

Speakers



Mark Bretton
Chair, Hertfordshire LEP
and the LEP Network

Mark Bretton is Chair of Hertfordshire LEP and the LEP Network, the national body that brings all 38 LEPs together. He is an independent consultant

with 36 years of wide-ranging business experience, including in several high profile Government programmes. Until recently Mark was a Managing Director (Partner) in the leadership team of the professional services firm Accenture. He sits on the Business Leaders' Council of the charity Teach First.

Mark has an MBA in Export Management and International Business from City, University of London Business School and a BSc Econ (Hons) in Management Studies. He was a Royal Signals Reserve Officer (Major) and holds a Territorial Decoration. Mark joined the LEP Board as Business Representative and Chair Designate in January 2016, took over as Chair of the LEP Board in June 2016 and became Chair of the LEP Network in September 2019.



Dan Dark OBE
Executive Vice President,
Worldwide Studio
Operations, Warner Bros

Dan oversees the worldwide studio operations for Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden and Warner Bros. Studios Hollywood, including all Production Services and

Worldwide Security. Having developed Leavesden Aerodrome into a studio to film Goldeneye in the 90s, he continued to run the site as a film studio which became home to all eight Harry Potter films. In 2011, Dan was appointed to the role of Senior Vice President, Studio Operations when Warner Bros. purchased the site and in 2020, he was promoted to his current role. Over £200m has been invested by Warner Bros. to make the globally renowned, purpose-built film studio Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden.

In the past 20 years, Dan has played an active role in the community. He is a former co-chair of Visit Herts, a member of the Watford Cultural Leaders Forum, a founding member of Skillmakers and an active contributor to the Chamber of Conscience. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Hertfordshire for his dedication to skills development, and a Careers and Enterprise award for Innovative Partnership of the Year for his work with The Collet School. In 2021, Dan was awarded an OBE for services to the UK Film Industry.



Neil Hayes
CEO, Hertfordshire LEP

Neil is Chief Executive of Hertfordshire LEP and has overseen its development from its inception.

Over that time, it has become a trusted authority on the economy, working with businesses and communities and across a two-tier system of local government to lend its expertise across these key priority areas: strategic infrastructure; skills and employment; enterprise and innovation.

Hertfordshire LEP has grown in size and stature and now sits as the head of a family of proposition-led brands.

Prior to joining the LEP, Neil was Head of the Economic Development Unit at Hertfordshire County Council. In his role as Head of Partnerships at the East of England Development Agency, Neil was responsible for local economic development partnerships across the region. Neil's earlier career was in business support including working for Business Link and the British Chambers of Commerce.



Caroline Cooper
COO, Sky Studios

Caroline is COO at Sky Studios, Sky's development and production arm across Europe, where she is responsible for all business operations, including production management and finance. Caroline has

also played a pivotal role in leading the launch phase of Sky Studios Elstree, Sky's new state-of-the-art film and TV studio.

Prior to Sky Studios, Caroline was Director of Finance and Commercial Director at Sky UK, looking after the Content and Commercial Businesses which includes Sports, Entertainment and Media. Prior to Sky, Caroline spent 10 years at ITV plc, most recently as Finance Director of ITV Studios.

Speakers



Cllr Morris Bright MBE
Chair, Board of Directors,
Elstree Studios; Leader,
Hertsmere Borough
Council

Morris has been the Leader of Hertsmere Borough Council for 14 years, having first been elected as a Conservative councillor in

1999. He is also an elected member of Hertfordshire County Council, recently appointed as Deputy Leader.

Morris is the Vice-Chairman of the Local Government Association (LGA) Safer Communities Board. He also assists the LGA by running media courses in their Next Generation scheme aimed at training up local authority leaders.

Morris is Chairman of the Board of Directors at Elstree Studios - the only studios in the country owned by a local authority. In conjunction with Elstree's Managing Director he oversees the day-to-day running of the world-famous Studios site, most recently the home to the multi-award winning *The King's Speech*, *Paddington* and *Sherlock Holmes*. Current television hits based at Elstree include *Strictly Come Dancing* & *Pointless*.

Morris has worked as a journalist – both as a writer and broadcast journalist – for 25 years and is a member of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts.



Dean Russell
MP for Watford

Dean has had a diverse background, education and career. At University Dean gained a Physics and Business Studies degree and an MPhil in Physics and Material Science and published two scientific papers.

Following University Dean put his work ethic into his career and contributing to the community. Dean has advised senior leaders from brands and governments, as well as philanthropists and Secretaries of State. Dean is also an artist and a children's book author with four published children's books.

Dean has been active in challenging the stigma of mental health for many years and has worked with many different political groups. He was elected to Parliament in 2019 with a majority of over 4,400 and has joined the Health and Social Care Select Committee and the Joint Committee on Human Rights. He also Chairs two APPGs and sits on a number of others.



Deirdre Wells OBE
CEO, Visit Herts and
Go To Places

Deirdre was appointed as CEO of Go To Places – the company responsible for both Visit Kent and Visit Herts - in September 2018.

Prior to her appointment to Go To Places, Deirdre was Chief Executive of UKinbound, representing nearly 400 UK inbound tourism businesses. During her tenure at UKinbound, Deirdre was a passionate advocate on behalf of the industry on a broad range of issues including the impact of BREXIT, Visas, Air Passenger Duty and skills. Deirdre joined UKinbound following 20 years in Government at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport working on a variety of high-profile projects including the Millennium Dome, Liverpool Capital of Culture 2008 and the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games. As Head of Tourism, Deirdre was instrumental in the delivery of the GREAT campaign – an ambitious and far-reaching marketing campaign promoting Britain as a great place to visit, study, work, invest, and do business.

Deirdre was awarded an OBE in 2007 in recognition of her work in leading the team behind the national memorial services for the UK victims of the 9/11 attacks, the Bali bombings, the 2004 Asian Tsunami and the London 7/7 attacks.



David Conway
Chief Financial and
Operations Officer for ITN

David is the Chief Financial and Operations Officer for ITN, the globally renowned news and television production company. ITN produces the news for ITV, Channel 4 and Channel

5, and works with all the major broadcasters and streaming platforms on a range of content.

David oversees a number of functions across ITN including Finance, Strategy, Technology (broadcast and IT), Post Production, Property and Health and Safety.

Prior to joining ITN, David was the Chief Executive Officer of BBC Studioworks Ltd, the UK's largest commercial TV studio operator, servicing the likes of ITV, Channel 4, Endemol Shine, and the BBC.

David is a business representative on the Board of Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

Speakers



Adrian Hawkins OBE
Chair - Stevenage
Development Board and
Skills Advisory Panel

Adrian Hawkins OBE is the former Deputy Chair of Hertfordshire LEP, the current Chair of the LEP's Skills Advisory Panel and the Founder of Weldability SIF,

an innovative advanced manufacturing firm based in Letchworth Garden City.

He is the Chairman and Founder of biz4Biz, an organisation established to support Hertfordshire business owners and leaders, as well as a Patron of Business Clubs, working alongside local MPs.

Adrian is a former School and College Governor and Chair of an Academy Trust. Adrian is also the Founder of the Weldability SIF Foundation, a registered charity which, working alongside FE Colleges and businesses Make UK and EDF, has created 41 Welding Skills Training College Studios across the UK, delivering currently 18,500 qualifications since its inception.



Professor Julie Newlan
MBE
University of Hertfordshire

Julie is Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University of Hertfordshire. She joined the University's Business School in 1996 as a Senior Lecturer in Business Strategy, and held various posts before

being appointed Head of the Business School in 2006.

Julie's academic career began at the London Institute in 1993, after achieving management success in the hotel and restaurant sector. This included running a chain of high street cafés for Martin The Newsagent, and subsequent strategic marketing and merchandising positions with Guinness when it acquired the business.

Julie joined the Hertfordshire LEP Board as Higher Education representative in December 2019, and has been a member of the LEP's Skills & Employment Board since 2015.



Phil Healey
BA(Hons) MA
Dean of the School of
Creative Arts

Phil Healey is the Dean of the School of Creative Arts at The University of Hertfordshire. He has extensive high-level

experience in the creative industries working in graphic design, advertising, illustration, photography, broadcast media and publishing; and for leading design consultants.

Phil is an award-winning graphic designer and best-selling author, and ran his own graphic design company, working with many leading publishers such as Bloomsbury, Virgin and 4th Estate, as well as for London Transport, BBC and Channel 4. Phil has worked at a number of leading creative arts institutions in UK Higher Education including the School of Communication Arts, University of the Creative Arts, Middlesex University and the University of Hertfordshire.



Anna Stewart
(moderator)
CNN reporter

Anna is a CNN reporter based in the network's London bureau. She covers topics related mainly to international business and the British Royal Family.

Anna reports daily on the latest global economic and financial news for CNN's flagship business programmes: First Move with Julia Chatterley, The Express and Quest Means Business.

She also currently hosts CNN's Passion to Portfolio, travelling the globe telling the stories of entrepreneurs who have turned personal dreams into professional success. Anna has also previously hosted CNN Equestrian across Europe, and reported for Marketplace Africa from South Africa.

In 2018 Anna played a key role in CNN's coverage of the Royal Wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, playing into live news for CNN International, CNN Domestic and HLN. She also reported on the couple's Royal tour of the UK and Ireland, in the months running up to the big day. In response to the 2020 coronavirus crisis, Anna launched 'The Good Stuff', a strand of 60 second reports focusing on positive news stories.

Anna has previously worked at CNBC. She was awarded an academic scholarship by the University of Oxford- where she received a B.A. in English Literature. She was also awarded the Oxford Gibbs prize for achievement.

Speakers



Gill Worgan
Principal and Chief Executive, WHC Group

Gill joined the senior management team at West Herts College in 2002, directing a range of curriculum and business functions.

Appointed Deputy Principal in 2008, Gill's focus at this time was quality and curriculum development. In January 2011 Gill was appointed West Herts College Principal and Chief Executive. In 2019, Gill led the successful merger between West Herts College and Barnfield College, which saw Gill's role extended to Principal and Chief Executive of WHC Group.



Chris Mitchell
Principal of Elstree Screen Arts Academy

ESA has a mission to transform vocational training in order to increase access to the creative industries for young people from all backgrounds and also to respond to the creative and

technical skills shortage in the cultural sector.

ESA is a UK Centre of Screen Excellence. Partnered with ScreenSkills and the BFI, and in association with the National Film and Television School, ESA provides technical and creative traineeships, with a particular vision to create greater access for young adults currently under-represented in the creative industries.

ESA is also a training partner of VOCAT - a collective of creative organisations from across Hertfordshire and beyond including Sky, Warner Bros, Banijay Initial, BBC Studioworks, ScreenSkills, the NFTS, UK Film Alliance and Film London. The VOCAT collective has a shared commitment to support the provision of vocational education and training to provide a pipeline of talented, skilled and diverse professionals into film and HETV.

Chris is also a contributor to the Leaders for Impact Programme, a course for cultural learning leaders run by Royal Opera House Bridge. Chris is a fellow of the RSA and sits on the advisory board of the Hertfordshire careers hub.



Emily Stillman
Senior Vice President, Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden

Emily began her career as a Researcher on documentaries around social welfare before moving into the world of TV drama and feature film production where

she worked as a Production Manager on productions including Pearl Harbour and Pirates of the Caribbean. Emily joined The Production Guild of Great Britain in 2009 where she was appointed CEO. During her five-year tenure she developed training programmes for the industry, campaigned to expand the UK tax incentive to include high-end TV drama, consulted on media related government policies and represented the interests of senior production talent.

Emily joined Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden in 2012 as Sales & Marketing Director. Now, as Senior Vice President, Emily is responsible for Business Development, Marketing and Operations for The Studios, Leavesden Park and Set Lighting and Rigging. Emily is passionate about Diversity and Inclusion and was instrumental in bringing The Wonderworks to Leavesden – a permanent childcare facility allowing women the option of returning to production after childbirth.

Emily became a board member of the Production Guild of Great Britain in 2020 and was elected to the BAFTA Film Committee in 2021. She is on the Film and TV charity Mental Health Taskforce Group, a judge on the Movers and Shakers awards panel and was listed in Variety's Women That Have Made An Impact in Global Entertainment 2021 report.