

# Breaking down the barriers

ANY review of the local economy has to consider national and international issues and our experience as a firm reveal several key issues which are affecting a broad range of our clients.

We are seeing a real polarisation in terms of financial performance between those businesses that are traditionally based and reliant on large numbers of employees and those businesses which are knowledge-led.

Unfortunately a number of our long standing clients are struggling because of intense competition from low-cost economies. However, our more knowledge based clients are enjoying very strong performance across a number of sectors which include aerospace, petrochemical, architecture and construction. I am sure this pattern is seen by our colleagues in the professional community locally and throughout the UK.

Some of the themes that certainly have a national feel to them are increasing levels of red tape and the challenge for our clients in dealing with pension issues particularly those companies with old pension schemes. This is a huge issue for our clients, for the Government and one that needs to be addressed at a national level.

I note from recent articles in the local press that, by local and national government working to resolve some of the issues around pension schemes, Sheffield Forgemasters has secured its future and this once again reflects the value of the knowledge based businesses in our local economy.

I think it is important that the articles in this

*Chris Sellars, head of corporate finance at independent chartered accountants Hart Shaw, believes there is a growing confidence in Sheffield's professional and corporate community but calls for local and national action to remove barriers to continued growth*

annual report are not doom and gloom and certainly that is not the message from Hart Shaw. We have a number of clients that are performing very strongly and from a corporate finance perspective we are seeing a lot of activity in the transaction market.

I think this reflects a growing confidence in the professional community and the investment in corporate finance locally, but also a growing entrepreneurial spirit.

It is important that this growing entrepreneurial spirit is supported, not only by the professional community, but also banking and funding organisations.

In addition, some of the wealthy individuals that have prospered in South Yorkshire should be considering supporting the next generation of entrepreneurs.

However, we do have some significant issues

locally which could damage that entrepreneurial spirit.

One of the significant ones is obviously transport. This is well documented on a regular basis within the local papers and it is one that is not going to be resolved easily.

Based at Sheffield Business Park overlooking the barely used runway of Sheffield Airport, I do feel that there must be some influence that can be brought by local government to ensure that this valuable asset does not go to waste.

There seems to be so much conflicting information around the length of runway, the types of planes that can operate there and the likely future of the airport. It is time that an unbiased opinion was presented to the people of Sheffield to ensure that this valuable asset is there in the long term.

With the development of the Boeing-supported operation on the opposite side of the Parkway it must be important that Sheffield Airport continues to operate.

In addition to the airport, we have some significant issues around road transport in the City. There really does need to be a concerted effort from local and national government, regeneration agencies and the business community to try and address what is a growing problem.

Sheffield is gradually emerging as a city of economic diversity and dynamism and the prospects for 2007 look good if key infrastructural and legislative issues, such as pensions, are addressed.



Chris Sellars of Hart Shaw

## Mobile communications can give your company the edge

I SEEM to have been banging on for years about the PC in your pocket being 'The Next Big Thing'.

Well now it's official; Windows Mobile 5.0 is alive and well and, judging by Microsoft's current full-colour advertising campaign in the national dailies entitled "Is that Microsoft Office in your pocket?", they intend us all to take notice.

For those of you who have not seen this, a visit to [www.microsoft.com/UK/windowsmobile](http://www.microsoft.com/UK/windowsmobile) will give you a quick overview of the sort of business applications made possible by this Pocket PC operating system.

One of the major advances in this release is Windows Mobile Direct Push technology which basically means that emails and other data can be sent to your pocket mobile device such as an XDA without you having to request a download.

I know the hundreds of 'Crackberries' amongst you will say that Blackberry has been able to do this for ages, but you need a separate Blackberry server to make this solution work and we all know that Microsoft solutions are always going to work better on a Microsoft platform.

And I know that Vista is only as good as Apple's OSX has been for years, but we're back to the old Betamax v VHS argument.

So, with apologies to any Open Source geeks who are still bothering to read this article, I'll confine my wanderings to Bill's offerings.

Mobile computing is available in a number of forms, not just the pocket

*Mike Smalley, managing director of the Holbrook IT Group, looks at how the revolution in mobile communications is benefiting business*



device. Secure connections to your office from a home PC are now widely used due to low cost, or even free, broadband access. The explosion in "free" Wi-Fi for the cost of a coffee is also extending the use of laptops outside the home and office.

The range of devices available to run mobile applications is also expanding to meet the demand. Everything from a full laptop to small pocket devices, connecting via the internet or GPRS gives the user freedom of choice.

Apart from MS.Office "utility" software, the real benefit of mobile computing is being able to access your head office systems just as if you were in the office. With a full size laptop this is no problem and all your business applications should be available to you and operate as quickly as if you

were at your desk provided they are running via terminal services.

Being able to communicate without the need for a fixed phone line means greater operational flexibility, faster customer responsiveness and savings in staff time.

Mobile communications enable everyone from the Managing Director to sales staff to keep in touch and receive e-mails, voice, video and high speed Internet access while on the move – wherever they are – creating a virtual, pocket-sized office.

Clearly, if you are using a pocket device then special programming will be needed to display information in a useable way on the smaller display screen. However, with the right programming, there is no reason why pocket devices cannot connect to your central databases for CRM, ERP and accounting use.

As ever, security is a major issue, particularly as users tend to leave laptops in cabs and on public transport. The explosion in the number of pocket devices will dramatically increase this "leakage" especially as a lot will be stolen by pick-pockets.

By using on-line access to head office data rather than downloading everything, this problem can be avoided as sensitive data will not be stored on your pocket device. Where this is not possible, strong user authentication is a must.

We are certainly finding that a growing number of businesses are realizing the benefits of mobile communications in helping them gain the edge in increasingly competitive markets.

**HART SHAW**  
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

**Where Money Matters**

*Registered Auditors & Business Advisors*

Specialising in Owner Managed Businesses

For a **FREE** initial meeting call us now on

**0114 251 8850**

Europa Link  
Sheffield Business Park  
SHEFFIELD S9 1XU  
Fax 0114 251 8851

Email [info@hartshaw.co.uk](mailto:info@hartshaw.co.uk)

[www.hartshaw.co.uk](http://www.hartshaw.co.uk)

We offer an extensive range of services

*Including-*

- Audit
- Strategic Business Planning
- Management Accounts
- Buying & Selling Businesses
- Personal & Corporate Insolvency
- Pension & Investment Advice
- Financial Administration Outsourcing

WE LISTEN WE UNDERSTAND WE DELIVER