

**Bristol Post Business Awards 2015**



● Avonmouth security company Sovereign Fire and Security has entered the Bristol Post Business Awards

# Family pride Security company wants to celebrate its success

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**W**HEN Marek Jakubczyk started his security business from his garden shed in Shirehampton back in 1991, he wanted it to sound like the professional outfit it would become. "I rebuilt the shed," he said. "It was 10ft long by 5ft wide and I called it 'Unit 2' to make it sound more commercial."

"I used to get some very confused delivery drivers looking for this commercial unit in our residential area."

Professionalism has been at the heart of Sovereign Fire & Security from early on, so appearance was important. "And it worked. The firm quickly grew and moved into leased premises before eventually buying a 5,800



square foot purpose built office in Avonmouth two years ago. It says something about the way Marek runs the business that he made the £150,000 purchase, plus fit-out costs, without borrowing. Now the 52-year-old wants to celebrate the company's achievements so he has entered the Bristol Post Business Awards. He is hoping for success in the family business category. The company has a strong family core, although Marek promotes on merit not nepotism. Brother Jan joined six

months after he started, and both their wives, Ruth and Lorraine, are directors too. "In the early days I was out getting business and my brother was fitting the systems while my wife did the compliance work in the evenings," said Marek.

Turnover has grown from £2.7 million in 2010 to £3.7 million in 2014, although it will be slightly lower this year as the team focuses on profit ahead of revenue.

Marek introduced high standards from the start, and was one of the first small independent firms to compete with the national companies on accreditation and standards.

Those standards have won business far beyond the Bristol area. "The most important product we offer is customer service," said Marek. "We supply integrated security solutions at the high end of the scale."

"Because of the level of service we offer it allows us to punch above our weight.

**"The most important product we offer is customer service."**

**Marek Jakubczyk**

"We are able to supply very high end service to clients who want to use us outside our normal geographic area."

As the business grows, Marek is working on succession planning, but not so he can retire.

"I can't think of a time when I won't be doing something," he said. "But I would like to spend more time doing what I enjoy most, being out there promoting the business."

● Nominations for the Bristol Post Business Awards close on Friday! To enter or find out more, visit [www.bristolpost.co.uk/businessawards](http://www.bristolpost.co.uk/businessawards).

**Sponsor profile**

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The best businesses really understand their place in the market and what makes their products unique. They compete on quality not price and consider export the natural extension to their business activities.

The South West is home to



many innovative businesses with great products and Bristol has for centuries been at the centre of the UK's trade links with the world. The businesses of the region are therefore well placed to break out from the constraints of domestic demand and take advantage of the opportunities that a well thought out export strategy provides.

Mazars is delighted to support the business awards and in particular the Export award which celebrates the achievements of businesses who have realised the opportunities of a global marketplace and truly stand out from the crowd.

**Re-evaluation**

## New valuation of rates finally in the pipeline

● THIS month marked a milestone for firms in Bristol as their future business rates are reassessed by Government.

According to CVS, a business rates specialist, businesses in Bristol currently pay around £443 million each year in rates.

But Government is now re-evaluating the data behind this figure.

Business rates are based on a Government assessment of property values, and April 1 marked the date when Government fixed these values for the next five-year business rates cycle.

This means that the rent business rates are paying now will influence their future business rates.

The Valuation Office Agency is now calculating the values of all 23,800 commercial properties in Bristol and will, over the next two years, finalise the figures with ratepayers and the city council before businesses get their new bills from April 2017.

David Ford, regional director at CVS, said: "This is a significant time for businesses in Bristol as the value of your property as of April 1 will affect your business rates in the future."

"Rates are one of the largest and often most burdensome overheads for business and, in some severe cases, have even risen higher than rents. The revaluation is a chance for business rates to step back into line with actual property values."

"This particular revaluation was postponed by the Government for two years, so it's now badly needed and long overdue. Our complex system means that there will always be winners and losers from this approach – it's good news if your rent has fallen, but you may face a bigger bill if your rent has gone up."

The Government has launched a wide-ranging review into the business rates system, looking at options to reform or replace the tax while the Labour Party has committed to cut and freeze rates for 1.5 million small businesses.

**National survey**

# Hot seat Bristol constituency in top five for top performing firms

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**A**BRISTOL constituency is in the top five for highest number of so-called scale-up businesses across the UK outside London.

Bristol West has 66 such companies, which have three consecutive years of at least 20 per cent growth in revenues or staff, placing it joint fourth not counting the capital.

Cambridge (86), Leeds Central (81), Glasgow Central (71) are ahead and Manchester Central is on the same number.

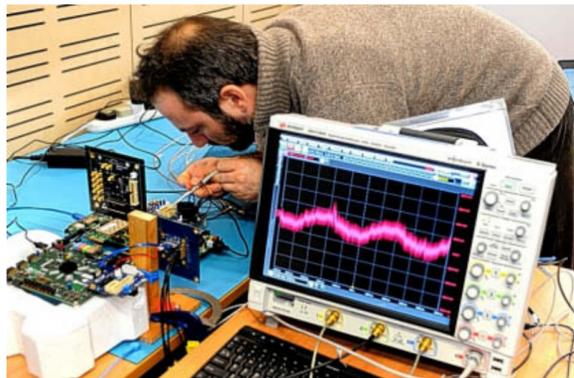
The contrast to other constituencies locally is marked as Bristol East and North West both have nine scale-up companies and Bristol South just five.

Bristol West includes much of central Bristol, so it's no surprise that it outperforms other areas locally, but the size of gap maybe a surprise given that Bristol North West includes the industrial area of Avonmouth and South Bristol is home to a number of manufacturing companies on the industrial estates.

Kingswood, despite including the Bristol and Bath Science Park and National Composites Centre, boasts just three scale-up companies, one of which is an arm outsourcing giant Mitie.

Filton and North Somerset constituencies are both home to 123 scale-up firms, including precision measuring firm Metyrx in Aztec West and Cablecam in Clevedon.

Thornbury and Yate has seven, including Aust-based insurance brokers brightside, Weston-super-Mare has four, including long established family business Davan Caravans.



● Blu Wireless Technology is among the Bristol West high-fliers

James Durie, executive director of Bristol Chamber of Commerce and Initiative, said: "Our city is the strongest performing economy outside of London and these latest statistics show that we continue to punch above our weight, using our innovative core to our advantage."

"While the number of scale-up businesses is good news on the top level, read between the lines and you will also see there is a lack of cohesion in our economic performance."

"A strong city centre is not supported by other areas across the city region, down to such factors as the infrastructure gaps across the area that the business community have been lobbying to address."

"As a result, long term sustainable growth hinges on much stronger co-operation between our local authorities, particularly on skills, housing and transport. Failing to do so is letting down the wider West of England population and this should act as

a wake up call for stronger cross-boundary working."

Paul Falvey, tax partner at the Bristol office of accountants and business advisers BDO, agreed but said improvements were on the way.

He said: "Major developments in the city such as the South Bristol Link Road, being built as part of the MetroBus scheme, will open up new business opportunities and improve access to the airport. The proposal for a new junction on the M49 could also have a huge benefit for Bristol North West, potentially creating a number of new jobs around Avonmouth."

The figures were compiled by Founders4Schools, an organisation which aims to help teachers get the founders of successful businesses to talk to their students.

They hope teachers will use the information to contact the founders of growing businesses near to them. Find out more at [www.founders4schools.org.uk](http://www.founders4schools.org.uk).

**Motoring**

## Luxury camper shows Bristol's got talent

● BRITAIN'S Got Talent viewers will have the chance to win the work of a Bristol company which aims to revitalise the camper van industry.

Avonmouth-based Horizon Multi-Concept Vehicles converts base level Mercedes Benz vehicles into luxury campers not that a Mercedes is too shabby to start with!

One such car, the New Vito model, below, is the star prize in a viewer competition on the prime-time ITV show which returned to our screens on Saturday.

The car is built to work both for day to day life such as the school run and for weekends away and road trips.

It includes an electronically controlled bed which turns into a bench and an elevating roof.

It has room to sleep four adults and one child and is kitted out to designer standards, with



upholstered leather furnishings, Compac Quartz Granite surfaces, and a two burner hob.

Sales director James Burt, pictured, said: "We are thrilled that our New Vito model will be featuring on Britain's favourite Saturday night show. The launch of our New Vito model, the second multi-concept vehicle launched since our start up last year, has been a very exciting period for us."

"Being the first company to have converted this particular luxury vehicle, we have experienced a vast amount of interest from customers right across the UK."

**Finance**

## KPMG offering free advice for joiners

● ONE of the big four accountancy firms will be giving free business advice to companies joining a new accelerator programme in Bristol.

KPMG is working with Entrepreneurial Spark, the Natwest-backed start-up hub recently launched at Trinity Quay. KPMG will provide entrepreneurs with advice and guidance around issues such as business plans and investor readiness.

It is also adding to a six-figure cash pot prize fund for Bristol start-ups annually, awarded to the best entrepreneurs coming through the programme.

Gordon Merrylee, head of entrepreneurship RBS and NatWest, said: "Whilst finance is of obvious importance to these businesses, it's also the networks, contacts, expertise and mentoring."

**Manufacturing**

# Building upturn creates jobs at plasterboard firm

THE UK's biggest plasterboard maker has created 28 new jobs after securing a number of new contracts.

Siniat, based in Easton-in-Gordano just outside Bristol, has benefited from the recovery in the construction sector.

In February, the business, which employs 410 staff, secured some landmark projects including a contract with Interserve to deliver on five new schools.

Other contracts include a £1 million project with Galliard Homes to deliver fire retardant plasterboard

to a new development on the Isle of Dogs, London, and a partnership with McLaren to support Banbury Gateway, an £80 million out-of-town shopping centre near Oxford.

Siniat will also be working with building firm Willmott Dixon on two separate projects, a £45-million redevelopment of Benenden Hospital in Maidstone which will include new medical facilities, new operating theatres and an MRI unit,

and the delivery of a new 'super school' in Ceredigion which will accommodate 1,000 primary and secondary students.

The two firms previously worked together on the new Southmead Hospital where some of Siniat's latest products were used which save time and money on decorating.

Managing director Neil Ash, pictured, said: "We've secured an enormous amount of new business already this year



thanks to the quality of our products and our proactive approach to solving our customer's problems.

"This trend is likely to continue, with healthy growth expected in UK construction this year. If we're making and selling more plasterboard across the UK, it's a clear indicator the construction market is on the up."

"We're continually looking for bright new talent to help us continue to meet demand. Our success comes from understanding the needs of our customers and developing products that make their lives easier and their businesses more efficient."

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