

Anthony's a star on the buses

READING Buses celebrated its employees by holding a 'Night with the Stars' where it crowns its Stars of the Year.

At a ceremony at the Hilton Hotel in Reading, the company honoured driving star Anthony Farmer, 50, who lives in Tilehurst, who was described as a role model and ambassador for Reading Buses.

Mr Farmer, who was unable to attend the event, was praised in his nomination for demonstrating kindness, patience and helpfulness towards a disabled passenger.

The man was unsuccessfully trying to manoeuvre a mobility scooter when Mr Farmer helped him to steer.

It took a long time to help the customer, but Anthony was said to have been patient, cheerful and encouraging the whole time.

Reading Buses HR director Caroline Anscombe said: "Anthony has been working for the company for a number of years now so to see him still full of enthusiasm and patience is great.

"Whenever our drivers encounter unusual situations, we are always delighted to see them remain calm, friendly and helpful.

"Anthony was definitely this and was recognised not just for the individual nomination, but his consistently excellent performance throughout his time with the company."

How apprenticeships can really boost your business

West Berkshire Training Consortium calls on firms to develop staff and bring in new talent

AS the end of the academic year and exams loom into view, many Year 11s and 13s are considering their options for when the exam results are released in August.

While Covid changed the shape of exams over the last two years, it also changed how young people view their options, with many more considering apprenticeships as an alternative to university.

Claire Richards, interim executive director of Newbury-based apprenticeship provider West Berkshire Training Consortium, commented on the opportunities

open to young people and highlighted how apprenticeships are also a great option for people already in employment.

She said: "We are really pleased to see a growing interest in apprenticeships following the pandemic.

"This is reflected in the number of apprenticeship vacancies we currently have from local employers.

"Everything from teaching assistants to project managers and engineering are currently in demand."

She continued: "The real benefit of undertaking an apprenticeship is the chance to learn real-world skills on and off the job, while still being paid.

"Our apprentices go on to very successful careers and the quality of our trainers and assessors is second to none.

"With over 35 years' experience in the sector, WBTC is the go-to training provider for many Newbury employers."

West Berkshire Training Consortium also works with employers to help upskill their existing staff.



West Berkshire Training Consortium interim executive director Claire Richards

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"If organisations are not using their apprenticeship levy, they can donate some of their funds to support other organisations to train apprentices"

This is particularly relevant to those large organisations that already pay into the apprenticeship levy to fund apprenticeship training.

If organisations are not using their apprenticeship levy, they can donate some of their funds to support other organ-

isations to train apprentices. WBTC can support with this process under its 100 Apprentice Challenge.

Mrs Richards concluded: "Apprenticeships are an excellent way to either introduce new talent or to develop existing staff to improve the per-

formance of your team while creating a pipeline of highly-trained staff ready to join your industry."

For more information about apprenticeships or to apply for an apprenticeship vacancy, visit <https://www.wbtc-uk.com>

Half of smaller businesses in South East don't understand 'carbon jargon'

THE majority of smaller businesses in the South East don't understand how common environmental terms such as 'decarbonisation', 'net zero' and 'zero carbon' apply to their businesses, according to research commissioned by the British Business Bank.

The Opinium survey of senior decision makers in smaller businesses in the South East found just over half (56 per cent) believe the language, terminology and information around emissions reduction is overcomplex.

The survey found nearly three in five (68 per cent) want advice on measuring their business' carbon footprint and more than half (53 per cent) want information to help them assess whether reducing their carbon emissions make financial sense for this business.

The British Business Bank's #GreenToGrow campaign aims to demystify and alert smaller businesses to the commercial benefits of investing in decarbonisation.

Resources include a new 'Green Decoder', an online guide co-created with Nottingham Business School, Nottingham Trent University to help smaller businesses decipher the terminology surrounding decarbonisation.

The British Business Bank's online Finance Hub also provides a series of guides and information about sustainability issues and how smaller businesses can start their journey towards net zero.

'Carbon jargon' terms not



Steve Conibear

understood in the South East include:

1. Greenhouse gas emissions: 86 per cent of smaller businesses do not have a full understanding of the term and what it means for their business
2. Science-based targets to reduce carbon emissions: 86 per cent
3. Decarbonisation: 82 per cent
4. Net zero: 80 per cent
5. Zero Carbon: 77 per cent

British Business Bank UK network director, South and East of England, Steve Conibear said: "Smaller businesses are far too often put off by the overcomplex 'carbon jargon' that comes with reducing emissions.

"By helping decipher some of the terminology around

decarbonisation the British Business Bank hopes to show smaller businesses that simple, incremental changes, such as switching off equipment when not in use, can make a difference in their net zero transition.

"This will become an increasingly important businesses requirement.

"Given that many consumers now consider sustainability when they make a purchase, by becoming greener, smaller businesses can enhance their competitive edge and expand their customer base.

"Our new mission at the bank is to continue to drive sustainable growth across the UK, and to enable the transition to a net zero economy, by improving access to finance for smaller businesses.

"This new #GreenToGrow campaign will help more businesses in the South East find the information they need to move toward transition."

The British Business Bank's 'Smaller businesses and the transition to net zero' report, published in October 2021, found that smaller businesses account for half (50 per cent) of total emissions from UK businesses.

Two in five (42 per cent) of those based in the South East believe, however, that a reduction in their carbon emissions will not make a significant difference to the environment and 66 per cent believe that large corporations are responsible for most of the business carbon emissions in the UK.

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