

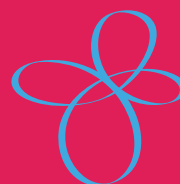
# BBP Life

BIRMINGHAM BUSINESS PARK MAGAZINE

SPRING 2026



**SPECIAL FEATURE:**  
WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP AT BBP



**Birmingham  
Business  
Park**



**WELCOME TO YOUR NEW BBPLife MAGAZINE**

Welcome to the very first edition of BBPLife – our newly rebranded community magazine for Birmingham Business Park.

BBPLife marks an exciting new chapter for the park, bringing together everything that makes our community such a unique and vibrant place to work. With a fresh new look and feel, this magazine has been designed to better reflect the energy, diversity, and ambition of the businesses and people who call the park home.

As we step into spring, the park is coming to life once again from the daffodils lining the woodland walk to colleagues reconnecting outdoors, enjoying lunchtime by the lake, and making the most of the green spaces around us.

Inside this edition, you'll find a mix of inspiring stories, business insights, and updates from across the park. We're shining a spotlight on some of the incredible organisations and individuals who make BBP what it is, alongside highlighting the events, initiatives, and opportunities designed to bring us all together.

As always, we'd love to hear from you – whether you'd like to feature, share a story, or get involved in upcoming activities. Feel free to email me at [lori@birminghambusinesspark.co.uk](mailto:lori@birminghambusinesspark.co.uk)

**Lori McDonagh,  
Marketing, Community and  
Business Development  
Manager**

# Passengers step into the future with autonomous shuttle trial

## SCALE PROJECT GATHERS VITAL FEEDBACK TO SHAPE FUTURE MOBILITY

**Birmingham Business Park played host to a landmark trial of autonomous transport as the full-route shuttle service from the SCALE Project completed its trial.**

Running from 5 February to 26 March 2026, the pilot saw self-driving shuttles operate across a 7km route linking Resorts World Birmingham, the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham International rail station and Birmingham Business Park.

The trial formed part of a wider programme exploring how connected and autonomous vehicles could support sustainable, first- and last-mile travel across the UK Central Hub area.

Operating Tuesday to Thursday between 10am and 3pm, the shuttles ran in mixed traffic conditions, giving tenants, employees and visitors the opportunity to experience autonomous travel in a real-world setting. No advance booking was required, allowing park



occupiers and guests to simply turn up and take part.

Importantly, the trial also served as a period of consultation. Feedback was gathered from passengers and stakeholders to help partners assess how autonomous services might operate at scale in the future, from safety and accessibility to journey planning and user confidence.

With up to 10,000 people travelling through Birmingham Business Park daily, the pilot provided valuable insight into how innovative transport solutions could enhance connectivity between major regional assets and employment hubs.

The SCALE Project is led by Solihull Council in partnership with Transport for West Midlands, Ohmio, University of Warwick, Coventry University and other collaborators. The programme has previously received





national recognition for its contribution to advancing connected and autonomous vehicle technology. Insights gathered during the consultation will help inform future decisions about autonomous transport across Solihull and the wider West Midlands.



## On board the future: Testing the Project CAV shuttle to BBP

It was with a real sense of excitement that I was invited to ride the Project CAV shuttle between the NEC and Birmingham Business Park.

After all, you're talking to someone who, as a teenager, would hop on the 900 bus to the airport just for the novelty of riding the Maglev. I've always had a soft spot for future-tech and a bit of Tomorrow's World transport.

Project CAV promises to transform connectivity between some of the West Midlands' most important destinations. The airport, Resorts World, the NEC, Solihull town centre and Birmingham Business Park could all become much easier to reach, if autonomous vehicle plans get the green light.

But there's one word in that sentence that may prove a sticking point: autonomous.

My 15-minute journey from the NEC to BBP offered a glimpse into what's possible. On this occasion, a driver and a manager were on board to guide

the vehicle through the busy roads of Bickenhill.

It's a fascinating trial and an exciting vision of the future, but it still feels like we're some way off seeing these compact shuttles operating entirely on their own. For now, there's reassurance in having someone there to spot hazards, navigate complex junctions and step in if needed.

While government legislation continues to evolve, there's also the question of public confidence. Winning over passengers who may feel uneasy about who, or what, is driving them could take time. That hesitation isn't really about the vehicle itself. The shuttle felt safe, comfortable and impressively equipped to get passengers from A to B. The real concern may lie beyond it, with other road users, who, let's face it, aren't always the most predictable or accommodating.

**Stacey Barnfield,**  
Edwin Ellis Creative Media

# Diamond development to shine bright at Birmingham Business Park

TWO UNITS AVAILABLE WITH MARKET LEADING SPEC



You may have noticed activity increasing around the Diamond plot - this marks the next phase of development at Birmingham Business Park, bringing forward new industrial and R&D space on site.

The scheme will deliver two units of 42,890 sq ft and 51,010 sq ft. Designed with flexibility in mind, the buildings can accommodate a range of uses, from light industrial and logistics through to research and development.

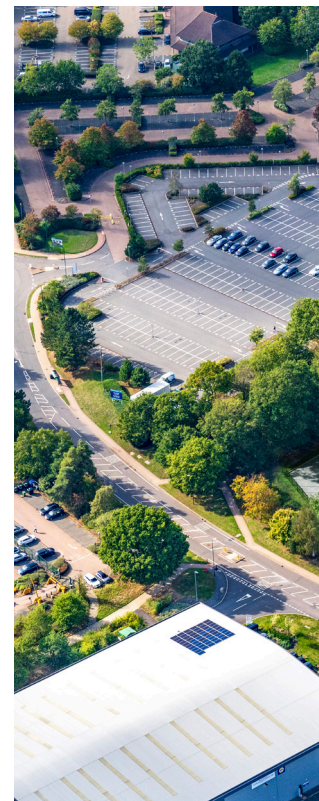
For those already based on the park, it's a notable addition - particularly for businesses thinking about how their space needs might evolve over time, or for teams interested in seeing how the park continues to grow and diversify. Positioned close to Junction 6 of the M42 and Junction 4 of the M6, the development builds on the park's strong connectivity, while complementing the mix of businesses already here.

As works progress over the coming months, you'll

start to see the structure take shape. It's another step in the ongoing evolution of the park, adding new space alongside the established community and green setting many of you already enjoy.

More broadly, developments like Diamond signal continued confidence and investment in the park, helping to attract new occupiers, create jobs and strengthen the overall business ecosystem. As new organisations join the park, there are increased opportunities for collaboration, knowledge-sharing and supply chain connections between existing and incoming businesses.

This ongoing investment also supports improvements to infrastructure, amenities and the wider environment, ensuring the park continues to evolve as a high-quality destination that meets the changing needs of its community, both now and in the future.



## DIAMOND SCHEME FACTS

The development is targeting strong environmental standards. Diamond is designed to achieve BREEAM Excellent and an EPC 'A' rating, incorporating measures to reduce operational energy use and support occupiers' sustainability objectives. Planned features:

- Photovoltaic panels and solar thermal heating
- Air source heat pumps
- Rainwater harvesting systems
- EV charging points / power charging stations
- Energy monitoring systems with smart meters
- LED lighting with automatic movement controls
- LED lighting to external yard areas and doors
- 10% rooflights to increase daylight
- Bio-diverse landscaping



## DIAMOND WORKS TIMELINE

Following the completion of pre-construction and enabling works, the project has now progressed into the main build phase. Groundworks and foundations are currently underway, which will bring increased machinery, deliveries, and some temporary traffic management.

Over the coming months, the building will begin to take shape, with the steel frame and external shell becoming visible. The later stages will focus on internal fit-out and landscaping, with activity gradually reducing as the project nears completion.

Access will be maintained throughout, with any temporary diversions clearly signposted. Completion is expected by December 2026, delivering high-quality new space on the park.



## ParkLife

BBP WORKERS SHARE INSIGHTS INTO THEIR ROLES & COMPANIES

### ERICA SPINK PARK MANAGER

#### Tell us a bit about your role?

I oversee the park's daily operations, including

managing contractors and health & safety. I work closely with both contractors and tenants to keep everything running smoothly.



#### What inspired you to get into the industry?

What drew me to the role was a chance to work in a setting that's constantly evolving. I enjoy being the point of connection between tenants, contractors, and the wider team, and I love the idea of helping create a place where businesses feel supported and can grow.

#### What do you enjoy most about working at BBP?

I feel fortunate to work somewhere so lovely. A morning walk by the lakes and through the woodland is the perfect way to start the day. No two days are the same, and I'm lucky to have a great team around me.

#### What do you like to do outside of work to switch off?

I enjoy getting lost in a good psychological thriller or heading out for a run. I'm also a big coffee fan, so you'll often find me in a local coffee shop.

#### What's one thing people might be surprised to learn about managing a business park like BBP?

It may look like the role is centred around managing the physical space but it's also very people focused, managing a shared community, rather than just overseeing properties.

Across Birmingham Business Park, leadership takes many forms, but a common thread unites those driving success today: adaptability, resilience and a strong sense of purpose. In this special feature, we speak to three inspiring female leaders working across education, clothing and leisure & hospitality, each bringing a distinct perspective shaped by their sector, experience and personal leadership journey.

“Each person brings a different skill set and perspective, creating a culture that is high-performing and enjoyable to be part of”

– JENNY McNAMEE, MANAGING DIRECTOR, ATTIRE EMEA

**Across Birmingham Business Park, a new generation of leaders is redefining what success looks like – and at the forefront are women bringing fresh perspectives, resilience and authenticity to the boardroom.**

One such leader is Jenny McNamee, Managing Director and co-owner of ATTIRE EMEA, a business rooted in global reach with exceptional client service. With over a decade at the company and a pivotal role in its evolution, Jenny’s journey offers insight into the realities of modern leadership – balancing strategic growth with a deep commitment to people.

**For readers who may not yet be familiar with Attire, can you give us a brief introduction to the business and your role as Managing Director?**

At ATTIRE EMEA – formerly Cintas EMEA and part of the wider Cintas Corporation – we specialise in the design, manufacture and supply of bespoke uniform programmes. Our deepest expertise lies in the cruise and hospitality industries, where attention to detail, durability, and brand expression are absolutely essential.

Our head office, based at BBP, is home to our sales, client services and administrative teams, while our warehousing and distribution operations are located in Porto, Portugal. From these hubs, we support clients across the UK, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and global cruise ports. We pride ourselves on the high level of service and responsiveness that has become synonymous with our name.

I joined Cintas in 2013, and 2026 marks my 13th year with the business. Over the years, I progressed into the role of Managing Director, and in 2021 I completed the acquisition of the business alongside my Finance Director, Rob Pollock. Today, as co-owner and Managing Director, I hold responsibility for the strategic direction

of the company, the performance of our teams, and the experience of every client we serve.

**As Managing Director, you balance people, brand, and commercial strategy. How would you describe your leadership style?**

I’m incredibly fortunate to lead a team at ATTIRE EMEA who are exceptionally talented and have been with the business for many years. Their loyalty, capability and commitment form the backbone of who we are. Each person brings a different skill set and perspective, creating a culture that is high-performing and enjoyable to be part of.

We work brilliantly as a team because there is deep trust between us. I trust them to take ownership of their roles, make decisions, and deliver for our clients. In return, they know I’m always there to support them.

My leadership style is centred around empowerment. I believe in giving people the space to grow and develop. At the same time, I’m hands-on when it matters – present, accessible, and invested in their success. We’re extremely lucky to have built a business where we genuinely enjoy what we do and enjoy working together, and that sense of shared purpose is what drives us forward every day.

**Leadership often means setting the tone for company culture. What values are most important to you when it comes to leading your team?**

For me, leadership starts with honesty and

trust. When you lead with transparency and integrity, you create an environment where people feel confident and empowered.

Exceptional customer service is another core value. Our clients rely on us to deliver consistently, so we set high standards and encourage the team to think outside the box.

Ultimately, the values that matter most are honesty, trust, creativity, accountability and a shared commitment to excellence.

**In your view, what defines a strong and effective leader in today’s business environment?**

A strong leader balances clarity, compassion and adaptability. Leaders need to navigate change confidently while keeping their teams supported.

It starts with being authentic – honest, transparent and consistent. Trust is built through actions, not words.

A modern leader also needs to stay connected: to their team, clients and industry. Listening is just as important as directing.

Above all, effective leadership is about setting high standards and inspiring others to rise to them.

**Every leadership journey comes with its challenges. What’s been one of the most valuable lessons you’ve learned as a leader?**

One of the most valuable lessons I’ve learned came when Cintas made the decision to divest the EMEA

business. At the time, I was Managing Director, and my first thought was the team – their futures, their security, their wellbeing.

Navigating that period required discretion.

“We’re lucky to have built a business where we enjoy what we do and enjoy working together, and that sense of shared purpose is what drives us forward”



I had a responsibility to protect the team until a clear resolution was secured. It was a reminder that leadership isn't just about strategy; it's about people.

That experience shaped the way Rob and I approached acquiring the business. It reinforced our belief that ATTIRE's strength lies in how we treat our people - and that this extends to our clients.

That moment taught me that leadership is about protecting your people and guiding them through uncertainty.

**Looking ahead, what excites you most about the future of Attire and the direction the business is heading in?**

What excites me most is the focused direction as we move into 2026. We're entering a period of business development, bringing ATTIRE's service, creativity, and product excellence to a wider global audience - particularly within the cruise sector.

The cruise industry is evolving rapidly, with operators seeking partners who can offer a full-service experience. That's where ATTIRE stands out.

There's something energising about stepping into new markets with a clear sense of who we are and what we offer.

**What's one achievement that you're particularly proud of since becoming Managing Director?**

One achievement I'm particularly proud of since becoming Managing Director is leading the business as a female in what has, throughout my career, been a very male-dominated industry. Stepping into this role wasn't just about taking on responsibility - it was about challenging long-standing norms and showing that leadership can look, sound, and operate differently.

What matters most to me is the impact this has had on others. I'm proud to be in a position where I can empower the women within our business, helping them see pathways and possibilities that weren't always visible to me earlier in my career. Creating an environment where female voices are heard, valued, and elevated has been incredibly rewarding

**Finally, when you step away from the business, how do you like to switch off and recharge?**

As a woman in my mid forties navigating life after a long-term relationship breakdown, I've found myself embracing a new chapter with a renewed focus on self care. These days I'm far more intentional about how I look after myself - from eating well to committing to the gym and reformer Pilates, which have become my non negotiables.

That said, balance is everything. I still happily indulge in a weekly trip to my favourite Indian restaurant, usually accompanied by a couple of glasses of red wine. Life's too short not to enjoy the good stuff.

And then there's my nephew - the absolute love of my life - a small but mighty French Bulldog named Frank. He's a regular fixture in the office when he's not "working from home," keeping the whole team entertained and ensuring Sean from DHL stays firmly on his toes. Frank brings a lot of joy into my world, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

Pictures courtesy: ATTIRE EMEA

“I’ve learned that leadership is less about having all the answers and more about empowering the right people to find them”

- SAMANTHA RUTTER, CEO, OPEN STUDY COLLEGE

**In today’s fast-changing business world, effective leadership is as much about people as it is about strategy. Samantha Rutter, CEO of Open Study College, exemplifies this balance, leading with a clear sense of purpose and authenticity.**

Having spent nearly two decades within the organisation, Samantha brings a hands-on, collaborative approach to leadership, shaped by experience across all areas of the business. In this Q&A, she shares her insights on leading through change, building strong teams, and creating a culture where innovation and people can thrive.

**For readers who may not be familiar with Open Study College, can you briefly introduce the organisation and your role as CEO?**

Open Study College is one of the UK’s leading distance learning providers, offering flexible, accessible education to learners of all ages and backgrounds. Our mission is to make education achievable for everyone, regardless of their circumstances.

As CEO, I’m responsible for setting the

strategic direction of the organisation, supporting our teams, and ensuring we continue to deliver high-quality learning experiences that genuinely change lives. That said, I’m not someone who leads from a distance, I’m hands on and not afraid to get stuck into the day-to-day operations. I spend a lot of time working closely with individuals and teams across the business, and over the past 18 years I’ve worn many different hats. That’s something I’ve always valued, and I still genuinely enjoy the buzz it brings.

**Your career journey has led you to the role of CEO at Open Study College. What experiences have most shaped your approach to leadership?**

My leadership approach has been shaped by a combination of hands-on experience, and navigating challenges that required resilience and adaptability. Working across different

areas of the business gave me a strong understanding of both operational and strategic perspectives. I’ve also learned that leadership is less about having all the answers and more about empowering the right people to find them.

**“I believe in creating an environment where people feel valued, heard, and able to bring their whole selves to work”**

**Leading a large education provider requires balancing strategy, people, and innovation. How would you describe your leadership style?**

I would describe my leadership style as collaborative, transparent, and purpose driven. Open communication is key, and I place a strong emphasis on listening, whether that’s to our learners, our colleagues, or industry trends.

**Online learning has evolved rapidly in recent years.**

**As a leader, how do you guide your organisation through periods of change and growth?**

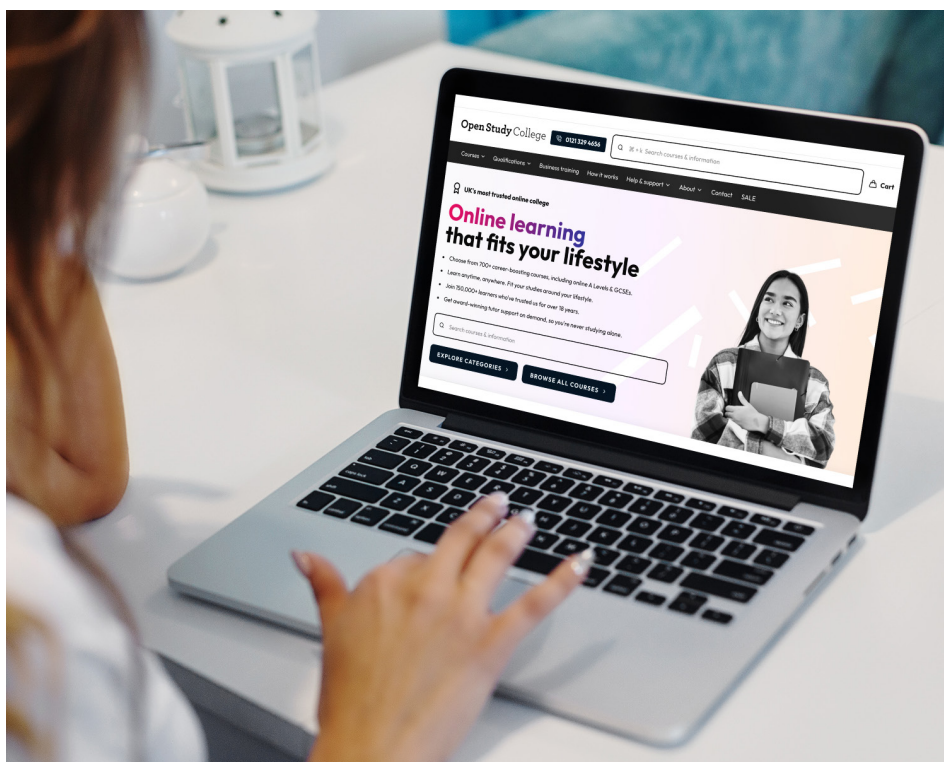
Change is constant in our sector, so it’s important to stay agile and forward-thinking. I focus on creating a culture that embraces innovation while remaining grounded in our core mission. This means investing in technology, listening closely to learner needs, and ensuring our teams feel supported and confident in adapting to new ways of working.

**As a female CEO in the education sector, what leadership values or principles are most important to you when running the organisation?**

Authenticity, empathy, and inclusivity are central to how I lead. I believe in creating an environment where people feel valued, heard, and able to bring their whole selves to work.

**What do you believe makes a great leader in today’s business and education environment?**

I believe great leadership today is about clarity, courage, and accountability. With so much change and complexity, people look to leaders for clear direction and honest communication. It’s about making informed decisions, even when they’re



“Leadership starts with trust and openness”:  
Samantha Rutter  
photographed at  
Birmingham Business Park

difficult. At the same time, great leaders create strong teams around them. You don't need to have all the answers, but you do need to build an environment where talented people can thrive, challenge ideas, and contribute meaningfully.

**How do you create a culture within Open Study College that encourages collaboration, development, and innovation among your team?**

It starts with trust and openness. We encourage cross-team collaboration, provide opportunities for professional development, and actively seek input from colleagues at all levels. Innovation thrives when people feel safe to share ideas, challenge thinking, and learn from both successes and failures.

**Every leadership journey comes with challenges. What has been one of the most important leadership lessons you've learned along the way?**

One of the most important lessons I've learned is the value of resilience and perspective. Not every decision will be perfect, and setbacks are inevitable. What matters is how you respond, staying focused, learning quickly, and moving forward with clarity and confidence.

**Looking ahead, what excites you most about the future of Open Study College and the role your team will play in shaping the future of online learning?**

What excites me most is the opportunity to continue expanding access to education in new and innovative ways. Online learning is becoming more personalised, interactive, and career focused, and we're in a strong position to lead that evolution. Our team's passion and commitment will be key to shaping a future where learning is truly accessible to all.

**Finally, when you step away from work, how do you like to recharge and maintain balance outside of your leadership role?**

For me, balance comes from spending quality time with family and friends, as well as taking time to switch off and recharge. Whether that's exercising, travelling, or simply enjoying quieter moments. It's important to create space to reset and return with fresh perspective and energy.



“We believe a strong team culture comes from creating an environment where people feel heard, valued, and supported”

– ZOE MOYO, FOUNDER, MAMOXX CAFE

**In today’s business landscape, leadership is increasingly defined by authenticity, culture and connection – values that sit at the heart of Mamoxx. Led by Zoe Moyo, the café brings a fresh perspective to the leisure and hospitality sector, blending Southern African heritage with a strong sense of community.**

Since opening at Birmingham Business Park, Mamoxx has quickly become a welcoming hub where food, culture and people come together. In this Q&A, Zoe shares the inspiration behind the business, her collaborative approach to leadership, and how creating a genuine sense of belonging, for both team and customers, has been key to building a brand with lasting impact.

**For those who may not have visited yet, can you tell us a little about Mamoxx and the inspiration behind the café?**

Mamoxx is a café built on the idea that food is more than just nourishment – it’s a way of connecting people. Inspired by our Southern African heritage, we wanted to create a space that reflects the richness of our culture while feeling accessible and welcoming to everyone. It’s a place where flavour, warmth, and community naturally come together.

**Mamoxx was created by three sisters and celebrates your heritage through food and community. How did the idea first come to life?**

The idea evolved over time through conversations between us as sisters. Food has always been a constant in our lives, something that brought us together growing up. We began to realise that we could turn that shared passion into something meaningful - a space that celebrates our roots while creating new experiences to share with others.

**Food has a special way of bringing people together. What do you hope people feel when they walk into Mamoxx?**

We want people to feel an immediate sense



of ease, like they just walked into a warm hug) There’s something powerful about walking into a space and feeling welcomed without effort. Whether a guest is visiting for a quick coffee or a longer catch-up, we hope they feel comfortable, cared for, and able to fully enjoy the moment over and over again.

**Mamoxx has quickly become a much-loved part of Birmingham Business Park. What has the journey been like since opening here?**

It’s been both energising and humbling. Building Mamoxx from the ground up has come with its challenges, but the response from the community has made it incredibly rewarding. Seeing familiar faces return, and watching word-of-mouth grow organically, has been a real highlight for us.

**As a founder and business owner, how would you describe your approach to leading the Mamoxx team?**

Our approach is rooted in mutual respect and collaboration. We believe that a strong team culture comes from creating an environment where people feel heard, valued, and supported. When that foundation is in place, it naturally translates into the experience we offer our guests.

**Do you have a favourite dish or drink on the menu that you’d recommend to someone visiting for the first time?**

Our rice boxes are often a favourite and a great introduction to what we do. They bring together a variety of flavours in a way that feels both satisfying and a little unexpected – an experience in itself.

“It’s been both energising and humbling. Building Mamoxx from the ground up has come with its challenges, but the response from the community has made it incredibly rewarding”

“We hope to see Mamoxx continue to grow in a way that remains true to its foundations”: Zoe Moyo photographed at Mamoxx, Birmingham Business Park

For the drink it would definitely be a Mamoxx special – a refreshing iced delight made with a taste of Africa\*

**Running a café is no small task. What have been some of the biggest challenges – and rewards – of building the Mamoxx brand?**

One of the greatest challenges has been navigating the unpredictability that comes with running a business – no two days are ever quite the same. Like the day our till system crashed in the middle of service! However, those challenges are balanced by the rewards – all our guests still got their orders with most returning to make payments later, which was lovely of everyone. I’m laughing now, but it was quite stressful at the time.

Also, seeing an idea take shape, building relationships with guests and creating something that resonates with people.

**Community is clearly at the heart of Mamoxx. How do you create a culture within your team that reflects that welcoming spirit?**

We focus on fostering a genuine sense of belonging within our team, by prioritising openness, trust, and support, we create an environment where people feel comfortable being themselves. That authenticity is what ultimately shapes the spirit of ‘UBUNTU’ (our favourite African proverb meaning we ARE because You Are) strengthening the atmosphere our customers experience.

**Looking ahead, what are your hopes and ambitions for Mamoxx in the future?**

We hope to see Mamoxx continue to grow in a way that remains true to its foundations. Expanding our reach, deepening our community connections, and creating opportunities for others are all part of our long-term vision. Above all, we want to build something that has lasting impact.

**Finally, when you’re not at the café, how do you like to spend your time and recharge outside of work?**

Time away from the café is centred around family and simple moments of rest.

Travelling, Laughter while sharing meals, unwinding, and just slowing the pace. Moments that allow us to reset and return with a renewed focus.





BBPLife PROFILE

# Combat Stress: Charity dedicated to supporting veterans

We're pleased to share that Combat Stress, the UK's leading charity for veterans' mental health, is based here at Birmingham Business Park and is relaunching a regular drop-in session for veterans, as well as their friends and family.

Combat Stress is a specialist charity dedicated to supporting former servicemen and women experiencing mental health challenges. Their work focuses on conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression often linked to experiences during military service.

The new drop-in sessions are designed to be informal, welcoming, and accessible. Open to both veterans and those supporting them, they offer a safe space to talk, seek guidance, and connect with others.

**IF YOU ATTEND, YOU CAN EXPECT:**

- A relaxed, safe space to talk
- Friendly, experienced staff on hand
- Information about available support and services
- The opportunity to connect with others who may share similar experiences

There's no pressure and no formal referral process just the chance to drop in, have a conversation, and explore what support is available.

If you, or someone in your team, could benefit from this support - the Combat Stress team would be happy to help.

Keep an eye on the BBP website 'What's On' page for upcoming dates, or contact [simon.west@combatstress.org.uk](mailto:simon.west@combatstress.org.uk) or [peersupport@combatstress.org.uk](mailto:peersupport@combatstress.org.uk)



## SIMON'S STORY

"I joined the Royal Engineers in 1984 when I was 16 and straight out of school. I did my apprenticeship in Chepstow. I served in Germany, Northern Ireland, Canada and served in the first Gulf (Iraq) war.

"I left the Army after 14 years as I felt I'd reached the end of my time - I'd done and seen everything I needed to, been to war, got the T shirt and wore medals. I got a civilian job working as a development analyst for an airline and had a successful career in project management, but I knew inside I was an angry man. I didn't realise I had mental health issues, although I guess everyone me around soon realised.

"I had no patience and it wouldn't take me long to go from calm to taking the world on - it didn't matter what the consequences would be, in my mind it wasn't me who had the issue, everyone else had the problem. I had no idea about PTSD - I just thought I was a veteran who was angry.

"By 2015 everything was going wrong around me and my relationships were rubbish, I was alienating people who cared about me. In my mind I had a deep, dark secret stemming from my time in the Army and I thought if people knew what it was, they wouldn't like me. I hated myself so how could anyone like me, let alone love me? So, I did all I could



“I broke down on the phone – it was the first time someone had asked me “how are you?” rather than “do you realise what your actions are doing?”

to make people dislike me first, no matter who it was; parents, partners, whoever.

“I needed to fill my mind with other activities. If my mind wasn’t busy, the thoughts could get in and that wasn’t a place I wanted to be. I was working away a lot and I would just work, eat, go to the hotel on repeat to block everything in my head.

“I finally went to the doctor in 2016 on the “advice” of my family – it was get help or get out. The doctor suggested I needed help, he had a friend who had served and who had suffered, so I called Combat Stress and within 90 minutes I was talking to a nurse.

“I broke down on the phone – it was the first time someone had asked me “how are you?” rather than “do you realise what your actions are doing?”

“I went in for an assessment and cried for 10 minutes before I’d even been asked a question because I felt so broken, I didn’t know what to do. I saw myself as indestructible and here I was saying to some stranger “I’m broken, I need fixing”.

From there I did a two-week stabilisation course, which gave you an insight into things like mindfulness, PTSD symptoms and recovery techniques, but the most useful thing for me was realising I wasn’t alone. I was with other veterans of all ages, who had served in many

different conflicts, who were experiencing the same things as me.

“I was meant to take part in an intensive PTSD programme but didn’t go – I’d had my treatment and felt like I’d ticked that box so didn’t need more help, I mean what could go wrong? But things got worse again and came to a head just before Christmas. I was in a deep, deep hole and had no idea how to get out of it. So again, I called Combat Stress saying I needed help.

“On 2 January 2017 I began the six-week residential Intensive Treatment Programme and overall had treatment for around a year. I’d say from my experience it was mentally brutal, and it wasn’t nice bringing back memories, I was introduced to the delights of trauma sickness and disassociation but it had to be that way to get myself on the way to recovery.

“The treatment from Combat Stress has made a huge difference to my life. I can identify my triggers now and know how to avoid them. For example, the diesel-like smell of tarmac after rain can trigger me so I know to carry a Vick’s inhaler stick with me to stop disassociation and to bring me back to the present day.

“I’m a different person and four years ago started a new career working for Combat Stress starting as a regional Peer

**“The treatment from Combat Stress has made a huge difference to my life. I can identify my triggers now and know how to avoid them”**

Support Coordinator, then Senior Peer Support Coordinator and now as Lead Peer Support Co-ordinator, working with veterans who are where I was.

“I’m so proud to work for Combat Stress and it may sound cheesy but know that I’m giving something back. I can sit opposite a veteran who is running out of willpower and say, “in 2016 I made one phone call and now look at me”.

“It’s the empathy that hits them immediately, Combat Stress have shown commitment to my progression and also to their veteran-centric model.

“I’d say to any other veterans who are experiencing mental health issues, you must call Combat Stress. The hardest step is making that phone call – after that it’s not plain sailing but holding your hands up and saying “I think I’ve got an issue” is the hardest bit. As veterans it’s not one of our strong points.

“I’m forever thankful to Combat Stress’ supporters as without their donations to fund the charity’s work I don’t think I would be here, that’s how bad it got. I certainly wouldn’t have a family around me.

“Combat Stress saved me; I’ll always have PTSD but now I manage it – it doesn’t manage me. For the skills I was taught by Combat Stress, from the senior clinicians, my therapist, to the nurses, even the recovery workers who would always be there at silly o’clock in the morning bringing out a coffee to me in the smoking area – for that I’ll be forever grateful.”

# 50 years of support: How Citizens Advice Solihull continues to change lives

**Citizens Advice has been a charity at the heart of the Solihull community since May 1972, offering free, confidential, impartial and independent information, advice and guidance to local residents.**

While the world has changed dramatically since the very first Citizens Advice service opened in a converted horse box in London on 4 September 1939, our mission has remained constant: to help people understand their rights and responsibilities, and to ensure their voices are heard.

Every day, we support people from all walks of life to find a way forward. Our advisers provide guidance on welfare benefits, money and debt, housing, family issues, consumer rights, employment, tax, health, immigration and more. We take a holistic approach, looking at the whole household and offering tailored options along with the costs and consequences of each one. Our aim is always to empower people to make informed decisions and feel more in control of their situation.

Beyond individual advice, we also play a vital role in identifying injustices affecting our community. By gathering evidence from the people we help, we highlight emerging issues and take them—along with practical solutions—to local and national policymakers. Sometimes change happens quickly; other times it takes persistence and years of advocacy. But we remain committed to ensuring that the experiences of Solihull residents shape better policies and fairer outcomes.



**Citizens Advice Solihull Chair, Daniel Bliss**

In FY25, 2,601 people accessed our service, and through our specialist advice and information we helped them secure over £9 million in financial gains. These individuals sought support for more than 17,000 issues. Increasingly, people come to us with multiple, complex challenges that can take several months to resolve, and we are proud to stand alongside them throughout that journey.

Our work is made possible by the

dedication of over 35 volunteers who give their time in roles ranging from retail assistant and clerical officer to adviser and board member. Our longest-serving volunteer has been with us for an incredible 33 years. As Trustee Ophelia Branford Kainth puts it: “I wanted to join Citizens Advice Solihull Borough to be part of a team that makes a real difference within the community. CASB is a significant community-based organisation that puts local residents at ease and creates impact every day. I wanted to be part of that, to support those who support others.”

We run several projects designed to meet the needs of local people, including our money advice service, social prescribing, Adviceline, outreach advice clinics and our charity shop. People can access our Adviceline (Mon to Fri 10am to 2.30pm) or through our Advice Clinics (Tues & Fri) at our offices 176 Bosworth Drive, B37 5DZ.

For more than five decades, Citizens Advice Solihull has been a trusted place to turn in times of uncertainty.

We’re proud to continue that work today, helping people navigate challenges, understand their rights and find the support they need to move forward with confidence. If you would like to know more about our organisation please email Kerry Turner, MBE: [ktturner@casb.org.uk](mailto:ktturner@casb.org.uk)

## MBE HONOUR FOR CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Kerry Turner, Chief Executive of Solihull Citizens Advice, (pictured) has been awarded an MBE in the King’s New Year Honours for her outstanding service to both the organisation and the wider Solihull community.

Under her leadership, the charity has continued to provide vital, free advice across issues including debt, housing and welfare, support that has become increasingly critical during the cost-of-living crisis.

The honour recognises not only Turner’s long-standing commitment to accessible advice services, but also the wider impact of Solihull Citizens Advice in helping residents navigate complex challenges and improve their quality of life.



## BBP HOSTS CLIMATE FRESK SESSION

On 12th March, we welcomed businesses from across the park to take part in a Climate Fresk Workshop, delivered by Solihull Council – an interactive and thought-provoking session designed to deepen understanding of climate change.

Climate Fresk is a globally recognised workshop based on the scientific reports of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change). It uses a simple but powerful concept: participants work together to piece together a series of illustrated cards, each representing different aspects of climate science such as greenhouse gases, rising temperatures, biodiversity

loss, and human activity. As the session unfolds, these cards arranged to build a “fresk” (or visual map), helping to connect the causes and consequences of climate change in a way that’s clear, engaging, and easy to grasp – regardless of prior knowledge.

What made the session particularly valuable was its collaborative nature. It sparked conversation, encouraged different perspectives, and helped translate complex climate science into something tangible and relevant to everyday business decisions.

A big thank you to Solihull Council for delivering such an insightful session. It’s a great example of how we can come



together as a business community to better understand the challenges ahead – and the role we all play in shaping a more sustainable future.



## BBP welcomes spring with Easter activities

On 19th March, we hosted our very first Easter Basket Workshop at Birmingham Business Park and what a lovely way it was to welcome the season.

Bringing together tenants from across the park, the session offered a chance to step away from desks, take a breather, and get a little creative. Guided by Ben Tebbutt from Nurture Landscapes, attendees were shown how to craft their own beautiful Easter baskets, using a mix of seasonal flowers and natural materials.

“The Easter basket workshop was a

fun and enjoyable experience. Ben from Nurture was fantastic and ensured the session ran smoothly. Everyone’s baskets turned out beautifully colourful – it was great to see so much creativity on display,” said Abbey Sond from Siva Tec.

Alice Thomson, from John Sisk, added: “The Easter Basket workshop was such a fun way to connect with others while doing something a little different at work. It was great to switch off, get creative, and reconnect with nature – especially with the amazing flowers Nurture provided to really bring our baskets to life!”



Pictures: Ian Yates

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