

# THE Voice

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF



## Media Information

### ABOUT LANCASHIRE BUSINESS VOICE

*The Voice* is the new official publication of award-winning North & Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce.

The Chamber, which has been established since 1916, actively represents, supports and promotes over 1,600 businesses, from micro to multi-national organisations, throughout the region.

Published four times a year, *The Voice* will fulfil two principal roles. Firstly, to keep members informed of the Chamber's many activities, whether they be lobbying government for legislative changes to assist business, providing information on the various networking opportunities that form a core part of any chamber of commerce's diary and promoting positive business news on behalf of its membership.

*The Voice* will act as a discussion forum for some of the region's leading business people, each issue will carry authoritative comment on key issues affecting all businesses, from tax to exporting and energy to tackling red tape.

With a readership of 6,000, few other business magazines can directly touch as many opinion formers across the region.

Finally, each issue will carry a series of features on topical business matters all backed by strong editorial support from leading figures within their speciality.

It is the breadth of editorial coverage that makes *The Voice* the obvious choice for any company wishing to promote itself to the business community of region.



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Issue 11 Spring 2019

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THE VOICE is published on behalf of  
North & Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce by  
CROSBY ASSOCIATES MEDIA LIMITED  
Crosby Road, Preston, Lancashire, PR1 2BB  
Tel: 0224 124 3780  
www.crosbyassociates.co.uk

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## QUARTERLY ECONOMIC SURVEY Q4 2018

The results of the latest Quarterly Economic Survey (QES) from the Chamber of Commerce show that economic conditions were **marginally subdued in the final quarter of 2018**, with a number of key indicators continuing to weaken under the weight of persistent Brexit uncertainty and rising cost pressures.

The survey, compiled by the county's three Chambers of Commerce, in association with H&A Moore and Smalley Chartered Accountants and Business Advisers, reveals a significant slow-down in domestic sales and orders for the service sector which is the main driver of the economy and makes up two-thirds of responses to the survey. The slow-down in sales has also affected business confidence in the sector, with turnover and profitability well impaired in the coming year taking a backward step.

The downturn in business confidence is also reflected in a weakening employment picture for both manufacturing and service firms. Despite this, over half of the firms in the survey attempted to recruit during the year with 74% of manufacturers reporting difficulty recruiting skilled manual workers.

Commenting on the results, Alan Walsh, Policy Manager at the North & Western Lancashire Chamber said: "The government must demonstrate that it is ready to act to turbo-charge business confidence. With little clarity on the trading conditions they'll face following Brexit, companies are understandably holding back on spending and making big decisions about their future. The government's absolute priority now must be to provide clarity on conditions in the near term and

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Right Words

## WELCOME

Many feel the time is right and believe the county could realistically win this title. We do, and if we do, the benefits are enormous.

We know that cultural investment can help transform communities and economies. Winning City of Culture status for the County of Lancashire would be something that makes a good situation even better for a county that is already experiencing significant development.

But this is not just about economic benefits, we want to change the future for the people of the region, especially the young.

The UK City of Culture competition is a fantastic opportunity for the winner to really put itself on the map. The title is a unique opportunity to drive artistic innovation, bring in visitors, and boost regeneration. Here in Lancashire we have beauty, history and geographical location on our side.

We've got the lot, from areas of outstanding beauty to the most visited seaside resort in the country. Lancashire is a pretty much the geographical centre of Great Britain, it's accessible, it's welcoming and it deserves a shot.

I would be great to bring home the title, but if our bid stands any chance it means everyone must get behind it. Of course, it's going to be challenging, it will demand fortitude, vision, commitment, good planning, tenacity and organisation, but above all we need a pragmatic, unified agreement.

We will all benefit from a Lancashire win. The question is do we have the commitment, the vision and the ambition to put local parochialism aside and support the role our county's hymn sheet. We really do have a - in fact I'm certain we can.

**Babs Murphy**  
Chief Executive at North & Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce

**I thought I was heading things - the county of Lancashire is bid for City of Culture status - Lancashire a city? Well according to the rule book there's nothing to stop us.**

Lancashire's application for the 2025 City of Culture status is one of the latest steps to put Lancashire on a global platform and winning would turbocharge our county's cultural and economic life. The ripple effect to all aspects of the county would be profound not to mention bringing national and international attention to the diverse range of businesses operating within the county's borders.

The prestigious 2025 UK City of Culture title is a chance to use arts and culture as a catalyst for a county's sustainable economic and social regeneration. Running every four years, the competition is also an opportunity to raise the profile of a county's creative reputation right across the country.

**"We want to change the future for the people of the region, especially the young."**

PRESTON IS 'SMILES BETTER' - Finalists Announced

Writing is closed and the results are in, over 70,000 votes have been cast in Preston BID's Smiles Better Awards, which recognise outstanding businesses and individuals in Preston city centre. The awards are sponsored by the North & Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce.

A total of fifteen prizes and up to grants at the awards' ceremony on April 9th, including Independent Retailer of the Year, Multiple Retailer of the Year, Customer Service Champion, Bar of the Year, Restaurant of the Year and City Star. In addition, a Special Recognition Award which cannot be shared, will be awarded to someone who's made a significant contribution to the city's economic, cultural and social life of the area depend on good transport and good mobility. This will be a key focus for the committee."

Mason, who operated a business in Preston for over thirty years, the Carter Family - former operators of Preston's 'The Carter' angling store and former leader of Preston City Council, the late Honorary Alderman Peter Banks.

Mark White, from Preston BID who organises the competition said: "The prizes in Preston city centre consistently offer outstanding service, and the Smiles Better awards are a way of honouring those

There's been headlines galore about the value of Bitcoin. Initial investors are said to have made a packet, but also warn. It's a volatile market at least right now until it potentially becomes a mainstream currency transaction platform.

Just to add a little more confusion, if you look beyond the headlines, there are a plethora of other cryptocurrencies to keep an eye on. Bitcoin doesn't have the monopoly. There's Litecoin, Peercoin, Dogecoin, Monero and Ripple to name just a few.

As always, there's a counter-argument that cryptocurrency is just a fad, another 'Silent CS'. But at the very least we need to be actually aware of it, what it could do, and how it might affect the way we buy and sell in the near future.

ultimately, we will be transacting using cryptocurrency in everyday life inside the next five to ten years. Sounds scary. But remember when we first heard about that thing called the internet. "I'll never catch on" some said, now look, we couldn't live without it. Some technologies have revolutionised the way we conduct business and the way we live, and experts suggest that Crypto is on track to be one of these life-changing developments.

It's almost inevitable that traditional banks will eventually accept cryptocurrencies, you and I could well be able to open crypto bank accounts. You can already buy Bitcoin, and other cryptocurrencies, from standard ATMs in some countries and crypto debit cards might become an actual thing.

makers at local and regional level. He said: "The Chamber represents 1600 businesses across Lancashire and I am pleased that some of our most influential members have agreed to sit on this new committee. The aim of the group will be to take a strategic view of all forms of transportation including roads, public transport, airports, ferries, ports, and rail.

"Our first objective will be to identify the top transport priorities for Lancashire businesses and then make the case for those schemes. We want to work with all of our stakeholders to agree new transport infrastructure and make sure that journeys in Lancashire and the wider region are quicker and more reliable."

Tony Dupleidge, who is chair of the committee, will be visited by Transport, Ariva, Translink in Northern Ireland, Transport for Edinburgh and Lothian buses.

Chamber Policy Manager Alan Walsh is confident that the award can have an impact on decision

avoid a messy and disorderly exit from the EU.

"Skills shortages continue to be a major concern for Lancashire businesses and we urge the government to proceed with caution over changes to immigration policy as we leave the European Union. Companies must be able to access skills at all levels without heavy costs or bureaucracy."

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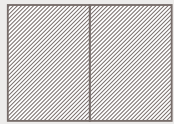
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