

# INTERFACE

**НæеНæ** **ON HIRE**



## **Lunch with the CEO:**

DARREN BARDEN IS AT THE TABLE P16

## **Essential winter workplace safety:**

SEASONAL RISKS AND TIMELY TIPS P14

## **Transformative leadership:**

UNICEF HUMANITARIAN AND AUTHOR HAS INSIGHTS FOR HIRE COMPANIES P22

**MEMBERS EVENT TAKES IN TOUR**

# **OF MAJOR DISTRIBUTION CENTRE**



**INTERFACE**  
HAEHA ON HIRE

## After a year's sabbatical,

Interface magazine has relaunched with a sharp new look and more regular updates and features for all those operating in, and supplying to, the hire industry.

Now published on alternate months, it's the perfect vehicle to bring your products and services to the attention of those in the hire sector.



# WANT TO GET YOUR BRAND IN FRONT OF THE HIRE INDUSTRY'S MEMBERSHIP?

Discuss promotional opportunities with Theresa Geeson  
[advertising@hae.org.uk](mailto:advertising@hae.org.uk)

Bi-monthly updates in digital and printed format to keep all those in the industry abreast of the latest news, business developments, legislation changes, products and advice.

# GOT SOME NEWS OR INSIGHTS TO SHARE?

Contact Editor Stephanie Cornwall  
[editorial@hae.org.uk](mailto:editorial@hae.org.uk)

We value the support of those companies who advertise in the magazine, without whom its publication would not be possible. We would urge all of our members and suppliers to spread the word about its promotional opportunities so that we can offer an even greater gallery of products and services, and help to keep this fabulous magazine in circulation.



## INTRODUCTION BY HAE EHA CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER PAUL GAZE

## A view from on high


**HAVE a few things to share with you since the last Interface On Hire issue was published.**

The third annual European Rental Week took place between October 13th and 19th, and members engaged to highlight careers in the hire and rental sector.

Ministers have listened to our collective case for certain capital allowances to apply to assets purchased for hire and leasing. The new 40% First Year Allowance (FYA) will apply to the hire sector from January 2026, which is great news. Applying to UK assets, it is a step in the right direction towards rectifying this historic anomaly.

The hire sector is a key enabler of much construction-related activity, and the new allowance will encourage further investment in equipment, plant, and tools. As an association, we'll be looking to provide more details and guidance on how the FYA will operate.

I was delighted to attend the inaugural Load Safety Forum event in Warwick where I joined a panel discussion and hosted a breakout session. This was an excellent event and was supported by a wide range of employers and the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency. HAE Member CargoStop deserves a huge amount of credit for helping drive this important initiative forward.

I recently attended the third Health and Safety Matters Live Scotland with Carl Bartlett in Glasgow, meeting

up with members and attending some insightful seminars. It was great to catch up with Adam Smith and Chloe Symons from Mentor Training to hear about their training offer and support for members. HAE EHA partners with Mentor Training to provide members with a range of dedicated training solutions. Adam delivered a thought-provoking seminar on 'Forklift Safety and the Path of Least Resistance', specifically focusing on

**“The announcement that entries for the Hire Awards of Excellence 2026 are now open is an exciting time for us.”**

the attitudes towards safety and how the concept of “positive accountability” can be used to improve safety culture and reduce unsafe practices.

At the same event, Joanne Price's 'Ask the Auditor' talk sought to demystify the ISO 45001 standard for occupational health and safety (OSH) management systems, offering an opportunity to ask questions on a wide range of issues related to the standard and its practical application.

We also attended a great session delivered by Chris Steel from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on 'What HSE Inspectors are looking for when they look at workplace noise'. This focused on three key areas: Identifying noise problems, steps taken to reduce noise using the hierarchy of controls, and the correct use and effectiveness of hearing protection.

Chris introduced the CUFF acronym (Condition, Use, Fit, Fit for purpose), which is a good tool for the hire sector employers to check hearing protection effectiveness. It's essential to ensure workers can hear warnings.

We recently held an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) where members approved new governance proposals. This will improve efficiency, streamline operations, and strengthen representation of the entire hire

industry. These changes are part of a broader effort to modernise the association's framework and ensure it is well-positioned to meet current and future industry needs.

Carl and I have been out and about visiting several members' premises over the past month. This has included the Newcastle Depot of One Stop Hire, where we toured the depot and got to see its excellent training facility and Snorkel EMEA in Birtley, where we met with David Graham, Nigel Hall, and HAE EHA board member Andrew Fishburn to record a podcast and present the Hire Industry Trusted Supplier certificate (HITS).

Finally, celebrating achievements in the hire industry is something HAE EHA is truly passionate about, so the announcement that entries for the Hire Awards of Excellence 2026 are now open is an exciting time for us. I'm very much looking forward to seeing this year's entries and wish to thank all the sponsors that have come on board so far. <<

## INTERFACE ON HIRE

### Head Office

2450 Regents Court, The Crescent,  
Birmingham Business Park,  
Solihull B37 7YE



#### CEO

Paul Gaze  
paul.gaze@hae.org.uk  
0121 380 4609



#### Director Certification Services

Carl Bartlett  
carl.bartlett@hae.org.uk  
0121 380 4604



#### Commercial Director

Neil Bravery  
neil.bravery@hae.org.uk  
0121 380 4605



#### Director of Public Affairs

Mark Bradshaw  
mark.bradshaw@hae.org.uk  
0121 380 4621



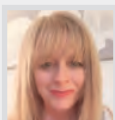
#### Learning & Development Officer

Nikki Wyllie  
nikki.wyllie@hae.org.uk  
0121 380 4617



#### Marketing Officer

Stuart Tyrrell  
stuart.tyrrell@hae.org.uk  
0121 380 4608



#### Editor

Stephanie Cornwall  
editorial@hae.org.uk

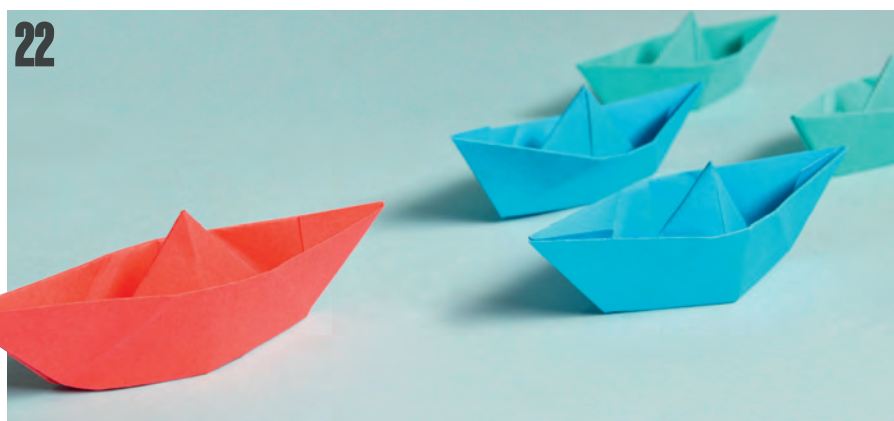
### Advertising

Theresa Geeson  
advertising@hae.org.uk

### Design

Dean Cole  
deanc@warnersgroup.co.uk

Interface is not responsible for the content of advertisements and does not endorse or promote any of their products unless stated. We accept no liability for companies or products featured. Interface is committed to using sustainable sources. We are proud to say that our magazine is printed on paper approved by the Forest Stewardship Council by Warners Midlands.



## REGULARS

- 03** View from on high
- 06** Members' news
- 19** Industry news
- 30** People and appointments
- 31** New members

## FEATURES

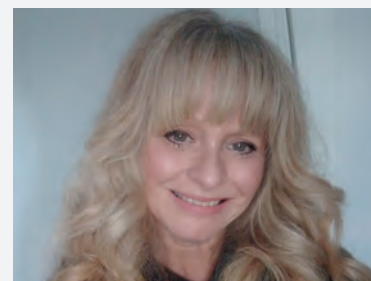
- 16** Lunch with the CEO
- 22** Business leadership
- 28** Members' day
- HEALTH & SAFETY**
- 20** SafeHire
- 24** Health and safety breaches



35

December / January 2026

# Contents



## A WORD FROM THE EDITOR ...

I had the pleasure of attending one of the HAE EHA member days recently and, having experienced this for myself, would encourage members to get involved in these if they are being held in your area or if you have time to travel to one of the other locations.

The event I attended was in Bolton, Lancashire, and incorporated a tour of the Amazon distribution centre. I was relieved to see I wasn't the only one who got a bit lost on the industrial estate where the centre is located, but these things are meant to try us – and always provide a good talking point on arrival!

The building is vast and its operations truly awe-inspiring. Those of us who went on the tour could truly feel its effects on our calves afterwards, but it was an excellent insight into how technology, training and attention to detail can work together on a major scale while creating many different employment prospects. It was a good model for a HAE EHA gathering as it mirrors so much of what HAE EHA seeks to achieve on behalf of its members – industry collaboration, relevant training and support services and a mindset to build and inspire a business sector that is integral to British industry.

You can read all about the members day on page 28, as well as catching up with the latest news from other HAE EHA members in our news round-up.

We've got some good topical features to share with you in this issue, alongside the regular sections on Public Affairs, Finance, Certification Services and Health and Safety. Also in this issue, Paul Gaze catches up with Darren Barden, a best-selling author, CEO of iTalk MH and public speaker, in the 'Lunch with the CEO' feature.

*Stephanie Cornwall*  
Editor

28



## RESOURCES

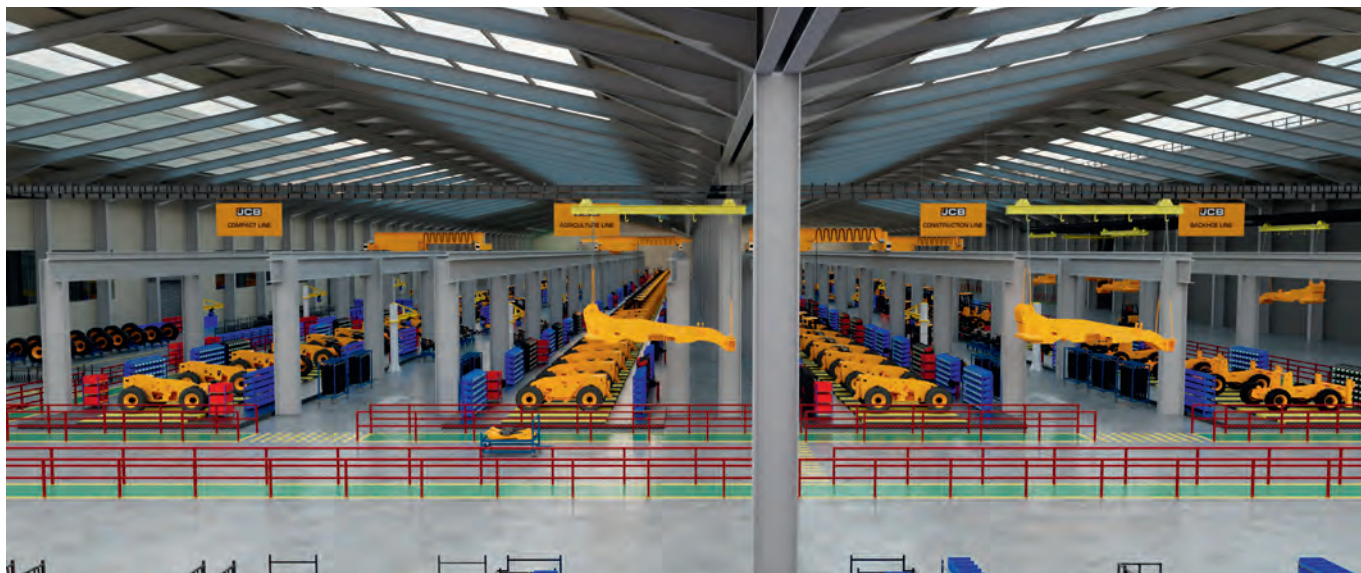
**14** Risk Services

**32** Finance

**34** Training

**35** Public affairs





## £100m manufacturing plant investment

JCB is investing £100 million in ultra-modern manufacturing facilities at its global headquarters in the UK.

The project at the company's plant in Rocester, Staffordshire, will see the installation of a fully-automated powder paint plant costing £60 million as well as a full modernisation of the shop floor, with new machining centres, friction welders and cylinder boring machines.

The company recently celebrated its 80th birthday and that of its Chairman Lord Anthony Bamford, marking the occasion by giving its global workforce of 19,000-plus people an additional day's holiday.

Lord Bamford said investing in the World HQ, JCB's home since 1950, was an important and logical step for the company.

"Basing JCB in the UK makes business sense, just as it has always made business sense. The work ethic in our country remains strong – especially in the Midlands, with its deep engineering heritage," he said.

"It makes perfect sense to invest heavily in our British factories and the £100 million we are investing now will put us at the forefront of our industry. Obviously, we are expanding overseas, not least in America, where we have been for decades. But the UK is our home.

"We directly employ more than 19,000 people around the world, more than 8,000 of whom are in the UK. And even though around three-quarters of our UK production is exported, we continue to make a huge contribution to this country and to the national economy.

Anthony Bamford was born on October 23rd, 1945 on the same day as his father Joseph Cyril Bamford founded JCB.

Inventor and entrepreneur Sir James Dyson paid tribute to Lord Bamford, saying: "Anthony Bamford is a wonderful example to us all for his entrepreneurship, his engineering, design, and manufacturing. He has built what was a small British manufacturing company into one which is a true global success story and one we are all very proud of."

## Jarvie Plant boosts its lighting fleet with Trime X-ECO LED sets

JARVIE Plant has expanded its hire fleet of lighting towers with an investment of 20 X-ECO LED tower lights.

The company's Sales and Plant Operations Director Gary Johnstone said now that the clocks had changed and darker nights were drawing in, Jarvie is experiencing increasing demand for lighting towers. "We were attracted to the Trime units principally because of their cost-saving attributes, longer run times between refuelling, instant bright light and the built-in auto start/stop light sensor," he said.

The Trime X-ECO LED features 6 no. 160W, 48V multi-directionally adjustable

LED lights floodlights, with safe 48V power between the generator and the lights. The vertical hydraulic mast has seven sections, rising to a maximum height of 8.5m with 340° rotation and wind stability up to 110 km/h.

Easy lifting is via a central lifting eye with longitudinal and transversal forklift pockets for safe handling and transportation.

With its headquarters in Newbridge, Edinburgh, Jarvie Plant is a family-owned business, which offers a comprehensive range of plant and equipment hire solutions to the construction, civil engineering and industrial sectors, in addition to a full

range of lighting sets. The company currently operates from eight depots throughout Scotland and a single depot in Manchester. It has six individual divisions that incorporate plant, accommodation and vehicle rental, including cars, vans, 4x4, pick-ups, and welfare units.



Trime Sales Manager David Gray with Jarvie Plant's Operations Director Gary Johnstone.



## Apprentices win automation challenge

NIFTYLIFT'S apprentice team, Elevation Nation, has been crowned winner of the 2025 IMechE Apprentice Automation Challenge (AAC), marking the company's second consecutive victory in this prestigious national competition.

The finals, held at the Manufacturing Technology Centre in Coventry, brought together a record 17 apprentice teams from across the UK. Each team was challenged to design and present an innovative automated product for use in the home or garden.



Niftylift's team impressed judges with their project, the Automated Stirrer, a kitchen aid that provides hands-free stirring to make cooking easier. The product has adjustable speed settings and is suited to time-sensitive cooking tasks.

Chief Judge Toby Heagarty said: "The winning team significantly impressed with their presentation skills. The prototype they developed showed iteration over time into their final product and the significant amount of research they had done into the market was a key factor in the judges' decision."

Niftylift's Apprentice Development Manager, Karl Digby, added: "The team should be really proud of themselves for the work they put in. They've been excellent ambassadors for the company and for the apprenticeship scheme. This result reflects their talent, teamwork, and determination to succeed"

Niftylift's Chairman and Founder, Roger Bowden, also congratulated the team, saying the achievement is testament to the enthusiasm, creativity, and professionalism of the company's young engineers.

"To see two different Niftylift teams win this competition in consecutive years is remarkable and reflects the strength of our apprenticeship programme. Our apprentices continue to make us proud, not only through their technical skill but also their passion for engineering innovation."

The win follows Niftylift's 2024 success at the same competition, when another team of Niftylift apprentices, Elevate Elite, took the top spot. Two members of this year's winning team, Paigan Huish and Ben Gillow, also featured in last year's line-up.

Niftylift's 2025 team members include: Paigan Huish – Team Leader, George Mott – Product Design Lead, Haydn Nixon – Product Design Support, Ben Gillow – Coding and Electronics Lead, and Ewan Bell – Coding and Electronics Support.

Their mentor, Karl Digby, and Niftylift's training and HR teams have supported the group throughout the project, offering guidance as they developed their prototype from concept to completion.

The IMechE Apprentice Automation Challenge is now in its 11th year.



Elevation Nation celebrating the win at the event in Coventry and the team's winning prototype, the Automated Stirrer.

## Total Hire and Sales adds more Trime generators

DERBY-based Total Hire and Sales, a supplier of a wide range of tools, plant, temporary accommodation, and powered access equipment, has purchased a fleet of 10, 20, and 45kVA generators, manufactured by power generation specialist, Trime.

The generators feature an emergency stop button and a central lifting eye and have front and side fork pockets, which heighten safe manoeuvrability, along with fully-bunded bases to guard against leakages and spillages.

Total's Managing Director Carl Tidey said: "We have a policy to remain loyal to suppliers that provide us with an excellent back-up service, and Trime stand out in this regard."



Total Hire and Sales was originally founded as City Plant Hire Ltd in 1968, and has grown into one of the leading suppliers of tools and equipment, operating from five depots in Derbyshire and the surrounding areas.

The Trime production plant is based in Cassinetta di Lugagnano, near Milan, Italy, and Pavia, just south of Milan. Aside from its lighting tower range and power generation equipment, the company also manufactures a wide range of water-recycling wash bays and dust suppression products. Trime UK has recently moved into a purpose-built 40,000 sq. ft. facility based in the Hinchingsbrooke Business Park, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire.

## Jarvie Plant boosts its lighting fleet with Trime X-ECO LED sets

JARVIE Plant has expanded its hire fleet of lighting towers with an investment of 20 X-ECO LED tower lights.

The company's Sales and Plant Operations Director Gary Johnstone

said now that the clocks had changed and darker nights were drawing in, Jarvie is experiencing increasing demand for lighting towers.

"We were attracted to the Trime units principally because of their cost-saving attributes, longer run times between refuelling, instant bright light and the built-in auto start/stop light sensor," he said.

The Trime X-ECO LED features 6 no. 160W, 48V multi-directionally adjustable LED lights floodlights, with safe 48V power between the generator and the lights. The vertical hydraulic mast has seven sections, rising to a maximum height of 8.5m with 340° rotation and wind stability up to 110 km/h.

Easy lifting is via a central lifting eye with longitudinal and transversal forklift pockets for safe handling and transportation.

With its headquarters in Newbridge, Edinburgh, Jarvie Plant is a family-owned business, which offers a comprehensive range of plant and equipment hire solutions to the construction, civil engineering and industrial sectors, in addition to a full range of lighting sets. The company currently operates from eight depots throughout Scotland and a single depot in Manchester. It has six individual divisions that incorporate plant, accommodation and vehicle rental, including cars, vans, 4x4, pick-ups, and welfare units.



Trime Sales Manager David Gray with Jarvie Plant's Operations Director Gary Johnstone.

## New AI tool to simplify searches

A NEW AI tool to simplify knowledge base searches has been launched by MCS.

The SmartSearch feature aims to improve how users interact with its Knowledge Base, a resource for customers that offers insights and documentation to help users understand and utilise its systems more effectively.

SmartSearch allows users to search for information using natural language, providing fast and accurate results. The tool is designed to be highly intuitive, making it easier than ever for users to find the product information they need. A key feature of MCS SmartSearch is its reliance on a dedicated and secure information source. The tool draws its answers from content within the MCS Knowledge Base, ensuring that information is accurate.

Customer Operations Director at MCS Rental Software, Adam Busby, said: "With SmartSearch, we're giving our customers the power to find precise answers quickly. Customers receive a clear summary that addresses their question, along with a list of the most relevant Knowledge Base articles, ranked by relevance. This intuitive AI-driven tool simplifies access to information, saving valuable time."

## Rental software business offers iplicit integration

CLOUD accounting platform iplicit has announced a partnership with MCS Rental Software, a global software provider for rental businesses which will integrate its software with iplicit's award-winning finance system.

MCS Rental Software chose to integrate with iplicit after hearing from a growing number of customers that were moving to the finance software.

MCS Development Director Chris Clarke said: "iplicit is a very capable, modern, cloud-based platform, which is exactly the kind of product we're interested in building integrations for.

"iplicit has discovered a sweet spot in the market. It's not over-engineered and excessively expensive for mid-market businesses and it complements the other systems that many of our customers use."

Chris said as rental businesses rely on accurate financial information to manage complex operations and asset lifecycles, it is essential that every transaction, from customer and supplier invoices to rehire costs, depreciation, and equipment financing, is correctly accounted for.

"Our integration with iplicit ensures that all financial activity is captured seamlessly, providing clarity on cost of sales, credit limits, and outstanding balances."

iplicit's Vice-President of Partnerships, Ben Crow, said iplicit was designed to integrate seamlessly with a host of other systems.

"Many of MCS Rental Software's customers are exactly the kinds that benefit the most from iplicit – expanding organisations that have outgrown the limits of basic cloud software or those that need to move away from outdated server-based systems. That makes iplicit and MCS Rental Software ideal partners."

Chris said he was impressed by iplicit's technical architecture and its secure hosting on Microsoft Azure servers, believing the system will scale and keep pace with customer demands.

"We've worked in close cooperation with iplicit. Its team has been there to see demos of our integration and make sure it's as good as it could be at each stage of development," he said. "It's very rare to have that kind of feedback and partnership from a vendor. We're confident this will be a successful relationship for us and, more importantly, our customers."



Chris Clarke



Ben Crow



# Hæ EHA Risk Services

## **FREE** Expert Advice for for HAE EHA Members

Running a hire business is demanding, and keeping up with health & safety or employment law isn't always top of the list.

But getting it wrong can lead to unexpected fines, legal trouble, or worse.

### Get advice on:

-  Workplace Legislation
-  Health & Safety Policies
-  HR and Employment Law

Call **0121 380 4612** or email [risk-services@hae.org.uk](mailto:risk-services@hae.org.uk)



### Listen & Learn

Scan the QR code  
to hear our team  
discuss best  
practices on the  
HAE EHA Podcast

**HEALTH & SAFETY | RISK MANAGEMENT | HR & EMPLOYMENT LAW | TRAINING**

HAE EHA Risk Services, 9 Lord Street, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, DN21 2DD

**T 0121 380 4612**

HAE EHA Risk Services is provided by Stallard Kane Associates Ltd. HAE EHA Risk Services is a sub brand belonging to HAE EHA

# Hæ EHA PODCASTS

Where industry insights, expert interviews,  
and real-world stories come to life

If you'd like to join one of our podcasts, where we explore latest trends, tackle challenges and share actionable tips, get in touch.

**Call 0121 380 4608 for more details**

**YOU CAN ALSO LISTEN TO OUR PODCASTS ON SPOTIFY**

## CMA condition satisfied for HSS ProService and Speedy Hire deal

THE Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has cleared the way for HSS ProService Marketplace's major supply and shareholder commercial agreement with Speedy Hire, marking the start of a new, digitally-driven model for building services across the UK construction and maintenance sectors.

The agreement brings together HSS ProService's digital marketplace technology and data-driven procurement systems with Speedy's nationwide network and operational expertise in a fully-integrated online marketplace for equipment, fuel and related services.

On HSS ProService Marketplace, Speedy replaces The Hire Service Company (THSC) while ProService becomes Speedy Hire's sole supplier for rehire and resale.

As part of the agreement, Speedy has acquired a 10% shareholding in ProService.

Speedy will supply the majority of core hire equipment available through the platform and provide testing services



Tom Shorten, CEO of HSS ProService Marketplace.

to ensure site safety and compliance. The deal also includes the transfer of a number of colleagues into the HSS ProService company.

HSS ProService Marketplace will take over Speedy's rehire business.

CEO of HSS ProService Marketplace, Tom Shorten, said: "Contractors and trades want value and efficiency. They want clear pricing, availability, and confidence that equipment will be there when needed. Our technology is the key to this."

"Bringing Speedy into the HSS ProService Marketplace means we can offer a deeper fleet, a wider footprint, and a single digital platform that simplifies the process end-to-end. For a site manager, that means fewer phone calls, less admin, and better control of hire spend."

"Brick by brick, we've been building a digital business that's fit for the future of this industry and this partnership represents a major step forward in how equipment can be sourced, supplied, and managed across the industry."

## Sunbelt becomes UK's largest supplier of Instagrid portable power

SUNBELT Rentals has significantly expanded its range of low and zero-carbon equipment with the UK's largest single purchase of Instagrid products.

Instagrid is a portable, silent and emission-free power supply with ultra-compact battery housed in a rugged IP54 rated casing. It delivers pure instant power, anywhere it's needed.

Sunbelt's National Sales Director Andy Webb said: "Instagrid technology has proven to reduce carbon emissions, improve productivity, and provide our customers with instant, reliable power in a compact, portable package. By becoming the UK's largest supplier of Instagrid, we're making sustainable power solutions more accessible to our customers and helping them easily make the switch to low and zero emission technology."

Instagrid Sales Director Matt O'Hara, added: "We are proud to partner with Sunbelt Rentals on this landmark investment. Their commitment to sustainability aligns perfectly with our mission to deliver clean, portable energy solutions that replace the need for polluting generators. Together, we are enabling industries to accelerate their transition to net zero while improving the working environment for countless professionals."



## 'Contain dust to keep workers healthy'

DUST is one of the most underestimated dangers on the jobsite. You can't always see it, but over time it can cause serious health problems, and if the HSE finds you're not protecting your workforce, your site could be shut down and fined.

Chris Murray, Professional Power Tool Trainer at Bosch which produces a range of accessories for dust management, stressed that any processing of material, whether wood, concrete or stone, produces dust.

While masks and extractors help minimise the risks to workers, there are various dust control solutions available to hirers that go a step further by containing the dust as it's created, he said.

"Breathing dust in can cause serious health problems over time. Silicosis, for example, is caused by inhaling silica dust, and it's estimated that around 500 construction workers in the UK die each year as a result. Exposure to silica dust has also been linked to thousands of deaths from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and in some cases, even lung cancer."

Solutions such as those offered by Bosch can help to contain the problem, Chris said. For example, the M480 sanding nets replace traditional sandpapers by enabling dust to be extracted through the surface during woodworking, painting, and drywall applications, and the Clean Max-8 Set features hollow drill bits that clean holes in reinforced concrete as they drill.

The company's full range of dust control solutions, including its EXPERT accessories, has been designed to keep the air clear and workers safe.





# Bring back the **Magic!**★

Objects can be copied, but thankfully people are unique. When they work together as a team, the results can be magical.

***Come and see for yourself how we deliver the **Magic** here in the North East... there's a warm welcome waiting for you.***



## **Snorkel**™

**Delivering the Magic!**★

For more information e-mail us at:

**[magic@snorkellifts.com](mailto:magic@snorkellifts.com)** or call:

**+44 (0) 845 155 0057** and we'll take care of the rest!



## Sponsorship opportunities available as awards scheme opens for entries

ENTRIES are now open and sponsorship opportunities available for the 2026 edition of the Hire Awards of Excellence, which will be held on Saturday, April 18th at Grosvenor House, London.

The awards celebrate the achievements of hire and supply companies across the UK's plant, tool, equipment and event hire industry, with special recognition given to individuals who have consistently stood out from the crowd.

There are 14 categories that can be entered: Best Use of Digital Media; Diversity and Inclusion Initiative; Sustainability and CSR Initiative; Hire industry Product of the Year; Hire industry Supplier of the Year; Safehire Plant, Tool and Equipment Hire Company of the Year (turnover under £10 million); Safehire Plant, Tool and Equipment Hire Company of the Year (turnover over £10 million); Safehire Event Hire Company of the Year; Health & Safety Champions of the Year; Young Apprentice of the Year; Apprentice of the Year; Operations Manager of the Year; Workshop Manager of the Year; Hire Manager of the Year

Entrants should submit 500 words as their entry statement and supply supporting evidence relevant to their submission.

The closing date is Friday, February 6<sup>th</sup>. Entry packs are available here: <https://bit.ly/484QXaj>

For more details on sponsorship opportunities, email [awards@hae.org.uk](mailto:awards@hae.org.uk)

## Innovation takes centre stage at 2026 Executive Hire Show

A KEY theme for the 2026 Executive Hire Show will be innovation, with new products spanning electric machinery, advanced power tools, digital technologies, and sustainable solutions designed to meet the industry's evolving needs.

The show will be held on February 11th and 12th, at the CBS Arena in Coventry with a free breakfast for those arriving before noon. All exhibition space for the 2026 Executive Hire Show has now been allocated, with 148 manufacturers confirmed to participate.

The event is set to welcome more than 45 first-time exhibitors, including LGMG Machinery UK, Kelly Tanks, RollyCarri, AJ Power, and Toolpak Ltd, while returning exhibitors include Hilti, Kubota, JCB, Niftylift, and Makita.

Exhibitors have been invited to submit their latest products for the Innovation Trail, which highlights new technologies and sustainable solutions and an awards event will be hosted by former England rugby star David "Flats" Flatman.



## New AI portal for fleet equipment

SUNBELT Rentals has introduced a new AI-driven customer portal built on the Trackunit IrisX platform, connecting its assets into one system.

The platform will provide actionable insights as soon as customers enter the portal.

Sunbelt's Director of Asset Connectivity, Matthew Ross, said customers will be able to access telematics on non-traditional equipment from battery storage units to solar-enabled accommodation and tower lights, through to fuel tanks, as well as all core Plant, PA and Power based products in fleet.

"The expansion of our partnership with Trackunit will allow us to provide our customers with more insights from the equipment they hire from us, enabling them to make more informed decisions about their hiring and operational practices. AI-driven insights will allow them to predict maintenance needs, minimise downtime and increase on-site efficiency.

"We're also able to provide accurate data on carbon emissions, supporting customers in meeting their sustainability goals.

Connectivity is no longer just about tracking equipment. It is the foundation for delivering intelligent partnerships with our customers and suppliers."

Trackunit's IrisX provides the insights.



## PCE Award sponsorship

HAE EHA sponsored the Plant Hire Company of the Year category at the recent Plant and Civil Engineer (PCE) Awards 2025.

This category celebrates excellence in plant hire, from fleet management and customer service to safety and sustainability.

The awards event took place at the Crowne Plaza, Belfast and was preceded by a regional members' day for Ireland members and suppliers.



## SafeHire and HITS Certifications

A NUMBER of members and suppliers are celebrating recently achieving or renewing their SafeHire and or HITS (Hire Industry Trusted Supplier) status recently.

By achieving SafeHire certification, they have demonstrated continual improvement and ensured compliance with industry best practices in health, safety and welfare, quality, and environmental management while the suppliers who've achieved HITS status have demonstrated quality and competence in areas like training, safety, environmental policy, R&D, production processes, and data security.

Five companies have been awarded for the first time. These include:

- Ardent Hire Solutions, of Chawston, Bedford
- Nixon Hire Ltd, of Newcastle Upon Tyne
- Tecto Group, of Northampton
- Centurion Services, of Atherstone, Warwickshire
- Harborough Plant Hire, of Smeeton Westerby, Leicestershire

Thirteen companies have renewed their certification. These include:

- B Jenkins & Sons Ltd, of Brecon, Powys
- J Coffey Plant Limited, of Harrow, Greater London
- Four Jays Group, of Maidstone, Kent
- Leetec Tool Hire, of Tonbridge, Kent
- Premier Tool Hire Ltd, of Birmingham, West Midlands
- Yahire Limited, of London
- Hutton Hire Ltd, of Newquay, Cornwall, TR8 4LA
- Mead Construction (Cambridge) Limited
- Banner Plant Limited, of Dronfield, Derbyshire
- Turner Tool Hire, of Sudbury, Suffolk
- Access Plant Hire & Sales, of London
- Alide Plant Services, of Bath, Somerset
- Harman (Plant Hire), of Brighton, East Sussex

## Thousands attend PlantWorx

PLANTWORX 2025 returned to Newark Showground with 12,000 visitors and 300 construction and technology exhibitors recently, with a number of HAE EHA members attending or exhibiting.

SANY UK exhibited a range of equipment, such as electric power solutions, micro diggers, and new telehandlers.

JCB was the headline sponsor of the Awesome Earthmovers Operator Challenge while Finning UK represented Caterpillar, showcasing the latest in Cat machinery and technology. Manitou had a significant presence at the event while Takeuchi UK showcased new models and brought UK firsts to the exhibition.

GAP Hire Solutions announced new Fusion Pulse welfare units and showcased a complete site set-up, while H. E. Services showcased latest plant hire solutions.

Flannery Plant Hire featured in the Site Sustainability Showcase with its modern and sustainable fleet. L Lynch Plant Hire & Haulage and Nixon Hire also participated in the showcase, demonstrating low-carbon solutions. Speedy Hire provided powered access solutions and was involved in the sustainability features of the show.

Other members and suppliers in attendance included Boss Cabins, BPH Attachments (a UK supplier of hydraulic excavator attachments), Worsley Plant (a provider of hydraulic attachments for construction, demolition, and recycling) SANY UK, National Highways and CPA (Construction Plant-hire Association).

The event is the UK's largest working construction equipment exhibition and is held every other year, with the next PlantWorx exhibition scheduled for September 2027.

## Largest UK collaboration to date for portable power provider

INSTAGRID, a HAE EHA supplier member which provides portable power solutions that are lightweight alternative to traditional generators, has provided a number of new systems to equipment rental provider Sunbelt Rentals UK Ltd.

It's the largest UK customer commitment to date for Instagrid, and has enabled Sunbelt to significantly expand its fleet of portable power systems.

Having initially invested in the Instagrid ONE (230v) several years ago for the business, Sunbelt Rentals has since been adding Instagrid GO (110v), LINK, and LINK MAX models to support a wider range of industries.

This latest investment in the full range is part of its drive to make sustainable equipment accessible to all its customers.

With this expansion, Sunbelt Rentals now holds one of the largest rental

fleets of Instagrid units worldwide. Instagrid featured prominently at Sunbelt Rentals' recent Innovation Day, a fast-growing annual event providing customers with an opportunity to see and try out equipment first hand.





# Essential winter workplace safety

The HAE EHA Risk Services team highlights some of the seasonal risks facing those in the hire sector and offers some timely tips on how to manage them.

**T**HERE are several measures hire businesses should be looking to include in a winter workplace safety checklist.

Ice, snow and wet floors can quickly turn into costly accidents. From proactive gritting to correct signage and staff awareness, employers are advised to take action before hazards develop.

As temperatures drop, simple preventative measures can make a huge difference in reducing slips, trips, falls and seasonal hygiene risks.

Key winter safety actions for employers to take include the following:

- Nominate a responsible person: The nominated person should monitor weather conditions and apply salt before ice or snow form. This is when it's most effective.
- Keep pathways and entrances clear: By regularly gritting or salting walkways and car parks to prevent ice build-up slip risks can be reduced.
- Use wet-floor signage indoors: Snow and water brought in from outside can create hazards. Clean entrance areas promptly and use mats to minimise wet flooring.
- Encourage proper footwear: Fully-enclosed, flat footwear with a good grip is essential for reducing slips on icy or wet surfaces.
- Promote good hygiene: This should include handwashing, safe use of tissues, and frequent cleaning of high-touch points like door handles to help minimise the spread of seasonal illnesses, including lingering forms of COVID.
- Conduct a winter-specific risk assessment: This will enable the company to identify higher-risk areas and implement targeted controls before incidents occur.

## Increased deliveries and stock levels

Many companies experience a spike in deliveries and stock levels from mid-January, once the holiday period is over and businesses get back to normal working patterns. This can lead to overcrowded workspaces, increasing the risk of accidents.

Measures should be taken to ensure stock is safely stacked and stored to prevent items from falling and injuring staff. Aisles and access routes should be kept clear at all times.



With increased stock movement, reminding staff about proper manual handling techniques is essential. Consider manual handling training to reduce the risk of back injuries or strains during busy periods; if your team is due a manual handling reminder, make it a New Year's resolution to book onto a relevant course.

### Fire safety precautions

Fire risk is increased during the winter months, whether this is from heating systems or through increased electrical use. As an employer, it is vital to prioritise fire safety.

Regular checks and maintenance of all fire alarms are crucial to ensure they function correctly when needed. Similarly, fire extinguishers must be serviced regularly and kept in easily accessible locations.

Emergency exits should be kept clear of stock or recycling and safety signage is clearly visible, so it's a good idea to review these.

It's also advisable to assess the condition of heating equipment. All portable heaters need to be in

good working order and used safely. They should be kept away from flammable materials.

### Common winter injuries

Certain types of injuries are more common during the winter months, including slips on ice, burns from heaters or lights, and minor injuries from manual handling.

First aid kits must be stocked with necessary supplies and easily accessible, while having first aid-trained staff on site is crucial in addressing injuries promptly and efficiently. First aid training prepares your team for potential accidents and can significantly reduce the severity of injuries.

### Winter driving and travel safety

Winter weather can make travel risky, especially for employees who drive as part of their job. Employers should take steps to maintain the safety of employees on the road.

If your employees use company vehicles, ensure they are serviced and ready for winter driving conditions. Check tyres, brakes and lights regularly

and provide guidance on safe winter driving such as reducing speed, keeping a safe distance and avoiding unnecessary journeys in bad weather.

To avoid unnecessary risks, consider allowing flexible working arrangements during adverse weather conditions. These might include remote working options or adjusted shift patterns.

Winter weather conditions require employers to reassess workplace safety. By investing in manual handling and first aid training, conducting risk assessments, and ensuring proper signage, employers can create a safer, more enjoyable environment throughout the winter months. <<



Risk Services is the HAE EHA helpline for enquiries relating to workplace legislation or health and safety policies. The service is provided for HAE EHA members in collaboration with Stallard Kane. For more information, email [risk-services@hae.org.uk](mailto:risk-services@hae.org.uk) or call **0121 380 4612**.

# HIRESECURE

## ASK ABOUT OUR SHORT PERIOD LOSS AND DAMAGE WAIVER

Short period cover for your hirers.  
Peace of mind for you.

Tel: **03300 182299**

Email: [insuranceservices@hae.org.uk](mailto:insuranceservices@hae.org.uk)  
or: [insuranceservices@eha.org.uk](mailto:insuranceservices@eha.org.uk)

Limits and exclusions may apply, please contact us for full terms and conditions.

HAE Insurance Services and EHA Insurance Services are trading names of Advisory Insurance Brokers Limited which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (Firm Reference Number 313250). Registered address 2 Minster Court, Mincing Lane, London, EC3R 7PD. Registered in England No. 4043759.

**HAE Insurance Services** **EHA Insurance Services**

# Lunch with the CEO

In this issue, HAE EHA CEO Paul Gaze sits down to have lunch and a one-to-one with Darren Barden, a best-selling author, CEO of iTalk MH and public speaker.



**Paul Gaze:** I'm across at Highways UK 2025 at the NEC in Birmingham, and I'm here with the CEO of iTalk, Darren Barden. So Darren, tell me a little about Italk and how are things going for you.

**Darren Barden:** We've noticed a change in the mentality of people. Mental health awareness has now become action, which is great as there needs to be more noticeable action. Italk has taken us to a different level now.

**Paul Gaze:** It's good to hear that the message is getting across. Can you give me some details about where we are with it now?

**Darren Barden:** Italk is a new concept. There are lots of people providing mental health information and details about suicide prevention, but the numbers are still going up. Suicide rates are still going up across the construction sector. Whether it's in highways departments, the tool hire industry, construction, or other sectors, the numbers are still concerning and that's not a good sign. I feel we needed to do something different. Our emphasis is that



prevention should take precedence over cure. To do that, we need to get to people before they ever have a mental health issue, anxiety or get into a suicidal crisis situation.

We want to teach them about real life situations. This could be connected to mortgages, pensions, insurances, relationships, the downside of drug and alcohol abuse for example. There are a lot of things that can have an impact. If there was more awareness and more education about it, it may prevent people going down the slippery slope. Many years ago, I had an experience like this and I'd like to help prevent other people from going through that.

**Paul Gaze:** Prevention is better than a cure, as you said, so in terms of where you want to take Italk, is that the main area you want to focus on?

**Darren Barden:** Absolutely. Ultimately we want to see a reduction in the suicide rates in the construction sector, tool hire industry and highway industry as a whole. But we want to see those turning around and heading towards zero. That's the ultimate goal. If we can get that happening, then we know we've done our bit. I can't do this on my own. Tool hire can't do it on its own. Everybody that works in this sector are doing some good work, but we're not having a big enough impact so we need to shift from awareness to action massively. That's what we want to do.



**Paul Gaze:** I see the opportunity here for a partnership with many across the industry to get the message out there. Is that how you see it?

**Darren Barden:** Absolutely. Whether it be small tools or plant hire, they can all be involved and this is an intrinsic part of the construction industry. When you go on any major site anywhere in the UK, in London, Manchester, Liverpool, these companies are in the thick of it. They can have a real and positive impact. One major hire company is going to be using Italk as part of its presentation. It's going to influence mental wellbeing and the cultural transformation, which I talk about all the time, directly into the construction companies. The hire industry can play its role in all of this.

**Paul Gaze:** You mentioned that you're raising awareness and getting the message out, which is good, but you're absolutely right. It's about taking that next step to take it further.

**Darren Barden:** Absolutely.

**Paul Gaze:** So Italk is going to be a real driver for us in this area?

**Darren Barden:** One hundred per cent. I get invitations to speak at various events where I go in, do the talk, then everyone there thinks: "What a story. We must pay more attention to mental health". But then when I walk out of the door and it stays the same. The idea with Italk is a subscription-based business.



People pay a monthly fee over 12, 24 and 36 months and for that we go in and create a cultural transformation. We work with the people within the companies, so we alleviate the pressure of them doing it themselves and knowing where to go and what to do. That's what it's about. It's about creating that cultural transformation within the business. It's something different that's not being done at the moment.

**Paul Gaze:** So a real partnership in tackling this challenge head on?

**Darren Barden:** Absolutely, yeah. Our aim is to help businesses achieve sustainable success via creating and maintaining mentally healthy, psychologically safe workplaces where people thrive as part of a supportive work community.

**Paul Gaze:** You've made the transition from somebody who worked for an international brand and somebody who is very, very well known, often at trade shows and events, where you're called 'Mr Hilti'. How are you finding it becoming the CEO of Italk?

**Darren Barden:** I had 10 incredible years at Hilti. They supported everything I've done from day one right through to now. I learned so much. It was the first time I'd worked for a large international corporate company and the things I notice now are that if I need business cards, I need to organise it myself and if I need an account sorting, I need to organise it myself. Going from being someone who worked at a big multinational company to actually being the CEO was a tough transition in terms of the day-to-day practical stuff. However, the one thing I've benefited from is having full control of my own diary. Not that I was restricted in any way with Hilti, is actually just about where I am now. I choose who I go to see, when I go to see them and where I go and see them, and that's been a real positive for me. Being in full control of those decisions has really helped.

**Paul Gaze:** You've talked about how big the challenge is around mental health and wellbeing. If you were a PM for one day, what change could you make to have an immediate effect in this area?

**Darren Barden:** Legislation. I don't want to make construction companies

or hire companies liable, but at the same time, but we could introduce a report like the RIDDOR one (<https://bit.ly/3MiORv4>) or if there's a suicide on site, it can be investigated. If we can investigate it, we can find out the root cause. If we can find out the root causes, we can then prevent others. By bringing in legislation, I think this will change the environment basically. That's what I would do.

**Paul Gaze:** What's next for you in terms of getting this launched and out in the open and people signed up? How do we find out more information about it?

**Darren Barden:** The best place to look is on LinkedIn via my own profile, or by visiting Italk's website at [www.italkmh.com](http://www.italkmh.com). Obviously the MH in the web address stands for mental health. The site is up and running. We are doing a few tweaks on that at

the moment, but generally speaking, reaching out to me personally via LinkedIn is the best route at the moment, and getting on board. Even if it's not just with us, take it seriously and have a look at what's going on in the world with people around you. They're all doing mental health initiatives but I look around now and think 'You've got SHEQ, so what? (Safety, health, environment, quality)'. How can one person do that job? It just shows how much people are focusing on it, so please reach out to me and, if it's not me, reach out to someone else in this industry to see how they can help

**Paul Gaze:** Darren, we've known each other for a long time and worked together on certain things. I can see and feel your passion for this topic - you want to really make this work.

**Darren Barden:** Yes. >>

**"Ninety per cent of all male suicides will have spoken to the authorities in the two months prior to taking their own life. But they are talking to a broken system or something that's not right."**



**Paul Gaze:** We've got a great opportunity, I think, to get lots of people involved and to really live this.

**Darren Barden:** Absolutely. The big thing is, if you are struggling with your mental health, one of the last things you are going to do is reach out to someone. I know I was once there myself, so you're not going to go around saying 'I'm struggling'. This is especially true with men. Just so people understand - men do talk, it's a fallacy to say they don't. Ninety per cent of all male suicides will have spoken to the authorities in the two months prior to taking their own life. But they are talking to a broken system or something that's not right. What we don't do is speak to our mates - that's one of the biggest things. If you've got a friend who's struggling, ask them: Are they okay? Don't be frightened to ask. Again, be prepared for a bad answer. And if you think someone's really, really desperate, one of the best things you can do is ask them if they having suicidal thoughts. Trust me, it's a difficult question to ask, but you'll be surprised how many lives that will save. That is one of the biggest things we can do as mates - just ask them and then ask again because that could save lives

**Paul Gaze:** It's such a powerful thing to do to get that message across and have a real conversation with somebody to let them know you care.

**Darren Barden:** Absolutely. Let them know you're interested in them. Don't try and fix the problem. We are not here to fix your problems. But at Italk, we can signpost you to the right people, the professionals for your requirements, and as a mate, you'll just want to be there just to listen and let them know they can talk to you.

**Paul Gaze:** I think, as you've explained during this conversation, the key thing is you're working with other professionals to bring things together to help people get those solutions and those lessons and plans in place to help them develop. That's important because as you say, it's not one person, but as a partner working with people who can make a difference.

**Darren Barden:** Absolutely. We've got, a whole plethora of organisations that we are working with, whether it's to do with



drug abuse, alcohol abuse, gambling or porn. It can be a whole plethora of things - relationships, money, worries, all of those, obviously mental health and suicide prevention as well. All of those problems go into this bucket and can sometimes be identified as just mental health issues. You need to get to the bottom of it. Within Italk we've got this covered, we've got therapists we can use, so there's a whole host of resources we have access to when people need it. One of the things I actually came up with the other day was getting to your guys in time - it'll help your bottom line. When people bring us in and we change that culture, you'll also notice the atmosphere surrounding individuals changes. Happy staff are up to 20% more productive. That's proven by scientific evidence. Make your staff happy. It's not just about giving them a pay rise. There's a lot more to running a business, as we all know. Make sure your staff feel like they're welcome and that they can be open and honest whenever they want. That changes cultures. That changes the atmosphere, and that will change productivity and add on long life.

**Paul Gaze:** Is a key thing in encouraging people to talk and bond

with others having some outside interests - for example I know you're, you're a keen football fan?

**Darren Barden:** Chelsea FC for me!

**Paul Gaze:** Chelsea - not a bad year so far.

**Darren Barden:** It's been good - World Club Champions, the only club that have won all the major trophies. I think the song they sing is 'We've won it all' at Stamford Bridge. It's been rocky at times but there's been a great relationship between us and the management. Bringing it back to mental health, having these conversations, if you are on site, or if you are in a yard or a hire depot and you see someone having their lunch on their own, ask them about football, rugby, cricket, tennis, whatever it is - just go and ask them. If you speak to them, that'll help - just like we are doing now about football.

**Paul Gaze:** So having that icebreaker can help start the conversation with people? Sport is a great leveller for everyone.

**Darren Barden:** Oh, absolutely, and if they're not into sport, then maybe you should get them into it. <<



## Consultation launched on asbestos management

THE Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has launched a consultation on proposals to improve the application of the Control of Asbestos Regulations and guidance around asbestos management to help protect workers and building users.

Great Britain already has one of the best workplace health and safety performances globally, with some of the lowest rates of occupational injury and fatality in Europe. These proposals build on this strong foundation to enhance protections in areas where asbestos remains a significant health risk.

The consultation aims to seek stakeholders' views on three proposals: Ensuring the independence and impartiality of roles in a four-stage clearance process to further minimise risk of exposure to workers and building users after asbestos removal; to drive up the standard of asbestos surveys to ensure dutyholders have the information they need to safely manage risks; to clarify what constitutes work as Notifiable Non-Licensed Work (NNLW).

The consultation is particularly relevant to dutyholders, asbestos analysts, asbestos removal contractors, asbestos surveyors, and associated professions including facilities management and construction.

Director of Engagement and Policy at HSE, Rick Brunt, said: "Asbestos continues to be a significant risk to workers in Great Britain. While we have made significant progress in managing asbestos risks, these proposals represent an important step towards further strengthening protections for workers and the public. We want to hear from all stakeholders involved in the asbestos regulatory system to ensure our approach is both effective and proportionate."

Minister for Social Security and Disability, Sir Stephen Timms, said the asbestos legacy remains the biggest cause of work-related deaths in the UK, responsible for 5,000-plus deaths per year, with many more people living with the impact of asbestos-related disease.

The consultation runs until January 9th, 2026. The full consultation document, including detailed proposals, background information and how to respond, is available on the HSE website at <https://bit.ly/3KphLcp>

## Construction management discrepancies highlighted by report

A NEW report has highlighted contradictions in construction quality management, which could be leading to reduced cost visibility, higher rework expenses, and project delays.

But the outlook in the British construction sector is noticeably different to the global vision.

The survey by PlanRadar, a platform for digital documentation, communication and reporting in construction, facility management and real estate projects, reveals a clear contradiction at the heart of quality management across the industry in both the UK and Europe.

Most companies prioritise QA/QC from the start but 77% report inconsistent documentation across projects and trades.

This fragmentation pushes costs into the shadows and exposes projects to cascading disruption – from rework and schedule slippage to disputes and warranty claims, the report states.

"Different standards across sites and trades" is the most common problem cited by respondents (56%), and more than half (55%) acknowledge they lack enforceable processes. Where no common standard exists, cost visibility disappears and companies without defined QA/QC are nearly twice as likely to have no view of rework costs (43% vs 22%).

Additionally, the report finds that quality misses can cause cascading challenges throughout projects, with two in three companies (67%) linking QA/QC failures to delays. Among those able to quantify the impact on project schedules, nearly six in 10 say quality issues add more than two weeks on average, and almost one in four report delays extend beyond a month.

Firms without consistent standards are over 50% more likely to face warranty risk (54% vs 35%) and are 23% more likely to encounter subcontractor disputes (43% vs 35%).

The 'Construction QA/QC Impact Report' reveals key differences within British construction and the global outlook.

Significantly, 78% of UK respondents agreed that better QA/QC would improve their margins, with 36% identifying reducing rework and costs as their top priority for improving quality processes.

When things go wrong, UK respondents said the main impact is project delays and lost time, with 75% reporting this, whereas globally the emphasis is on rework that could have been avoided (71%).

Furthermore, when delays do happen, UK firms see the greatest cost as damage to client relationships (72%), while globally the top concern is the added labour and overtime costs (76%).

Rob Norton, UK Director at PlanRadar, said: "These findings reflect what we're seeing across UK construction sites daily. The industry recognises that consistent QA/QC is fundamental to profitability, yet most firms are struggling with the practical execution. When 61% of UK companies can't ensure their teams follow the QA/QC plan, and only 22% achieve consistent documentation, we're looking at a systemic challenge that's directly hitting margins and client relationships. The 72% who report that quality delays damage client relationships understand the real cost – it's not just about immediate rework expenses, it's about long-term business sustainability."

# Powerful allies

The HAE EHA SafeHire team highlights the testing and inspection regimes necessary for PV arrays and systems in the hire fleet

**A** WIDE range of equipment is now supplied with Photovoltaic (PV) systems to supply power to site, either as a means of powering the item on hire or as a method to supply power to site.

Some examples of PV-powered hire equipment and ancillary equipment include solar-powered lighting towers, hybrid generators, solar smart frames and site accommodation units incorporating these, PV modules, PV cables, PV connectors/MC4 connectors and DC isolator switches.

PV Panels are classed as a voltage generation source and can be hazardous in nature owing to the amount of DC Voltage and current generated when placed in direct sunlight, so can pose a hazard to users and the general public if they are in an unsafe state.

As with any other electrical device or system, regular inspection and testing is recommended to ensure electrical safety has not been compromised.

In addition, over time panels may decrease in their output, as a result of wear and tear or damage to the system. Regular checks of the output of the system can help to ensure these modules are performing as expected by the end user, where the PV generating voltage may hold a critical requirement, i.e. no access to mains power or to charge critical batteries.

A typical DC PV system may include some or all of the following items that should be inspected for signs of damage at regular intervals:

- PV module(s) – One to many depending upon the voltage / current requirements of the system
- PV cable – To transmit power to the load

- PV connectors – Most commonly MC4 connectors

- DC isolator switch – To disconnect the DC voltage for maintenance

In addition, regular testing of the system using a dedicated PV Installation tester can identify issues with the electrical safety and operating output of the system, and should be considered as a regular and routine activity within the hire industry.

A number of resources and information on PV Testing are available to help you with this. HAE EHA member Seaward Group, has a useful guides and webinar content that we recommend members refer to. The PV guide can be found at <https://bit.ly/4rKgWvq> and the PV webinars can be found at <https://bit.ly/4rwgu3Q>

## Actions to take

Several actions are recommended in order to ensure PV systems are fit for purpose and free of risk.

The first step is to carry out risk assessments in all powered equipment within a hire fleet.

Pre-hire inspections should be carried out in relation to all PV systems and equipment.

Staff training should be organised to ensure all employees expected to inspect and test PV systems and equipment are properly briefed.

Regular inspections should be carried out on all cables, connectors and panels for signs of damage, and a regime of regular dedicated PV system testing should be implemented to ensure electrical safety has not been compromised, and that voltage generation is at expected levels.

You have a responsibility to ensure appropriate PPE is used whenever

testing is required, and end users must be briefed regarding care and maintenance of the equipment, including inspection for safety.

## Testing equipment

Three pieces of equipment should be used for testing and monitoring. These include PV testing equipment, irradiance meters and clamp meters.

PV test meters are multi-functional. Within hire, they can be used for performance of electrical safety testing and performance measurement of Photovoltaic modules and systems.

It can check continuity and Insulation resistance for safety and can also provide open circuit voltage and short circuit current measurements for performance.

It's suggested these should be used every 12 months minimum.

Irradiance meters are used to measure the strength of the sunlight during the time performance measures are taken. In hire applications, they are used to compare performance





characteristics against manufacturers' specifications of PV systems. Current generation is directly linked to the strength of the sunlight (measured in watts per metre squared).

A clamp meter is designed to measure currents flowing in the PV cables. They ensure the absence of current prior to disconnection / reconnection of connectors. <<



The SafeHire Certification Scheme is a private standard created by and written for the hire industry with the help and guidance of British Standards Institute (BSI) with support from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). For further details about SafeHire, SSIP and how to get your organisation audited for certification, contact the team on **0121 380 4602**, or **safehire@hae.org.uk**.

# Are your HPDs on the CUFF?

**T**HE things that really matter when it comes to taking measures to protect personal hearing were recently outlined in a presentation by Chris Steel, Specialist Inspector (Noise & Vibration) at HSE (Health and Safety Executive).

The session detailed what HSE Inspectors look for when they assess workplace noise and the practical steps businesses need to take to ensure compliance and, most importantly, protect their employees.

Chris said inspectors focus on the CUFF acronym to assess the effectiveness of hearing protection in workplaces. CUFF stands for Condition (is the equipment in good order?), Use (are workers trained and consistently using it correctly?), Fit the ear (is it

inserted properly for a good seal?), and Fit for purpose (is the attenuation level appropriate for the noise?). HSE emphasises that hearing protection requires active management and correct, consistent use to effectively prevent noise-induced hearing loss.

HAE EHA's Carl Bartlett, who attended the presentation, said: "A key takeaway that I think everyone will remember is the simple, yet powerful, CUFF acronym for assessing Hearing Protection Devices (HPDs). This framework provides a clear, actionable guide for all safety professionals and this information is crucial for reducing occupational noise-induced hearing loss."

Active management is crucial, according to Chris.

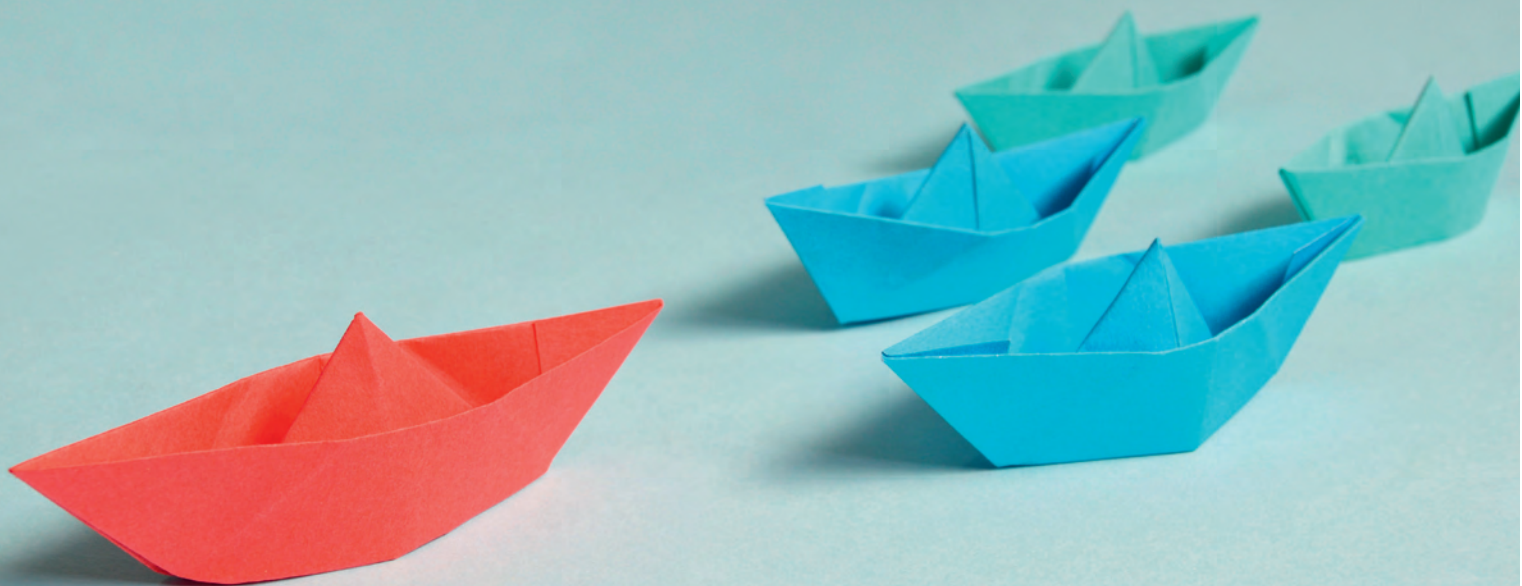
"Providing hearing protection is not enough; companies must actively

manage its use and effectiveness.

Hearing protection is useless if it is not used, or if it is used incorrectly," he said, adding that HSE inspections have found "serious gaps" where workers believed they were protected, but the HPD was not being used or fitted correctly.

While inspectors look for practical, actionable evidence that the HPD program is working, not just a case of equipment sitting in storage, there is also a risk of over-protection, he said. Using an HPD with a too-high attenuation level can also be a risk, as it may prevent workers from hearing important safety warnings or signals.

Failure to implement adequate noise control can result in work improvement notices, noise abatement notices, or prosecution. <<



# Transformative leadership

UNICEF humanitarian and author Dr Will Parks highlights the four leadership lessons he's learned in his work that could transform how hire sector businesses lead.

**I**N 2014, I found myself in Kirkuk (Iraq) as ISIS forces prepared to attack a city already hosting 400,000 refugees from previous assaults.

The population had swelled to more than one million, and we had to decide how, where and when to position our rapid response mechanism - humanitarian supplies including food, water, medicine, and emergency shelter - to help families who would inevitably need to flee.

This was a high stakes situation, and you may think that in a Venn diagram of management experiences it's unlikely there'll be much overlap between my world and the world of the hire sector. But consider this proposition: Good management is good management, regardless of circumstances.

## Teams work better with psychological safety

Psychological safety is the shared belief that team members can speak up, ask questions, and admit mistakes without fear of punishment. In Kirkuk, I embraced this and, rather than make a unilateral decision, I turned to my team. The Kurdish military experts had ideas about likely evacuation routes, Iraqi security forces understood the local dynamics and our logistics coordinators knew the practical constraints of moving supplies quickly.

By creating space for everyone to contribute, without fear of being blamed if their suggestions proved wrong, we developed a positioning strategy that helped thousands of families when the attack came.

Of course, the stakes are different for a business leader, but there is still

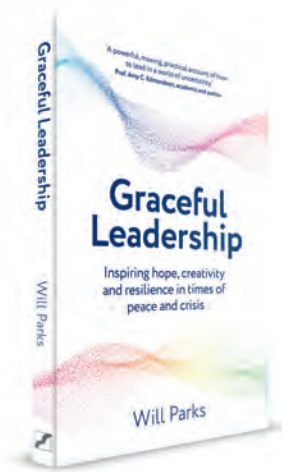
the need to be highly attentive rather than dismissive. In practical terms, this means treating meetings as sacred time where people leave feeling fulfilled rather than drained.

Perhaps most importantly, psychological safety demands that we avoid the blame game when things go wrong. Instead of witch-hunting, we must approach problem-solving as a team sport, understanding together what contributed to issues so we can prevent them recurring.

## The magic of the pause

The neuroscience of leadership reveals something crucial. Our ability to slow things down under pressure often determines our effectiveness. In stressful situations, our brains default to fight-or-flight responses that are highly reactive and emotional.





It's a natural, evolutionary response that works amazingly well when we need to flee a tiger or avoid falling rocks. However, it can be counterproductive when we are trying to make a rational decision.

The leaders who excel - whether in humanitarian crises or business challenges - are those who master what I call the magic of the pause. Slowing down often speeds up results. When leaders rush to judgment under pressure, they frequently create new problems that require even more time to resolve. Taking a moment to breathe, consult others, and think through implications usually leads to better decisions that stick.

Stress is contagious, but so too is calmness. Leaders who maintain their composure create space for others to think clearly. In emergency response situations, the best outcomes invariably come from teams led by people who can stay calm under fire.

### **Tame the advice monster**

When I took my first senior leadership position in Nepal in 2010, I fell into a trap that catches many new leaders: Believing my job was to have solutions to everyone's problems. People would queue outside my office with challenges, and I'd work exhaustively to provide answers. Not only did this leave me with no time or energy for strategic work, but it was also counterproductive.

The breakthrough came when I decided to ask people to come with potential solutions they'd developed, not just problems. Instead of giving advice, I started asking reflective questions to help them think through their options.

The queues didn't disappear. They actually grew longer. People felt empowered to take control of their situations and wanted to impress with their thinking. Yet, the quality of solutions improved dramatically, and paradoxically, I became more energised by coaching than the advice-giving I had been doing.

This doesn't mean never offering advice or making decisions. Sometimes directive leadership is necessary. But in meetings, you can often add your thoughts while summarising all the different perspectives at the end, giving people space to think through implications.

Businesses with leaders who embrace coaching approaches consistently report higher team engagement, better retention, and improved performance. When people work out solutions for themselves, they're more committed to implementing them successfully.

### **Master the skill of compassion**

Perhaps the most misunderstood aspect of effective leadership is compassion. Too often dismissed as "soft" management, compassion is one of the most demanding leadership capabilities. I define it as empathy plus kindness i.e. understanding someone's situation and acting on that understanding with genuine kindness, without expecting anything in return.

The key phrase is "without expecting anything in return." If you're kind to a colleague heading for burnout because you want to keep them productive, that's manipulation, not compassion. True kindness involves offering time off and covering their work because you genuinely care about their wellbeing. This distinction matters because people sense the difference, and authentic compassion builds trust in ways that disingenuous kindness never can.

But compassion in leadership requires more than good intentions. It demands the courage to have difficult conversations when necessary. Avoiding tough conversations isn't kind. It's enabling. When someone continues making mistakes because no one has given them clear feedback, everyone suffers.

True kindness can also involve what I call compassionate toughness i.e.

demonstrating care and support before and during difficult conversations, which makes those conversations more resilient and effective. When you need to provide challenging feedback, people are better prepared to receive it if they know it comes from genuine concern for their development. The combination of toughness and kindness creates conditions where people can grow without feeling attacked or diminished.

Research across sectors consistently shows that kindness produces better business results, but it's worth acknowledging that some individuals won't respond positively regardless of how compassionate your approach. Toxic employees exist, and effective leaders need robust HR policies to address situations where kindness alone isn't sufficient.

The goal isn't to be naive about human nature, but to lead with compassion as the default whilst maintaining clear boundaries and expectations. <<



### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dr Will Parks is a humanitarian who has worked for UNICEF in the Pacific Islands, Nepal, Iraq, Iran, Bhutan and Cambodia. Before joining UNICEF, Will worked with the Australian and UK Aid Agencies, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, and the World Health Organisation, honing his skills in diverse cultural and professional settings. A scholar, thought leader and coach, Will has authored multiple books and articles, presenting his insights at numerous international conferences and workshops.

# Health and safety breaches

In this regular feature, we detail the latest court cases and sentences resulting from HSE investigations, highlighting the significant outcomes that result from lack of compliance and adequate care while carrying out work on construction sites, within factory or workplace environments, using plant machinery, working at height and other areas commonly associated with hire services.

**“It is the duty of employers to ensure that everyone working on a building site returns home safely.”**



## Roofing company fined £16,650 after employee fell through skylight opening

A NORTHAMPTON roofing company has been fined £16,650 after an employee suffered serious injuries when he fell through a skylight opening.

Ryan Robinson, aged 31, was working for Kingsley Roofing Contractors Limited to recover a flat roof of single-storey extension at a domestic property on Sywell Road in Northampton.

Covers that had been installed over two large skylight openings had to be removed as part of preparation. Mr Robinson fell through one of these openings whilst removing material from the other, falling over three metres to the ground. His injuries required surgery and long-term treatment.

An investigation by HSE found that Kingsley Roofing Contractors Limited failed to properly plan work at height activities and implement measures that would have prevented their employees from falling through the skylight openings.

Kingsley Roofing Contractors Limited of Chartergate, Clayfield Close, Moulton Park, Northampton pleaded guilty to breaching the Health and Safety at Work Act. The company was fined £16,650 and ordered to pay £7,205 in costs and £2,000 victim surcharge at Birmingham Magistrates' Court.

HSE Inspector, Chris Bennet, said: “Falls from height are the most common kinds of fatal accidents, accounting for over a quarter of fatal injuries to workers in 2024/25. This could be avoided through proper planning and implementation of effective controls.

“The fine imposed on Kingsley Roofing Contractors should underline to everyone in the construction industry that the courts, and HSE, take a failure to plan works at height extremely seriously. It is the duty of employers to ensure that everyone working on a building site returns home safely.”

This HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Arfaq Nabi and paralegal officer Lauren Temple.



## Manufacturer fined £16,000 after 18-year-old breaks arm in workplace accident

A CONVEYOR systems manufacturer based in Swadlincote has been fined £16,000 after an 18-year-old employee broke his arm when he became entangled in a manual lathe while deburring with emery cloth.

The incident happened in December 2023 at Isoma Limited's factory at George Holmes Business Park, Swadlincote. The young employee was deburring by hand without using a protective appliance when his arm became caught in the rotating lathe.

An investigation by HSE found that Isoma Limited failed to provide a safe system of work or a risk assessment for deburring components.

HSE guidance states that employers must carry out a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks from using emery cloth to polish, deburr or size a metal component while it is rotating in a manual lathe. The risk assessment should determine whether the use of emery cloth can be eliminated completely. Where this is not practicable, a safe method of using emery cloth on a rotating manual metalworking lathe must be implemented.

Isoma Ltd, of George Holmes Way, Swadlincote, Derbyshire, DE11 9DF pleaded guilty to breaching the Health and Safety at Work Act. The company was fined £16,000 and ordered to pay £4,357.77 in costs and £2,000 victim surcharge at Chesterfield Magistrates' Court on 20 November 2025.

HSE investigating inspector Nicole Riley said: "Every year there are accidents involving the use of emery cloths on metalworking lathes, resulting in serious injuries. This incident could have been avoided if Isoma Limited had put in place a suitable safe system of work."

This HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Andy Siddall and paralegal officer Lynne Thomas.

## Manufacturer faces fine after driver suffers life-changing injuries in fall

A MANUFACTURER has been fined £80,000 following a preventable incident at its County Durham site in November last year. A visiting lorry driver, employed by Dobbs Logistics Ltd, fell from a trailer during loading and sustained a brain injury and multiple fractures, leaving him unable to work.

The HSE investigation found that Penn Elcom Limited failed to ensure the safety of visiting workers and did not implement suitable measures to prevent falls from height during the loading process. In this case, falling from height was from the visiting vehicle.

HSE Inspector Beth Chapman stressed the need for action: "Falls from vehicles account for around a third of all workplace transport injuries. This was a wholly avoidable incident caused by the company's failure to identify the risks and implement suitable control measures."

Penn Elcom Limited pleaded guilty to breaching health and safety regulations and was fined £80,000 plus £4,537.32 in costs.

## Construction client sentenced after worker found dead on site

A CONSTRUCTION client has been handed a suspended prison sentence after a worker was found dead on a building site in London.

Moses Meisels received a 12-week prison sentence, suspended for one year, and was ordered to pay £10,000 in costs City of London Magistrates Court owing to his role in the incident.

The Metropolitan police discovered the man's body at the site of a synagogue development at Upper Clapton Road, in Hackney, in December 2018.

Although the worker had died as a result of natural causes, subsequent inspections by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) revealed multiple life-threatening safety failures at the site.

Moses Meisels was overseeing major structural work to enlarge the synagogue, but he repeatedly ignored warnings about dangerous practices, putting construction workers at serious risk of fatal falls.

Following the discovery of the man's body, HSE inspectors conducted four separate visits in a five-month period, where they uncovered a catalogue of serious failures including workers operating on the roof beyond the protection of scaffolding edge barriers and large unprotected holes in the ground floor creating fall risks into the basement below. A single unsecured ladder was the only access to the first floor, which didn't extend far enough to provide a safe handhold, and construction waste dangerously stacked in the front garden.

Meisels of Gilda Crescent, Stoke Newington, pleaded guilty to breaching Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015. He received a 12-week prison sentence, suspended for one year, and was ordered to pay £10,000 in costs.

HSE inspector David King said: "It is essential that clients must make suitable arrangements for managing a project, including the allocation of sufficient time and other resources."

This prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Rebecca Schwartz and paralegal officer David Shore.

**"It is essential that clients must make suitable arrangements for managing a project, including the allocation of sufficient time and other resources."**



**“Falls when working at height remain the most common kind of workplace fatality, accounting for around a quarter of all worker deaths.”**

## Construction company fined £33,500 after man dies following fall from height

SKYLADDER Construction Limited has been fined £33,500 after a man died when he fell through a skylight opening at a domestic property.

The company was constructing a single-storey extension with a flat roof at a property in Farnborough. On the evening, in July 2022, it began to rain, and the company director and an employee returned to the site at approximately 11pm to cover the new roof with a blue plastic tarpaulin, securing it with logs of wood.

Bhakta Rai accompanied the employee to the site that evening. At some point, Mr Rai went onto the roof to assist and fell through a hole intended for a skylight, falling approximately 2.5 metres onto the concrete floor below.

In an attempt to recover Mr Rai, he was lifted back through the roof opening, carried across the roof, and then brought down a ladder at the front of the property. No ambulance was called, and Mr Rai was transported to hospital in a van. He died a few days later after sustaining significant injuries, including a spinal fracture, fractured skull, possible bleed on the brain, and swelling to the head.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) attended the scene. Between the police leaving the site (at around 4am) and the HSE's arrival later that day, the tarpaulin had been replaced, covering the roof.

An HSE investigation found that Skyladder Construction Limited failed to take suitable and sufficient measures to prevent, so far as was reasonably practicable, any person from falling a distance liable to cause personal injury. There were no physical measures in place at the edges of the

building or around the skylight openings to prevent a fall, and no measures to mitigate the distance or impact of a fall.

Skyladder Construction Limited also contravened a requirement imposed by an HSE inspector. During the investigation, HSE requested information from the company under Section 20 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, which it is an offence not to provide. No response was received.

HSE guidance sets out measures for planning and carrying out work at height safely. It includes practical controls that can be implemented to remove or reduce the risk of a fall. Following this guidance would have identified the risks from the unprotected roof and shown that the risk could have been eliminated entirely by changing how the work was undertaken. Further guidance can be found here: Work at height – HSE.

Skyladder Construction Limited, of 8 Harbour Close, Farnborough, GU14 8HT, pleaded guilty to failing to provide information requested under HSE regulations.

The company was fined £33,500, ordered to pay £8,472 in costs, and a £2,000 victim surcharge at Basingstoke Magistrates' Court on 31 October 2025.

Following the hearing, HSE Inspector Jenny Morris said: "Falls when working at height remain the most common kind of workplace fatality, accounting for around a quarter of all worker deaths. In this case, this was a wholly avoidable incident. Mr Rai died in a fall which should never have been able to happen."

This prosecution was brought by HSE Enforcement Lawyer Rebecca Schwartz and Paralegal Officer Helen Hugo.



## Social housing management firm fined for failing to protect workers

AN East Midlands social housing provider has been fined £32,000 after multiple workers were diagnosed with vibration-related ill-health conditions such as Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS).

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) launched an investigation after it received more than 10 reports of vibration-related ill health in a short period of time. The workers affected had been employed by Nottingham City Homes Limited, an arms-length management organisation that managed social housing on behalf of Nottingham City Council between 2005 and 2023.

The HSE investigation found a large number of the company's employees were exposed to vibration in their day-to-day work. These included bricklayers, joiners, electricians, plasterers, caretakers and others. While their work was varied, all included extensive use of power tools, ranging from drills and impact drivers to vibrating plates and road breakers, over an extended period of time. Despite this, and the dangers exposure can cause, the company had not properly assessed or controlled worker's exposure to vibration.

Prolonged and regular exposure to vibration can affect a worker's health resulting in disorders of the nerves, blood supply, joints and muscles of the hands and arms. These disorders are collectively known as HAVS and symptoms can include pain, tingling, numbness and loss of strength. HAVS can make everyday tasks such as fastening buttons or holding utensils difficult or impossible.

The HSE investigation also found that the company had not undertaken a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks posed by vibration. Control measures, such as removing the need to use vibrating tools, using lower vibration alternatives, or limiting exposure times, had not been properly implemented. Tool maintenance and health surveillance arrangements were inadequate, and employees had not received sufficient training on the risks that they faced.

Nottingham City Homes Limited, of Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The company was fined £32,000 and ordered to pay £6,226 in costs at Nottingham Magistrates' Court.

HSE inspector Tim Nicholson said: "Nottingham City Homes Limited exposed its employees to vibration through the use of power tools for a long period of time. The company failed to properly manage this risk which led to employees suffering ill-health. The effects of exposure to vibration can be debilitating and, once damage is done, it is irreversible."

The prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Neenu Bains, and paralegal officer Jorge Kemp.

## Manufacturing company fined £600k after fatal workplace incident

A GLOBAL manufacturing company, Systagenix Wound Management Manufacturing Limited t/a Scapa Healthcare Limited, has been fined £600,000 following a fatal incident at its Gargrave, Craven premises in September 2020.

An employee, aged 56, died after being trapped under a heavy, double-stacked pallet weighing 592kg that fell onto him.

A subsequent investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) revealed major failings by the company, including inadequate risk assessment, improper storage and insufficient training.

Systagenix pleaded guilty to breaching health and safety regulations. It was fined £600,000 and ordered to pay £15,000 in costs.

HSE Inspector Kirsty Storer-Cottrell said proper training, monitoring, supervision, and risk control measures would have averted the fatality.



The SafeHire Certification Scheme is a Private Standard created by and written for the hire industry with the help and guidance of British Standards Institute (BSi) with support from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). For more information, email [safehire@hae.org.uk](mailto:safehire@hae.org.uk).



# Plenty of steps and some timely tips

**Bolton members' day incorporates tour of one million square foot building, while highlighting how companies can help prevent hire sector thefts and fires.**

**T**HEFT and fraud in the hire industry, battery fires, flexible finance for assets and property and short-term insurance were focus points of a presentation at a recent HAE EHA members day held at the Amazon distribution centre in Bolton.

Neil Bravery and Carl Bartlett spoke to members about the need for members to upload information about thefts so that a shareable database can be compiled, and potential fraud prevented, through the sharing of suspicious vehicles' registration plates, details of stolen items and other pertinent information that could help to prevent future incidents involving hire companies' equipment.

"The more data we can get plugged into the crime portal, the more we can share with our members to try

and eliminate theft and fraud," Neil told members, going on to add that £1.7 million worth of goods were stolen in the first quarter of 2024, with more than £600,00 of this being from the hire sector.

"On the plus side, 32 arrests were made and 127 items recovered – from as far away as Romania and Italy," he said, adding: "Essex, Kent, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and South Yorkshire were identified as the high-risk areas."

Anders McLocklan, Head of Business Unit at Everywhen Affinities & Partnerships, spoke about HireSecure, a new short-term insurance product now available to HAE EHA members provided by Everywhen and Matthew Martin, Partnerships Director of HAE EHA partner organisation Approved Finance, discussed how the partnership can provide greater

opportunities for members and enable them to be more competitive.

The company specialises in business asset finance and can assist members with securing commercial properties, he stressed.

"We want to work with you to help you get new clients," he said, highlighting the platforms used to update and facilitate services for members and discussing how payment plans can be adapted to account for seasonal spikes.

Carl showed some videos of lithium battery fires and highlighted the risks the batteries can present if not stored and handled properly.

"We've often got no idea of what's happened to our equipment when it's been hired out – whether it's been dropped, bumped into etc, and it can come back to us in a condition we are not fully aware of, so we have to do our due diligence," he said.





He said members often only get in touch when there is a problem rather than to take preventative action, which is why HAE EHA has implemented safety measures for lithium batteries, including providing customers with clear guidance on usage, charging, and storage, and promoting best practices like using only manufacturer-approved chargers and avoiding damage.

After showing those present a video caught on security camera of a fire caused by incorrect procedures, he highlighted the necessity to guard them against extreme temperatures, physical impact, and storing batteries with conductive materials, emphasising that staff should be trained to identify damaged batteries and follow emergency procedures.

Carl then went on to talk about SafeHire highlighting that the certification helps businesses secure more opportunities and gives them a competitive edge, improving their reputation with end-users.

After the talks and a buffet lunch, those present were then given a guided tour of the Amazon distribution centre, which uses 2,000 robots to assist with parcel handling and

streamlining operations, particularly during peak times like Black Friday and the Christmas season. Different models are used for tasks like receiving, storing, picking, packing, and shipping items.

The facility is a significant part of Amazon's UK logistics network, processing tens of thousands of orders daily and employing up to 3,000 people. The one million square foot facility opened in 2018. <<



HAE EHA provides members with a range of opportunities to connect, gain knowledge, and address any queries at its regional member days. For more information about what events are coming up, and to register, contact the contact the HAE EHA Membership Team on **0121 380 4600** or email **enquiries@hae.org.uk**





## Industry's mental health champion becomes Garic's new CEO

GARIC, a leading provider of sustainable site solutions and a subsidiary of Bibby Line Group, has appointed Asif Latief as its new Chief Executive Officer.

Asif joined Garic in November, working alongside Interim CEO Brian Sherlock during a brief transition period before Brian returned to his role as Non-Executive Director in December and Asif formally assumed CEO responsibilities.

Asif has spent more than 23 years working within the hire industry, during which time he has held leadership roles in A-Plant (Sunbelt Rentals), Boels Rental and most recently Speedy Hire plc where he worked as Chief Commercial Officer. He is active in the wider hire sector, working closely with the European Rental Association (ERA), Construction Plant-hire Association (CPA) and as a Director of HAE EHA where he is champion of the industry-wide #UnitedforMentalStrength campaign.

Asif's appointment comes at a pivotal time for Garic, following the company's rebrand in 2024.

He said: "I'm excited to be joining Garic at such an important moment in its journey. What attracted me to the business is its strong set of values, centred around people, trust, and doing the right thing. These values closely align with my own, and I look forward to working with the team to build on Garic's reputation for excellence and drive forward its commitment to sustainable site solutions."

Jonathan Lewis, Chairman of Garic and CEO of Bibby Line Group, said he was delighted to welcome Asif to Garic and grateful to Brian for his 'valuable contribution'.

"His deep industry expertise and proven leadership make him ideally placed to guide the business through its next chapter," he said. "Asif is widely recognised for building businesses that excel in customer service, collaborative culture and operational performance."

"Garic's refreshed brand reflects a strategic shift towards innovation, customer value, and sustainability. Asif's leadership will be instrumental in accelerating this vision, ensuring Garic continues to deliver equipment-as-a-service solutions that meet evolving customer needs and environmental standards."

Bibby Line Group, founded in 1807 and headquartered in Liverpool, is a family-owned business operating across marine, infrastructure, and financial services sectors in the UK and beyond.



## 'Mr Newsome' celebrates 40-year milestone

BRAD NEWSOME Ltd, a national provider of process cooling, air conditioning, Dehumidifiers, and temperature and humidity control systems, is celebrating a major employee milestone.

Dave Harker, who has played an instrumental role in shaping the business from a small local supplier into a trusted partner for manufacturers across the UK, is celebrating his 40th anniversary of continuous service with the company.

Dave began his career with Newsome on the shopfloor and quickly demonstrated the technical skills, determination and leadership qualities that would define his time with the business. Over the years, he progressed through multiple roles, including sales, project management, and operations, before being appointed Managing Director.

Under Dave's leadership, Newsome expanded into new markets and embraced emerging technologies. He has been instrumental in launching new service lines, mentoring team members, guiding long-term strategy and building enduring customer relationships with leading manufacturers in sectors such as food and beverage, plastics, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals.

Known as "Mr Newsome", Dave now holds the role of Strategic Projects Director, helping to deliver large-scale, complex rental and sales projects.

He continues to work closely with Sales, Projects, and Service teams. His technical credibility is reinforced by his IEng ACIBSE status with the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers, a professional recognition that underlines his commitment to continuous learning and engineering best practice.

Commenting on the milestone, Group Managing Director Richard Metcalfe said: "Dave has been central to Newsome's development for four decades. His knowledge, leadership, and passion for the business have been instrumental in our success, and his contribution continues to shape our future. We are delighted to celebrate this milestone with him."



If you've made a recent appointment, promotion, or an employee has reached a certain milestone, let us know so we can share your news with the rest of Interface's readers. Contact Stephanie Cornwall at [editorial@hae.org.uk](mailto:editorial@hae.org.uk).



# NEW TO THE CREW ...

We introduce the latest recruits to HAE EHA membership and invite you to join us in giving them a warm welcome.

NINE new members have joined HAE EHA in recent weeks from a range of different sectors and geographical areas, expanding its growing membership.

- **M O'BRIEN PLANT HIRE**, based in St Albans, Hertfordshire, provides operated and self-drive plant and machinery hire services across the UK, with a fleet of excavators, dumpers, telehandlers, and other machines. The company also offers related construction services such as earthworks, demolition, drainage, aggregate supply, and quarry management. The company was formed in 1990 by Michael and Annamarie O'Brien with a single JCB 3CX, operating from their home in Luton.

- **TYROLIT LTD** manufactures grinding and dressing tools and provides system solutions, primarily for the construction industry. The company offers a wide range of products, including conventional abrasives, super-abrasives, and diamond tools, for industries like construction, electronics, and steel and plant construction.

- **BANKMORE RENTALS LTD** is a company based in Omagh, County Tyrone, that provides construction-related rentals. The company was incorporated in June this year, with directors Cathan John Gerard McCourt, Conor Joseph McCourt, and Brian Toal. It also offers power generator rentals.

- **CHEVRON TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT** works with clients in the utilities, construction, rail, highways, local authorities and events sectors to create safe work zones to protect employees and the general public. The London-based company has more than 1,800 employees and a turnover of more than £200 million.

- **L&S ENGINEERS** describes itself as "The UK's largest supplier of Plant Hire & Garden Machinery Spares for over 50 years" It supplies spares and consumables to the construction and plant hire industry as well as to local councils, small businesses and the general public. The company has a warehouse in Walsall and aims to ensure products can be provided with next-day delivery. It is a main dealer for many construction and groundcare brands including Stihl, Wacker, Honda, Husqvarna, Belle, Paslode, and Atlas Copco. It also offers non genuine replacement parts for most brands.

**01543 378189**

**www.lsendeers.co.uk**

**L&S**  
ENGINEERS

- **ALRIK** is a logistics software platform for the construction industry that helps merchants and suppliers streamline deliveries by digitising workflows and automating processes like transport sourcing, emissions tracking and invoicing. The software connects key stakeholders such as merchants, carriers and construction sites to reduce costs, improve efficiency, and provide real-time tracking and automated reporting.

**(+44) 7356 198481**

**www.alrik.com**



- **SAFETY SHIELD GLOBAL LTD** develops and manufactures technology solutions that use artificial intelligence (AI) to improve safety, primarily through collision avoidance systems for plant and machinery. Its core product is an AI-powered safety system that uses cameras to detect humans in the danger zones of heavy equipment, then alerts the operator or automatically applies brakes to prevent accidents. It also offers related digital solutions.

- **WATSONHIRE** is a full service tool repair centre offering quick repair and maintenance of tools for Irish tradesmen, businesses and local households. WatsonHire covers the entire Irish market and is an authorised service centre for tool manufacturers such as Bosch, Makita, Hitachi, DeWalt, Draper, Black & Decker, Paslode, Stanley, Bostitch. John Watson first opened his Letterkenny store in 2005.

- **BAM SITE SOLUTIONS LTD** is based in Wellingborough, provides in-house services for construction sites, including the hire of plant and equipment, and the supply of safety products like PPE and fire protection through its BAM Site Direct arm, across the UK and Ireland. The company has been in operation for more than 60 years, having started with a different name in 1959.

# The ‘Selective Borrower’

How UK SMEs are rethinking borrowing in 2025.

**A**FTER several years of economic uncertainty, the UK’s small business landscape is showing an interesting and encouraging shift in borrowing behaviour.

According to the British Business Bank’s latest Small Business Finance Markets Report, fewer SMEs are using external finance, down from around half to just over 40%. Yet the total value of lending is on the rise.

In other words, smaller firms aren’t borrowing less, they’re borrowing smarter. The ‘selective borrower’ has emerged, and they’re more

cautious, and increasingly focused on investment that drives efficiency and growth rather than short-term survival.

Some financial experts believe this evolution is bringing both a challenge and an opportunity for UK business owners who want to make confident, well-informed decisions about when and how to access funding.

Rory Crisp Jones, of UK business finance broker Jones & Co Finance, said: “On an almost daily basis now, we are witnessing a real mindset shift among business owners. A few years ago, borrowing was often reactive, and driven by short-term cashflow



Rory Crisp Jones says SME borrowing is no longer reactive but more future-focussed.

needs, whereas now we see SMEs that want to understand the impact, plan for contingencies, and make sure borrowing truly supports their growth.”



Despite the rising cost of borrowing, the appetite for finance among growth-oriented SMEs has not disappeared.



During the pandemic and the inflationary years that followed, many small businesses were forced to seek support simply to stay afloat. Schemes such as the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLS) flooded the market with liquidity, creating a generation of firms with new or increased debt positions, Rory said.

Nowadays the picture is quite different. Despite the rising cost of borrowing, the appetite for finance among growth-oriented SMEs has not disappeared.

"If anything, it has evolved somewhat and we may also see a shift in thinking again as the Government looks likely to reform business rates for small businesses to help with growth plans - giving SMEs greater flexibility and confidence in the future," Rory said.

Businesses are being more selective, targeting finance for defined purposes such as technology upgrades, productivity investment, and

sustainability transitions rather than day-to-day working capital.

"Furthermore, business owners are taking a longer-term view, and there's a strong sense of, 'If I'm going to take on debt, it has to directly support efficiency or expansion.' That's a very healthy shift, and it's changing how advisers and lenders need to engage with clients," said Rory.

The British Business Bank's research found that more than half of smaller firms (54%) believe they are less likely to be approved for finance today than they were two years ago, even though actual approval rates have held relatively steady.

So, there's a confidence gap, which means thousands of viable businesses may be holding back from borrowing that could enable growth or innovation. In fact, many SME owners still carry a legacy view that finance is hard to access or that lenders are quick to say no. The reality is often different, but unless someone helps them navigate that process, they may never test the water.

### Regional disparities

The report also highlights persistent regional disparities in access to finance. London and the South East still account for a disproportionate share of lending and equity investment, while many businesses in the North, Midlands, Wales and the devolved nations face higher rejection rates or lack awareness of funding options.

This imbalance underscores the importance of local expertise, because in many regional economies, business owners want to speak to someone who understands their market, their sector, and the challenges of running a company outside the capital, according to Rory.

"As the borrowing culture shifts, so too must the approach of finance professionals and lenders. SMEs today want strategic partnerships, they want to work with someone who can help them weigh up the timing, structure and long-term implications of borrowing.

"As advisers, we need to play our part here, and we should be asking: What are you trying to achieve? How resilient is your cashflow and what's the best funding mix for your business goals?"

"If clients understand how lenders make decisions, and lenders see more robust, well-prepared applications, everyone benefits. It builds confidence on both sides."

For SMEs weighing up whether to seek finance in 2025 and into 2016, it's essential to start by being clear on why funding is needed and what it will achieve. Whether it's accelerating expansion, upgrading equipment or driving digital transformation, the purpose should be tied to measurable outcomes.

Cashflow should then be assessed, and different repayment scenarios tested using realistic assumptions about revenue and costs so it's clear what the business can sustain.

It's also worth exploring the full spectrum of finance options. Traditional lending remains important, but there's growing interest in hybrid instruments and alternative models. Understanding how these products work, and where they fit into growth plans, can open doors that may not have previously been considered.

Guidance should be sought early on, rather than leaving until the last minute. Bringing in a qualified adviser or broker early can make a meaningful difference, helping SMEs structure a proposal in a way that strengthens their case with lenders. Rory advised keeping a strong communication channel open, because maintaining transparency about business performance builds trust and creates more room for flexibility in the future.

"The rise of the selective borrower suggests that small businesses are becoming more sophisticated and resilient in their approach to finance. With better information, confidence and support, they can continue to invest, innovate and drive the UK's recovery. Caution isn't a bad thing, it's a sign of maturity and the key is to pair that caution with confidence and clarity," he said.



HAE EHA Financial Services offers asset finance, commercial loans and mortgages tailored for hire businesses. For further information visit [www.approvedbusinessfinance.co.uk/haeeha-financialservices](http://www.approvedbusinessfinance.co.uk/haeeha-financialservices).



**Some of the key programmes and achievements of the year are highlighted as we prepare to enter 2026.**

**A**S we look back on 2025, it's been a year of tremendous progress and achievement in learning and development across our network.

Thanks to continued support from the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), our members have been able to access vital funding and deliver high-quality, impactful training to teams across the hire and rental sector.

### **Investment in skills and training**

This year, we've successfully claimed £13,400 in short duration training grants, £38,000 in Specialist Applied Skills Programme (SAP) funding, and a further £14,152.25 in Employer Network funding.

These investments have played a crucial role in strengthening our workforce, ensuring our members have the skills, confidence, and qualifications needed to meet the evolving demands of the industry.

### **Delivering real results**

In total, 278 training days have been delivered to 203 delegates so far in 2025, reflecting our

ongoing commitment to upskilling and professional development. This achievement demonstrates the collective dedication of our members, trainers, and industry partners to continuous learning and excellence.

### **Developing future leaders**

The Management & Leadership Programme we held in October was a resounding success, equipping the next generation of Branch Managers with the knowledge, leadership, and strategic thinking needed to lead effectively in today's competitive environment.

### **Innovating with HireTech**

September saw the launch of our pilot HireTech Specialist Applied Skills Programme, an exciting new

initiative focused on equipment maintenance and technical excellence. This programme is designed to train and qualify the next generation of plant, tool, and equipment fitters, ensuring they gain the practical, hands-on skills required to keep the industry running safely and efficiently.

### **Looking Ahead to 2026**

Building on the success of this year, we're already looking ahead to 2026 with confirmed intake dates for our upcoming programmes:

- Hire Desk Programme starting January 2026
- HireTech Programme starting April 2026

These programmes will continue our mission of training and qualifying the next generation of professionals in hire and rental, ensuring our sector remains strong, skilled, and future-ready. <<



**Nikki Wyllie** is responsible for learning and development within the association, supporting members to identify training needs and plan any development required for employees. Nikki also coordinates the association's NVQ Assessment Centre and CITB Approved Training Organisation. [nikki.wyllie@hae.org.uk](mailto:nikki.wyllie@hae.org.uk)







# Guard your business against fraud attacks

**Our HAE EHA Public Affairs team has been working with industry partners to produce user-friendly guidance on identifying and preventing fraud, as well as reporting stolen equipment.**

**T**HROUGH the Combined Industries Theft Solutions (CITS), CPA, HAE EHA, and IPAF have been working closely with the NCATT (National Construction and Agricultural Theft Team) specialist police unit to create a checklist which companies can adopt to tackle the problem of fraud perpetrated by Organised Criminal Groups (OCGs).

The checklist will benefit both hire desk personnel and their colleagues, as well as delivery drivers to encourage greater vigilance and a confident response to fraud risks.

Central to the organisations' collective response is the need for photographic evidence when an asset is handed over and confidence to challenge requests to hire or deliver where things 'simply do not look right'.

Alongside the checklists, it's suggested that HAE EHA members take note of the latest CITS advice on reporting stolen assets. NCATT and other police forces rely on good record keeping, for example serial numbers rather than fleet numbers,

as well as other key identifiers on the stolen plant and equipment.

A lack of key information delays the police in identifying an item of plant so any discrepancies are exploited by criminals, with the police handing back items to the people who have probably stolen them.

It's advised that members incorporate the checklists into their business toolbox and other training schemes and that procedures to record and share asset identifiers are adopted beyond fleet numbers.

We in the hire industry are in a continual battle with organised crime groups OCGs who view the hire sector as a 'low risk, high reward' target, and HAE EHA wants to work with its members and partners to change this.

Any feedback on how the checklists and guidance might be expanded and improved in the future will therefore be welcomed.

HAE EHA members can also sign up to the Crime Portal using their member username and password, can report incidents or concerns, and see reports made by other hire

businesses and the police." The portal is a simple but effective way to share this critical information.

For further information about this new guidance or the Portal, please contact public affairs specialist Mark Bradshaw at [mark.bradshaw@hae.org.uk](mailto:mark.bradshaw@hae.org.uk). <<



**HAE EHA Director of Public Affairs Mark Bradshaw** is responsible for relations with the UK Government, other central agencies, as well as external and trade association partners. If you would like further information on any of the above, or other related topics, call 0121 380 4621 or email [mark.bradshaw@hae.org.uk](mailto:mark.bradshaw@hae.org.uk)

# PRINT ON DEMAND



## So how can this work?

You can easily obtain our whole range of fully-licensed, up-to-date HAE EHA safety guidance leaflets for your business without the hassle of keeping stock.

You can optionally co-brand the leaflets with your own company logo. Leaflets are downloaded as PDF files so you can either print them on demand or email to your customer.

To give your customers peace of mind that they are getting the very latest safety advice, each leaflet clearly states its expiry date, together with a unique QR code which guarantees that you are giving them our latest advice.



Give it a try!

**Hae EHA**  
**Print**  
on demand | **QR**

For more information on Print-on-Demand please contact us on **0121 380 4620** or email us at **[print-on-demand@hae.org.uk](mailto:print-on-demand@hae.org.uk)**