

CENTRAL SOUTH QUARTERLY NEWS ROUND-UP

HSCCA:
THE LOCAL GROWTH
PLAN

BUSINESS FIRST:
FROM THE CLASSROOM TO
THE COUNTRYSIDE

IN MY VIEW:
ALISON BARNES
REFLECTS WILD FIRES

AUTUMN IN THE CENTRAL SOUTH



PANNAGE IN THE NEW FOREST

PORTSMOUTH INTERNATIONAL
PORT'S SHORE POWER SYSTEM

RESTORING NATURE AT
HALNAKER HILL FARM

A word or two from the Editor



Welcome to the latest edition of our quarterly news round-up.

We hope you enjoy the panna cotta on the front cover, helping us to mark the changing of the season and draw attention to this centuries old New Forest pastime.

Our focus this edition is very much with the great outdoors – we always like to promote the fact that the Central South is a national park sandwich, with the South Downs National Park to the east and the New Forest to the west.

We are honoured to have Alison Barnes, CEO of the New Forest National Park, sharing her reflections following the devastating fire next to the A31 and the need for us to support businesses in the forest.

We are also shining the spotlight on Halnaker Hill Farm and the work that has gone on to restore its natural beauty.

And keeping the theme going, we are proud to welcome Sparsholt College as a new Champion and highlight the important work they do to train land-based professionals.

If you would like your story to feature in a forthcoming edition of the news round-up, please ensure you are sharing your latest media releases with us.

And if you fancy joining me for a Business Lunch, drop me a line to kate@businesssouth.org

Kate Pearce

KATE PEARCE

HEAD OF STRATEGY

ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

CENTRAL SOUTH MEETING



Energy is firmly on the agenda at the All-Party Parliamentary Group Meeting

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for the Central South will meet at Westminster on 20th October. The APPG is chaired by Richard Quigley MP (Isle of Wight West), who was formally appointed as Chair following the EGM.



Photo: Previous Central South APPG attendees outside Westminster, London

Business South has contributed to the creation of the University of Southampton Clean Energy paper which has been formally launched in the city and will be presented at the APPG for the Central South.

The Energy and Utilities Action Group created a draft paper looking at energy issues and solutions across the region, and evidence gathered has been included in the final University of Southampton paper.



ON THE AGENDA AT THE ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP CENTRAL SOUTH MEETING

- Director of Portsmouth International Port, Mike Sellers, will be talking about the electrification of the UK's most successful local authority owned port following the publication of their own white paper.
- Bill Bullen is the founder and CEO of Utilita, one of the UK's leading smart pay-as-you-go energy providers with a £1 billion-plus turnover. He will speak about fuel poverty and the way his company is harnessing the latest technology to improve the customer journey.



The Central South APPG (All-Party Parliamentary Group) is a cross-party group formed to address issues in the Central South region.

It serves as a platform for dialogue between regional MPs and business leaders, facilitating discussions on various topics, including policy-making and economic challenges.

Thinking of getting involved?
Email Ella@businesssouth.org.

LOCAL GROWTH PLAN

WHY THE LOCAL GROWTH PLAN MATTERS: SHAPING THE FUTURE ECONOMY OF HAMPSHIRE AND THE SOLENT



Teresa Hogsberg
HSCCA Local Growth Plan Lead.

With globally recognised strengths in marine and maritime industries, defence, aerospace, advanced manufacturing, clean energy, logistics, digital technologies, creative and life sciences, our region has the assets, talent and ambition to thrive in an increasingly competitive global marketplace.



Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is home to one of the UK's most diverse and productive economies outside London.

However, economic success cannot be taken for granted. Businesses across the region are navigating rapid technological change, evolving workforce needs, ongoing financial pressures, increasing global competition and the transition to a low-carbon economy.



THE LOCAL GROWTH PLAN WILL ESTABLISH A FRAMEWORK FOR IDENTIFYING THE INVESTMENTS, ACTIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

At the same time, significant opportunities exist to attract investment, accelerate innovation and make the most of our economic strengths.

The Hampshire and Solent Combined County Authority (HSCCA) is now developing a Local Growth Plan for the region, a key component of the Government's devolution agenda and the establishment of a Mayoral Combined County Authority. More importantly, it provides a unique opportunity to bring together business leaders, local government, education providers and other partners behind a shared vision for long-term, sustainable economic growth.

More than a strategic document, the Local Growth Plan will establish a framework for identifying the investments, actions and partnerships needed to increase productivity, support business expansion, develop local talent and create the conditions in which enterprise can flourish over the coming decade. It will also provide a strong case for investment, demonstrating the vital contribution Hampshire and the Solent can make to both regional and national prosperity.

LOOKING FORWARD

WHY THE LOCAL GROWTH PLAN MATTERS: SHAPING THE FUTURE ECONOMY OF HAMPSHIRE AND THE SOLENT



For businesses, this means creating the right conditions for growth by helping to develop the skilled workforce, infrastructure and investment environment needed to raise productivity, support expansion and strengthen regional prosperity. For residents and communities, the Local Growth Plan also has the potential to support better access to jobs, skills, housing, transport and opportunities, helping to ensure that economic growth delivers tangible benefits across Hampshire and the Solent

Crucially, the success of the plan will depend on business leadership and engagement. By combining local insight with a clear understanding of future opportunities, HSCCA can build a stronger case for investment and ensure that growth delivers lasting benefits for businesses, communities and the wider economy.

Developing the Local Growth Plan will be a collaborative process.

Initial engagement will focus on local government leaders before broadening to include businesses, education institutions, infrastructure providers, community representatives and other stakeholders. This matters to businesses because their insight will help shape the priorities, investment cases and practical actions needed to address workforce pressures, unlock growth and strengthen the region's competitiveness.

The authority recognises that Hampshire and the Solent is made up of a number of distinct places, each playing a different role within the wider economy.

For more information on the new Authority, visit [HSCCA](#)

From internationally significant port infrastructure and innovation clusters to thriving market towns, rural communities and growing urban centres, the region's diversity is one of its greatest strengths. The delivery approach will therefore need to reflect the different opportunities and challenges facing individual places, while helping businesses access the skills, infrastructure and support they need to grow.

The region also possesses a unique combination of economic assets, nationally important industries and internationally recognised strengths that cannot easily be replicated elsewhere.

The Local Growth Plan will celebrate these advantages while drawing upon robust evidence to establish a clear baseline understanding of the region's economic performance, demographics and future potential.

Understanding where we are today is an essential first step in determining where we want to be tomorrow. By combining evidence with engagement, the Local Growth Plan will identify the priorities that matter most to businesses, communities and local leaders.

The Local Growth Plan will set out the region's 10-year vision for sustainable growth. For businesses, it is an opportunity to help shape the priorities, partnerships and actions needed to support investment, strengthen the workforce and build long-term prosperity across Hampshire and the Solent.

SUMMER RECESS

TIME TO FOCUS ON CONSTITUENCY WORK

Southampton 'Future Leaders' Summer School



A group of young people from Southampton took part in Darren Paffey's first MP summer school.

Attendees experienced a crash course in the world of politics, media and campaigns.

The week included a joint Question Time with fellow Southampton MPs, Satvir Kaur and Caroline Nokes.

Together with Satvir Kaur MP, Darren joined volunteers at See Southampton's Cruise Welcome Desk at the Ocean Cruise Terminal, welcoming some of the 4,000 day-trippers disembarking from the visiting cruise ship.



Amanda Martin - MP for Portsmouth North hosts Political Summer School

"Seeing so many bright young minds eager to step up and make a difference in our city gives me so much hope for the future. Massive thanks to Airbus for hosting us and making this possible!" Amanda Martin MP

Caroline Nokes MP has been spending time with community groups across Romsey and Southampton North.

"Recess has continued to be busy and interesting, giving me the opportunity to spend time with community groups across Romsey and Southampton North.

I had a fantastic afternoon at Sherfield English Bowls Club, where I was invited to relearn how to play."



Town of Culture 2028

In Basingstoke, Luke Murphy MP helped submit a bid for Basingstoke and Deane to become the UK's first Town of Culture.

Luke met with the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Lisa Nandy MP, to make the case for Basingstoke to be crowned.



LONDON REAL ESTATE FORUM 2026

LONDON'S PREMIER REAL ESTATE EVENT



**COLLABORATION,
STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT,
STRONG PARTNERSHIPS
AND COMMUNICATION**



The conversation focused on what is needed to accelerate investment and development – from bringing the right partners together and aligning ambitions, to mitigating risk and creating the conditions for sustainable growth.



Photo: Nick McKeogh, CEO NL&A & Leigh-Sara Timberlake, Business South

Why the timing is right to choose the Central South?

The Central South attended the London Real Estate Forum bringing together local authorities, investors and business leaders to showcase the opportunities shaping one of the UK's most dynamic regions.

Our roundtable, chaired by Gavin Hall, Head of Office at Savills, brought together development directors from Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, Portsmouth City Council and Southampton City Council to explore the projects and investment opportunities already underway across the region.

The message was clear: collaboration, strategic alignment, strong partnerships and communication will be critical to turning opportunity into investment.

With thanks to all our partners and to NLA for extending the invitation.

REFLECTIONS ON THE NEW FOREST WILDFIRE

At the peak of this summer's heatwave, on Sunday 9 August, a van caught fire on the A31 through the New Forest National Park.

Fanned by strong winds and record temperatures, the blaze spread rapidly to neighbouring heathland.

Although partner organisations had prepared for a wildfire, including through a tabletop exercise only weeks earlier, the conditions created exceptional challenges. Despite heroic efforts, the fire devastated 1.6km² of habitat.

WHY WAS THE IMPACT SO GREAT?

The New Forest National Park is a world capital for wildlife, with a rare mix of habitats supporting around 23,000 species. Lowland heath is now rarer globally than rainforest and takes decades to develop; the New Forest contains the most extensive remaining area in Europe.

The affected area was home to many nationally and internationally rare species, including all six UK reptiles, specialist insects, plants and heathland birds such as Dartford warblers and nightjars. It is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a stronghold for smooth snakes, the UK's rarest reptile.

Photo: Green shoots in the weeks after the wildfire.
Credit: Hilary Makin



BY ALISON BARNES, NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND BUSINESS SOUTH DIRECTOR



REFLECTIONS ON THE NEW FOREST WILDFIRE

Some internationally important pasture woodland of ancient beech and oak trees was also destroyed. Heathland can recover to some level over time, but the loss of ancient trees is permanent.

The human impact was considerable too. For Commoners, local communities and everyone who loves and cares for the Forest, seeing it ablaze felt deeply distressing. The A31 was closed for nearly two weeks during one of the busiest periods of the year, disrupting Commoners' animals, travel and local businesses.

A COMMUNITY-WIDE RESPONSE

Our thanks go to the emergency services and firefighters who travelled from across the country to tackle the incident, as well as Forestry England, councils, volunteer agencies, businesses and local communities who supported the multi-agency response.

Photo right: Beaminster Fire Station helping to tackle the New Forest wildfire, August 2026. Credit DWFRS.



LOOKING FORWARD

The loss of rare species and biodiversity is devastating. It also affects the Forest's delicate ecological balance and reduces grazing land for Commoners' animals. Recovery to some level is possible, but it will take many years, and some features of mature heathland may take decades to return. Where local populations of rare species have been badly affected, recovery may be slow or uncertain.

This wildfire underlines the need to build resilience and adaptation to climate change, which is bringing hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters. That resilience matters for businesses, communities and the precious landscapes of the central south. It is essential if we are to achieve both a world-class environment and a world-class economy.

With Sustainability South, we are planning a joint Green Halo Partnership Conference in February to explore resilience, adaptation and response to climate change and why larger, interconnected systems of wildlife and human networks are vital.

We hope you will join us.



Photo above: Verwood Fire Station at the height of the fire, Credit DWFRS.

Diversions prevented visitors reaching some businesses, with several reporting trade down by around 50%, some businesses were forced to close during those two weeks and some future bookings were cancelled.

National Park Authority colleagues helped where they could: rangers supported closures and diversions on roads, car parks and trails; we worked with campsites to reduce wildfire risk while the Forest was on red alert; and we shared updates on smoke, road diversions and ways to support local businesses.

PORTSMOUTH INTERNATIONAL PORT'S SHORE POWER SYSTEM

STRIVING TO BECOME THE
COUNTRY'S FIRST ZERO-EMISSIONS
PORT BY 2050.



In a huge forward step for the UK maritime industry, ferries and cruise ships are now plugging into Portsmouth International Port's shore power system, as it strives to become the country's first zero-emissions port by 2050.

Brittany Ferries' hybrid-electric ships, the St Malo and the Guillaume de Normandie – both part of a €550 million fleet renewal – are both now regularly plugging in after the system went live in July, marking a major milestone in the decarbonisation of the port, and of the country's maritime industry.

Cruise ships have also been taking electricity while alongside, with ships including AIDA's AIDAsol, Phoenix Reisen's Amera, and Virgin Voyages' Valiant Lady all plugging in. When Valiant Lady used the system, it was the first time any Virgin Voyages ship had used shore power in Europe.

**Portsmouth
INTERNATIONAL
Port**

The initiative is the first of its kind in the UK, offering high-voltage, 100% renewable electricity through a multi-berth, multi-user, multi-frequency system. When it is at full capacity, three ships – two ferries and a cruise ship – can be plugged in simultaneously.

Dubbed Sea Change, the project was funded with £19.8 million from the Department for Transport and £4.6 million from Portsmouth City Council.

Any of the port's customers' ships can now plug into clean electricity, meaning they can turn off engines while alongside, helping to improve the city's air quality. Those with batteries will also be able to enter and exit the harbour under electric power.

As well as improving air quality for Portsmouth residents, the system is projected to help avoid emissions of around 20,000 tonnes of CO₂e from 2027, aiding in the goal to become the country's first emissions-free port by 2050.



PORTSMOUTH INTERNATIONAL PORT

STRIVING TO BECOME THE COUNTRY'S FIRST ZERO-EMISSIONS PORT BY 2050.

Mike Sellers, Portsmouth International Port director, said: "This is a huge moment not only for us, but also for the UK ports industry as a whole, as we are now the country's first port to offer multi-berth, multi-user shore power.

"The clean electricity will have a big benefit to air quality in the city, and it also helps to future-proof Portsmouth port, aligning us with international moves towards electrification for all of our customers, meaning we can continue to be profitable and provide for essential services in the city."

While electricity prices remain high, the port, the council and Brittany Ferries worked hard together to strike a deal to ensure the company's two shore-power-ready ferries could plug in.

Mike added: "There are still challenges we're facing around the cost of electricity, and we're continuing to lobby the government hard to ensure they address these and make electrification a more attractive business proposition for us and for ports across the country."



Christophe Mathieu, chief executive at Brittany Ferries, said: "As we mark half a century of serving Portsmouth, it's crucial that we look forward as well as back, and shore power does exactly that. This isn't just leading-edge technology, it's a concrete step in our decarbonisation journey and, perhaps most importantly, a commitment to being a good neighbour. The most immediate benefit is cleaner air for the people who live and work around the port. And for our customers too, it means greener travel."

In addition to the funding for construction of the system, Portsmouth City Council also provided £3 million to secure the power that was needed from the grid.

Cllr Steve Pitt, leader of the council, said: "I want to congratulate everyone involved in this huge undertaking, which sets Portsmouth apart in the UK cruise and ferry market, cements our sustainability ambitions, and contributes to our ongoing commitment to the health of people across the city."

Sea Change project, is the result of the work of a number of partners, including Barter 4 Things, Brittany Ferries, MSE International, Swanbarton, and the University of Portsmouth.

Sea Change is part of the Zero Emissions Vessels and Infrastructure competition (ZEVI), which was announced in February 2023, funded by UK Government and delivered in partnership with Innovate UK. As part of ZEVI, the Department for Transport allocated over £80m to 10 flagship projects supported by 52 organisations from across the UK to deliver real world demonstration R&D projects in clean maritime solutions. Projects will take place in multiple locations from the Orkney Isles to the south west of England.



Action Group Roundup

Maritime Transport Action Group

The Maritime and Transport Action Group (MTAG) held its annual Summer Lunch at Harbour Hotel, Southampton, kindly sponsored by Paris Smith.

The working lunch provided a valuable opportunity to stay updated on the group's actions.

A major focus of the meeting was the continued success of the Maritime Transport Careers Programme (MTCP), which is helping to raise awareness of the wide variety of careers available across the maritime sector.

The next MTAG Action Group meeting will be on 7th October 2026, from 10:30- 11:30, on TEAMS.

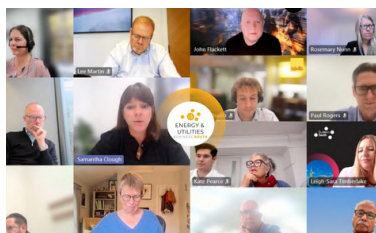


Energy & Utilities

Our latest Energy & Utilities South Action Group meeting explored the changing energy landscape across the Central South, with updates on the group's work, Clean Energy South Launch Event, NESO, the Central South APPG and AI.  Energy

White Paper: The group's chair, Sam Clough from Cavendish, provided an update on the Energy White Paper, which is now incorporated into wider research-led work with the University of Southampton.

The Energy & Utilities South Action Group meeting will be on 11th November 2026, 10:00 - 11:00 on TEAMS.

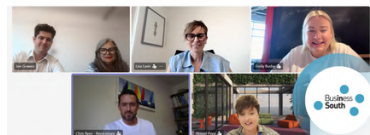


Leisure & Wellbeing

The Leisure & Wellbeing Action Group brings together organisations from across the Central South to champion workplace health, wellbeing and active lifestyles.

Chaired by Chris Rees of ReesLeisure, the inaugural meeting explored practical ways employers can support physical and mental wellbeing, including workplace fitness initiatives, wellbeing activities and the development of a network of workplace Health Champions.

Chaired by Chris Rees (ReesLeisure), the next Leisure & Wellbeing Action Group Meeting will meet on 1st October 2026, from 14:00 - 16:00, at Marwell Zoo.



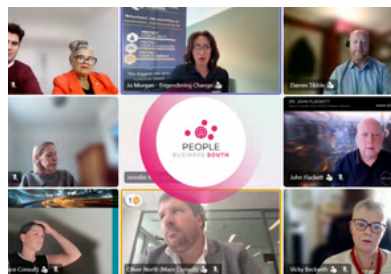
Action Group Roundup

People South

Our most recent People South meeting featured an interesting discussion on the next stage of implementing the Employment Rights Act, focusing on third-party sexual harassment, which comes into effect on 30th October 2026.

People South's new Chair, Darren Tibble, Partner and Head of Employment Law at Dutton Gregory, summarised what Champions should know ahead of its implementation, including the proactive steps organisations can take to prevent harassment from third parties.

The next People South Action Group meeting is on 2nd December 2026, between 10:00 - 11:00, Portsmouth Guildhall.

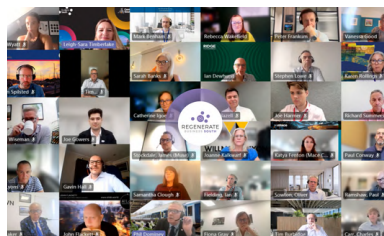


Regenerate South

Our latest Regenerate South Action Group meeting focused on the recent Regen South Annual Conference, what the new PM could mean for the built environment in the Central South, delivering the Priorities for Good Growth and using AI responsibly for industry.

It was agreed that the Regenerate South Conference had demonstrated a 'huge amount of momentum in every direction and the breadth of activity and opportunities emerging across the region for investors and development'.

The next Regenerate South Action Group meeting will be held on 18th November 2026, 10:00 - 11:15, venue TBC.

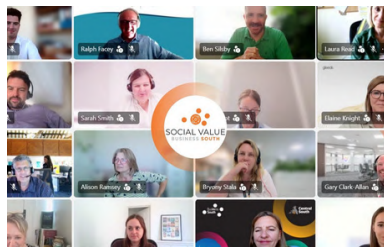


Social Value

Business South's Social Value Action Group explored how Business South Champions can better report, track and demonstrate the long-term impact of social value activity.

As the group continues to grow in membership, co-chairs Ben Silsby (Senior Sustainability Manager, Willmott Dixon) and Laura Read (CEO, Marwell Zoo) welcomed and introduced attendees, outlined the session's key discussion on demonstrating social value in practice and using data to drive community engagement.

The next Social Value meeting will be on 29th October 2026, from 14:00 - 15:00, at Blake Morgan.



Action Group Roundup

Sustainable South

The Sustainable South Action Group visited Halnaker Hill Farm for its annual netwalking meeting.

The group was welcomed by John Yeend, Kate Jerome and Will Atkinson to the 330-acre estate. John shared with the group about the farm's transformation, history, ecological regeneration and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) programme, as well as Halnaker Hill Farm's transformation from an intensive arable farm into one of the UK's largest BNG habitat banks.



The next Housing Group Meeting will be on 23rd September 2026, from 14:00 - 15:00 at Halnaker Hill Farm

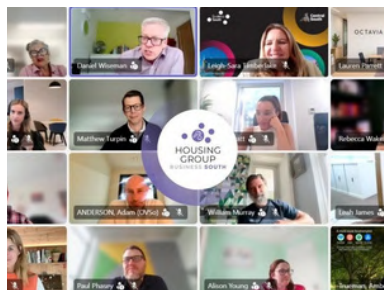
Housing Group

Business South's latest Housing Group meeting explored the changing planning landscape and what recent national policy changes could mean for housing delivery across the Central South.

Matt Turpin from VIVID chaired the meeting and welcomed Daniel Wiseman from Gillings Planning, who provided an overview of the recently published National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), proposed changes to Section 106 agreements and the latest Housing Delivery Test figures.

The group also looked at housing delivery across the region and the challenges facing local authorities in meeting housing requirements.

Discussion explored how strategic planning could help better connect housing delivery with economic growth, employment, infrastructure and transport, as well as the role of development around well-connected transport hubs.



The next Housing Group meeting will take place on 1 December 2026, from 10:00–11:00 on Microsoft Teams.

To join one of our Action Groups, please email Joe@businesssouth.org.

BUSINESS LEADERS BREAKFAST AT

SOUTHAMPTON INTERNATIONAL BOAT SHOW

**THE BOAT SHOW FEATURES
EVERYTHING THE LEISURE
MARINE INDUSTRY HAS TO
OFFER**



From conversations over breakfast to insights from the stage, it was a morning full of great energy at the Southampton International Boat Show 2026

Our Business Leaders Breakfast brought senior leaders together from across the region to connect, share ideas and hear from an inspiring line-up of speakers – all in a very different setting for a business event.



The breakfast offered a valuable opportunity to meet fellow business leaders and decision-makers in a relaxed setting before heading into one of the UK's leading showcases for the leisure marine industry.

Thank you to everyone who helped make it happen – we look forward to seeing you again soon!



A big thank you to Lyndsay McClay, Heather Thomas, Linda Jacques, Thomas Herbert-Evans and Lee Peck for sharing their experiences and insights, and to everyone who joined us and helped make the morning such a great one.

Watch the Business Leaders Breakfast Video on Business South [YOUTUBE](#).



HALNAKER HILL FARM: RESTORING NATURE IN THE SOUTH DOWNS

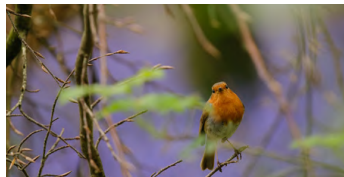
If you've ever taken a walk up to the historic Halnaker Windmill, you'll have enjoyed the stunning view stretching for miles across West Sussex and beyond.



However, you may not know that a huge ecological transformation is taking place across the 330 acres of land immediately in front of this beautiful spot in the South Downs National Park.

Most of this land, known as Halnaker Hill Farm, was intensively farmed for wheat from the 1970s, with the use of chemicals and pesticides contributing to poor soil quality and low levels of biodiversity.

Now, a project that has been under way for more than two years is transforming the site to create one of the largest Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) landbanks in the UK.



Working with expert agriculturists, ecologists and species specialists, the team from Halnaker Hill Natural Capital (HHNC) is using regenerative agriculture techniques to restore the land's natural health and create the conditions for wildlife to thrive.

HALNAKER HILL FARM: RESTORING NATURE IN THE SOUTH DOWNS

So far, they have planted more than 20,000 trees, established 7km of hedgerow, seeded wildflower meadows and created dew ponds, laying the foundations for a renaissance of nature in the decades to come. New wildlife corridors will also be created to encourage birds, bats, insects and mammals to take up residence.

The project plays an important role in supporting wider regional and national nature recovery ambitions, including the South Downs National Park's target to renature 33% of the National Park by 2030.

Its ecological impact is already visible. Corn buntings, which have declined heavily across the UK, reappeared within a couple of months of restoration work beginning, and several breeding pairs are now settled on the site. The endangered small blue butterfly, which is around the size of a fingernail, has also been observed on the farm, alongside nightjars, yellowhammers, stonechats, linnets and skylarks – all positive indicators of a thriving natural environment.



Commercially managed by Chichester-based property developer Kingsbridge, the landbank at Halnaker Hill Farm is secured through a Section 106 Agreement with the South Downs National Park Authority. It has generated more than 850 measurable BNG units, all registered and available for purchase, with a commitment to manage each unit carefully for 30 years.



The landbank provides a vital resource for developers, who are now required by law to achieve a 10% biodiversity net gain on qualifying developments. Where some or all of this uplift cannot be achieved on the development site, landbanks provide a way to purchase BNG units and deliver the required gain off-site. Units can also be purchased by companies to support their ESG goals and by individuals looking for a way to contribute to long-term nature recovery.

The project is already winning plaudits, including a win in the Landscape and Garden category at the Sussex Heritage Trust Awards, Repurposing Project of the Year at the South Coast Property Awards, and shortlisting in the Living Landscapes and People's Choice categories at the National Park Protector Awards. Find out more at www.halnakerhill.co.uk



Greg Lukasiewicz
Sales & Marketing
Director for
Halnaker Hill
Farm

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE GROUP: SKILLS & TRAINING

FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE COUNTRYSIDE: DEVELOPING
THE NEXT GENERATION OF LAND-BASED PROFESSIONALS

AS THE SOUTH'S RURAL ECONOMY EVOLVES, DEMAND IS GROWING FOR SKILLED PEOPLE WHO CAN COMBINE TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE WITH TECHNOLOGY, SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATION. SPARSHOLT COLLEGE GROUP IS HELPING TO MEET THAT NEED THROUGH SPECIALIST EDUCATION, TRAINING AND PROGRESSION ROUTES.



Photo above: Sparsholt Fisheries

Significant investment in facilities, including the Agri-tech Centre, Vertical Growing Centre, agricultural machinery simulators and a newly planted vineyard, gives students access to the technologies and practical environments shaping the future of domestic food security, land management, viticulture and conservation.



Working with more than 5,000 students and 3,000 businesses each year, the Group brings together three distinctive educational communities: Sparsholt College, Andover College and University Centre Sparsholt.

Sparsholt College plays a distinctive role within the Group, offering specialist courses across agriculture, animal management, equine, horticulture, conservation, fisheries, forestry, sport, outdoor adventure, uniformed protective services and related land-based industries. For agriculture students, the working farm provides a commercial learning environment, combining academic study with hands-on experience in livestock, crops, machinery, farm management and environmental stewardship.



Photo above: Sparsholt Birdseye View. Photo on the right: Agricultural Student at campus

SKILLS & TRAINING

FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE COUNTRYSIDE: DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LAND-BASED PROFESSIONALS



WORK PLACEMENTS GIVE STUDENTS EXTENDED, MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE IN THE WORKPLACE, HELPING THEM BUILD PRACTICAL, TECHNICAL AND EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Foundation Degrees through to undergraduate and PhD study. Students can specialise in areas including agriculture, animal and zoo science, fisheries, wildlife ecology and conservation, equine science and performance management and veterinary nursing science.

The Group's role extends beyond full-time education. Its business training and part-time courses support employers and individuals looking to develop skills, gain qualifications or upskill alongside work and other commitments.



Industrial work placements and apprenticeships are central to this employer-led approach. Work placements give students extended, meaningful experience in the workplace, helping them build practical, technical and employability skills through real tasks and employer feedback. Apprenticeships combine paid work with structured college-based training, with opportunities at Sparsholt in areas such as agriculture, crop production, veterinary nursing, animal care, dog grooming, arboriculture, horticulture, countryside management, gamekeeping, golf greenkeeping, sports turf and equine.

Delivered with local and regional employers, these routes help develop skilled, work-ready talent for land-based, rural and associated industries.

Sparsholt Campus also provides a unique countryside setting for businesses and organisations to hire for meetings, conferences, training days and events, with a range of facilities available for professional and corporate use.



**Photo above: Sparsholt Vineyard.
Photo on the left: Countryside Student at Sparsholt**

SKILLS & TRAINING

FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE COUNTRYSIDE: DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LAND-BASED PROFESSIONALS



Photo above: Sparsholt Birdseye View. Photo on the right: Agricultural Student at campus

From first steps into a career to specialist degrees, professional upskilling and business support, Sparsholt College Group provides opportunities at every stage. Through practical learning, employer partnerships, innovation and sustainability, the Group is helping to develop the skills needed for the future of farming, the rural economy and the environment across Hampshire and beyond.

If you would like to find out more about how **Sparsholt College Group** can support local businesses through training or venue hire for corporate events, please visit sparsholt.ac.uk.



SPARSHOLT
COLLEGE GROUP

Would you like to feature in the Central South quarterly news round-up?

Please send your news to Rebecca@businesssouth.org

AWARDS & RECOGNITION



JANE FALKINGHAM HAS BEEN NEWLY MINTED AS A FELLOW OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY

[READ MORE](#)



DANIEL CROW, DIRECTOR OF 'A SPACE' ARTS, AWARDED THE BRITISH EMPIRE MEDAL (BEM)

[READ MORE](#)



APPLICATIONS OPEN FOR THE VENTUREFEST SOUTH INNOVATOR SHOWCASE & AWARDS

Venturefest South is looking for ambitious businesses to join its Innovator Showcase & Awards, with a particular interest in companies that have gained traction and are now looking to scale, secure investment, develop partnerships or open new routes to market.

[Read more](#)



DAME WENDY HALL WINS THE SIR FRANK WHITTLE MEDAL

Professor Dame Wendy Hall DBE FREng FRS, Regius Professor of Computer Science and Director of the Web Science Institute at the University, has received one of the Royal Academy of Engineering's most prestigious individual awards, presented last night in London.

The Sir Frank Whittle Medal, named after Britain's wartime jet engine inventor, recognises Dame Wendy's extraordinary achievements during a career spanning five decades in leading the development of web science and shaping the UK's AI strategy.

[Read more](#)

Share your news, appointments and promotions,
email: natalie@businesssouth.org

PIGS ARE BACK FOR PANNAGE IN THE NEW FOREST

HAVE YOU EVER SEEN PIGS IN
THE NEW FOREST?



EVERY AUTUMN, FOR A LIMITED PERIOD, THEY ARE ALLOWED TO FREELY FORAGE FOR NUTS AND FRUIT FROM THE FOREST FLOOR.

Each year the pigs are let out by the Commoners - those who own New Forest livestock including ponies, cattle and the pigs - so they can snuffle up acorns, beechnut and other fallen food.

It is a crucial job given the acorns can prove toxic to ponies and cattle if consumed in large amounts.

THE PIGS WILL BE TURNED OUT FROM MID- SEPTEMBER

This 'pannage' season is an important part of the New Forest National Park calendar, with the right to turn pigs out (known as Common of Mast) stretching back centuries.

This year, they will be out from mid-September until the end of November.

To help protect the Forest soil and the mosaic of habitats, the pigs wear rings in their noses to ensure they don't root too deeply into the ground for food.

If you do see the pigs out and about in the New Forest, please admire them from a distance and whether you are walking, riding or driving, allow them the space they need to forage for food.

As with all Forest livestock, refrain from petting and feeding the pigs, as there is more than enough food for all the animals in the National Park.

Sadly, along with ponies, pigs can also become victims of road accidents in the New Forest.

Drivers are urged to give animals on or near roads plenty of room and to pass them wide and slowly.

New Forest businesses are encouraged to sign up to the New Forest Drive Safe initiative, which urges companies to promote safe driving among their employees and staff by sharing email newsletters and literature.

The initiative is run by the New Forest Commoners' Defence Association (CDA), alongside the New Forest National Park Authority and Forestry England.



Sign up is free via the New Forest CDA website here [New Forest Drive Safe - Real New Forest](#)

Find out more about pannage and commoning on the New Forest National Park Authority website: [New Forest National Park - New Forest National Park](#)



BUSINESS LUNCH

KATE PEARCE, HEAD OF STRATEGY AT BUSINESS SOUTH
SITS DOWN FOR A BUSINESS LUNCH WITH VIVIENNE
CONWAY, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, HGP ARCHITECTS

VENUE: ORANGE GROVE HOTEL, FAREHAM



Over lunch, our wide-ranging discussion took in everything from AI to the downside of being self-employed (namely chasing payment). With stories over the weekend about the potential for AI to obliterate the human race by the end of the decade, it's no surprise that it cropped-up as a topic of conversation.

It seemed somewhat fitting that our latest Business Lunch outing was to the delightful Orange Grove Hotel in Sarisbury.

They have recently become Business South Champions – and so have HGP Architects (the practice responsible for such local landmark buildings as Spinnaker Tower, Sails of the South (the wonderful structure that greets you on the way into Portsmouth) and Southampton Harbour Hotel) – and it's a great example of a building being given a rewarding new lease of life that's taken it from redundant health provision to a vibrant hospitality venue.

My guest was Vivienne Conway, Associate Director at the Fareham-based firm – and it was a brilliant opportunity to find out more about her career and the journey that has taken her from Australia to the Central South.



BUSINESS LUNCH

BUSINESS LUNCH WITH VIVienne CONWAY



Over Classic Caesar Salad, complete with Soft Egg, Romaine, Grana Padano, Smoked Bacon, Focaccia Croutons with Grilled Chicken and King Oyster Mushroom Massaman with Sticky Jasmine Rice, Pak Choi, Thai Basil and Charred Lime, we mused about the positive and slightly daunting elements of AI. Vivienne shared that her son, who has recently graduated having studied computer science and AI, is busy applying for jobs and had the unsettling experience of being interviewed by a chatbot as part of the process.



There's no doubting AI is going to completely re-shape the world of work but both Vivienne and I retained the hope that human intervention will continue to play a crucial role (especially when it comes to architectural practice).

Our main courses were both delicious and satisfying and we both had room for a pudding. Sticky banana pudding was the choice for both of us, with a coffee to round things off ...

Famously there is no such thing as a free lunch and this was no exception. I was keen to enrol Vivienne for an exciting project that we are working on, that we hope will be showcased at UKREiif and in Prosper magazine.

We will be pulling together a crack team of visionaries for this mission and calling on Champions to share their thoughts and ideas too.

And the great news is, Vivienne accepted the challenge. More news on this hush-hush project as the next few months unfold ...

Thanks so much for joining me Vivienne ...



If you would like to join me for a future Business Lunch, please email kate@businesssouth.org.

CHAMPION NEWS

DEMOLITION APPLICATION SUBMITTED FOR FORMER TOYS R US BUILDING

4.6-ACRE SITE

WBS Growth Partnership LLP has submitted a prior approval planning application for the demolition of the former Toys R Us building in Southampton

[Read more](#)



COUNCIL APPROVES NEXT PHASE OF INVESTMENT IN FAREHAM SHOPPING CENTRE

Fareham Borough Council has approved the next phase of investment in Fareham Shopping Centre, marking another important step in the transformation of Fareham Town Centre. >

[Read more](#)



CUSTOMER INFLUENCE, AI AND ACTION: VIVID'S ANNUAL REVIEW CHARTS PROGRESS ON CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

VIVID has published its Annual Review for 2025-26, highlighting how customer influence, data and digital innovation are leading the way and driving improvements in services and outcomes for its 84,000 customers.

> [Read more](#)

FROM HAVANT TO THE OUTBACK: HSDC ALUMNUS TRAVELS THE WORLD

James Robinson has built a career from university and offshore survey vessels to the jungles of Southeast Asia and the mining regions of Western Australia. > [Read more](#)



CHAMPION NEWS

13.25-HECTARES



PORTSMOUTH CITY COUNCIL ANNOUNCE PARTNERSHIP WITH ECF FOR CITY CENTRE NORTH

ALLICA BANK RECOGNISES ESTABLISHED BUSINESSES' IMPACT ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES WITH THE ORANGE HAT PLAQUES

In a 'Doff of the hat' to Historic England's iconic Blue Plaques, Allica Bank is introducing The Orange Hat Plaques to recognise the overlooked established businesses that have made a lasting contribution to their communities, industries and local economies.

> [Read more](#)



Portsmouth City Council has selected ECF as preferred partner for City Centre North, marking an important step forward for one of the largest regeneration opportunities on the south coast.

City Centre North covers 13.25-hectares of brownfield land in the heart of the city. The area has the potential to deliver up to 2,300 new homes, helping meet growing demand for high-quality homes in the city centre across a mix of tenures to support a diverse and inclusive community.

> [Read more](#)

AMBITIOUS NEW FACILITIES APPROVED FOR CIVIL ENGINEERING TRAINING CENTRE

South Hampshire College Group has secured a £4.5 million capital grant as part of the Construction Skills Capacity Fund from the Department for Education. This grant funding is for a major redevelopment of its Civil Engineering Training Centre (CETC) at the Solent Enterprise Zone. > [Read more](#)



CHAMPION NEWS

VIRGIN VOYAGES SAYS “SEA YOU SOON” TO THE UK AFTER MAKING PORTSMOUTH THEIR HOME FOR THE LAST FIVE YEARS



Virgin Voyages' Valiant Lady made an epic departure from Portsmouth last night (27 August) as the cruise line waved a fond farewell to its UK home port after another successful season. For the last five years, the global brand has made Portsmouth International Port its UK home and broken a number of records along the way.

> [Read more](#)

SOLENT FREEPORT REPORTS STRONG PROGRESS AS NEW REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS INVESTMENT, TRADE, AND JOBS PIPELINE

Fawley Waterside Limited is bringing forward proposals for the redevelopment of the former Fawley Power Station site in the south-eastern corner of the New Forest.

The emerging new vision for the site is for a commercial, employment-led development that maximises its strategic location on the Solent and follows on from the historic energy use. >

[Read more](#)



IT'S ELECTRIFYING – PORTSMOUTH INTERNATIONAL PORT'S SHORE POWER SYSTEM GOES LIVE

In a huge forward step for the UK maritime industry, ferries and cruise ships are now plugging into Portsmouth International Port's shore power system, as it strives to become the country's first zero-emissions port by 2050.

> [Read more](#)



ARCHITECTUREPLB TACKLE RIVER TEST INVASIVE HIMALAYAN BALSAM > [READ MORE](#)



CHAMPION NEWS

BUSINESS SOUTH, COMAX AND HAMPSHIRE FARE UNITE TO SHOWCASE THE BEST OF THE CENTRAL SOUTH'S FOOD, DRINK AND HOSPITALITY



A COMPLETE SHOWCASE
FOR HOSPITALITY
EXCELLENCE

Three leading organisations from across the region's food, drink and hospitality sectors are joining forces to create a major new trade showcase for 2027.

> [Read more](#)

£154.4 MILLION WILL DELIVER MORE THAN 1,000 SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOMES

Eastleigh Borough Council will deliver 1,042 new social and affordable homes after securing £154.4 million from Homes England.

Homes England has chosen the Council as a Strategic Partner for its Social and Affordable Homes Programme 2026 to 2036. > [Read more](#)



PORTSMOUTH SUBMITS LANDMARK UK CITY OF CULTURE 2029 BID POWERED BY LOCAL PEOPLE

Portsmouth has officially submitted its bid to become the UK City of Culture 2029, marking the culmination of one of the largest community engagement exercises the city has undertaken.

> [Read more](#)



SHARE YOUR NEWS

Send your news stories to natalie@businesssouth.org and we will include as many as possible in our newsletters and on social media.

DIRECTORS OF THE FUTURE DINNER



DIRECTORS OF THE FUTURE

**YOUNG PROFESSIONALS,
NEW IDEAS AND BUILDING
CONNECTIONS**



A fantastic evening at our Directors of the Future Dinner at Chewton Glen Hotel & Spa

The glittering event brought together young professionals and established business leaders from across the Central South to share experiences, exchange ideas, and build valuable new connections.

Attendees listened to a presentation by Paula Bradley, Business Development Manager and NED for Business South.

Thank you to everyone who joined us, and to our event partners for their support in making the evening enjoyable.



The evening was a great opportunity for those developing their careers to gain insight from people working across a wide range of sectors and to take part in meaningful conversations about the future of business in our region. Guests were welcomed by Raymond De Toulouse Lautrec, Deputy General Manager at Chewton Glen.



NOVICE NETWORKING EVENT AT GOD'S HOUSE TOWER

NOVICE NETWORKING

**GOOD CONVERSATIONS,
MORE CONFIDENCE AND A
ROOM FULL OF PEOPLE
READY TO CONNECT**

The Business South Novice Networking event was all about building confidence, starting conversations and creating meaningful face-to-face connections in a relaxed and welcoming setting at the gorgeous God's House Tower.



Our guest speaker, Katie Bruce, Engagement Lead for the Maritime and Transport Careers Programme and Enterprise Coordinator at Hampshire Careers Hub, shared a great reminder that networking doesn't have to feel daunting.

Advising networkers to start small, speak to one person and remember that it's about giving as much as receiving.

The simplest conversation can lead to a new connection, an introduction, or an opportunity.



Thank you to Daniel Crow, Chief Executive of 'a space' arts, for welcoming us to God's House Tower and sharing a little of its story.

And to all our Novice Networkers for joining us and sharing their experiences, which helped make the event such an enjoyable evening.



MOVING ON UP



HSDC CONFIRMS KURT HINTZ AS PRINCIPAL AND CEO UNTIL JANUARY 2029

HSDC is pleased to confirm that Kurt Hintz continues as Principal and CEO until January 2029, providing clear leadership and direction for the three colleges that make up the HSDC group: Alton, Havant and South Downs.

[Read more](#)



LESTER ALDRIDGE PARTNER EARNS FIRST CHAMBERS HIGH NET WORTH RANKING AS TEAM'S SUCCESS CONTINUES

Lester Aldridge is pleased to announce that Partner Parisa Jones has been recognised in the Chambers High Net Worth (HNW) Guide 2026, achieving her first individual ranking for Private Wealth Law in Southampton and surrounds.

[Read more](#)



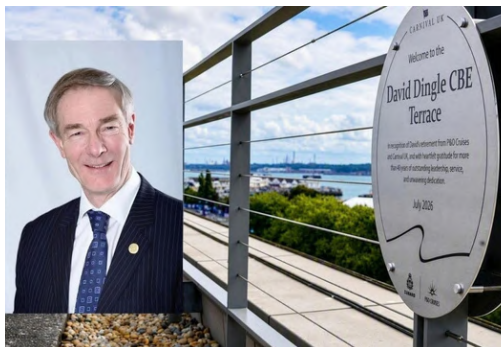
MDL MARINAS STRENGTHENS ESTATES TEAM WITH APPOINTMENT OF COLIN LAMBERT AS HEAD OF ESTATES

MDL Marinas has appointed experienced property professional Colin Lambert as its new Head of Estates, strengthening its property expertise as the business continues to invest in and develop its marina estate.

[Read more](#)



CARNIVAL UK



DAVID DINGLE'S LASTING IMPACT ON CARNIVAL UK AND THE BRITISH CRUISE INDUSTRY

Few people have influenced modern cruising in Britain quite like David Dingle CBE. From joining the business as a management trainee in 1978 to leading Carnival UK as CEO, his nearly 48-year career helped shape P&O Cruises, Cunard and the cruise industry we know today.

As David retires from his executive role, we have an opportunity to reflect on the impact he has had on our brands, our colleagues and the wider maritime sector.

[Read more](#)

EVENTS IN THE CENTRAL SOUTH

HALLOWEEN SPOOKTACULAR AT PAULTONS

This October half-term, bring the family to the best and most frightful Halloween theme park event in the UK at Paultons Park.

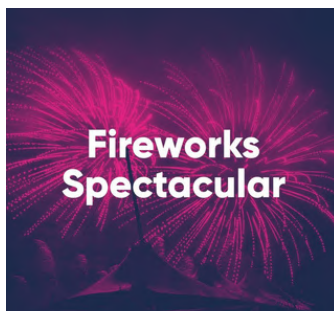
[Learn More](#)



FIREWORKS SPECTACULAR AT UTILITA BOWL

Friday 6th November for an unforgettable night as our stunning fireworks display returns! Enjoy the fun of the fair, seasonal entertainment, and plenty of family-friendly fun.

[Learn More](#)



WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL CHRISTMAS MARKET

Winchester Cathedral Christmas Market is recognised as one of the best in Europe. Taking place from 20th November – 22nd December 2026.

[Learn More](#)



BUSINESS SOUTH 2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Central South – Shaping Tomorrow Together - [Register online HERE.](#)

Annual Conference 2026

RESERVE YOUR TICKET TODAY

THURSDAY 5TH NOVEMBER 2026
08:30-14:00
HILTON SOUTHAMPTON - UTILITA BOWL







LAST WORD

And Finally ...

2026 is racing away, and I can't quite believe we are now less than two months away from our Annual Conference 2026.

The conference is always very well attended, and this year we have an unmissable line-up of speakers, including Trevor Williams, who served as Chief Economist at Lloyds Bank. If you haven't reserved your place yet, please do book your ticket soon.

In September, we attended our first London Real Estate Forum, and I'd like to thank our partners and the team at NLA for extending the invitation. The opportunity to collaborate, share ideas and learn from regions across the country is incredibly valuable, and I'm keen to see how we can build on this attendance in 2027.

The Central South APPG will meet at Portcullis House on 20 October, chaired by Richard Quigley MP for Isle of Wight West. We will be launching our Clean Energy Report. The report will explore key challenges and opportunities facing the Central South as we work towards a cleaner energy future.

Our programme of national and international investment events continues, with MIPIM 2027 and UKREiiF already high on the agenda. If you would like to find out more about our programme of events and opportunities to get involved, please do get in touch with me at Leigh@businesssouth.org.

It's going to be a busy few months – and I'm looking forward to seeing many of you at our upcoming events.

Leigh



Leigh-Sara Timberlake
Business South Group CEO

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

EVENT CALENDAR

6 October 2026

Growing Together Alliance Drinks Reception

14 October 2026

Champion Directors Dinner

15 October 2026

Responsible Generative AI in Business Workshop: Maritime Sector

5 November 2026

Business South Annual Conference

26 November 2026

Responsible Generative AI in Business Workshop: Construction Sector

9 December 2026

Festive Drinks

3 February 2027

Champion Directors Dinner

9 February 2027

Central South Food & Drink Trade EXPO

15 - 19 March 2027

MIPIM, Cannes

18 - 20 May 2027

Central South at UKREiIF

