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DEDICATED TO THE SWEDISH-BRITISH
BUSINESS COMMUNITY SINCE 1906



The energy of a
busy Saturday still
stays with me.

Karen O'Rourke, new Managing Director for the UK and Ireland at H&M, on being driven by the shop floor, focusing on people, and future-proofing H&M for the next 50 years.

Meet Karen O'Rourke – page 12.



ABOUT THE SWEDISH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOR THE UK

The Swedish Chamber of Commerce for the United Kingdom is the ultimate platform for entrepreneurs and businesses within the Swedish-British community. Founded in 1906 – by business, for business – we have represented, inspired, and promoted our members, extended commercial relations between our countries, and delivered first-class services and events for over a century.



**SWEDISH CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE FOR THE UK**

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 Swedish Chamber of Commerce for the UK
 SCCUK





DEAR MEMBER,

If you have been to one of our events recently, you will know the feeling. Full rooms, good energy, the kind of conversations that go on well after the programme wraps up. That is not something we take for granted – and it is exactly what pushes us to keep raising the bar.

This spring, we are doing just that.

Part of that means working smarter. Our tech journey is very much ongoing, and we are using data-driven insights to shape a Chamber that is more targeted, more personal, and more relevant to you. We want every interaction – every event, every introduction, every piece of content – to feel like it was made with you in mind. That is the direction we are heading.

It also means broadening what we bring to the table. Our Business Development Services team has a rich set of projects running this spring – delegations, ecosystem exchanges, matchmaking initiatives, and more. Different formats, different sectors, but the same underlying logic: creating the conditions for real, lasting connections between the Swedish and British ecosystems.

And on the forums front, there is a lot to be excited about. Our Life Sciences Forum and Tech Forum are among the highlights this season – both speaking to focus areas that will run through the Chamber's work across 2026. These are conversations that matter well beyond our community, and that is precisely the point. Swedish solutions to global challenges, on the UK stage. That has always been at the heart of what we do.

We hope to see you in the room – and hear where the conversation takes you.

FREDRIK WARNERYD

*Chief Executive
Swedish Chamber of Commerce for the UK*

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CMS
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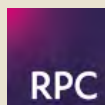
KREAB

NEFAB
SAVING RESOURCES

NEXXER

Nordea

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SAS



SKANSKA

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Swedbank

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WHITE & CASE



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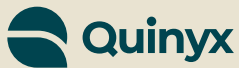


Goodwille.



IK Partners

Linklaters



SEB



STIRLING SQUARE 

VATTENFALL 



MEET THE PATRONS

The patronship of the Chamber consists of a core group of Member businesses, all committed to the long-term support of the Swedish-British business community. The Patrons are advocates for the Members of the Chamber and in return, the patronship comes with a range of added benefits, exclusive access and invites as well as extended marketing and networking opportunities.

Founded in 1992, the patronship has grown steadily and consists today of a vast number of Member businesses that represent a wide range of industries, from the financial sector and manufacturing, to retail and tech. The Patrons reflect the strength of the Chamber's business platform and represent some of the largest brands in Swedish-British business.



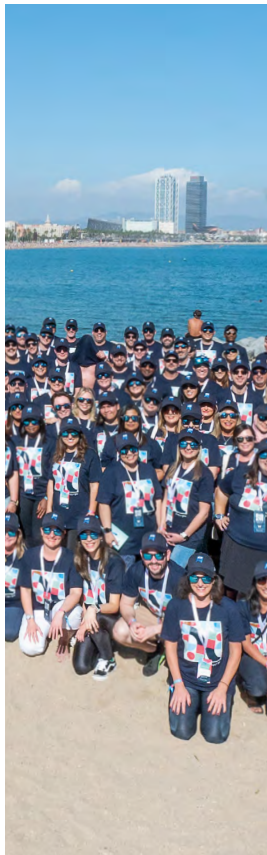
LINK 376: SPRING ISSUE

CONTENTS

PUTTING PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF MOBILITY

K2 Group champions people-centred global mobility, blending tech, sustainability, leadership.

08



CMS ON RESHAPING THE SWEDEN-UK DEAL LANDSCAPE

New Patron CMS strengthens Sweden-UK deals, collaboration, and resilient growth.

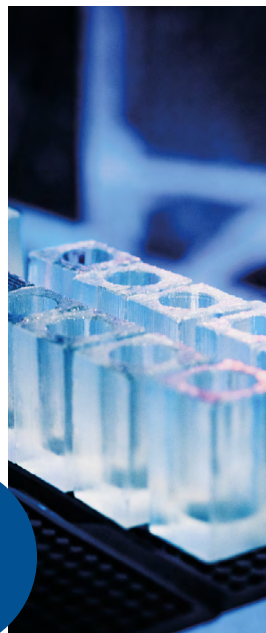
18



THE COOLEST BAR IN LONDON?

Experience Northern Swedish river ice transforming corporate hospitality, soon in central London.

22



'IF YOU SEE A SPADE, CALL IT A SPADE'

Hear how Stirling Square Capital Partners backs Swedish champions with candid, pan-European growth partnerships.

26



IN-DEPTH
INTERVIEW

WHEN DOES FUTURE-PROOFING STOP HELPING?

Eidra's Paul Harrop challenges future-proofing assumptions, drawing on frontline experience where strategies meet reality.

32



POWERING NET ZERO PROGRESS BEHIND THE SCENES

New member ABB helps businesses compete while accelerating net zero, resilience, and resource efficiency through industrial innovation.

38



ON THE COVER

FROM THE SHOP FLOOR TO MD – MEET KAREN O'ROURKE

With 25 years at H&M, Karen is leading the UK & Ireland business into a milestone year, as the brand marks 50 years in the market.

12

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

10: Q&A: Future Factories – the factory floor is changing, but what does that look like in practice?

38: Say 'Hej' to our new intern – a warm welcome to Emma!

42: Q&A: Engineering the transition – we explore how UK–Sweden industry can cut emissions and scale green tech.

INTRODUCING K2 GROUP

MOVING PEOPLE, MOVING BUSINESS

TEXT: ALEXANDER HÖGBERG | PHOTOS: K2 GROUP

When a company sends someone abroad, the paperwork is only part of the story. There is a family uprooting, a career shifting, a person stepping into the unknown. Organisations that grasp this human side of mobility – and build their service around it – are the ones that make a lasting difference. That belief sits at the heart of K2 Group and shapes how they think about people and talent.



K2 Group joins the SCC UK membership at a time when mobility is closely tied to wider business priorities. Growth often happens across borders, and the ability to move people smoothly, compliantly, and confidently is now a question of strategy as much as operations.

Because it's personal

K2's philosophy is captured in this simple phrase: because it's personal. For Jesper Albrekt, Global Head of Immigration, those words are a daily reminder of what is at stake.

"Our philosophy reflects the reality that cross-border moves affect an individual's security, family life, and ability to work," he says. "In practice, this means we prioritise clarity, relationship-building, and proactive support."

That support stretches across years rather than months. "From an immigration perspective it's often personal because we follow our clients through the full immigration lifecycle, starting with the first work visa, renewal, permanent residence, and finally getting citizenship, which is a truly rewarding and heartwarming moment for our teams." Mobility, in other words, is not just a file to be opened and closed, but a journey to be walked alongside people.

Growing into a global partner

The K2 story began in 2002, when founder Nick Plummer started the company as a household goods specialist. It has since grown into over 360 employees across 15 offices, with each new location marking a fresh chapter in its evolution.

"From an immigration perspective, a key milestone was in 2018 when we acquired London-based immigration and HR consultancy Harbour HR, and so entered the UK immigration market," Jesper recalls. Personally, he has been part of that journey: "I've been with the company for almost 9 years and I've never looked back."





Throughout the expansion journey, culture has remained a constant. “K2 is really proud to have been awarded the Great Place To Work® accreditation a number of years in a row.”

Most recently, 2025 and early 2026 marked another key milestone for the company: K2 Corporate Mobility rebranded as K2 Group. The point, Jesper says, is to “clearly demonstrate that we are more than just a moving company; we are a family of mobility and professional services brands,” including “a standalone, world-class immigration service, K2 X Border, which operates at the highest level in the industry.”

Technology, sustainability, and the human touch

Like many in the mobility space, K2 has invested heavily in technology – but as a way to make work more human, not less. “Technology brings structure and visibility to complex, deadline-driven processes,” Jesper says. “Our proprietary case management system and our Client Portal give HR teams real-time oversight of case progress, approvals, and key milestones.”

Data, as he puts it, is an enabler that allows consultants to focus on advice and personal support rather than administration. “We see data as an enabler, allowing our consultants to focus on advice, judgement, and personal support rather than administration.” That approach is supported by K2 AlphaTech, the in-house technology division that allows the company to develop its own tools in response to client needs.

Sustainability is also integrated into the core. “Sustainability at K2 isn’t an add-on; it’s woven into the very fabric of how

we operate.” The company participates in the United Nations Global Compact initiative and has achieved a Gold EcoVadis rating, “which places us amongst the top 5% of companies assessed globally in 2025.”

Mobility as a leadership story

Step back from the individual moves and mobility becomes a way to read how a business thinks about leadership, risk, and change. “Mobility has moved from being a purely operational function to a function that can deliver real strategic value,” Jesper says.

He highlights three areas where that value shows up: access to global skills, resilience and growth, and careers. “Employees – particularly younger generations – see international experience as a key differentiator in their development,” he notes. “Global exposure builds leadership capability, cultural intelligence, and adaptability in ways that no classroom can.” Companies that invest in meaningful mobility pathways, he argues, “are able to develop future leaders internally rather than relying solely on external hires.”

Looking to the near future, Jesper is “personally very excited to be starting up our China immigration function which is expected to be up and running by Q2 2026,” describing it as “a building block for future growth and partnerships with companies entering the Chinese market and for Chinese talent moving overseas.” It is one more reminder that behind every policy shift or market move there are people crossing borders, building skills, and shaping what comes next – a story that sits right at the intersection of mobility and leadership.



Q&A:

FUTURE FACTORIES

The factory floor is changing – faster than ever. Automation, data, and digital tools are reshaping how things are made and who makes decisions. But what does that really look like in practice? We sat down with key players from the SCC UK Patronship to explore the human side of industrial transformation, from the shop floor to the boardroom.

They answer two questions:

1. In your UK operations, how have automation and data most visibly changed work on the floor – and what hasn't really changed at all?

2. When you roll out new technologies, how do you involve operators and engineers so that they feel ownership of the change rather than having it imposed on them?



ASTRAZENECA

Mark Proctor, VP and General Manager UK Operations (Macclesfield)

1. In the UK, automation and data have materially elevated execution on the factory floor. Over the last five to ten years, we've deployed smart robotics in key areas, including end of line packing, Quality Control (QC) sample prep, co-bots and robots in sterile manufacturing, and Automatic Guided Vehicles (AGVs). Data drives everything – optimising processes and enabling real time decisions via our visual factory and Solvace-powered Power BI dashboards, accelerating data democratisation, and facilitating higher quality decisions. AI adoption is building on this foundation. What hasn't changed is the primacy of human expertise in operating equipment and solving problems – our operators are at the centre of what we do.

We embed change with operators and engineers from day one – co-design, iterate with feedback, invest time, fully engage pilot lines, and empower them as advocates.

2. We build ownership by engaging operators and engineers in cross-functional teams from day one – co-designing workflows, capturing frontline feedback, and iterating through multiple change cycles. We invest the time for hands-on trials, shadowing, and readiness training, aligning roles, standard operating procedures, and KPIs so the technology fits the work, not the other way round. In our Global Packing Centre, we implemented Digital Changeover with two pilot lines fully engaged from the outset. Those teams shaped the solution, validated usability, and became advocates who coached peers, shared outcomes, and sustained adoption. This approach embeds change into daily routines and creates trusted champions who drive continuous improvement; digital innovation is rarely right first time – it takes iteration and learning to be successful.





ATLAS COPCO

James McAllister, General Manager, Atlas Copco Tools & Industrial Assembly Solutions

1. Automation and data are transforming daily life on the factory floor. Rising labour costs and skills shortages have accelerated investment in AI, automation, and digital technologies, with 60% of UK manufacturers increasing digital spend to improve uptime, quality, and resilience through real-time data. The most profound shift isn't just technological – it's behavioural. Smart factories rely on operators who can interpret data, manage automated systems, and act on machine-generated insights, enabling faster, better-informed decisions.

What hasn't changed are core production principles: quality, safety, and repeatability. Smart manufacturing doesn't replace people – it augments them, combining automation with human judgement, adaptability, and problem-solving.

2. Successful technology adoption relies on people understanding, trusting, and shaping the tools they use – especially as digital skills gaps widen.

Co-creation from pilot stage: Rollouts that start small, gather operator input, and scale once real benefits are proven build stronger buy-in. Workers adopt new systems more readily when they help define what 'success' looks like.

Upskilling as a strategic priority: Upskilling is no longer a luxury. Organisations must invest in training and strengthen links with academia, as demonstrated by Atlas Copco and University College Birmingham's industry-accredited training pathway for UK battery manufacturing.

Making human centred technologies such as operator guidance systems and error proofing software that empower operators with real time data, reinforcing that technology supports, rather than replaces, people.



SSAB

Gary Matthews, UK & Benelux Sales Manager

1. Data is vital in any company to ensure the processes are working correctly and in the most efficient way.

We collect data across the whole business production to ensure optimisation and minimal waste. Transport to determine we're making deliveries in a sustainable, economical way. Purchasing to see if we are utilising best practices and sales to analyse order patterns for stock profile and repeatability of business.

SSAB focuses heavily on sustainability. We use data to accelerate our journey for decarbonisation, by monitoring renewables, understand our efficiencies, track our progress in the green transition and collate figures we can present to our customers.

Without accurate data, continuous improvements would not be possible.

2. When we implement anything new within SSAB, from the outset we include all departments. Whether be it new technology, system or processes, we need to understand the requirements from each area of the business.

Operators who are directly involved daily will be the champions of change. By having these people involved from the beginning they can share knowledge, have input on requirements, make suggestions and feel part of the process which is vital in making something work.

Implementing anything new can have teething problems. Having the primary users involved throughout the journey, means they will generally meet the transition with a positive mindset and encourage others along.



KAREN O'ROURKE

From the shop floor to Managing Director

TEXT: ALEXANDER HÖGBERG | PHOTOS: H&M

With 25 years at H&M – from the shop floor to the Managing Director's office – Karen O'Rourke is leading the UK & Ireland business into a milestone year, as the brand marks 50 years in the market. In this conversation, she reflects on future-proofing fashion retail, what it means to put people and customers first, and how collaboration through platforms like SCC UK is helping to shape the next chapter.





There is something telling about the way Karen O'Rourke talks about a busy Saturday on the shop floor. Not as a footnote to a career that has spanned 25 years and 14 different roles at H&M, but as a formative moment – one that still shapes the leader she is today. "My early years in store taught me what truly drives our business: our customers and our teams," she says, "and the energy of a busy Saturday still stays with me."

That grounding in the everyday realities of retail is, in many ways, the foundation of everything Karen has gone on to build. Starting on the shop floor and working through area and sales positions before stepping into senior leadership roles, she has gained a panoramic view of H&M – one that only a few Managing Directors can claim. Today, she leads the brand across the UK and Ireland, two of the most fiercely competitive and rapidly changing fashion markets in the world. And she does so at a significant moment, as 2026 marks 50 years of H&M in the UK.

For Karen, that milestone is a springboard rather than a victory lap. "The UK and Ireland are incredibly important markets with a long heritage for the brand, but we also know that the way customers live, shop, and engage with fashion is evolving faster than ever," she says. "Future-proofing means meeting those expectations not just today but anticipating what they will need tomorrow."

Leading a landmark year

Half a century is a long time in any industry. In fashion retail – continually reshaped by digital disruption, shifting consumer values, and global economic pressure – it is an extraordinary achievement. Karen is under no illusion about the pressures that come with it. "As with every other retailer in the UK, we are operating in a challenging economic environment, with cautious consumer spending and higher operating costs."

Yet her instinct is always to look for the possibility inside the pressure. "However, with challenges comes opportunities!" she insists. "We are seeing consumers still investing in meaningful, elevated products, and we are meeting this head-on by investing in our assortment, strengthening our fashion

authority, and ensuring customers see H&M as the place where style, quality, and value meet."

That combination – style, quality, and value – is a defining thread in her leadership agenda. It is not about chasing the lowest price point, but about staying both innovative and dependable for customers who are more discerning than ever.

The principles behind the person

Look beneath the strategy slides, and Karen's leadership is anchored in a handful of personal principles. "My leadership ethos is anchored in a few core principles," she reflects. "First, customer centricity – every decision should reflect what's best for our customers and support our long-term brand."

Equally important is her belief in people. "I believe great results come when individuals feel seen, trusted, and empowered, and I strive to create an environment where people can grow, make decisions and bring their whole selves to work."

She links this to very tangible experiences over her career: "Seeing team members grow into leaders remains one of the most rewarding parts of my journey."

In times of uncertainty, Karen returns to clarity. "I also value clarity and consistency, because in times of change, teams deserve transparency, clear expectations, honest communication, and a steady presence."

And she is explicit that she favours collaboration over hierarchy because "diverse perspectives and collective problem-solving always lead to stronger outcomes than top-down direction."

Perhaps most telling is her attitude to experimentation. "I hold a deep belief in the courage to try, learn, and adapt – our industry never stands still, and fostering curiosity, experimentation, and continuous learning is essential, even when outcomes aren't guaranteed."

Looking back, she credits the breadth of her own journey for shaping this mindset. "Starting in store really grounded me in being customer-centric and taught me the value of





Seeing team members
grow into leaders remains
one of the most rewarding
parts of my journey.

Karen O'Rourke, Managing Director UK/IE at H&M





teamwork," she says, while working across sales, operations and leadership roles has given her "a comprehensive understanding of the business and the ability to balance hands-on detail with strategic direction."

Where style, quality, and value converge

Ask Karen what makes H&M distinctive in the UK and Ireland today, and she quickly moves beyond product alone. "It's about deepening customer relevance across every touchpoint, strengthening our stores as true destinations, and building a more sustainable and agile business."

Physical retail remains central to that vision. "The appetite for engaging physical destinations continues to grow," she notes, highlighting how H&M is investing in stores as spaces people want to spend time in, rather than just transact. At the same time, a strong loyalty and omni-channel offering sit at the core of H&M's business model,

ensuring that customers experience them as one brand, wherever they meet it.

Digitalisation is the glue that holds these pieces together. "Digitalisation offers enormous potential for us in the UK & Ireland, and the biggest opportunities lie in using technology and data to create a more seamless, personalised, and efficient customer experience across every channel," Karen explains. "Our omni-channel approach continues to evolve, with new app features and digital capabilities – both online and in stores – allow us to connect data more intelligently, streamline the shopping journey and offer services that feel timely, relevant, and intuitive."

Ultimately, the aim is clear: "These investments ensure we can deliver a flexible, consistent experience that reflects how customers actually shop today."



Building a sustainable future, at pace

Sustainability is no longer a side-project in fashion – it is at the heart of how brands earn trust. For Karen, it is inseparable from the idea of future-proofing. "Accelerating our work in circularity and responsible sourcing is a critical part of how we future-proof H&M," she says. "Our strategy is built around four clear shifts: decarbonising our supply chain, increasing recycled and sustainably source materials, aligning production to demand, and scaling circular business models."

The broader lesson for leaders

Karen's story is, in one sense, very much an H&M story – built on decades within one organisation, from shop floor to Managing Director. But the lessons it holds resonate far beyond fashion.

The leaders best equipped to navigate uncertainty are often those who, like Karen, have led through it before. "During my tenure, I've led teams through both market shifts and organisational changes that really strengthened my communication, resilience, and reminded me to always focus on what truly drives results."

Crucially, she points to the role of others in shaping her perspective: "I truly believe that collaborating with diverse teams and leaders both through good and challenging times is what has broadened my perspective and taught me patience, empathy, and the importance of staying true to long term values."

Her role on the board of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce for the UK (SCC UK) is a natural extension of this mindset. "The SCC UK provides a fantastic network for the Swedish-British community. It brings together likeminded businesses and individuals across a variety of sectors, providing insights on a range of topics, from public & government affairs to industry specific support for businesses of all sizes," she says. "I look forward to further collaboration with the SCC UK, expanding our network across the H&M team, and connecting our colleagues with the organisation to ensure that we can all benefit from the insights and platform that the SCC UK offers."

As H&M marks 50 years in the UK, and as Karen steps fully into her role as its leader, both milestones feel like the beginning of something rather than a culmination. The work of future-proofing a business is never finished. But it helps, enormously, to have someone at the helm who has been preparing for it for 25 years.



A NEW SCC UK PATRON'S VIEW OF THE DEAL LANDSCAPE

TEXT: MAJA STENBERG

PHOTOS: ALEXANDER HÖGBERG & CMS

Sweden–UK business is moving from routine to strategic. What once centred on getting goods over the border now increasingly revolves around shared bets on energy transition, digital infrastructure, high growth tech, and more resilient supply chains. On both sides of the North Sea, boards are weighing the same questions: which projects to back, how much risk to carry, and how to stay competitive as conditions shift.





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We are seeing opportunities in core sectors – and Swedish and British businesses are uniquely positioned to collaborate.

New SCC UK Patron CMS is in the middle of that conversation.

With a long history of advising across jurisdictions, the firm has watched the UK–Nordic corridor move from a promising niche to a core part of its workload.

“We see a consistent flow of investment between the UK and the Nordics in sectors like energy, technology, infrastructure, and real estate,” says Eva Talmacsi, partner in the global M&A and corporate team at CMS London. “Our London and Stockholm colleagues work as a single team on mandates that span both markets, helping clients with strategy, structuring, and execution.” That rhythm – and the close teamwork behind it – helps businesses move with more confidence in an uncertain environment.

Next level relationship building

Against this backdrop, CMS is joining the Swedish Chamber of Commerce for the UK as a Patron – a step that links the firm’s legal insight directly with a Swedish-British business community looking for growth and collaboration.

In other words, it’s about people more than anything else. “Becoming a Patron was a natural step,” says Magnus Forssman, partner in CMS’s Stockholm Office. “We have grown our Nordic platform significantly with offices in Sweden and Norway, and strong ties across Denmark and Finland. Supporting the Chamber and its community lets us share insight, foster connections, and help Swedish and British businesses find and scale opportunities.”

Eva highlights the SCC UK as “a great forum to bring people together: corporates, investors, and advisers, all aligned around practical business outcomes.” In practice, that might mean a Business Breakfast where a Swedish scaleup meets its future UK distribution partner over coffee, or a roundtable that gives a British investor a clearer view of the Nordic landscape before they commit capital. It can also be a platform where bigger themes – from geopolitical tensions to digital infrastructure – take centre stage, and ideas are tested and sharpened before they turn into transactions or long-term projects.

Eva agrees: “We are seeing opportunities in core sectors – and Swedish and British businesses are uniquely positioned to collaborate. The Swedish Chamber of Commerce for the





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Supporting the Chamber and its community lets us share insight, foster connections, and help Swedish and British businesses find and scale opportunities.

UK plays an important role in this ecosystem, and we're excited to be part of it."

Magnus sums up what clients are looking for today: "Clients today want advisers who understand not just the law, but the business drivers in each market. In Sweden and the UK, we're seeing converging priorities: from digital infrastructure and renewable energy to high-growth tech, and that's where we add value."

Deals that match today's risks and ambitions

Across the Nordics, dealmaking is changing shape, and entry into new markets remains a key driver for M&A. In 2024, nearly a third of Nordic transactions included purchase price adjustments and earn-outs are becoming more common as parties bridge valuation gaps and manage uncertainty.

"These structural shifts – savvy use of deal mechanisms, more sophisticated risk allocation – reflect a maturing market," Eva says. "For international investors, it means faster execution and clearer pathways to value."

Magnus adds: "Clients are thinking beyond price. They want predictability and post-closing success – and that changes how we advise on transaction terms."

Beyond transactions – energy, infrastructure, and data

The Swedish-British relationship is just as active outside pure M&A. The Nordic region's energy transition, digital infrastructure, and storage markets are drawing interest from global capital – from Norway's data centre growth to Sweden's industrial and digital ecosystem and Finland's focus on renewables and storage.

Eva sees a clear pattern emerging in boardroom conversations. "Our clients are looking at dual-use

investments" – projects that address multiple needs such as energy flexibility, grid resilience or integrated data infrastructure, she explains. "Those structures can unlock efficiency and resilience, and we are helping clients think through legal, regulatory, and commercial frameworks." For boards and management teams, this translates into decisions about where and how to build assets that will still make sense a decade from now.

Long-term partnership and wider change

Across sectors and borders, both partners come back to one theme: relationships. "We don't just show up for transactions, we build long-term partnerships," Magnus reflects. "That means understanding how clients work, what keeps their executives awake at night, and anticipating how markets are shifting."

Eva adds: "It's about being ahead of the curve. Whether it's ESG, digital transformation or emerging regulation, our teams invest in knowledge, technology, and coordination so clients can act with confidence." Internally, CMS is embracing tools that enhance quality and consistency – including expanded use of AI platforms that support lawyers firm-wide. The aim is to give clients advice that is not only technically sound, but timely, joined-up, and highly tailored.

No one can predict every twist in the market – but you can choose who you work with, which tools you rely on, and how you make decisions so they can bend without breaking. Whether you are entering the UK, scaling across the Nordics, reshaping your infrastructure or backing the next wave of Swedish-British innovation, the message from CMS is the same: connect early, stay curious, nurture enduring partnerships, and build with resilience in mind.



JOIN CMS – BECOME AN SCC UK PATRON

CMS is one of the newest SCC UK Patrons – our most prestigious membership tier for organisations shaping Swedish-British business. As a Patron, you gain exclusive access, high-level networking, and a platform to make an impact. Ready to join this distinguished group? Become a Patron and help shape the future of SCC UK.



THE COOLEST BAR IN LONDON?

TEXT: MAJA STENBERG | PHOTOS: ICEHOTEL



There is a theory in corporate hospitality that the right setting can do more for a team than any agenda. Soon, you will be able to test it for yourself – in a room made entirely of ice, carved from the Torne River in northern Sweden, in the heart of central London. ICEBAR by ICEHOTEL is opening steps away from Leicester Square and Covent Garden, and everything inside – the walls, the art, the glass in your hand – comes straight from northern Sweden.

One material, one idea

The concept behind ICEBAR begins, as most strong ideas do, with a clear belief. “ICEBAR is an extension of the philosophy behind ICEHOTEL in northern Sweden,” says Marie Herrey, CEO. The theme shifts every year, shaped by experienced sculptors who have spent seasons working at ICEHOTEL in Jukkasjärvi.

What that produces is not a themed bar in the conventional sense. “It isn’t a set design. It’s an art space made of natural ice, shaped by designers and artists each season,





bringing a piece of northern Sweden’s environment and creativity to the middle of the city,” Marie says. This is not a constructed aesthetic – it is a place shaped by artists, a river, and the Swedish winter that gives the ice its character.

The Arctic in the heart of London

At –5°C, guests enter wrapped in capes and gloves, served cocktails and sparkling drinks in glasses made entirely of crystal-clear Torne River ice.

“Bringing ICEHOTEL to London is like sharing a small piece of our home – the ice, the art, and the stories behind it,” Marie explains. The provenance is real and traceable: every winter, ice is harvested from the Torne River and used to construct both ICEHOTEL and the ICEBARs.

Lighting, Marie says, is crucial to how the space feels. “Light moving through ice creates depth and texture.” Then there are the quieter sensory details – the acoustics of a frozen room, the cold weight of an ice glass, the Nordic flavours in the cocktails, crafted by Norrbottens Destilleri in northern Sweden. Each element compounds the sense that you have, briefly, left London.

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Bringing ICEHOTEL to London is like sharing a small piece of our home – the ice, the art, and the stories behind it.

MARIE HERREY, CEO AT ICEHOTEL





The guiding principle of ICEHOTEL's founder, Yngve Bergqvist, is captured in a Swedish phrase: "Gräv där du står" – dig where you stand. Use what is around you. Build from there.

Where the room does the talking

London is not short of bars. What it is shorter on is spaces that genuinely shift the dynamic between people. "When people step into a space made entirely of ice, it immediately changes the dynamic of the room and conversations start naturally," says Marie.

For companies, that translates into clear practical value. Whether it is a client dinner, a team night or a leadership kick-off, the environment does work that a conventional venue simply cannot. Guests leave with "a sense of creativity, curiosity, and connection" – and in organisations where those three qualities matter, that is worth something.

Future-proofing something that melts

Future-proofing is SCC UK's theme for 2026 – and few places embody the question more literally than ICEBAR. Here is a venue designed to be extraordinary, built from a material that vanishes every year. An appealing paradox.

"The temporary nature of ice is actually part of the concept," Marie explains. "At ICEHOTEL we rebuild the seasonal part of the hotel every winter, which keeps the design fresh and allows new artists to reinterpret the space each year." Renewal is not a risk to be managed – it is the operating model.

Behind the artistry lies considered engineering. Ice is harvested in March, at its thickest and clearest. "The total volume of ice used for ICEHOTEL and all ICEBARs corresponds to roughly ten seconds of the Torne River's natural flow, which shows how abundant the resource is." It is then stored in Jukkasjärvi, kept cold by the northern Swedish climate and with the help of solar energy. Transport runs on a fuel containing 0% fossil oil, reducing emissions by at least 90% compared to traditional diesel.

"Ice is a natural, renewable material borrowed from the Torne River," Marie says. "We borrow it for a season, transform it into art and experiences, and then return it to the cycle it came from." For companies with serious ESG commitments, that is a documented process – not a marketing line.

What Nordic clarity teaches organisations

Perhaps the most transferable lesson from ICEBAR has nothing to do with ice. The guiding principle of ICEHOTEL's founder, Yngve Bergqvist, is captured in a Swedish phrase: "Gräv där du står" – dig where you stand. Use what is around you. Build from there.

That discipline runs counter to how many organisations operate. Strategy documents multiply. Brand values accumulate. The original idea gets buried. ICEBAR offers a counterargument in built form: by "building an experience around a single element – and telling a clear story about where it comes from – you create something distinctive and memorable."

For leaders thinking about organisational culture, the parallel is worth sitting with. The most resilient cultures, like the most resilient venues, are built around one idea – and the discipline to keep returning to it, season after season.



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'IF WE SEE A SPADE, WE CALL IT A SPADÉ'

TEXT: ALVA MILD | PHOTOS: RADEK DRANIKOWSKI/RADSKI

Stirling Square Capital Partners has become one of the leading pan-European investors helping Swedish mid-market companies scale onto the European stage, pairing London-based capital and networks with a long-term commitment to Nordic strengths. We spoke to Henrik Lif, Managing Partner at Stirling Square, about how this model plays out in practice.

From Stockholm to London: A Swedish dealmaker's journey

Henrik spent most of his career in Swedish private equity before joining Stirling Square in 2017. He describes the Swedish private equity environment as rather homogeneous, with colleagues in the industry often thinking in similar ways and having been shaped by the same universities and early career steps.

Today, his London base places him in a setting that feels quite different. Stirling Square brings together 14 nationalities and 11 languages in one office, and as Henrik puts it, "We have such diverse backgrounds, and sometimes we don't understand the nuances of each other's cultures." That diversity shapes the way investments are made: "It's actually not as easy as it is in the Nordics to get something through the investment committee. It's a higher threshold and you get questions that you never get in a more homogeneous environment."

This has created a quite distinct and direct culture at Stirling Square. "If we see a spade, we call it a spade." As he adds with a smile, "I am famous for that. I think I was probably too direct for the Swedish community." His own cross-border move, from Stockholm to London, mirrors what he now helps portfolio companies do – step out of the comfort of their home markets and learn to operate in a more complex, international environment without losing their clarity or edge.

Backing local leaders to go global

Stirling Square is a pan-European private equity fund in the lower mid-market. From day one, the firm was set up with

a wider European lens rather than as a local fund that later expanded. When the company was set up in 2002, they initially focused largely on investments in industrial companies.

Over time, its investment focus has shifted, as Henrik explains, "In the last 8-9 years since I've been around, our investments have skewed more into business services and tech. We could occasionally do an industrial deal as well, but these days I think there will always be a tech element to it."

Today, Stirling Square backs mid-sized, local or regional champions, usually valued between €100 and €500 million, whose management teams have the ambition to expand beyond their home markets. The firm's differentiator is not just capital. It is a repeatable model of taking local leaders and giving them the tools, networks, and acquisitions to become international platforms.

The Swedish edge in European deals

Within that European canvas, Sweden has become one of Stirling Square's key markets. Structurally, the Nordic home markets are small. "Swedish companies typically need to expand outside of their home markets earlier in their life compared to in France, Italy, or here in the UK," Henrik notes. That naturally creates management teams who are used to thinking beyond their own borders – a close match with Stirling Square's international focus.

However, it is not only about size. Henrik describes the ease of doing business in the Nordics as a result of "a very well-organised corporate environment with a high trust and transparency index," and the fact that English is widely spoken in Swedish management teams further reduces friction in cross-border work.

For investors and partners, this mix – early international ambition, strong governance and transparency, and ease of communication – makes Swedish firms particularly attractive candidates for the kind of international growth journeys that Stirling Square specialises in.





A global industry still stuck on paper

Two of Stirling Square's recent Swedish investments sit in construction tech, a sector that, as Henrik puts it, is "one of the industries which has had the slowest adaptation of digital solutions." Therefore offers a long runway for value creation, with both companies providing digital services that make construction projects more efficient and compliant across an expanding international footprint.

Henrik's favourite illustration of how far the industry still has to go comes from a visit to a construction site in New York. "You had a multi billion dollar project, but the site manager was still tracking who was on site with a clipboard and a ballpoint pen," he recalls. For him, that moment captured both the risk and the opportunity: "If you can't even say who's on site, you can't manage safety, productivity, or costs properly."

A playbook for growth

Stirling Square's investments typically follows the same playbook: back a local champion, then accelerate its growth through international expansion, add-on acquisitions, and a broader suite of services. That doesn't just create a larger geographic footprint; it also builds more diversified, resilient businesses. As these companies add software and services on top of their core offerings, a greater share of their revenue becomes recurring, which is exactly why Stirling Square looks for business models that can shift towards subscription and service income rather than relying on one-off industrial sales.

Preparing mid market champions for tomorrow

For Henrik, future-proofing is not a buzzword but a set of concrete priorities. When asked how Stirling Square is future-proofing its portfolio, he points to two pillars: "We focus on internationalisation and digitalisation."

On the digital side, Stirling Square has a dedicated head of digitalisation who works with around 20 external consultants to support portfolio companies. "Typically, we help them recruit a CTO and build a proper technology function," Henrik explains. "Most companies in our size bracket don't have these capabilities and resources in-house, so they welcome the help rather than feeling threatened by it."

Sustainability is treated with similar seriousness. "We develop individual sustainability programmes for each and every portfolio company," he says, underlining that generic checklists are no longer enough. Together, digitalisation and sustainability form a focused agenda that keeps businesses relevant without overwhelming management with endless initiatives.

A partnership model of support

Underpinning all of Stirling Square's investments is a clear partnership model. "They are still running the business, we are here to support," Henrik emphasises. As a result, Stirling Square avoids the trend of parachuting in operating partners: "If the team is not right, we change the team – we don't try to run the business from the outside."

Similarly, supporting the Swedish Chamber of Commerce for the UK is a natural extension of that partnership mindset. Being a Patron of the SCC UK means showing up, contributing, and building long-term relationships in a community they believe in.

In many ways, that mirrors the role Stirling Square seeks to play for its portfolio companies: a committed, quietly ambitious partner helping Nordic champions step confidently onto a wider European stage.

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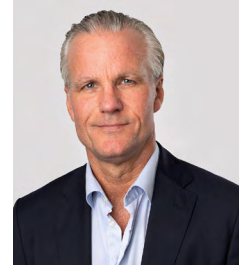


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Fredrik Warneryd, Chief Executive
fredrik.warneryd@scc.org.uk

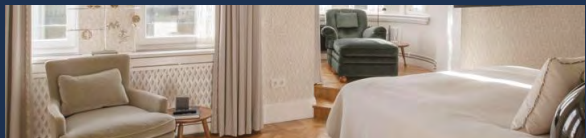


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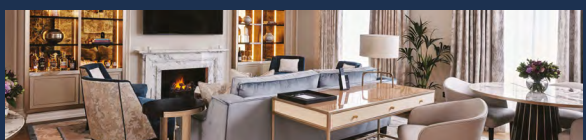
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Over the year, the SCC UK hosts a wide range of different events, such as Forums, Flagships, Business Breakfasts, Roundtable Discussions, and Business Insights for our Young Professionals' community. Here are some of the events hosted in the recent months.



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WHEN DOES FUTURE-PROOFING STOP HELPING?

TEXT: MAJA STENBERG | PHOTOS: ALEXANDER HÖGBERG

We've all heard it. Future-proofing. It sounds reassuring and hard to argue with. But Paul Harrop doesn't deal in comfortable consensus. As UK Managing Director of Eidra – a 1,400-person global consultancy headquartered in Sweden – he's spent years sitting with organisations at the point where plans meet reality. And that vantage point tends to produce some inconvenient questions.

His background is in product, sharpened by experience in strategy and technology consulting, and filtered through a lens of economics and behavioural economics that often challenges conventional wisdom. So, when the subject of future-proofing comes up – SCC UK's theme of the year and a phrase currently doing a lot of heavy lifting across boardrooms – his reaction is telling.

"Mild frustration," he says, smiling. And then he explains why.

The problem with the word 'proofed'

"The future is unknown. Proofing assumes you're fixed. So how can you ever be future-proofed?"

Paul encourages us to sit with that thought for a moment. The word proofed implies completion – like sealing a document, or waterproofing a jacket. You do the thing, and then you're done. Safe. Sorted. Ready for whatever comes next. Except, as Paul points out with certain humour, nothing complex works like that.

"If I built a castle back in the day, was I future-proofed? No – because the weaponry changed."

Paul explains how every time an organisation entrenches itself around a fixed model of the world, the world subtly

reorganises itself around that decision. It's not that future-proofing is a bad instinct – the desire to be prepared is entirely rational. The problem, according to Paul, is the static solution mindset it tends to produce at precisely the moment organisations need to be dynamic.

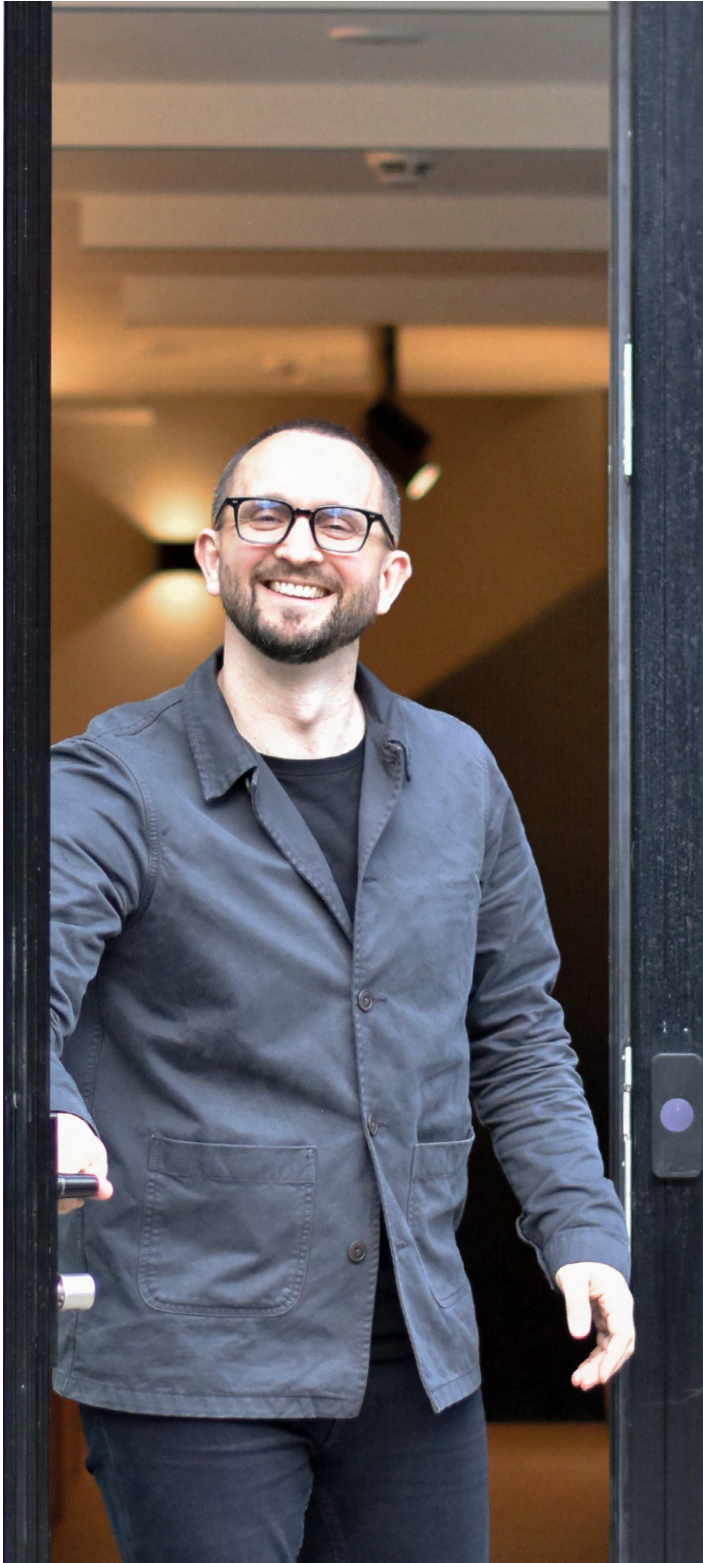
"The language locks you into a static solution mindset at exactly the moment you need a dynamic capability mindset."

There's a literary dimension to this, too. Paul cites an unlikely source – Gould's Book of Fish by Richard Flanagan, an Australian novel – to land the point. In it, there's a line he returns to often: "Definitions belong to the definer, not the defined." With this, Paul points out that just because you've decided something is future-proofed doesn't make it so. The market, as ever, has its own ideas.

ABOUT EIDRA

Eidra is a Nordic-born consultancy collective, founded in Stockholm in 2019. It is built on the conviction that real business transformation requires deep collaboration between consulting, creativity and engineering. The collective brings together over 1,400 specialists across 17 offices in Europe and the US under a partner-owned model. Eidra's London office connects that Nordic heritage – pragmatic, design-literate, engineering-led – with the scale and ambition of the UK market.





“

The language locks you into a static solution mindset at exactly the moment you need a dynamic capability mindset.

PAUL HARROP, UK MANAGING DIRECTOR
ON FUTURE-PROOFING

Eidra



“

Speed without direction is just a faster way to get lost.

What to aim for instead – and what it actually takes

So if ‘future-proofed’ is the wrong destination, what’s the right one? Paul’s answer is less a slogan and more a philosophy: future preparedness. Resilience, yes – but not the passive kind.

“You’re going to get knocked around, you don’t know what’ll happen, but you need to be able to get back up. And I think also front foot. You need resilience to get back up in a fight, but you also need to be able to attack.”

He talks about organisations needing to shrink the gap between “something has changed” and “we’ve adapted to it.” That requires three things working together according to Paul: sensing change earlier than your competitors, interpreting what that change means for your specific context, and moving fast enough to act before the window closes. Most organisations, he observes, are genuinely good at one of the three. Very few are good at all of them. And critically, the sensing, the interpreting, and the acting tend to happen in different parts of the business – disconnected from each other, the signal diluted by the time it reaches anyone who can do something useful with it.

“Joining those three things up is usually where the real work is.”

AI, amplification, and the risk of efficient drift

It wouldn’t be a business conversation in 2026 without a discussion of artificial intelligence – but here too, Paul resists the familiar narratives. He’s neither breathlessly optimistic nor performatively sceptical. What he offers instead is a useful reframe.

“AI is a signal amplifier, not a signal interpreter.”

Where it genuinely helps, he argues, is in processing the sheer volume and velocity of information that humans simply can’t. Spotting patterns at speed, reducing friction in synthesis, freeing up leaders to spend more time actually deciding rather than assembling information. All real. All valuable.

Where the hype outpaces the help, in his view, is anything that tries to replace human judgement at the interpretation layer. AI can surface that something is changing. It cannot yet tell you what that means for your organisation – your culture, your positioning, your relationships, the things that are not in any dataset.



“Speed without direction is just a faster way to get lost. The strategic and cultural layer has to stay human, or you end up with very efficient drift.”

There’s a specific trap he flags for leaders who are currently excited about cost reduction through automation: the bottleneck doesn’t disappear, it moves. “We’ve been through these cycles many times where leaders see productivity gains, forecast cost reduction, and then reduce their headcount. And then the people that could have wrangled that – they need to recruit back in.” He calls it a Jevons paradox: new technology creates new use cases that people need to do things for. It’s always been the case, and there’s no particular reason to think this time will be different.

The human factors that actually matter

Strip away the frameworks and the technology, and Paul keeps returning to two things: psychological safety and decision rights.

He is direct about the risks here. In his view, if people don’t feel safe raising bad news early, the early warning system fails at source. He sees how leaders can end up making decisions based on a sanitised version of reality and then wonder why the strategies keep missing. For him, unclear decision rights are just as risky – if adapting to a new signal means escalating through multiple layers before anyone feels able to act, the moment has effectively passed.



And then there's what he calls "tolerance for being temporarily wrong." Organisations that treat a wrong bet as a failure learn slowly and painfully. Organisations that treat it as data learn fast and cheaply. "That's not a process – it's a cultural norm, and it comes almost entirely from how leadership behaves when things don't go to plan."

He has a phrase for the kind of leadership he thinks organisations will need more of: the generalist synthesiser. Not the deep specialist, not the empire builder, but the person who can hold complexity without collapsing it too early. Who can sit with ambiguity, work across domains, and make sense of signals from multiple directions. His practical suggestion is simple: start a weekly 30-minute habit of reading one thing outside your industry to notice what questions it raises about your own context.

From concrete to conference stages – a partnership in practice
To see what this thinking looks like when applied, consider one of Eidra's recent client partnerships. A ConstructionTech company came to Eidra with a focused hardware brief: reduce unit costs significantly. Paul and his team spent days on construction sites, learning the domain from the ground up. The team achieved and exceeded the target hardware cost reduction – but that turned out to be just the start.

"Just because you have figured out a way to lower unit cost on hardware doesn't mean the business thrives. That

hardware then needs to connect with the cloud. And if that cloud is underperforming, then you've got to solve that."

What followed was a full business transformation – SaaS design, brand strategy, visual design, spatial design, and more. One brief resolved bottleneck by bottleneck. That, Paul would say, is sense-and-respond in action.

The direction of travel

For Paul, strategy has become less about a fixed plan and more about a maintained direction with flexible execution. That's a harder thing to communicate to an organisation, and a harder thing to hold onto when markets are volatile and investors want certainty. He's honest about that tension.

The organisations that navigate that tension best, he suggests, are the ones that have stopped looking for the fortress and started building the fitness. That can compete in races they didn't even know were coming.

Future-proofing as a label? Potentially useful – it can rally people, force them to think about scenarios, create shared language inside large organisations where alignment is genuinely hard. As a destination? In Paul's view, it does not exist. The future will always have moved.

What remains is the day to day work of adapting – steady evolution, sudden disruption, and a willingness to accept that the job is never quite finished.

5 QUICK QUESTIONS WITH PAUL

Extra free day in London?

Browse, eat and drink on Bermondsey Street, wander through Maltby Street Market, grab a coffee at Monmouth and then go to the marvellous Brotherhood Games shops in Bermondsey Blue to geek out on games, cards, and merch. And if you've still got the energy, head to the Brunel Museum and Mayflower pub for some added culture and a well earned drink on the river.

One small daily habit?

Codifying what I know or what I've learned about a thing that day. And then collating that in a repository. At this point in my career, it's a sprawling, chaotic list of quotes, visuals, frameworks, etc. But it's a wonderful reference point for me, that I use often.

Last thing that really stuck with you?

In Athens recently, I took a jewellery making course with my family and a friend. I wasn't expecting much from it, but truly loved it. It was the combination of imagining something physical, experimenting with how to create it, playing with tooling and techniques, failing, starting again. And ultimately creating something flawed, but distinctly mine. Loved it!

If Eidra was a person?

Obi-Wan Kenobi. And I mean that seriously, not just as a Star Wars fan. Think about what makes him distinctive – he's not the most powerful person in the room, he's the wisest. He doesn't impose a solution, he helps others find their own clarity. He's steady when

everything around him is moving fast. And he's always thinking about the long game, not just the immediate battle. That's genuinely what I want Eidra to be. An organisation that makes the people it works with more capable, not more dependent. That earns trust slowly and keeps it.

That brings calm and rigour to moments that feel chaotic. If a client walked away from us thinking 'I can handle this now' – that's the win.

One sentence of career advice to your younger self?

"Map it. Model it. Draw it"

I'm a visual thinker. If I can't visualise it, I don't understand it. So, embrace that.



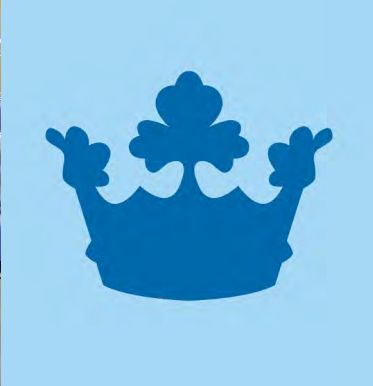
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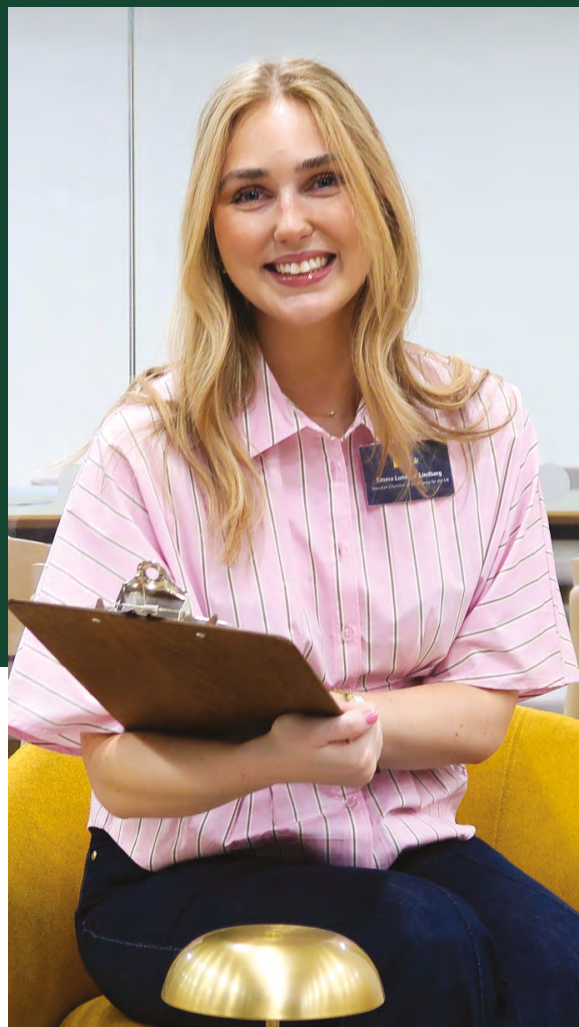
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Say 'hej' to **EMMA!**

Meet our new intern Emma Lundén Lindberg, who recently joined our team to support our members and help strengthen our community. In this short Q&A, she talks about her background, what attracted her to SCC UK, and how she hopes to contribute to an even better experience for our members.



What attracted you to SCC UK and this internship?

I moved to London one and a half years ago for my master's and have since fallen in love with the city's energy, diversity, and British culture. Living abroad has also made me more aware, and proud, of Swedish innovation, and of how much Swedish companies can offer the UK market. Having moved here post Brexit, I've also seen how complex and confusing the UK landscape can be from the outside. That's why SCC UK appealed to me so much: it sits right at the intersection of these two worlds, helping Swedish businesses take their first steps into the British market in a very hands on way.

What's one thing about you that might surprise your colleagues and/or the network?

In fourth grade I took part in Schackfyran, the big Swedish school chess tournament, and I even won my game – not bad for someone who has now totally forgotten how to play.

If you could swap jobs with anyone for a day – inside or outside SCC UK – who would it be and why?

I would love to swap jobs with the Swedish Ambassador to the UK for a day. I'm really interested in how Sweden and the UK are connected, and it would be fascinating to see from the inside how those political, cultural, and business relationships are built, and I have to admit, getting to live in the residence for a day wouldn't be too bad either.

What's your favourite thing to do in London, or your favourite hidden gem in the city?

I recently moved to Notting Hill, and it's been on my to-do list to find the best pubs in the area. If you're nearby, I can highly recommend The Pelican – it's a great place to enjoy a good meal and soak up the atmosphere.

What are you most looking forward to during your time with SCC UK?

I'm really looking forward to getting to know the SCC UK network, socialising with people, and learning from all the inspiring individuals involved. It feels like a unique opportunity to connect with people I might not have crossed paths with otherwise and to learn from their experience and perspectives.





INNOVATION IN THE BACKGROUND, IMPACT IN THE FOREGROUND

– The ABB approach

TEXT: ALEXANDER HÖGBERG | PHOTOS: ABB

Modern business leaders are grappling with the same challenge: how to stay competitive while moving faster towards net zero, greater resilience, and smarter use of resources. Few companies sit closer to that crossroads than ABB – a group whose technologies power energy systems, factories, hospitals, ships, and data centres across the world. ABB now joins the SCC UK community, with a story offering both a rich industrial heritage and a clear-sighted view of the future.

More than meets the eye

At first glance, ABB can seem like a business that works firmly “behind the scenes”. Yet without its technologies, much of modern life simply would not function.

“ABB is a global leader in electrification and automation, committed to enabling a more sustainable and resource efficient future,” says Malgorzata Moussa, Country Holding Officer UK & Ireland. “With 110,000 employees worldwide and more than 140 years of innovation, we operate through three core businesses: Electrification, delivering advanced energy distribution and management technologies; Motion, providing industry leading electric motors, drives, and digital powertrain solutions; and Automation, offering integrated control systems, software, and analytics for process, hybrid, and maritime industries.”

Those three pillars give ABB a distinctive vantage point. The group is not focused on a single sector; it sits across the systems that allow entire economies to function – and that now must be rebuilt for a lower carbon, digital era.

Future-proofing UK and Ireland industry through electrification, automation, and digitalisation

For Malgorzata, ‘future-proofing’ is more about engineering what comes next, rather than predicting it. “From my position, this means we’re at an inflection point where three fundamental capabilities – electrification, automation, and digitalisation – will define industrial competitiveness for the next generation.”

On electrification, she points to the UK’s net zero journey and the rapid build out of renewables. “We’re proud to be involved in eight UK offshore wind projects, including Dogger Bank, the world’s largest offshore wind farm. But generating renewable power is only part of the equation. Grid stability matters enormously, which is why projects like our synchronous condensers in Liverpool are so important – they help the grid handle the variability that comes with wind and solar.”

Automation, she argues, is just as critical. “I’ve observed how industries globally are discovering that automation delivers multiple benefits simultaneously. Take the steel sector, where transitioning to electric arc furnaces improves both cost efficiency and environmental performance. It’s not an either or proposition – productivity and sustainability can advance together. That’s the kind of transformation we see potential for across UK and Ireland manufacturing sector.”

Then comes digitalisation – the ‘connective tissue’ that allows electrification and automation to reach their full potential. Data, analytics, and digital tools, Malgorzata notes, enable organisations to “see their operations end to end, anticipate issues before they arise, and optimise performance in real time,” helping them move “from reactive to predictive approaches” and view sustainability as integral to competitiveness.





Investing in resilience at home

That philosophy is visible in ABB's recent £33 million investment in its earthing and lightning protection facility in Nottingham. Severe weather and complex infrastructure are changing risk profiles, and Malgorzata is clear about the stakes.

"The frequency and intensity of severe weather events with lightning strikes are increasing. This investment means access to advanced protection solutions that safeguard their most critical assets; whether that's a data centre supporting cloud services, a hospital's medical equipment, renewable energy infrastructure, or telecommunications networks."

The facility is also part of a broader shift in how ABB serves its markets. "The £33 million investment in our new Nottingham facility is part of ABB's broader strategy to drive innovation and sustainability, expand manufacturing, and shorten supply chains to bring production and R&D closer to customers."

For the UK, advanced manufacturing is far more than a technical upgrade. "I see advanced manufacturing as the enabler of UK industrial resilience and competitiveness," Malgorzata says. "Crucially, it also helps anchor high value skills, innovation, and supply chains in the UK – turning manufacturing into a strategic asset rather than a cost base."



From transactions to true partnership

ABB's collaborations across the UK and Ireland reveal another important differentiator: a system level mindset. Whether supporting offshore wind in the harsh North Sea environment or acquiring UK based diagnostics specialist IPEC, the company is rethinking how industrial challenges are tackled.

IPEC's technology "tracks critical electrical infrastructure around the clock, using AI and advanced analytics to predict failures that could result in multi-million-dollar losses, safety risks or extended outages for industries such as data centres, healthcare, utilities and manufacturing." For Malgorzata, this is emblematic of a broader shift "from solving isolated technical problems to addressing challenges at system level – combining hardware, software, data, and operational insight into a single, resilient solution."

"At ABB, we have a mindset that enables genuine partnership rather than transactional relationships – working alongside customers and collaborators over the long term to co-create solutions that are safer, more resilient, and fit for the future."

Culture, leadership, and lessons for change

Behind the technology, Malgorzata sees people and culture as ABB's true engine of creativity. "ABB has evolved from a traditional engineering company into a leader in digitalised industrial automation and electrification, and that transformation has been underpinned by a relentless focus on customer value," she reflects. "Our most impactful solutions share common characteristics: increased energy efficiency, enhanced safety, and the intelligent integration of software with hardware."

But what truly stands out is how she links innovation to values and inclusion. "ABB is a genuinely diverse and inclusive organisation, and that diversity of background, experience, and thought, is a powerful driver of innovation. When people feel included and empowered, they challenge assumptions, bring new perspectives, and collaborate more effectively."

This people centred culture is not only felt internally but also externally recognised. ABB has been certified as a Top Employer by the Top Employers Institute for the sixth consecutive year, reflecting a sustained commitment to creating a workplace where values are lived, not just stated. The certification reinforces that ABB's culture of trust, inclusion, development, and care is embedded in everyday leadership behaviours and ways of working.

"This is where our values come to life," she adds. "Customer focus ensures innovation solves real problems. Care guides how we protect people, operations, and the environment. Curiosity drives us to continuously question and improve. And collaboration – across businesses, cultures, and partners – turns ideas into scalable solutions."

For leaders navigating broader organisational change, ABB's journey offers three clear lessons: treat sustainability as a driver of competitiveness, not a constraint; think in systems, not silos; and invest in cultures where curiosity, care, and collaboration are lived every day. As Malgorzata puts it, "our most creative solutions haven't come from isolated breakthroughs, but from a culture where inclusion, curiosity, and collaboration are embedded in everyday decisions. That combination is a true enabler of innovation – and one of ABB's greatest strengths."

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Our most creative solutions haven't come from isolated breakthroughs, but from a culture where inclusion, curiosity, and collaboration are embedded in everyday decisions.



Q&A:

ENGINEERING THE TRANSITION

As heavy industry in the UK and Sweden races to decarbonise, the focus is shifting from pilots to scalable, commercially viable solutions. In this Q&A, we explore where the biggest near-term emission cuts can be made – and what needs to change across technology, regulation and value chains to unlock full-scale roll-out.



SIMON BJÖRKLUND

Managing Director UK,
Ireland & Benelux, Polarium

Across your UK and Swedish operations, where do you see the biggest near-term opportunities to cut emissions, and which technologies are you prioritising to deliver them at scale?

One of the clearest near-term opportunities is replacing or supplementing diesel generators with battery energy storage. For instance in telecom infrastructure, diesel is still widely used for backup power and off-grid reliability, creating both emissions and operational cost challenges. Lithium-ion battery systems can significantly reduce generator run time or replace diesel entirely. Polarium has a long track record of designing battery solutions that integrate with telecom networks and renewable energy sources. The replacement of diesel as option for backup power is also possible in a much wider scope, and we have for instance installed a battery system at Swansea University, which is being used to cut power peaks and supply critical backup power to their semiconductor manufacturing.

For heavy industry's green transition, what needs to work differently between the UK and Sweden – from regulation to customers and suppliers – to move more projects from pilots to full commercial roll-out?

For heavy industry's green transition to scale beyond pilots, clearer and more harmonised frameworks are essential. Sweden has benefited from relatively consistent policy and strong industrial coordination. In the UK, progress would accelerate with greater harmonisation of planning processes and grid connection requirements across regions. Today, projects often face differing local network conditions and technical requirements depending on the distribution operator, which increases complexity for nationwide roll-outs. This can sometimes necessitate additional technical studies and site-specific agreements that adds time and uncertainty. The UK grid code is also relatively stringent, and the commercial adoption of green technologies would benefit from a more standardised approach that more closely harmonise with the rest of Europe.





AMY MOORE

Head of Sustainability,
Scania UK



RICHARD GOULD

Managing Director,
Virtual Manufacturing UK

Across your UK and Swedish operations, where do you see the biggest near-term opportunities to cut emissions, and which technologies are you prioritising to deliver them at scale?

Tackling decarbonisation is the big topic, as is how to do it well. At Scania, our focus is on heat and fleet to deliver the biggest cuts to our operational emissions, and to meet our ambitious sustainability targets. In the UK, our new Learning Academy is being installed with solar panels, an energy storage battery and the latest heat pump technology. While our courtesy cars and service vans are now electric. But the biggest challenge is working with our customers. We want to play a supporting advisor role throughout their decarbonisation journey. Our end goal is making their fleets fully electric, but we value the important role low carbon and renewable fuels will play throughout the transition.

For heavy industry's green transition, what needs to work differently between the UK and Sweden – from regulation to customers and suppliers – to move more projects from pilots to full commercial roll-out?

There needs to be better utilisation of the knowledge, learnings and expertise Sweden has gained through its own electrification journey to help influence UK legislation, regulation and innovation. The transport and logistics sector is heavily focused on decarbonisation, and the truth is, in the UK, we are very much behind most of Europe. This is down to not having a supportive legislative framework or the correct enabling factors – like a solid EV infrastructure and subsidised charging costs – to stimulate growth. Which is why we need to take inspiration from Sweden. By doing so, it can help address the key barriers to adoption and avoid us installing legislative measures that prohibit, rather than encourage, innovation of our sector or growth of the economy.

Across your UK and Swedish operations, where do you see the biggest near-term opportunities to cut emissions, and which technologies are you prioritising to deliver them at scale?

In Sweden, where the grid is already largely clean, the focus is process optimisation; in the UK, where decarbonisation pressure is more acute, data-driven decision making is helping manufacturers build the confidence to move beyond small-scale pilots. Across both markets, visibility is the critical first step – you can't reduce what you can't measure. Granular energy monitoring at machine and workstation level consistently surfaces inefficiencies that would otherwise go unnoticed, making existing facilities smarter before capital is committed to replacing them.

For heavy industry's green transition, what needs to work differently between the UK and Sweden – from regulation to customers and suppliers – to move more projects from pilots to full commercial roll-out?

Sweden benefits from long-standing industrial-government alignment and a culture of incremental improvement that makes scaling pilots more natural. The UK presents a more complex landscape – fragmented regulation, longer procurement cycles, and greater financial pressure on capital projects all make the path from pilot to full roll-out genuinely harder. Bridging that gap requires both the digital tools to build visibility and the cross-market experience to know what good looks like – and for most manufacturers, the confidence to commit comes from seeing comparable operations move first, not from the technology alone.



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UPCOMING EVENTS



APRIL

23

Swedish Business Footprint in the North East

Explore the impact of Swedish enterprises in the North East, hear inspiring success stories, and connect with industry leaders in a region driving innovation and growth across key industries.



MAY

07

Swedish Business Footprint in the North West

Discover how Swedish businesses are helping transform the North West into an innovation-led economy, showcasing cutting-edge solutions and new opportunities for collaboration.



MAY

14

Life Sciences Forum

Life Sciences Forum 2026 unites Swedish and UK leaders to explore how policy, innovation, AI, and investment are reshaping life sciences, fostering cross-border collaboration, partnerships, and ultimately better patient outcomes together.





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FORUM



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JUNE

04

Tech Forum: From action to integration

Tech Forum is a thought-provoking conference exploring today's evolving tech landscape, bringing together key stakeholders for expert talks, sharp panels, and high-value networking at the intersection of technology, society, and future innovation.

NOVEMBER

11

Nordic Private Equity Forum

The Nordic Private Equity Forum gathers Nordic and UK investors to discuss market outlooks, emerging trends and value creation, while fostering networking, strategic dialogue and new opportunities across the ecosystem.

NOVEMBER

26

Outer Thinking: Swedish-British Summit

This is a full-day conference exploring contemporary leadership beyond the usual boundaries, bringing together 200+ business leaders, entrepreneurs, politicians, and academics from Sweden and the UK.





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