approved by

both Boards of Directors with the Recognising Excellence Managing Director, David Tew, remaining in position.

"This merger puts Recognising Excellence in a winning position by enabling us to offer even greater value to our clients and partners," said David. "Both companies will benefit from a greater and a more varied service portfolio, shared talents and resources, and a wider customer base – it's a win-win situation! We recognise the strong synergies between our skills, experience, values and ambitions, and the benefits of combining these."

Phil Smith, Managing Director of GWE Business West said, "It was a natural fit. Both organisations have a high profile in the South West and work closely with key partners. Our brands are well-known and trusted, and we are both committed to delivering added-value and excellent customer service. The merger will make it easier for businesses to access a broader range of quality services. We welcome Recognising Excellence to the GWE Business West family!"

Over the last few weeks the Boards of both companies have been working through the technical and legal aspects of the merger which are now completed. Recognising Excellence and GWE Business West will continue to operate as usual.




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PMI index shows strongest growth in South West for three months

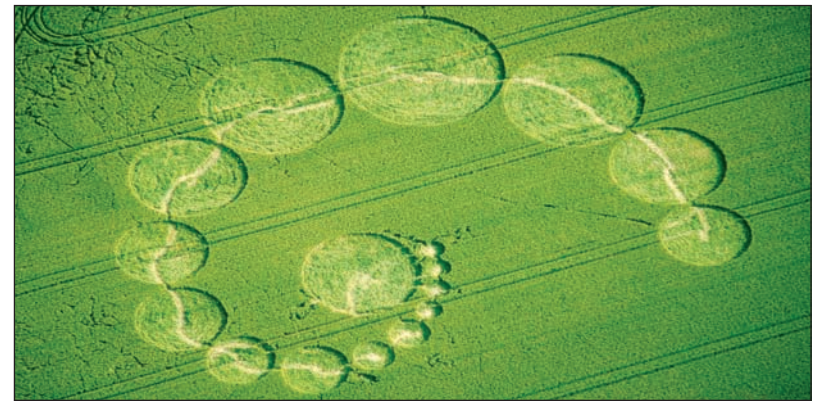
July data signalled marked growth of the South West private sector economy.

The headline seasonally adjusted Business Activity Index – which measures the combined output of the region's manufacturing and service sectors – posted 54.5, up slightly from 54.3 in June, and above that reported for the UK as a whole for the first time in nine months.

The latest rise in activity was supported by a further increase in new orders received. However, this was boosted mainly by the region's manufacturing sector, with service companies continuing to record lower activity and new work. Nonetheless, the rise in overall activity supported a further increase in employment. Meanwhile, input cost inflation eased for a third successive month.

Companies in the South West reported a marked rise in activity during July, which was the fifteenth in successive months. Moreover, the rate of output growth accelerated for a second consecutive month.

A further increase in new order volumes supported the rise in output. Incoming new business has now increased in each of the last ten months, with the latest expansion the strongest in three months. Anecdotal evidence suggested that the rise in new orders reflected an ongoing improvement in general economic conditions.



July data signalled a marginal rise in employment within the South West. However, the latest increase in staffing levels was the slowest in the current five-month sequence of rises. The increase in headcounts was largely focused in the region's manufacturing sector.

Despite accelerated growth in new order volumes, backlogs of work fell again in July. Nonetheless, the latest reduction in outstanding business was weaker than that indicated for the UK as a whole, and slower than the long-run average for the series.

Input costs faced by companies in the South West continued to rise in July, with input price inflation now sustained for nineteen successive months. However, the latest increase in costs was the slowest in eleven months. Reflective of the further rise

in input prices, companies in the South West reported another increase in charges. However, the rate of output price inflation was only marginal, with the extent of the latest rise limited by strong competition for new business. Nonetheless, charges have now risen for six successive months.

Commenting on the South West PMI survey, Shane Vallance, Economics and Evidence Manager at South West RDA, said: "The story of the last few months – that of a tentative recovery primarily driven by the manufacturing sector – continued into July. It's encouraging to see this was driven by growth in new orders, rather than businesses reducing backlogs. On the other hand, the national picture shows momentum in the economic recovery is slowing."

£7m wave energy funding for SW

The South West RDA (Regional Development Agency) has welcomed a £7m investment in developing wave and tidal technologies of the future – many of them in the South West.

The Technology Strategy Board (TSB) has announced the winners of a funding competition to support the development of existing wave and tidal devices and the development of new ones.

The RDA has worked in partnership with the TSB to manage the competition because of the Agency's ongoing work to develop marine renewables and the strength of the sector in the South West. This includes the RDA's £42 m Wave Hub project that is being installed off the coast of Cornwall.

Some 35 businesses and universities are involved in the nine research and development projects that have won TSB backing.

Claire Gibson, director of sustainable resources at the South West RDA, said: "The fact that more than half of these projects have strong links with the South West demonstrates the strength of the marine renewables sector in the region."

"The TSB's investments will be welcomed by the fledgling wave and tidal energy industry and complement our own investments in marine renewables, including Wave Hub and the Peninsula Research Institute for Marine Renewable Energy."

"If we are going to harness the vast potential of the oceans to generate low-carbon electricity for millions of homes then we need to support research into improving the reliability and performance of wave and tidal stream devices. The South West is already a leader in this field and many of these projects will reinforce that."

Among those benefitting from the TSB funding is Fred Olsen, which is

leading a project involving the University of Exeter to develop a wave energy device that can be deployed and tested at Wave Hub, and Bristol-based Marine Current Turbines to develop its Seagen tidal generator for exposed and deep water tidal locations. Falmouth-based Mojo Maritime is also involved

in this project.

Launceston-based Offshore Wave Energy Limited (OWEL) has also been awarded a grant to help develop its wave energy device, as has Bristol-based Tidal Generation which is developing a fully-submerged tidal generation prototype.

