

# TELEGRAPH

News and updates from  
Alan Boswell Group.



In this issue:

- How Black Swan Care Group thrives in a challenging sector

Plus:

- EDP Business Awards success
- An insurance broker's role in a complex risk landscape
- Supporting horticulture at Bridge Farm Group

Pictured: Tom Lyons - Black Swan Care Group  
Read the case study on page 13.



Insurance Brokers  
Risk Management  
Financial Planners



# WELCOME

Since 1982, we have been building Alan Boswell Insurance Brokers from a one-man band in Wroxham into the group of more than 450 employees it is today.

Over the years, we have solidified our expertise in farm and business insurance and gradually evolved our services to include risk management, engineering inspections, private medical insurance, and financial services, expanding our offering to meet the changing risks of our clients.

In this magazine, you'll read the warm words our clients say about us and why we were named Insurance Broker of the Year in 2025 – not bad for a business that started more than 40 years ago! We hope it gives you a sense of the personal service, trusted advice, and long-term relationships that our clients experience. We'd love the opportunity to provide the same for you.



Alan Boswell,  
Executive Chairman



Pictured: Bridge Farm Group

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# EDP BUSINESS AWARDS



“This award is a testament to the ethos of the whole company and the hard work our team put in every day to deliver excellent service to our clients. It’s an honour to be recognised alongside so many great Norfolk businesses; congratulations to all the finalists and winners.”

Alan Boswell, Executive Chairman



## Large Business of the Year 2025

We’re delighted to have been awarded ‘Large Business of the Year’ at the *Eastern Daily Press Business Awards 2025*. Held at the Norfolk Showground on the 27th November, the awards celebrate excellence within Norfolk’s business community.

Across ten categories, they recognise a range of achievements: outstanding business performance (for small, medium, or large businesses), growth and innovation, customer service excellence, sustainability, employer practices, and positive community impact, among others. Within the ‘Large Business of the Year’ category, Alan Boswell Group was a finalist alongside well-respected Norfolk-based businesses Mills & Reeve, Norfolk Passport, and Blakely.

As well as winning the ‘Large Business of the Year’ category, ABG was also named as runner-up for the ‘Norfolk Business of the Year’ award.

Alan Boswell, Executive Chairman commented, “This award is a testament to the ethos of the whole company and the hard work our team put in every day to deliver excellent service to our clients.

“It’s an honour to be recognised alongside so many great Norfolk businesses; congratulations to all the finalists and winners.”

This follows other awards success for the Group this year, including ‘Insurance Broker of the Year’ at the British Insurance Awards 2025, ‘Best Landlord Insurance Provider’ at the National Landlord Investment Show Awards, and a third Which? Best Buy award.



## Alan Boswell Group named the UK's top broker for online visibility and reputation

We're pleased to announce we've been named the UK's leading insurance broker for online visibility and reputation in the latest industry report from Foliame.

The *UK Broker Index* ranks insurance brokers across the country, assessing digital performance across five key areas: client voice, digital presence, credentials, scale, and longevity.

We achieved a total score of 81.8, placing us more than ten points ahead of our nearest competitor and securing the top national ranking.

This recognition reflects a sustained, business-wide effort to strengthen our online presence, alongside the reputation we've built through long-term client relationships.

Lee Boswell, Marketing Director, said: "This is strong independent validation of the work we've been doing across the business. It's not just about marketing output. It reflects how our teams engage with clients, build trust, and consistently deliver

excellent service across every touchpoint."

The report draws on a wide range of data, including customer feedback, search visibility, online credentials, and overall business footprint, providing a clear picture of how brokers are perceived and discovered online.

For us, the result reinforces our position as one of the UK's leading independent brokers. It also highlights the growing importance of digital visibility in supporting client relationships and giving clients more choice in how they communicate with their broker.

"Online visibility now plays a critical role in how clients choose their broker," Lee added. "To be ranked number one in the UK shows that our approach is cutting through in an increasingly competitive market."

With more than 450 people across the Group, we continue to prioritise a personal, human-led service, while giving clients the flexibility to interact in the way that suits them, whether online, over the phone, or face-to-face.



**81.8**  
online voice  
score

**#1**  
national  
ranking

**74.8**  
client voice  
score

"I was incredibly proud to be recognised as Manager/Mentor of the Year, and even prouder to see Freddie highly commended for Level 3 Apprentice of the Year. The evening really showcased the value apprentices bring to businesses and reinforced why investing in the next generation of talent is so important."

Chloe Denholm



# APPRENTICESHIPS NORFOLK AWARDS 2026

We were delighted to attend this year's Apprenticeships Norfolk Awards, held at Carrow Road on 11th February, where we proudly supported two of our employees who were recognised for their outstanding contributions.

Freddie Cutting was named a top three finalist in the Apprentice of the Year - Advanced Level (Level 3), a fantastic achievement that reflects both his commitment to learning and the high standard of work he delivers day-to-day.

We are equally pleased to share that Chloe Denholm was announced as Manager/Mentor of the Year, an award that recognises the role Chloe has played in supporting our apprentices to succeed. Speaking of her award, Chloe said, "The Apprenticeships Norfolk Awards were a fantastic celebration of the talent coming through apprenticeships across all industries in Norfolk. I was incredibly proud to be recognised as Manager/Mentor of the Year, and even prouder to see Freddie highly commended for Level 3 Apprentice of the Year.

"The evening really showcased the value apprentices bring to businesses and reinforced why investing in the next generation of talent is so important."

Apprenticeships have long been an integral part of our approach to learning and development. We have operated our Insurance Adviser Apprenticeship Scheme since 2010, providing structured training, hands-on experience, and professional support to help individuals build successful careers in the insurance industry.

Speaking of the awards, HR Director Gillian Anderson-Brown commented, "Apprenticeships open the door for individuals starting their careers to earn while they progress. By learning alongside our experienced team, apprentices gain the support, training, and confidence they need to grow into their careers and build our talent pool for the future. We are proud to be recognised in Norfolk for our apprenticeship scheme and continue to ensure that we provide these opportunities across the whole Group."

## MEET THE FACES BEHIND OUR SERVICES

At Alan Boswell Group, we believe clients value more than just access to products and policies; they value knowledgeable people, practical advice, and the confidence that comes from working with specialists who understand their needs. With over 40 years of experience and broad in-house expertise, we support businesses and individuals across insurance, risk management, employee benefits, financial planning, and more.

What sets us apart is the breadth of our services. Clients can come to us for support in one area, or

benefit from a more joined-up approach that brings together different disciplines under one roof. From commercial and landlord insurance to private medical cover, claims support, engineering inspections, and financial services, our teams deliver tailored, responsive advice focused on lasting relationships.

Behind our areas of specialism are highly-qualified, dedicated teams with extensive industry experience, working with insurers to provide our clients with the best possible policy cover and service.

### COMMERCIAL INSURANCE

Businesses of every size need insurance that reflects their trade, operations, and risks. Across our seven offices, our commercial insurance teams work with organisations in a wide range of industries, combining regional support and local knowledge with wider specialist expertise to help businesses protect their operations and staff.



Andrew Thompson



Sam Brown



Steve Seekings



Zoe Kerswill

### LANDLORD INSURANCE



Heath Alexander-Bew Simon Ventham

Our award-winning landlord insurance team and products protect clients from the risks of owning and managing rental property with specialist cover for a wide range of needs. Headed by Heath Alexander-Bew and Simon Ventham, their varied insurance experience ensures we're providing market-leading products to individual landlords and larger portfolio owners.



Alex Mhandu

### PRIVATE MEDICAL INSURANCE

Our private medical insurance team helps individuals, families, and businesses understand the range of private healthcare products available and arrange a policy that enables access to affordable, prompt, private healthcare treatment. Led by our Head of Healthcare, Alex Mhandu joined us in 2012 and has over 15 years of experience in financial services. Our wider healthcare team ensures clients are supported throughout the policy year and through making a claim.



Laurence Hill

### CREDIT INSURANCE

For businesses that rely on stable cash flow, missed or late payments can affect financial stability. Credit insurance protects businesses from the risk of customer non-payment, whether due to insolvency, delayed payment, or an adverse political event. The department is run by Head of Credit Insurance Laurence Hill, who has over 20 years of experience in credit broking, having originally started his own credit insurance brokerage in 1996, before it became part of Alan Boswell Group in 2016.

### PRIVATE CLIENTS

Our private clients team delivers a discreet, highly personalised service, working with individuals who need specialist insurance for high-value property, fine art, jewellery, vehicles, boats, and investment property. Head of Private Clients, Mark Linehan, has been at ABG since 1997 and leads a team of 17 to provide highly personalised support to our private clients.



Mark Linehan

### FINANCIAL SERVICES

Financial planning can seem daunting and unpredictable. For more than three decades, our team of expert advisers have combined their experience with their understanding of our clients' situations to provide straightforward, jargon-free recommendations. Guided by Directors Sally Key and Tony Robinson, Alan Boswell Financial Planners provide guidance on investments, savings, pensions, life insurance, income protection, and critical illness cover.



Sally Key

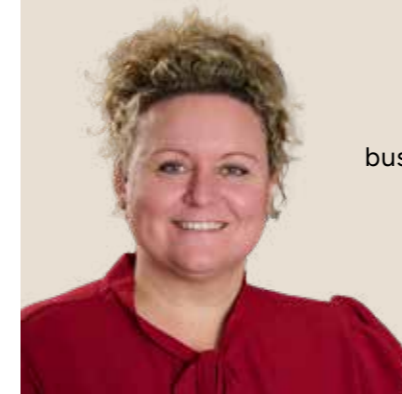


Tony Robinson

### EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Our dedicated employee benefits team delivers ongoing support to a range of businesses, from start-ups and SMEs to expanding organisations and multinational corporations, to attract, retain, motivate, and reward their workforce.

Dee Myhill heads up the team in Norwich, having been with Alan Boswell Group since 2013, and provides advice and solutions for workplace pensions, salary exchange schemes, and group risk and protection, helping businesses with well-structured, tax-efficient packages.



Dee Myhill

### RISK MANAGEMENT

Our risk management advisers help clients identify potential issues, implement measures to reduce risk, and strengthen compliance, complementing insurance by helping to prevent problems before they arise. Providing H&S support to exhibitors and the Showground Management Team at the Royal Norfolk Show, Mike Farrow is part of our wider team of advisers.



Mike Farrow

### ENGINEERING INSPECTIONS



Simon Wyeld

Our engineering inspections team, managed by Simon Wyeld, provides specialist support to help businesses meet statutory inspection requirements and maintain safe working environments.

### CLAIMS

When clients need support most, our in-house claims team guides them through the process.

Alongside Claims Director Mark Davenport and Claims Manager Kate Howlett, our 35+ strong in-house claims team liaises with insurers on our clients' behalf, helping to bring what can be a stressful period to a satisfactory conclusion.



Mark Davenport



Kate Howlett



The ABGCT sub-committee with team members from MAGPAS Air Ambulance.

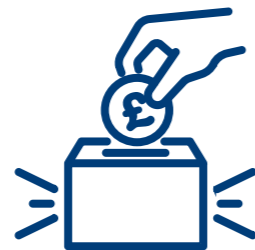
## A YEAR OF IMPACT FROM THE ALAN BOSWELL GROUP CHARITABLE TRUST

The Alan Boswell Group Charitable Trust (ABGCT) was set up in 2019. Its aim is to support causes in the communities where we operate; over the past seven years, the Trust has donated over £3.5m and supported more than 450 charities and community organisations across Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, and Lincolnshire. The Trust has funded projects that support the arts, community sports and leisure, nature conservation, health and medical care, animal welfare, and vulnerable communities.

In 2025, the Trust made 111 grants, totalling over £775,000. The grants enabled projects including funding a new accessible changing facility at the Mike Thurston Water Activities Centre, supporting cancer wellbeing services through Little Lifts and Look Good Feel Better, helping launch a new homelessness support service with Wintercomfort for the Homeless, funding respite holidays for children through Happy Days Children's Charity, and assistance dog partnerships through Canine Partners for Independence and wildlife conservation and education work at Suffolk Owl Sanctuary, among other initiatives.

The Trust is incredibly important to the Group and wouldn't be possible without the support of our employees, including the Committee, who take on the admin required to run the Trust. Staff fundraising efforts also play a vital role, which collectively totalled over £20,000 in 2025.

For more information on the Trust and how it works, visit [alanboswell.com/abgct](http://alanboswell.com/abgct).



### £775,489

Total donated to charitable causes in 2025

### 111 GRANTS

Total number of grants made in 2025

### £21,580

Employee fundraising in 2025

### £3.5m

Total donated since founding in 2019

## THE AI RISK GAP: WHY BUSINESSES LACK COVERAGE

Artificial intelligence (AI) has quickly proven itself as the latest technology game-changer.

A recent survey found 79% of businesses already use AI in some capacity, with most planning to increase its use in the coming years.

Be it data analytics, research and development, price modelling, or customer support AI is rapidly becoming essential to business operations.

However, this adoption introduces new risks, heightened by a changing regulatory landscape with different jurisdictions taking different approaches.

But, only 32% of businesses are confident their current insurance programme address AI risks adequately. So, how can you be sure you have the right cover?

### How AI use cases and risks are changing

Like the internet, smartphones, and cloud computing, AI is impacting life in multiple ways. This flexibility can be seen in how it's used across industries, whether a tool is driving efficiencies, lowering costs, or delivering more accurate results faster. According to the survey, more than two in three businesses are harnessing AI for improved data and analytics, while over half are implementing AI in marketing and to enhance employee productivity.

### The insurance gap in the AI era

While businesses are looking to take advantage of the benefits of AI, many are still unclear whether their current insurance policies offer adequate protection. Demand is growing for insurance that keeps pace with this fast-moving technology, but there's still a lack of understanding when it comes to AI risks, at a time when the majority of businesses already use the technology.

Innovation shouldn't come with uncertainty. That's why it's essential to build AI protection into insurance policies across a wide range of industries including technology, finance, professions, healthcare, media, and more. AI can seem complex, but with comprehensive cover in place, mitigating the risks can be simple.

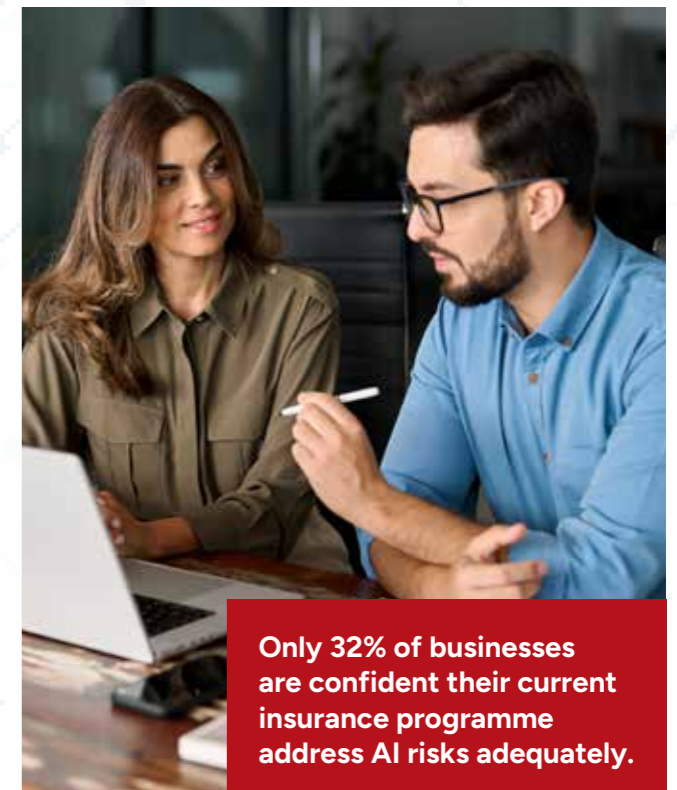
### Navigating global AI regulation

In the EU, The AI Act is the first comprehensive regulation of its kind, establishing a legal framework for AI development and use. The Act classifies AI systems based on the risks they pose, aiming to reduce uncertainty and promote safe, responsible development.

Meanwhile, the UK is adopting what's perceived to be a more flexible, pro-innovation approach, relying on existing regulators and encouraging companies to innovate faster. Currently, the plan is to manage AI sector by sector, allowing regulations to be tailored to unique AI challenges and opportunities presented in different industries.

Across the US, there's no single national AI law. Regulation is currently shaped by a combination of federal initiatives, state-level legislation, and evolving industry standards.

For businesses, especially those operating internationally or trading across borders, understanding these regional differences is critical. It's no surprise the survey found compliance and regulatory issues to be a top concern of using AI. Compliance can be difficult to achieve, particularly as what's compliant in one jurisdiction may not be in another.



Only 32% of businesses are confident their current insurance programme address AI risks adequately.



To find out more, visit [alanboswell.com/cyber](http://alanboswell.com/cyber)

## WHEN TENANTS STOP PAYING, HOW CAN LANDLORDS PROTECT THEMSELVES?

With the Renters' Rights Act now in force, open ended periodic tenancies, strict rules around rent increases and rent in advance, and, significantly, the end of Section 21 "no fault" evictions have been introduced to the private rented sector. While these changes are designed to strengthen tenants' rights, they increase the risk to landlords, particularly when a tenant defaults on the rent.

### Rent arrears after the Renters' Rights Act

Rent arrears often start with a change in tenants' circumstances: redundancy, illness, relationship breakdown, or a gap between jobs can all impact tenants' income. While landlords generally try to be reasonable, especially where the tenant maintains open communication, mortgage payments, service charges, and maintenance costs continue to accrue.

Under the new legislation, landlords must rely on statutory grounds for possession under Section 8, rather than the quicker Section 21 "no fault" route. Section 8 will require landlords to provide increased evidence, documentation, and process.

Given that a tenant must now be in three months' arrears before a Section 8 notice can be served (previously two months), the period between the first missed payment and vacant possession can be significant.

Statistics show the average Section 8 eviction takes six to eight months; meanwhile, landlords' costs can quickly accrue when they receive no rental income.

### How can landlords protect their income?

Legal & rent guarantee insurance can help landlords protect their income and investment. It is typically comprised of two components:

- **Rent protection cover** to pay the missed rent (subject to policy limits and conditions). Our policies provide payment after two months' arrears, with service of the notice following after month three.
- **Legal expenses cover** to pursue possession and/or rent recovery using the correct notices and court process.

In a post-Renters' Rights Act environment, legal expenses cover has become more important than ever. If a landlord is seeking possession due to arrears, they'll need the correct ground, notice, supporting evidence, and proof that they have provided their tenant with the correct documentation. Legal & rent guarantee insurance takes over the administrative burden for you, helping you to regain possession of the property while receiving the missed rent payments.

### Practical steps landlords can take

Whether you already have a legal & rent guarantee policy in place or you're considering it, there are things landlords can do to help ensure consistent rental income

- **Set expectations in the tenancy agreement:** confirm payment dates, preferred method, and what happens if rent is late.
- **Act quickly on day one arrears:** a polite reminder at one to three days late can prevent a small problem from becoming a big one.
- **Keep comprehensive documentation:** rent schedule, tenancy agreement, referencing documents, certificates, proof of service of the required documentation, and written communication should be easy to produce.

• **Follow a consistent escalation path:** when rent is late, ensure you escalate through the following stages: reminder, formal letter, insurer notification, and instructed legal steps.

• **Review rent taken upfront:** with tighter rules around rent in advance and bidding, make sure your letting process stays compliant. A possession claim can quickly be refused if you haven't complied with the applicable legislation.

The Renters' Rights Act has changed tenancies in the private rented sector. For landlords, that makes prevention and protection more important. Legal & rent guarantee insurance can help you stay financially resilient when a tenant stops paying, while taking on the administrative burden of regaining possession of your property.



To find out more, visit [alanboswell.com/rent-guarantee](https://alanboswell.com/rent-guarantee)

# MANAGING RISK & DELIVERING CARE

How Black Swan Care Group thrives in a challenging sector.



Pictured: Tom Lyons - Managing Director, Black Swan Care Group  
Will Roffey - Account Executive, Alan Boswell Group

Black Swan Care Group traces its origins back to 1991, when three former finance professionals, Brett Burton, Clive Hill, and Steve Winfield began an unconventional entrepreneurial journey: importing and selling Ugg boots.

Brett spotted the opportunity to import and sell the sheepskin footwear, originating in Australia, to the UK market. In a nod to his Australian heritage, Brett named the company after the state bird of Western Australia, the black swan. The venture proved premature, however, and in a significant pivot, the trio turned their attention toward residential care, opening their first home, Nightingale Lodge, in Hunstanton, in 1994. The name and logo, however, were retained.

What began as one home has developed into a portfolio of 23 spread throughout the East of England, providing care and support to over 700 residents across elderly and dementia care and supported living for individuals with learning and physical disabilities. We spoke to Tom Lyons, Managing Director of Black Swan Care Group, to get some insight into how they manage their risks as they grow.

The care sector is a growing industry; statistics show that around 13.2 million people are currently aged over 65 in the UK, and this figure is expected to increase to over 16 million by 2034.

Black Swan has developed a reputation for turning around 'failing' homes (those rated 'inadequate' by the Care Quality Commission), having grown from just seven homes when Tom joined in 2008, by significantly investing in them.

"The majority of the properties we purchase are either failing through regulatory issues or have been financially mismanaged. We've got the ability to act incredibly quickly and make decisions quickly. Our success is based around our agility, ability to evaluate what's going on in the business, and then to make decisions.

"From viewing a home to completing the purchase, including changing registration [with the CQC], we can do it within 30 days; our most recent purchase was 15 working days from viewing to completion.

"We will always put people before profit. By doing that you build a really strong reputation. We're not fanatics on budgets; we're not fanatics on KPIs. We recognise that to make money, you have to spend it.

"A lot of the care homes we acquire haven't invested in their services for a number of years, and they're relying on local authority-funded individuals. The care fees that we get from a local authority barely cover the cost of delivering it, so you have to invest in your properties to attract the private fee-paying individuals. We position ourselves at the top end of the middle market as we can provide a personal level of care, with a return on investment that allows us to continually invest in the service and experience we're providing."

Property in the UK elderly care sector has seen a trend towards large, new-build homes over recent years. However, Black Swan's portfolio focuses on boutique-style homes, with a model built around putting the person at the centre of their care offering, and providing a home that any resident, and their family, would be happy and comfortable living in.

"Everything we do is built around the individual and a personal approach, and so the majority of our care homes are slightly smaller than new builds, but we provide what we consider to be a significantly better experience."



"Everything we do is built around the individual and a personal approach."

“Working with Alan Boswell’s means that we can utilise the experience of a reputable company, with knowledge of our business, the care sector, and our risks.”

Black Swan is in the top 1% of care companies to have all their homes rated ‘Outstanding’ or ‘Good’ by the CQC. But they are not content with that accolade. With staff shortages within the care sector well-documented since Brexit, they take pride in their ability to attract and retain staff, giving them one of the lowest staff turnovers in the sector. Their approach to recruitment and onboarding has recently been recognised with an award from Apollo Health and Social Care, enabling them to reduce reliance on agency staff and provide residents with a consistent, friendly face. But staffing is just one of the risks the Group faces.

“We have a really transparent risk management approach and quality assurance process. We have delineated duties ensuring that all of our health and safety compliance is maintained. Our starting point is to make sure that everyone is well-trained, supervised, and has all the information they need. There’s a very clear process every day for walk-rounds of the homes and the various checks that need to be done on a weekly, daily, and monthly basis; from fire alarm testing to Legionella water checks, etc.

“We have a blueprint that we know works and have copied and put into every single service, and then we combine that with a team of auditors and our regional managers to ensure that we’re providing a safe environment for our residents. Records are then digitally inputted so that we can maintain oversight from our head office and when risks present

themselves, we can provide mitigations for them.”

Black Swan has relied on Alan Boswell Group to support their risk management with robust insurance solutions since 2020, looked after by Account Executive, Will Roffey.

“We always get good assurance from Will that we’re getting the best value. We have 1,000 staff, 700 residents, and another 5,000 family members that we’re interacting with on a daily basis. It’s all about relationships. So as a company and individuals, if we weren’t ‘people people’, then we’re probably in the wrong sector. It’s really important to us when we’re working with companies that they have a similar mindset. That they are people we can trust; that share our values. If they’re local, that’s even better for us.

“Since we moved to Boswell’s, we’ve been really happy. The one thing we won’t do is compromise on quality. It is important to us to get the right cover. There are a lot of risks and liabilities in care that we need to mitigate, and having the knowledge that we’ve got a good broker and policy that sits behind our good practice is really important.”



As Black Swan’s insurance broker, our expert understanding of their business and the risks they face on a day-to-day basis ensures that we provide them with tailored policies that protect their property, liabilities, fleet, and cyber liability. In particular, we ensure that their liability exposures, such as resident welfare, staff liability, property damage, or regulatory compliance, are comprehensively covered. This means they are protected against claims that could arise from incidents involving residents, visitors, or staff, protecting their financial position and their reputation. By structuring policies around the specific challenges of operating care homes, we give Black Swan the assurance that their key liabilities are insured to the right level.

“We have quite a complex number of businesses; a total of six different businesses across 23 different locations. Working with Alan Boswell’s means that we can utilise the experience of a reputable company, with knowledge of our business, the care sector, and our risks. That can give us the best advice possible and ensure that our insurance needs are met in a way that safeguards us from as much risk as possible.

“A real benefit for us is having the support there every day if we need it. Be it a question about our fleet, our pension [looked after by Senior Employee Benefits

Consultant, Dee Myhill], our cash plan [looked after by Head of Healthcare, Alex Mhandu] or whatever, Boswell’s are always at the end of the phone. We’re able to speak to someone locally who can meet us face-to-face who understands the business.

“On the claims side, thankfully, we haven’t had many, but, when we have, Will has led on those conversations. He understands the stress of making a claim and deals with a lot of that for us, so that we can get on with running the business.”

Having the right insurance in place has been a key part of enabling Black Swan to focus on their residents and plan for the future. From ensuring their existing homes are fully protected to structuring cover for new acquisitions and refurbishments, we work with them to make sure their liabilities, property, and business continuity are all properly insured. This gives them the confidence to focus on growth, while covered for the risks that come with running care services.

“We’ve got a lot of plans to grow. We’re setting up a home care business at the moment, and there are a number of other care homes on the market which we are looking at, as well as focusing on the refurbishment of our newest acquisition, Taverham Grove, which we’re aiming to open later this year.”

“A real benefit for us is having the support there every day if we need it. We’re able to speak to someone locally who can meet us face-to-face who understands the business.”



# INSURANCE CLAIMS YEAR IN REVIEW



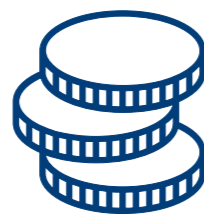
## 10,500 CLAIMS IN 2025

(reported to ABG)

We understand that the true value of insurance is only realised when you come to make a claim. Our in-house claims team are here to support our clients through what can be an incredibly stressful time; working on your behalf to liaise with insurers and, hopefully, bring your claim to a satisfactory conclusion.

From burst pipes to flash flooding, fires, subsidence, and travel disruption, 2025 saw 10,500 claims reported to our claims team. The single largest claim we received in 2025 was for £3m for property damage following an explosion, while the most common was for escape of water, with 1,227 claims during the year.

We look at how weather, seasonal trends, and global geopolitical events affected claims trends across the industry in 2025, as well as their impact on the specific claims our team received.



### £6.1BN PAID BY INSURERS IN 2025

(UK industry-wide)



### £1.2BN IN CLAIMS FOR WEATHER- RELATED DAMAGE

(UK industry-wide)

“ Thank you for all of your help in dealing with the insurer. It would appear that dealing with an insurance company is a bit of a minefield, and I certainly could not have done it without your help and expertise. ”

Mr Collis

## What are the claims trends we're anticipating for the coming year?

- More volatile weather: storm and surface-water flooding events can create sudden claim increases.
- Water damage prevention: escape-of-water remains one of the most frequent causes of home and commercial claims.
- Repair-cost inflation: parts availability and specialist labour continue to affect vehicle and property repair times and costs.
- Landlord risk & legal expenses: rising query volumes and changes in the rental landscape are driving greater demand for advice and legal-cost protection.
- Travel disruption: geopolitical events and changing airspace/routes can impact business and leisure travel plans at short notice.

## April

Easter marks the beginning of peak self-drive hire season. Campervans and larger vehicles can catch drivers out when navigating tight turns, height restrictions, and reversing. Motor insurers paid £11.9bn in claims across 2.5m cases in 2025.<sup>1</sup>

## May

Garden fire claims rose as BBQ season began early, following an exceptionally sunny start to May which saw the South of England record its highest daytime temperature for May since 1884.<sup>2</sup>

## June

Following weeks of warm, sunny weather, torrential rain hit the UK, and central Norwich saw localised flooding, leading to claims reported to ABG totalling £820,000.

Across 2025, insurers paid £1.2 billion in property claims for weather related damage, 14% more than in 2024.<sup>4</sup>

## July

Harvest season begins, bringing increased activity, machinery movement and time pressure across rural risks. Data from the HSE indicates that agriculture, forestry, and fishing have a fatality rate 21 times higher than the 'all industry' rate<sup>5</sup>, highlighting the need for rigorous health and safety measures.

## August

Summer holidays bring peak visitor numbers to the UK's waterways and an influx of marine claims as people take to the waters on hire craft.

## September

After the hottest summer since records began, potential subsidence reports spiked. On average, £17,264 is paid out per claim for subsidence-related property damage<sup>6</sup>.

## November

Storm Claudia hit the country, prompting weather-related notifications and follow-on damage concerns. Home insurance claims for storm damage totalled £244 million in 2025, up 32% from 2024<sup>7</sup>.

## December

A busy season for hospitality clients is accompanied by a rise in accidents linked to celebrations and parties.

## January

With the Renters' Rights Act announced to come into force from May 2026, we experienced a 40% increase in new landlord legal expenses claims.

## February

A particularly cold spell resulted in a number of burst pipes and escape of water claims. Escape of water was the most common claim type we saw in 2025.

## March

Conflict in the Middle East disrupted travel for clients. Disruption is expected to continue, with 13,000 flights cancelled in May due to rising jet fuel prices<sup>8</sup>.

“ I am ever so grateful for all your kind help throughout the claim process. You offered me clear guidance and provided me with great support each step of the way. You have shown great understanding of the stressful situation and made the claim process straightforward and pain-free, which really helps! ”

Joy

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.insurancetimes.co.uk/news/motor-insurers-paid-out-119bn-in-2025/1457731.article>  
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/syndication/syndicated-articles/2025/may/may-records---southern-england>  
<sup>3</sup> <https://www.insuranceage.co.uk/insight/7957979/property-insurance-payouts-hit-record-ps61bn-in-2025-abi>  
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.insuranceage.co.uk/insight/7957979/property-insurance-payouts-hit-record->

[ps61bn-in-2025-abi](https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/resources/fatal.htm)  
<sup>5</sup> <https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/resources/fatal.htm>  
<sup>6</sup> <https://www.abi.org.uk/news/news-articles/2025/7/insurance-support-tops-150-million-for-homes-affected-by-subsidence/>  
<sup>7</sup> <https://www.abi.org.uk/news/news-articles/2026/2/adverse-weatherpushesproperty-insurance-payouts-to-6.1-billion-in-2025/>  
<sup>8</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cyv24v3mpdmo>

# PROTECTING ANTHROTEK'S PATH TO GROWTH IN EMERGING TECH INDUSTRIES



# AnthroTek

Medical

197K



Pictured: Raoul Peltier, Nazmus Tareque,  
co-founders of AnthroTek

With a PhD in material chemistry, 37 authored research articles, two reviews of literature, and one patent in the field of chemistry, nanotechnology, and material science, it might be surprising to discover that Dr Raoul Peltier would get his big break in business through his weekend hobby: making custom silicone face masks.

Not content with his day job of developing a device to 3D print DNA, Raoul was spending his spare time in his garage blending traditional mask-making techniques with modern technology to create hyper-realistic, bespoke masks for the film industry. But it wasn't until a chance encounter with his now-business partner, Nazmus Tareque, that the work Raoul was producing was to be fully realised.

Nazmus (Naz) met Raoul while punting on the River Cam at a local networking event in Cambridge. Naz recalls, "Raoul was head of DNA synthesis at a biotech in Cambridge, but his side-project was producing amazing prosthetic pieces for movies, working with Danny Boyle on the *28 Years Later* movie. He'd been doing this, as a hobby, for eight years. But it's a hobby that had grown over eight years. Raoul's a material chemist with a deep understanding of polymer chemistry, but with the mind of an artist.

"So, I saw it. I invited him for lunch, and I said 'Look, this is super cool. We should talk about it, because I know people from the medical simulation industry, people working with robotics, tinkering with the idea of humanoids and all these things.' We started having a conversation, one thing led to another and AnthroTek was born."



AnthroTek (Anthro comes from the Greek word anthropos, meaning 'human', and Tek is an abbreviation of technology, so 'human-technology') was established in 2024.

"It's an advanced material science company that is focused on solving problems for medical simulation, soft robotics, and the cinema industry. When you talk about advanced material science, what we are actually talking about is soft materials like silicone,



"When we pitched the idea to investors, they had the same questions: 'Who is going to buy it? Do you have any proof?'. But we started finding clients immediately; we were very lucky."

rubber, polymers; materials that can mimic human tissue. That's the very core of what we do.

"Raoul's expertise in material chemistry and his knowledge in the cinema industry gave us an edge, a bit of focus. So, when we started hiring, we brought people in with this understanding."

The first hire was Dr Paul Stanley, who holds a PhD in Chemistry and Material Science and is an expert in 3D modelling and printing.

"There's a team around this core

competency, which is soft material chemistry, material science. So, the immediate work we got was from clients who wanted us to solve very complex problems for medical simulation. To solve these problems, we had to combine the knowledge of both material chemistry and the movie industry.

"And this has been the secret of our success; we retain the IP of what we produce. We now have a product that came out of this work: Anthropad. Anthropad is a

new type of skin pad for people to test injectable pharmaceuticals."

Getting these early orders has been key to AnthroTek's success.

"We were very lucky," Naz concedes. "When we were having those early conversations, it was just an assumption that we had the basis for a business. But you don't have a business unless someone is willing to pay for it.

"When we pitched the idea to investors, they had the same questions: 'Who is going to buy it?

Do you have any proof?'. But we started finding clients immediately; we were very lucky. The first week after the company was formed in July 2024, we received a medical simulation request from a client in Japan who was looking for a highly complex laparoscopic simulation model for surgical camera testing. It was a substantial project.

"We also had an adjacent project that we were doing for The Face Forge [the subsidiary company of AnthroTek specialising in the special effects work for movies], producing 17 Christmas elf masks for a theme park in, Norfolk. We were busy from the get-go."



It was these projects, along with their founding team, vision, and growth plans that gave investors the confidence to back AnthroTek. The company's first funding round was completed in September 2024 and provided the funds to invest in a dedicated workspace to expand operations.

The company has used the resources to develop the technology to recreate entire human body parts for medical simulation training.

"We have a base human model, which is anatomically accurate, vetted by professionals, doctors, and surgeons. We are then able to produce various body parts that are unique. For example, we might get a request for a specific surgical simulation where an organ is in a very particular position."

One thing which really excites Naz is how the development of advanced AI might lead to humanoid robotics.

"The humanoid market is going to grow. Physical AI is the next phase of development. We want to be the company that produces skin for them. We want to understand how humans sense things. So not only will synthetic skin look similar to human skin, but it will behave similarly. This is a very long-term project."

Understanding the intricacies of this work, the risks involved, and how best to protect the business with an appropriate insurance programme had become complex.

"For the work we did with *28 Years Later*, they asked us to produce a mask that could be set on fire - a very risky venture. We spoke to a lot of insurance brokers, but they didn't really understand what we were doing. They were basically trying to put us in a box that we didn't fit in. We are a material science company, but we work with cinema, medical simulations, and soft robotics.

"After getting our previous insurance, we felt it was not fit for purpose because it wasn't representative of our risks. It was not considerate of how we want to grow and expand, and how it could expand with us. So, we wanted to find a partner that could understand what we were doing and what we were planning. We really needed somebody who understood us."

It was at another networking event in Cambridge that Naz's insurance challenges were resolved when he met Rebecca Sugden, a tech-insurance expert at Alan Boswell Group.

"We won an award at the *Cambridge Independent Science and Technology Awards*. Rebecca came over and congratulated us. She then followed up, and we had you [Alan Boswell Group] and a few other brokers competing for our business. But the differentiator was the care and interest in the business by Boswell's. It felt like you understood us."

Rebecca has worked with the AnthroTek team to develop a comprehensive insurance solution that includes commercial combined cover, liability policies, professional indemnity, management liability protection, cyber risk protection, and business travel insurance. Each policy is carefully tailored to accurately reflect the company's activities, ensuring

Pictured: Rebecca Sugden and Naz Tareque



insurers have a clear understanding of the work performed by the business. This was particularly important given the unique challenges AnthroTek faces, including trading and supplying products internationally, managing high-risk projects such as creating masks designed to be set on fire while worn by actors for film productions, and developing cutting-edge technology and materials that are entirely new to the market and unfamiliar to insurers. These complexities required a bespoke approach to ensure the cover was fit for purpose and adaptable as the business continues to innovate and expand.

The insurance is now part of the foundations of the business as it grows from a start-up to an established player in the region's science and tech landscape. So, what does the future look like?

"We have short, mid, and long-term goals. In the short term, we're acquiring some really good B2B clients, enterprise-level clients, and we're solving problems for them.

"We're retaining IP that we can scale up for mass production. But we're also doing some hardcore research and development. We're funding a PhD at Warwick University, where we're looking into materials and polymers for healthcare applications and robotics.

"In the long-term we want to develop some patents and do things that can really take us far. We are building for the future."

"The differentiator was the care and interest in the business by Boswell's. It felt like you understood us."

With ambitious plans to scale their IP, invest in cutting-edge R&D, and shape the future of synthetic materials, AnthroTek is firmly focused on growth. Their tailored insurance programme gives them the confidence that they are appropriately protected, safeguarding their unique operations and enabling continued expansion into new markets.

# AN INSURANCE BROKER'S ROLE IN A MORE COMPLEX RISK LANDSCAPE

We sat down with Adrian Rayner, Commercial Director, to talk about how the risk landscape for businesses has changed and why the role of a broker matters more than ever.

**Q. Adrian, when people talk about a 'more complex' risk landscape for businesses, what do they actually mean?**

**Adrian:** Most business owners expect uncertainty; that comes with the territory. What has changed is the sheer number of moving parts. Inflation has pushed up repair and replacement costs, cyber crime has gone mainstream, weather events are more volatile, and insurers are far more forensic about the risks they are prepared to take on. The problem is that many insurance programmes have not evolved at the same pace.

Insurance should be there to protect balance sheets and business continuity. It should never be a tick box exercise. When risks shift, your cover has to shift with them, otherwise gaps only become obvious at the point of claim, which is the worst possible time to find out.

**Q. What are the biggest pressures you are seeing on policies at the moment?**

**Adrian:** Underinsurance is a big one. If sums insured and limits have not kept pace with inflation, the settlement simply may not be enough to put the business back where it was. That catches people out far more often than they expect.

Cyber risk is another obvious pressure. Ransomware, invoice fraud, and data breaches are no longer only issues for big corporates. We see them affecting businesses of all sizes. On top of that, you have supply chain disruption, more extreme weather events, and rising liability exposures in an increasingly litigious environment. If you trade overseas, the complexity multiplies again with different legal systems, jurisdictions, and contractual standards to consider.

All of this feeds into insurer appetite, the questions they ask, and the exclusions and conditions that appear in policies.

**Q. Many businesses now buy insurance online. Where do you see the risks in that approach?**

**Adrian:** Online insurance looks efficient, and for very simple risks, it can be. The issue is that most online journeys are designed to be fast, not forensic. They rely on assumptions that do not always reflect how a business actually operates day-to-day.

The real danger is that you do not know what you do not know. A particular activity might need to be disclosed, a limit might be too low, or a single exclusion might completely change the value of the policy. Everything can look fine on paper until you try to claim.



Pictured: Adrian Rayner

**Q. What sort of blind spots do you commonly see when policies are arranged this way?**

**Adrian:** Misdescribing the business is very common. People understandably pick the closest-sounding trade description, but that does not always capture higher-risk activities, contracting work, or work away from the premises, including overseas.

We also see values and limits drifting out of date as turnover, wages, and stock levels change. Business interruption is another big one. An indemnity period might look reasonable, but when you actually think through how long it would take to purchase replacement machinery, replenish stock levels, rebuild trading, customers, and cash flow, it is often nowhere near long enough. Cyber and fraud gaps also crop up, particularly when businesses assume cover exists under a package policy when a standalone policy would be more appropriate.

**Q. So where does a broker add real value in this environment?**

**Adrian:** A good broker is not there simply to obtain a premium. Our role is to understand the business properly and design cover around exposures and liabilities. That means looking at activities, locations, contracts, overseas trading, and, crucially, what would genuinely stop the business from operating if something went wrong.

We help set realistic sums insured and limits that reflect current rebuild costs, stock values, turnover, and liability risks. We negotiate and tailor cover, explaining key terms, conditions, and exclusions so there are no nasty surprises later. And when a claim happens, we are in the client's corner, helping with notification, presentation, and negotiation to get the business back up and running as quickly as possible.

**Q. Finally, what would you say to a business focused purely on price?**

**Adrian:** In a market where wordings are evolving, and claims costs are rising, the cheapest policy is not always the best policy. If it leaves you exposed, it is not really cheap at all.

A broker does the hard work for you. That might mean understanding seasonal stock changes, managing the exposures that come with overseas expansion, or accessing niche insurers for specialist risks that are simply not available through standard online routes. Ultimately, it is about peace of mind and knowing that if you do need to make a claim, the cover will actually do what you expect it to.



To find out more, visit [alanboswell.com/business](https://alanboswell.com/business)



# SUPPORTING HORTICULTURE WITH EXPERT ADVICE AT BRIDGE FARM GROUP



Pictured: Bridge Farm Group,  
Horseshoe Nursery

Each Christmas, homes across the UK are adorned with tinsel, twinkling lights, baubles - and often, a few poinsettias. These vivid red plants have become a seasonal staple, adding a splash of colour to festive décor. Over eight million are sold annually in the UK, mostly within an intense eight-week window from late October to December. Given that it takes around six months to grow a poinsettia to marketable size, meeting this demand is a logistical feat, one handled impressively by specialist growers across the country.

Bridge Farm Group is one such grower, supplying over 1.2 million poinsettias to some of the UK's largest retailers, including Tesco, Asda, B&Q, Morrisons, and M&S. From their base in Spalding, Lincolnshire, they are one of the UK's leading horticultural experts, growing more than 70 million plants every year in their low-carbon, water-efficient, biomass-heated glasshouse.

Julie Pike, Head of Finance Shared Services at Bridge Farm Group, is better placed than many to talk about the history of the group, having been involved in her own way from childhood.

"My family owned Neame Lea Nursery in Gosberton. In fact, I was born on the nursery. But I was always against working for the family business; having been carted around in lettuce boxes for most of my

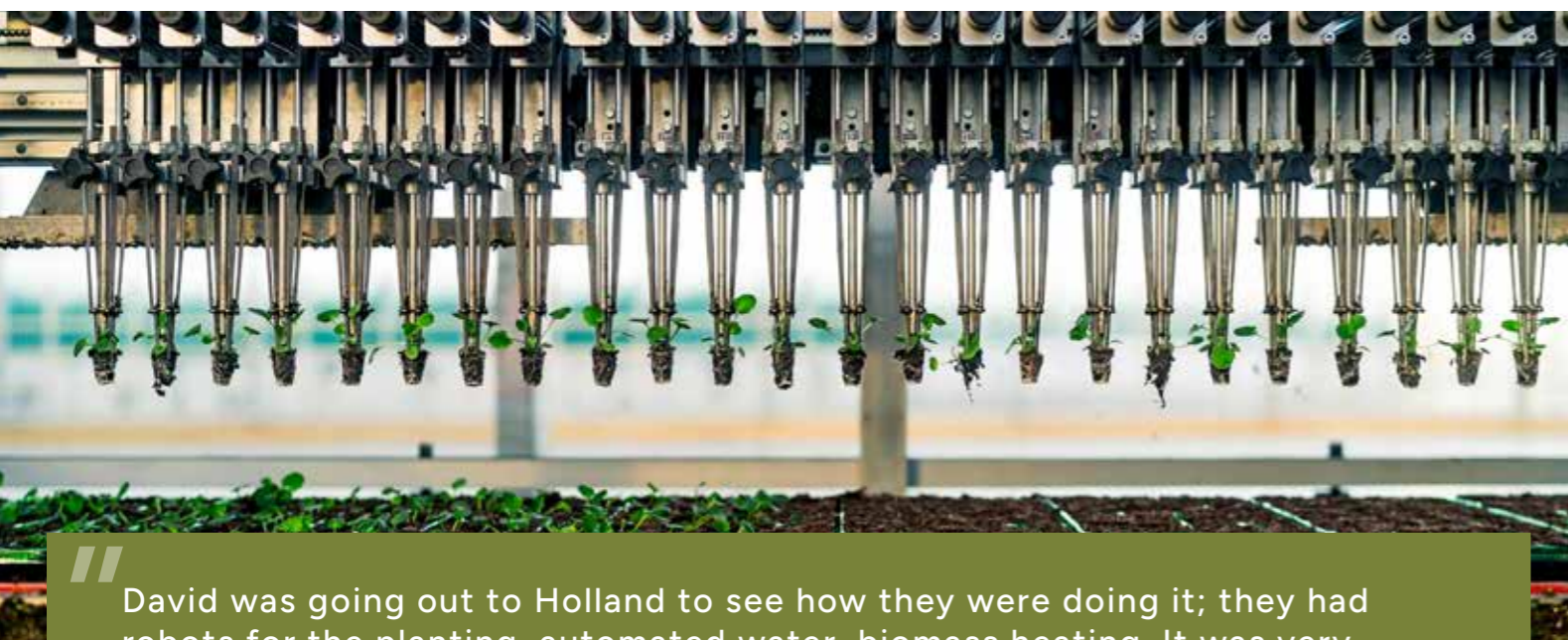
life and having to pull orders on weekends, I felt, 'I don't really want this,' so I went for an office job.

"But my circumstances changed, and I decided that it would work. That's how I ended up joining the business 21 years ago." When Julie's father passed away in 2010, the family decided to sell to another local nursery, Bridge Farm, which was owned by Jayne and Tony Ball, alongside their son, David.

It was David Ball who had the vision to increase production and sell directly to the market rather than through other suppliers.

“That’s when the business really started to grow. David wanted to deal directly with the major retailers, and when he got a contract with Tesco, we needed more growing area. Just up the road from his parents’ place was the Horseshoe Nursery site. He could see the potential to build an industrial glasshouse there, and they took on that site in 2015.”

A new state-of-the-art greenhouse was built at Horseshoe Nursery, facilitating a significant growth in capacity and allowing them to expand their direct supply to retailers. But that wasn’t the end of the expansion. In 2018, Bridge Farm secured planning permission for a 100-acre site in Lincolnshire. They have now completed the first two phases of the development, giving them 60 acres of state-of-the-art glasshouse.



“David was going out to Holland to see how they were doing it; they had robots for the planting, automated water, biomass heating. It was very autonomous. It was his vision to bring it back to the UK, and we implemented it at Horseshoes, but he thought, ‘Actually, we can do this on a bigger scale.’”

This scale demands not only physical infrastructure but also sophisticated technology. The glasshouse operates year-round, thanks to a modular system that allows different climatic zones to coexist, enabling simultaneous cultivation of diverse crops. Biomass heating ensures low-carbon energy use, while water-efficient systems support sustainable irrigation.

This is supported by a suite of cutting-edge automation, which includes propagation robots capable of planting up to 5,000 cuttings per hour, climate control, irrigation, and crop movement. These technologies not only optimise yield and quality, but also reduce environmental impact. Bridge Farm’s approach exemplifies how robotics, AI, and sustainable design can converge to redefine modern horticulture at industrial scale.

*And it’s not just poinsettias.*

“In June / July, we’ll start putting our poinsettias in. We’ll have those until they go out at Christmas. Then we put in spring bulbs, hyacinths, and Tête-à-Tête, and then bedding through the summer, and in between that we’re doing house plants and baskets.”

The sheer scale of the glasshouses cannot be overstated, and neither can the scale of the associated risks.

“We’ve got two or three guys that do all the maintenance of the boilers, and we’ve got a health and safety officer that does the rest of the business. You [Alan Boswell Group] do the engineering inspections.”

The relationship with Alan Boswell Group began in 2020 when David and Julie were introduced to Account Executive Steve Eastwood through a mutual acquaintance. Meeting the insurance needs of a large horticultural operation that supplies over 70 million

plants a year requires specialist sector expertise not always offered by standard insurance brokers. Steve Eastwood has experience in industrial glasshouse insurance and provided Bridge Farm with services not available from their previous broker.

“We were insured with another broker before, but it was quite complex. It was laborious to go through everything. It used to be a massive document. Steve and Jacky [Smith, Account Handler] have streamlined the whole process. Now it’s not a hassle. Steve comes on site two or three times a year. It’s really good to get an outside perspective. They are always on hand to answer any questions.”

Insuring industrial glasshouses is uniquely complex because the environment is constantly changing

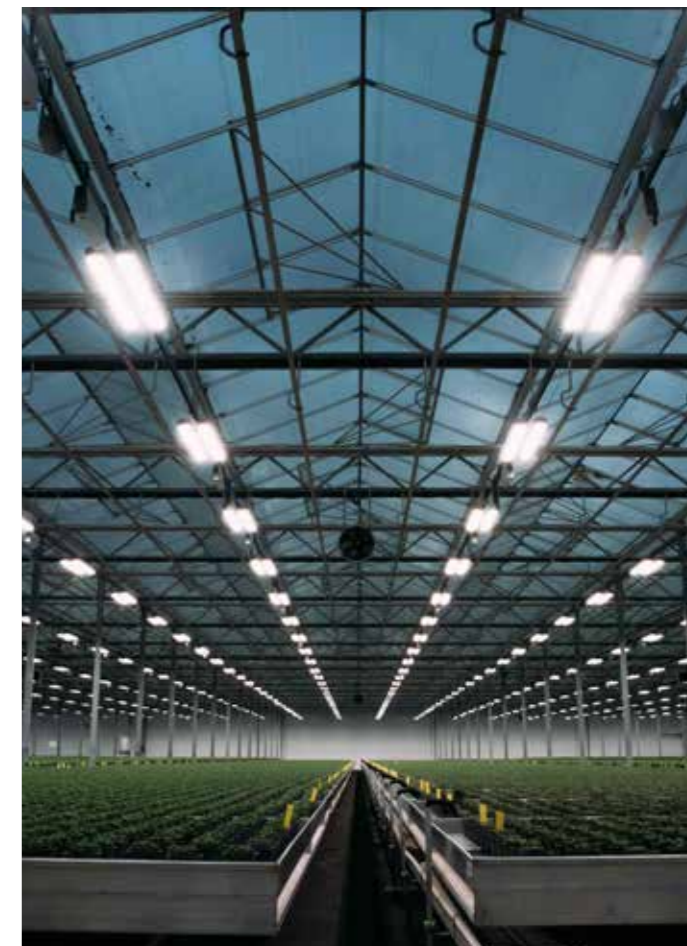
and relies on advanced technologies like automated heating and irrigation. Each crop has its own lifecycle and value, so insurance must account for seasonal risks and potential losses from business interruptions. Steve Eastwood’s years of expertise help Bridge Farm secure tailored cover, ensuring all aspects, including standard risks such as buildings, cyber, and directors’ and officers’, are protected with specialist knowledge.

Steve’s expertise has been pivotal as Bridge Farm expands and diversifies.

“We’re predominantly growing, but we have some R&D on the side. We have space set aside for bioscience. It did start with CBD oil, but now we’re going down the pharmaceutical route. Bakuchi oil and products that we can extract from the plants, which can go into cosmetics, for example.”

Bridge Farm’s bioscience arm maximises the capabilities of the growing space by creating a fully vertically integrated process, which is used in their specialist laboratories for tissue culture development, CO<sub>2</sub> extraction, product formulation, and analytical testing. This was the natural next step in their horticultural journey, giving them full control over every step of the plant’s journey from seed to final plant-derived ingredient.

Looking to the future, Bridge Farm are planning a phase three build to add a further 40 acres of glasshouse, future-proofing their horticultural and bioscience facilities. Their collaboration with Alan Boswell Group has streamlined complex insurance processes, providing peace of mind and specialist cover for their complex operation. As the business continues to expand, embracing bioscience and innovative plant-derived products, Bridge Farm remains at the forefront of automated growing technology.



“Steve and Jacky have streamlined the whole process. Now it’s not a hassle. Steve comes on site two or three times a year. It’s really good to get an outside perspective. They are always on hand to answer any questions.”

# TAX-EFFICIENT LIFE INSURANCE FOR BUSINESS OWNERS AND DIRECTORS

Compared to a personal life insurance policy, relevant life insurance is a tax-efficient way for businesses to provide life cover to individual employees and directors. Similar to death-in-service benefits, these policies pay out a lump sum to beneficiaries if an employee dies or is diagnosed with a terminal illness.

These policies are especially suited to SMEs that don't qualify for larger group schemes. We examine how relevant life insurance can save your business money while supporting employees and their loved ones.

## What is relevant life insurance (RLI)?

Relevant life insurance is a type of policy bought through a limited company to cover business owners, directors, and employees, offering a tax-free payout on death or terminal illness.

Unlike personal life insurance, which individuals buy for themselves, RLI policies are owned by the company paying the premium.

## Is relevant life insurance the same as a death-in-service benefit?

No. While both provide financial support to beneficiaries if an employee dies while employed, relevant life insurance is a standalone life insurance policy owned by the business for an individual employee.

Death-in-service is an employee benefit provided by the employer, and is usually linked directly to the employee's salary.

Death-in-service is owned and provided by a business or organisation, with payouts usually a multiple of the employee's salary. Employees are eligible only while employed by the company paying the premium.

Relevant life insurance policies are taken out on behalf of employees by a UK-based business entity (such as a limited company, LLP, or charity).

Policies can also be moved from employer to employer or converted to a personal life insurance policy if an employee leaves a company.

## Key benefits of relevant life insurance (over personal life insurance)

Relevant life insurance is an option for businesses that want to provide life cover for individual employees. Key benefits include:

### Tax-efficient

- RLI can help lower Corporation Tax liability.
- Beneficiaries receive a tax-free payout.
- Exempt from Income Tax and Inheritance Tax (if set up correctly).
- Does not count towards pension allowances.

### Cost-effective

- The business pays the premiums, freeing up personal funds.
- Due to the tax efficiencies, it may cost less than personal term life insurance for business owners or directors.

### Flexible and simple set-up

- Suitable for a wide range of businesses that may not require group life insurance.
- Can cover multiple directors or key employees under separate policies.
- Employees can transfer policies to a new employer.
- Supports strategic business planning, as policies can be updated if the business structure changes.

The value of tax benefits depends on your individual circumstances. Tax laws can change.



## Why might business owners consider replacing personal life insurance?

Relevant life insurance is a more tax-efficient way to arrange life insurance because it's:

- **Free from Income Tax** (as it's not considered a benefit-in-kind).
- **Exempt from Corporation Tax** (as it's an allowable expense).

## What key considerations are there when it comes to RLI?

Policies are aimed at directors and employees of UK-based businesses. It's not available to sole traders or partners.

If you're thinking about setting up relevant life insurance for your business, you'll also need to ensure the policy is arranged correctly (in a discretionary trust) to benefit from its tax efficiencies.

## • Free from employer and employee National Insurance contributions.

Another benefit for employees is that payouts are not part of someone's estate, so beneficiaries avoid probate. RLI payments are also exempt from Inheritance Tax as they are set up within a discretionary trust.

In contrast, personal life insurance is less tax-efficient, as premiums are paid from take-home salary, after Income Tax deductions.

## How we can help

If you think it's time to review your personal life insurance policies and want to compare costs and benefits with relevant life insurance, our financial planners are on hand to help.

As well as navigating you through your options, we can manage your policy, ensuring it is compliant and properly structured, so that you and your employees enjoy the full range of benefits. We can also help coordinate your needs alongside broader business protection and estate planning strategies.



To find out more, visit  
[alanboswell.com/relevant-life](https://alanboswell.com/relevant-life)

# MANAGING RISK WHILE PLAYING TO WIN

## How Unicorn Products continues to evolve after nearly a century in sport.

Walk into a pub in Britain in the 1930s, and you would almost certainly find two things: conversation and darts. What you would not expect is that one evening in rural Devon would quietly change how the game was played around the world.

That moment, as Edward Lowy, Managing Director, tells it, is where the story of Unicorn Products began.

Unicorn was founded by Edward's grandfather, Ferenc (Frank) Lowy, a Hungarian immigrant who arrived in the UK in the early part of the twentieth century looking, like so many others, for opportunity. A gifted linguist, Frank initially earned a living translating patents and intellectual property in London, even paying for his English lessons by teaching others what he had learned. But it was a chance encounter with the game of darts that prompted something else entirely.

"Back then, darts weren't sold in sets," Edward explains. "You'd go into a hardware shop and pick three individual darts out of a box. They'd all be slightly different. My grandfather reasoned that if the equipment was identical, you'd stand a better chance of improving your game."

The solution proved elegant and revolutionary. Frank designed a properly engineered dart, 'The Silver Comet', sold as a matched set of three, with consistent weight and dimensions, aluminium alloy shafts, and a patented domed flight system that reduced bounce-outs. He even introduced selling darts by weight in grams, a convention that remains standard today. The dart sets were an instant success with the more affluent middle and upper classes, selling 170,000 sets, through distribution partner Wisden, in the first year.

The first patent for Frank's design was filed in 1937, and Unicorn Products Ltd was formally incorporated in 1941. Almost a century later, the

impact of those decisions is still being felt.

### From side project to global brand

In the early years, the business was modest but successful. Unicorn's darts were far more expensive than anything else on the market, but they were measurably better. Serious players noticed.

As demand grew, so did expectations. "People would say, 'I love your darts, but do you do anything heavier?' Others would ask for something lighter," recalls Edward. "At first, we only made one weight, which was a dream for manufacturing. But Frank listened, and soon we had a range: heavy, medium, and light. Then people wanted something in between, so we introduced medium-heavy and light-medium. The range just kept growing because we responded to what players actually wanted."

Over time, the company expanded its range, professionalised its operations, and adapted its manufacturing routes. Overseas production was introduced, and a wider portfolio began to take shape.

Today, Unicorn Products is a premium sports equipment manufacturer and distributor, operating globally across several major brands:

- Unicorn Darts, still the foundation of the group
- Gunn & Moore, the historic cricket bat maker, founded in 1885 and still manufacturing in Nottingham
- Powerglide, specialising in cue sports
- Net1, supplying institutional basketball and netball systems
- Molten, the Japanese sports ball brand, distributed in the UK and Ireland

"Darts probably still accounts for around 55% of the business."

Despite its scale and international footprint, Unicorn has remained grounded in its manufacturing heritage, particularly in Nottingham, where Gunn & Moore bats are still made by skilled craftspeople and specialist machinery.

### A family business, shaped by experience

Edward joined the company in 1984, though not straight from university. After studying management, he began a graduate career at Ford of Europe, an experience which taught him as much about what he did not want as what he did.

"I realised that if I didn't go into work one day, it didn't really matter," he recalls. "The organisation was so big you were just a tiny cog."

When he joined Unicorn as a junior computer programmer, the contrast was stark. The business was manufacturing in the UK, employing around 200 people, and every system, process, and decision had a direct impact on outcomes.

That early systems role gave Edward an unusual vantage point. "I had to learn every aspect of the business because if something wasn't working, I had to understand why. Warehousing, manufacturing, finance, logistics. It was an education you couldn't get anywhere else."

By the mid-1990s, Edward and his brother Richard had taken the reins, with Edward as Managing Director and Richard as Sales Director, and their father, Stanley, remaining involved as Chairman. The transition was decisive.

"You realise very quickly that you can't keep asking what your father would have done," Edward says. "You have to make your own decisions and stand by them."

"We're a family business. We want to deal with people who understand that, not a call centre."

Managing complexity with limited margin for error

What has not changed over time is the inherent complexity of the business. Unicorn manufactures, imports, exports, retains considerable stock, operates machinery, stores flammable materials, and relies heavily on technology to function.

"You have all the complexity of a large business, but far fewer resources to deal with it," Edward explains. "That's true of systems, and it's true of risk."

The risks are multi-layered: manufacturing machinery, global shipping, overseas production, property, stock, and professional liability. One incident in particular brought that into sharp focus.

"We had a container on a vessel that sank off the south coast. You don't think it will happen until it does. Our dartboards were literally washing up on beaches."



Pictured: Ferenc (Frank) Lowy

### Finding the right insurance partner

Over the years, Unicorn had worked with a range of brokers, from small firms to large national players. As consolidation in the insurance industry increased, Unicorn Products' relationship with their broker became more distant and less personal.

"It stopped fitting our culture," Edward says. "We're a family business. We want to deal with people who understand that, not a call centre."

When Unicorn undertook a formal broker review, Alan Boswell Group stood out immediately.

"Gary came in and was outstanding. He wasn't selling. He was listening. He asked relevant questions and showed genuine interest in how the business actually works."

For Edward, it was about confidence and access. "I felt that if something serious happened, I could pick up the phone and speak to someone senior. That matters."

The insurance programme was reviewed and modernised, covering the full breadth of Unicorn's operations, from manufacturing and stock to international trade. More importantly, it was structured by people who understood the business.

### Securing the future through employee ownership

After nearly a century under family ownership, Unicorn reached another landmark moment in 2025: the transition to an Employee Ownership Trust.

With no desire to sell to private equity or overseas buyers, and no intention of forcing a fourth generation into the business, Edward and his brother chose a route that aligned with both head and heart.

"We've transferred 75% of the shares into the trust," Edward explains. "The business continues as normal, but it's now owned in the interests of the people who work here."

“ Gary came in and was outstanding. He wasn't selling. He was listening. He asked relevant questions and showed genuine interest in how the business actually works. ”

It is a model that protects the company's legacy while encouraging long-term stability and employee engagement. A new generation of managers is already in position beneath the board, ensuring continuity beyond the founders.

"I was pleased to stand up and tell staff that the new owners weren't a multinational," Edward says. "The business remains in the hands of those that know it inside and out."

### Still building, still evolving

From a single patented dart to a global portfolio of respected sports brands, Unicorn Products remains defined by curiosity, engineering expertise, and long-term thinking.

With a modern management structure, an employee-owned future, and a risk strategy built to support complexity instead of restricting it, the business is well placed for its next chapter.

As Edward puts it, "Whatever the future throws at us, we want partners around us who have thought about it before. That's what gives you confidence to keep building."



Pictured: Darts player Gary Anderson

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