

NORTHERN

# INSIGHT

SEPTEMBER 2021

ISSUE 72



CMYK  
TAKE A MOMENT TO REFLECT

business • technology • property • media • education • motors • fashion • arts • leisure



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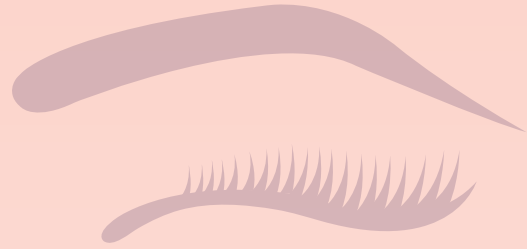
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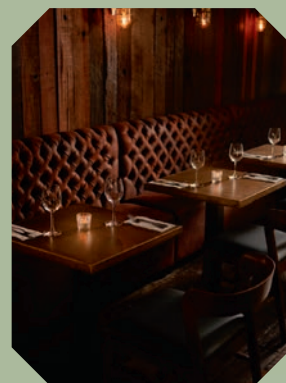
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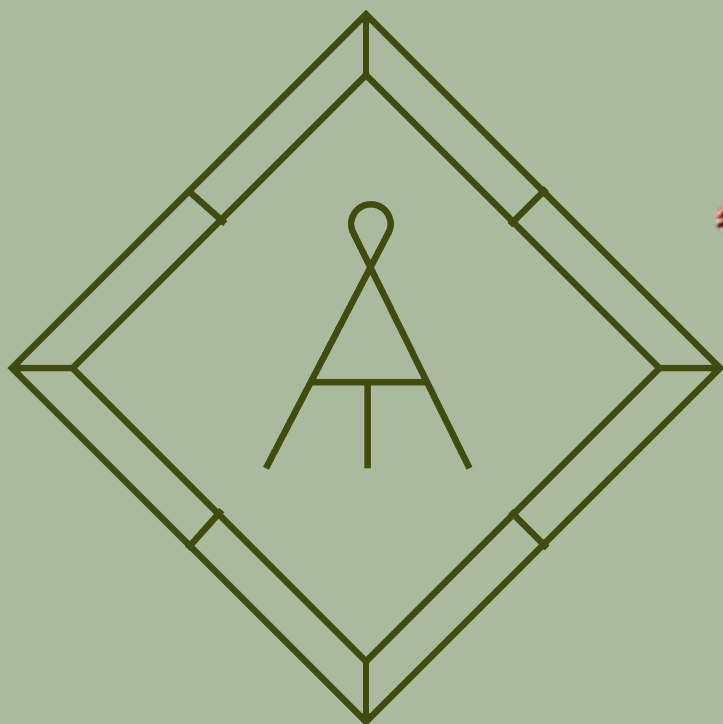
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# FOREWORD

Welcome to the 72nd edition of Northern Insight put together in a period of high summer and a hugely enjoyable issue to compile.

Our cover stars are national business technology provider CMYK who reflect on their North East journey so far.

In our popular 'Big Interview' slot we talk to Paul Jennings, Chief Executive of NEPIA, who have been a leading global marine insurer for over 160 years.

Look out also for our annual independent education feature showcasing some of the finest schools in the region.

On our travels we visit the wonderful Blackbird in Ponteland to sample a sumptuous Sunday lunch.

Some great features, plenty of insight and analysis and something for everyone to enjoy.

Many thanks as ever to all our loyal clients, contributors and readers.

*Stay safe and well. Till next month...*

*M.J. Grahamslaw*

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## £30,000 FUNDING KICK STARTS NORTH EAST'S FIRST SUSTAINABLE PROTOTYPING KNITWEAR FACILITY

North East entrepreneurs, Jo Lennon and Jo Storie, founders of KnitLab North, have won £30,000 grant funding from the Rural Growth Network to purchase machinery enabling them to offer the latest in sustainable prototyping for the knitwear industry.

Having applied for a grant fund, under the North of Tyne Rural Business Growth Service Programme, KnitLab North will expand its business capacity with a Shima Seiki WholeGarment knitting machine and the latest in 3D virtual prototyping software.

The design studio is looking to support anyone looking to create British knitwear collections.



It also promotes responsible and sustainable manufacture and aims to support clients bringing their own products to market.

Jo Storie said: "Launching a business takes determination and a huge amount of effort. The grant that we received was a huge boost to assist our own efforts to raise enough money to purchase the machinery we needed."

## NEW TRAINING BUILDS UP ROUTE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE INTO CONSTRUCTION



Geon Training, based in Gateshead's Team Valley, has announced its latest and most ambitious programme to date, as its new BUILD UP programme aims to offer trainees real work experience in the construction sector.

The BUILD UP programme is aimed at 16- to 24-year-olds who are looking to start a career within the construction industry. The six-week programme includes two weeks of on-the-job training with some of the North's leading employers including Re:Gen Group, Shaw Construction and HS Scaffolding NE.

Each delegate will work towards a Level 1 Health and Safety in Construction Environment Certificate and NOCN Level 1 qualification in Construction Skills, whilst receiving practical work preparation skills such as bricklaying, painting, scaffolding and groundworks. They will also receive training in interview and CV techniques, basic maths and English and learn about mindfulness and positive mental health.

## NORTHERN GAS AND POWER TO RECRUIT 100 NEW POSITIONS

The UK's leading energy procurement consultancy, Northern Gas and Power, is set to create a hundred new roles over the coming months.

The news comes as the firm's staff move into their new Riga development, the £2m new UK HQ set on Gateshead Quays, as the company continues

its rapid expansion.

Global Procurement Group, trading in the UK as Northern Gas and Power, has taken four floors of grade-A commercial property on the Gateshead waterfront, close to its offices at Baltic Place. It is the biggest commercial office project in the North East for the past five years.

The recruitment process for the new jobs, which include a range of roles from energy consultants to training and technical roles, will help the business reach its next level of growth, as it continues to expand its customer base to in excess of 22,000 businesses internationally.



## ASPINALLVERDI APPOINT HEAD OF NEW NORTH EAST OFFICE

Property regeneration consultants AspinallVerdi have expanded into the North East of England, with the appointment of Brett Devenish to head a new office in Newcastle.

The Newcastle office of AspinallVerdi will serve the entire North East and represents the latest addition to the Leeds-headquartered firm's network of offices in Leeds, Liverpool and London.

Having worked in the private and public sectors in the North East for the past 14 years, Brett joins AspinallVerdi from Capita, where he was Head of Property for the international outsourcing consultancy's partnership with North Tyneside Council, as well as working with clients across England.

Brett has extensive experience in development viability, regeneration, valuation, disposals and property management.

As the firm's workload across the region grows, AspinallVerdi also plans to recruit further staff to join Brett when he secures dedicated office space in Newcastle.



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## CAREER CHANGE BIDS CHRISTIAN WELL

A bid writing specialist that just five years ago spent 18 months as a trainee learning his craft has been appointed as Managing Director of the firm and has also bought into the business, as a significant shareholder.

Christian Rowe spent two decades in the recruitment business before joining Executive Compass as a trainee bid writer. His transferable skills were put to good use together with his passion to learn and his ethical and quality approach to business.

Now, based in the company's Newcastle's Hoults Yard offices, Christian oversees the preparation of bids and selection questionnaires for its clients, which range from owner-managed SME businesses to multinational companies.

Christian's new position became vacant when founder of the business Neil Capstick decided to take time away from the day to day running of the company to concentrate on his Doctorate in Business Administration.

## GILLIE & BLAIR'S BOAT COMES IN

A recent visitor to the River Tyne was the MV Sea Melody, which picked up offshore equipment bound for assembly at Barrow-in-Furness.

The brief loading at W.D. Close Engineering's Wallsend quay gave owners, Newcastle-based GT Gillie & Blair Ltd, one of the North East's most respected shipping companies, a chance to personally inspect their latest marine investment.

Managing Director, Steve Gillie, commented: "We're delighted to welcome the Sea Melody to Tyneside. At 3,600 DWCC (Dead Weight Cargo Carrying Capacity), she's the latest and indeed largest addition to our fleet, which focuses on the offshore and renewables sector in the North Sea, as well as supports our traditional local customers in the bulk trades, such as Grainco, ICL fertilisers and Blackwood Biofuels."

"The logistics of moving non-standard sized items by sea is a complex affair but is what we excel at. It takes so many headaches away from our clients."



## OSPREY TARGETS NORTH EAST FOR NEW ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING HUBS

The North East is being targeted by an electric vehicle (EV) charging hub developer, after the region saw a sharp rise in EV ownership.

Osprey is actively searching for premium sites across the region, hoping to install thousands of rapid charging points close to major motorway and A-roads in urban and edge-of-town locations.

The move is encouraging news for drivers who, research shows, see a lack of charging points as a barrier to purchasing an electric car.

Knight Frank has been appointed to source locations and recent research by the firm shows the North East saw a substantial 1049% increase in EV registrations over the past nine years, with 5,555 electric vehicles registered in 2020.

The first North East sites to benefit from Osprey charge hubs are Tyneview Retail Park in Prudhoe, Willowburn Retail Park in Alnwick and Northumberland Retail Park in North Tyneside.

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# MOVING ON FROM DISAPPOINTMENT AND FAILURE



Steve Black

Steve Black, also known as Blackie, is well known in the sporting world for his positive mind and fit body wellbeing approach.

**More recently he has been using his knowledge and extensive experience to help businesses, individuals, and community groups through his latest venture Protean Solutions.**

Here, he talks about how failure and disappointment is something we all have to deal with at some point in our lives, but when it takes over and affects our other moods and relationships, it can become of detriment to our health and wellbeing.

"Realisation of failure and disappointment can manifest itself at any time, eating into our wellbeing and creating many health issues. The moment of when it can take over may be well down the line from the actual event if the issue isn't addressed and processed at the time properly.

"Take for example, our three young England footballers, Bukayo Saka, Marcus Rashford and Jadon Sancho. These three young men have had one of the hardest trials of their lives, a tournament with many ups, a great achievement but with one of the hardest downs they will ever have had to endure. Amplified by the public attention, the comments, downright hatred and racism towards these sportsmen just trying to do their best for our country.

"Through the initial period the trio had lots of support from their manager, the club, team mates, true friends and real family. But now a few months on, those people will be moving on, hoping that the trauma is behind them and that they are now focused on next year's World Cup and the start of the leagues again this month.

"Having worked closely with sportspeople who have been through similar situations, let me tell you, it isn't over for them and they need to find a way to

look beyond the impact of that disappointment and what they view as failure. They need to accept what happened internally, which is one of the hardest things to do.

"Relate that same failure and disappointment to a business position, or a personal relationship, and the feelings are the same. The impact is the same. Expressions like Imposter Syndrome come to mind, along with loss of confidence, being hard on ourselves and even not liking who we are. All are very detrimental to our wellbeing.

"So, here are some tips for anyone who has struggled or is struggling with the pressure of 'failing' or viewing themselves as a disappointment. I know often these things are easy to say and hard to do but create a routine for yourself that builds them in daily and it will help.

"Failure should be viewed as a lesson – so every morning write a journal and learn from it. Remind yourself that things do pass, work out what you want to change in small steps each day and remind yourself of your joys and what you have in the here and now that is positive. What can you learn? How will you be better?

"Accept that to get to a point where you can fail, means you've tried to do something. That person who was trying, they need reminding how brave they were to try. So, start your rebound from negativity by patting yourself on the back for all the good things you have done on the journey so far. I have never witnessed or experienced success that hasn't had a few failures and disappointments along the way!

"Celebrate every success or win – how ever little it is. Finding a parking space in a busy carpark... being

on time for a meeting ... remembering to unload the washing machine while it still smells nice... winning a new client... it doesn't matter what it is, just remember to praise yourself and be happy that things do go right!

"It doesn't matter who you are, someone loves you for just being you. Everyone has someone who values them. Do you know who it is? YOU. Find yourself again. Look in the mirror. Work out what would make you happy today and do it. Move on from what didn't work out and start again with a brand new you, who you can love! From head to toe, celebrate who you are, what your body can do and invest in yourself.

"If you do these simple things every day and remember to live in the here and now, things will improve. Looking back causes sadness, looking forward can cause anxiety, so live for each day, in the day, and make each one count!

"God bless all..."

Steve Black is a well-known face in the sporting world who has taken his expertise in making people fit in the mind as well as fit in the body through his corporate facing business, Protean Solutions.

Steve Black, or Blackie as he is better known, has been focussing lately on working with both individuals and organisations driving motivation, teamwork, leadership and excellence in the workplace.

His portfolio is impressive, with big names including Kevin Keegan, Rob Andrew, Jonny Wilkinson, Jonathan Edwards and Glen McCrory endorsing the former Newcastle Falcons and British Lions rugby coach. He now works with companies including Cascade Cash Management, The John McEnroe Academy and Fairstone to name a few.

**More information is available at [www.steveblack.co.uk](http://www.steveblack.co.uk)**





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# HOW TO BECOME A PRIVATE EQUITY INVESTOR

Private equity seems to be constantly in the news these days. By way of example, Morrisons the supermarket chain, is under offer by US private equity firm, Fortress. Another is Ultra Electronics being sold to Cobham, which is owned by another US private equity firm.

**These are huge deals, but small British investors can also get involved with private equity, but how?**

Enterprise Investment Schemes (EIS) are exciting, tax efficient opportunities for a small amount of an investor's wealth. They should only be considered after the ISA and pension allowances have been fully utilised.

The tax benefits are as follows:

- 30% income tax reclamation in the tax year, with the ability to carry back to the previous tax year.
- Capital Gains Tax deferral from the previous three years.
- Tax free growth, i.e., no tax to pay on exit.
- Inheritance Tax free after two years of ownership.
- Any failures can be set against loss relief at the highest marginal rate.

Clearly, the tax position is very attractive, but these are high risk investments.

Let us look at the worst-case scenario. A 45% taxpayer invests £50,000 across five different EIS companies, and they all fail with nothing to come back. How much has the investor lost? £50,000? Actually, once you have taken into account the 30% Income Tax relief and the loss relief, the real loss is £19,250 in this instance.

A loss is not really palatable, even after the tax reliefs but it is highly unlikely that all five investee companies will fail.

If we look at the same investor investing £50,000 and one company fails, one doubles upon exit, two treble in value and the star performer exits at eight times, we have a very different picture.

Firstly, the investor has the 30% Income Tax benefit which is £15,000 and can claim loss relief on the company that failed, so that is worth a further £3,150. The successful investments give a return of £160,000, tax free, but there would be performance fees charged by the manager. With one manager we know this would amount to £22,400, netting the return to £137,600 and the tax reliefs on top. In my view, performance fees are fair enough if the manager is doing its job properly.

So, what does a good EIS manager do?

The manager is responsible for vetting any company it invests in. But it does not end there. These managers are often run with specialist knowledge in specific fields. This may be in technology or life sciences, for example. The investee company gains not just money but also expertise and contacts added to their Board of Directors. It is bit like getting a Dragon from "Dragon's Den" to invest in your company. You get acumen as well as cash to develop the business.

EIS can be a solution to tax events when individuals suffer significant Income or Capital Gains Tax. For example, medical consultants, and others, with large salaries and defined salary pension benefits can pay income tax on money they are yet to receive. Tax on gains on second or rental properties is also penal.

Why is the Government being so generous with these tax breaks? They know that Private Equity is vital for the health of the UK economy. The companies that benefit would receive little assistance from a bank. Funding must come from other institutions and private investors. The reliefs are there to mitigate some of the risks, but the rewards can be significant.

***If you would like more information, or would like to discuss your own position, then please do not hesitate to contact me or my colleagues,***

***David Hughes and Denise Graham. Peter Rutherford is a director at Rutherford Hughes Ltd. He can be contacted on 0191 229 9600***

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L-R: Peter Rutherford, Denise Graham and David Hughes



## COVER STORY

# NATIONAL BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY PROVIDER, CMYK, TAKE A MOMENT TO REFLECT ON THEIR NORTH EAST JOURNEY SO FAR

The Newcastle arm of a national Managed Print and Business Technology firm is heading towards the first year in business while celebrating success across our region.

**CMYK's North East base, headed by regional sales directors Craig Pratt and Sarah Wharrier, pictured on this month's front cover are experiencing substantial growth and building solid foundations for the future.**

September represents a significant milestone for Sarah and Craig as this month marks a year from when the pair made the decision to take the quantum leap to join forces with CMYK to establish the business's North East base.

Sarah commented; "We are delighted to be on the front cover of this month's edition of Northern Insight magazine as September marks a major milestone in our CMYK journey. Northern Insight was one of the first partnerships we formed when Craig and I started with CMYK earlier this year so to be on the cover feature 12 months on is just fantastic". Craig added, "I'm delighted with our journey to date, it's been extremely hard work but at the same time very rewarding. The support has been overwhelming and we have a lot of individuals and firms to thank who have been instrumental during our journey so far".

Mike Grahamslaw commented... "From day one I have really enjoyed working with Craig and Sarah. They are blessed with a great sense of integrity and professionalism and I expect CMYK to grow rapidly in the region in the months ahead due to their strong work ethic and commitment."

CMYK boasts an exceptional reputation for its technical expertise and industry leading technology solutions, which is underpinned by a professional team that is continually growing to meet demand for its services. So how did CMYK's expansion into Newcastle all come about? When strategising on the best possible way to support the region's businesses and organisations, Craig and Sarah knew the only way to succeed was to approach and partner with an established company, allowing a smooth route to market, great infrastructure and business expertise. The pair joined forces with CMYK to expand into Newcastle, allowing them to offer a wider portfolio of workplace technology solutions, whilst being able to provide unrivalled customer service.

CMYK is headed by Managing Director Jim Sharp. Jim commented on the regional expansion of the business; "We first met with Craig and Sarah at the end of April last year to discuss a business plan for the possibility of expansion into the North East region. After getting to know Craig and Sarah, I really felt that they would be a great fit for the company with their expertise, knowledge and dynamic characters... I knew they would just fit in perfectly at CMYK and I have the confidence in them to drive the business expansion in the North East region and beyond".

The Newcastle office adds to CMYK's established branch network with offices located in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Warrington and London.

However, the expansion wouldn't have been possible without the assistance of legal partners and advisors. Utilising the expertise of Newcastle based law firm Short Richardson & Forth allowed CMYK to swiftly locate and establish a base here. Assisted by Chris Morgan, Associate of Short Richardson & Forth, Chris commented; "It was a privilege to work with CMYK and assist them with the next stage of their development to allow them to continue to innovate and progress from strength to strength."

Building on the groups 25th Anniversary this year the Newcastle regional management team adds a further 24 years of combined experience, the majority of that time spent together at one of the region's largest firms prior to its change in ownership. Sarah and Craig pride themselves on their client focussed approach, allowing CMYK to further build its presence as a locally minded business with national strengths and capabilities.

To ensure a smooth transition to CMYK, Sarah and Craig sought guidance from regional Law Firm BHP Law. Guided by Partner Dermot Winters and assisted by Anthony Willis, Solicitor of BHP Law, the firm provided independent advice and contractual support prior to Craig and Sarah joining CMYK. Dermot commented; "It was a pleasure to assist Sarah and Craig in their new roles at CMYK. Their energy, experience and expertise will be invaluable to business and entrepreneurship throughout the North East and beyond." Anthony also added; "Craig and Sarah are an agile, dependable and disciplined combination with the capacity to acquire new understanding, knowledge and an ability to adapt to situations. It is always a pleasure doing business with expertise you can trust."

When chatting to the team at CMYK it is evident that forming local partnerships was very important to the business and they want to utilise regional expertise for services and support whenever required. As well as establishing the North East base this year, the CMYK team have been very busy in other areas of the business, recently gaining 4 UKAS accredited ISO certifications, improving operational procedures, internal procedures and forging new partnerships.

Sarah said; "We are extremely grateful to everyone who has supported us...we owe a huge thanks to the leadership team at CMYK, Jim and Bing for believing in our ambitious plans and giving us the backing and support needed to make everything possible. We are very excited for the opportunities which lie ahead for CMYK and other businesses across our region, especially considering all of the inward investment we have seen in the area recently."

Craig added "The past year has been particularly challenging for all businesses, so we're delighted with our growth and success which has surpassed our expectations. As the world begins to return to normal we look forward to meeting more clients face-to-face once again and supporting their needs which have undoubtedly changed throughout the course of this past year. With the increase in agile and remote working, businesses want to move away from restrictive processes and require better infrastructure, connectivity, document workflows and software to support this change. We're here to help businesses through a vitally important transitional time."

Quick reminder of what CMYK can do to support you and your firm.

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**For more information on how CMYK can support your business please contact Craig Pratt and Sarah Wharrier. You can reach them by calling 0191 389 7751 or emailing [c.pratt@cmyk-digital.co.uk](mailto:c.pratt@cmyk-digital.co.uk) or [s.wharrier@cmyk-digital.co.uk](mailto:s.wharrier@cmyk-digital.co.uk)**

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Craig Pratt and Sarah Wharrier



# TORRO FEELING BULLISH

North East leather products with worldwide appeal.



Depending on your age, you will remember your home or office being littered with pieces of tech equipment such as PC, laptop, camera, tape recorder, hi-fi, Sony Walkman, X-Box and calculator. You also had a heap of zero-tech stuff like a diary, note pad, Filofax, road map and photo album.

And then the mobile phone got its act together and went from being a boring phone to a handheld office, sat nav, camera, TV, digital sound and video recorder etc.

Today, if you are carrying a mobile phone and a tablet you really don't need anything else.

The only snag is that phones and tablets look very similar. This led to users wanting to personalise their kit.

And that was when William Johnson and two of his colleagues came up with the idea of TORRO.

"All three of us had recently bought the latest mobile phones which probably retailed at something close to £700 each, and we wanted to buy a case to protect them," says William. "The big problem was that the choice was restricted to either cheap and nasty cases or having to go to firms which traditionally only sold high-end clothing but who'd decided to brand their own phone cases which invariably cost nearly as much as the phones. So we decided to do something about it. To start with it was really just an idea that became a hobby. We all liked the feel, look and smell of quality leather so we spent £500 and had some samples made. We also designed our bull's head logo.

It was then a case of trying to find a market so we put our initial products onto the Amazon website. We were stunned by the positive response and it was only at that point that we decided to take the plunge, leave our full time jobs and concentrate on building TORRO. Here we are ten years later with a really successful business designing and selling high quality leather goods at sensible prices from our base at Shiremoor on Tyneside to dozens of countries around the world via Amazon and our TORRO.co.uk website."

And, as you can see from the photos, although mobile phone and tablet cases are still a big part of the TORRO business, they have steadily expanded their range of products.

COVID-19 has actually seen an increase in sales of their office related leather goods because the pandemic forced people to work from home. If you spend 8 hours a day in a normal office, you might have your own mug and possibly a pot plant or something stuck to the edge of your PC screen. However, if you are working from home, why not have a few touches of quality on your desk like a leather keyboard and mouse mat, or how about a set of leather coasters and a seriously smart cover for your notepad.

If you are golf fan or know someone who'd really appreciate a quality and distinctive accessory, then check out TORRO's leather scorecard holder, yardage notebook and accessory set which includes tees, pencil, marker and pitch mark lifter. It's not surprising to find that the golf range has been incredibly successful in the North American market. By coincidence, their leather is sourced from the USA too.

TORRO's travel range is steadily expanding. There's a passport holder and a travel wallet. The wallet has places for your passport, tickets, additional paperwork and credit cards. There's also a place for headphones. You can even buy a leather sunglasses case. A range of travel luggage is in the pipeline.

"Just as the quality of mobile phones, tablets and laptops has improved, we wanted to give buyers the option of having a case or accessory that was of similar quality but wasn't incredibly expensive due to the name of the fashion brand that it was featuring. We wanted to ensure our products showed that care and attention to detail had been put into the design and manufacture. Everything has to look and feel good while also being durable. I'm delighted to say that the response from buyers has been fantastic. TORRO will go from strength to strength and be something that the North East can be proud of as our products are distributed around the world."

If you've ever been stuck for birthday or Christmas presents, you need to take the bull by the horns and see what TORRO can do for you.

***If you'd like to view their leather accessory range, the best idea is to go onto the TORRO website....  
www.TORRO.co.uk You can call them on 0191 270 5143 or email [customercare@TORRO.co.uk](mailto:customercare@TORRO.co.uk)***











Grace Tia Bon Bon



# NEW CONTRACT AWARD FOR SUCCESSFUL NORTH EAST FIRM DURING THE PANDEMIC

ITL North East Limited ([www.interpretingline.co.uk](http://www.interpretingline.co.uk)), an established language translations services company based in Tyneside, has been awarded the contract for the provision of Translation Services for North Yorkshire Council.

Grace Tia Bon Bon, Managing Director said, "This is an excellent account win for a local SME of 25 years. We are constantly improving our ISO quality and information security, cyber security, encryption to meet national standards criteria". Richard Collins has been appointed as the Quality and Operations Director of this contract.

The contract covers all the translations needs of North Yorkshire Council from legal, social care, healthcare, asylum and immigration matters throughout the North Yorkshire region. Much of the work will be highly confidential and will be supplied on a rapid feedback process.

This will run for two years and will add to ITL North East Limited ([www.interpretingline.co.uk](http://www.interpretingline.co.uk)) portfolio of long-standing contracts within the public sector which include interpreting and translation services for Durham County Council, Northumberland, Gateshead and Zoom/Teams services for South and North Tyneside council.

The new contract will underwrite the employment of all members of the ITL team which supplies face-to-face and telephone interpreting together with translation services covering a wide range of languages. These language services provide valuable support to clients throughout the social services, medical, legal and corporate sectors and the ITL team can offer well over a hundred different languages provided by highly qualified and experienced staff, many of whom have been with the company for years and have established a strong reputation both locally and nationally.

Managing Director Grace Tia Bon Bon, pictured, welcomes this new contract award and says that she is very proud of the company's success and the support which she has received over the years from her colleagues and clients. She looks forward to successful delivery of the contract requirements and to further expansion of the company's activities nationally. ITL North East Limited ([www.interpretingline.co.uk](http://www.interpretingline.co.uk)) welcomes new DPSI, Chartered Institute of Linguist (CioL) translators/interpreters both enhancing ITL's capability and supporting the individual's own career.

**For further information contact**  
**Grace Tia Bon Bon at ITL, Bizspace, Gateshead.**  
**Tel: 0191 421 2221**  
**[grace@interpretingline.co.uk](mailto:grace@interpretingline.co.uk)**  
**[www.interpretingline.co.uk](http://www.interpretingline.co.uk)**

“  
...I'm very proud of the  
company's success and  
the support which has  
been received over the  
years from my colleagues  
and clients...  
”





## CLEAR EDGE SETS SIGHTS ON THE FUTURE AFTER CO-FOUNDERS COMPLETE MBO

The co-founders of Clear Edge Search & Selection Ltd have completed the Management Buyout of a specialist staffing business.

Terry Batty and Tom Fox, who established the Leeds-based business in 2011, have acquired the shareholding of corporate shareholder CSG to now own 100% of the company.

CSG, which is an international staffing and executive search business with more than 200 employees across seven offices on four continents, supported the establishment of Clear Edge by providing the co-founders with capital investment, training, IT, accountancy, finance and back-office services.

This enabled the business to build its presence in the consumer goods and digital sectors placing candidates in roles from middle management to board level. Clear Edge has developed particular market expertise in the food, drinks, consumer durables and health sectors, whilst also expanding into the sports betting and iGaming markets.

As a result, Clear Edge has grown significantly and has been able to build in-house accountancy, finance and compliance capabilities, facilitating the opportunity for the MBO.

Corporate finance advice for the founding shareholders was provided by Newcastle-based RG Corporate Finance, led by Partner and Head of Corporate Finance, Carl Swansbury.



## FUNDING SUPPORT MEANS GROWTH FOR PLANT HIRE FIRM

A Teesside plant hire firm is scaling new heights after winning funding to purchase new equipment.

Foster Plant Hire, which is based in Wilton International Centre, Redcar, has been providing equipment to the construction industry, councils and the Highways Agency for 35 years.

The firm has recently bought two new pieces of equipment worth a total of £89,000, in a project that will also create five new jobs on the back of the investment.

Co-director of the firm, Allan Foster, said: "We've received £48,000 in funding, which will go towards the cost of a new forklift truck and JCB, meaning we can take on hire jobs that we would previously have had to turn down. We'll also be taking on some new team members to add to our existing eight: three plant operators, a yard worker and an apprentice."

The firm received funding from a Tees Valley growth hub thanks to support from Middlesbrough-based Nudl, business support consultancy.

Allan added: "The help the Nudl team provided was invaluable. They made the whole process so easy from start to finish, and we can't wait to get to work with the new equipment."

## FW CAPITAL INVESTMENTS BOOST NORTHERN ECONOMY

The Northern economy has been boosted by £134m as a result of 138 FW Capital investments in the past financial year, new figures have shown.

The investments, valued at £43m, have helped SMEs in the area leverage private sector investment totalling over £91m, creating or safeguarding 935 jobs. Two of the sectors most invested in by FW Capital are manufacturing and construction, both key to the levelling up agenda.

The remarkable figures come as the British Business Bank has accredited FW Capital under the Recovery Loan Scheme (RLS), that will be used in conjunction with the deployment of loans from the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund (NPIF). The RLS supports lenders providing access to finance for UK businesses as they recover and grow following the Covid-19 pandemic.

Joanne Whitfield, FW Capital's Fund Director in the North East, said: "We are dedicated to providing Northern businesses with the funding they need to reach their full potential. As these outstanding figures show, FW Capital has played a central part in the levelling up agenda over what has been a very uncertain period, with our investments injecting £134m of much-needed growth capital into the Northern economy."



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## RAZORBLUE EXPANDS INTO SCOTLAND WITH ACQUISITION OF SARN TECHNOLOGIES



Multi-award-winning Managed IT Services Provider razorblue has announced further expansion into Scotland following the acquisition of Stirling-based sarn Technologies Ltd for an undisclosed sum.

The acquisition comes at an exciting time, following the firm's most successful financial year to date, achieving a 32% increase in turnover in 2020-21.

Founded in 2007 by CEO Dan Kitchen, razorblue has grown from just 2 employees to over 120, with a 30% headcount growth in the last year alone.

Now with eight offices and teams across the UK, razorblue works with over 500 businesses providing a wide range of services, including managed IT support, connectivity, cloud solutions and business

software.

The expansion into Scotland forms part of razorblue's vision to be the most trusted Managed IT Service Provider in the UK's SME marketplace.

Dan commented: "We're excited to have expanded our business further into Scotland. Whilst our roots are in the North of England, our client base is located throughout the UK. It makes sense to acquire a business that is already doing what we do, but in a different location."

sarn Technologies' clients will also benefit from other products and services in razorblue's portfolio including connectivity, cloud and telecoms solutions.



## DURATA UK STRIKE PARTNERSHIP WITH HARTLEPOOL UNITED

Hartlepool United have celebrated being back in the English Football League by announcing a key sponsorship agreement with Durata.

The Teesside-based critical power infrastructure specialists' blue and white logo will be on the back of Hartlepool's new away shirt this season.

As well as appearing above the players' names on Hartlepool's red and black away kit in Sky Bet League Two, Durata will also be branded on the warm-up tops before matches.

Hartlepool Chairman, Raj Singh, said: "I am delighted to welcome Durata as a new partner for the 2021/22 EFL season. This is an exciting time for the club and we are proud to welcome new companies like Durata to be a part of this journey with us.

"Durata will be proudly on the back of our new away shirt which I have seen and personally really like. It is always great to see Hartlepool United attracting new businesses and partners as we continue to grow in the right direction."

Durata will be represented at every Hartlepool game this season as part of the new partnership and is a further sign of the eight-year-old company's desire to be involved in sport.



## NORTH EAST-BASED INVESTMENT FUND DELIVERS POSITIVE FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

TOC Property Backed Lending Trust PLC (PBLT), managed by Newcastle-based wealth management and property lending specialist, Tier One Capital Ltd, has reported continued growth in the North East and Scotland property sectors, according to its latest financial results.

This continues the growing positive momentum for PBLT following its refreshed investment strategy and focus on the North East and Scotland residential and commercial property markets.

Announcing an interim trading update for the six months to 31 May 2021, the Newcastle-headquartered investment company has a current portfolio of £19.7 million, funding 17 live construction projects.

As a result of its activity during the six-month period to 31 May 2021, PBLT has increased profits before tax to £606,000 compared to £256,000 for the same period the year before.

John Newlands, Chairman of PBLT, said: "While certain sectors continue to be impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, the house building industry has remained resilient, which vindicates our strategy to increase PBLT's focus on this market.

"The continued demand for new properties has driven growth in the housing market and opportunities for house builders. Underlying demand is likely to remain as the economy unlocks."



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## ST.CUTHBERT'S HOSPICE GOLF DAY

The St Cuthbert's Hospice Golf Day was recently held at Close House. 23 teams kindly supported the day with a fantastic £13000 raised at the competition.

This was the first event raising money for the Charity since March 2020.

Thank you to Kevin Maddison from Root Cause Consultancy for organising the event and headline sponsors, Unite Group, Zempport, Properties Unique & Host and Stay.









# THE BIG INTERVIEW

## COALS TO NEWCASTLE - INSURANCE TO THE WORLD

As any historian will tell you, the Tyne, Wear and Tees were three of the world's leading shipbuilding rivers. It's estimated that, at that turn of the 20th century, over half of the world's ships were built in the North East. Sadly, that industry has declined dramatically.

**However, maritime is still a vitally important part of the North East economy.**

Situated on the Newcastle quayside, just along from the Millennium Bridge, is an imposing modern building.

This is the home of North P & I Club...the North of England Protecting and Indemnity Association. They have regional offices in Asia, Europe and North America.

They've been a leading global marine insurer for over 160 years.

You probably haven't heard of them as their main client base and the ship-owners they insure are located outside of the region, but these figures will make you sit up and take notice.

They insure, in some shape or form, one in eight of the world's shipping fleet. In terms of big ships like tankers, container and bulk carriers, they have over 5,000 on their books. Smaller vessels like fishing boats or specialist vessels will total in excess of 10,000. They also play a major role in the International Group of P&I Clubs which is an association of underwriting clubs insuring around 90% of the world's ocean-going tonnage.

Oh, and talking of tonnage, it's worth remembering that 95 per cent of the world's trade goes via sea.

"And that's why when something goes wrong, it can affect a country's economy", explains North's Chief Executive, Paul Jennings. "We saw that when the Ever Given was stuck in the Suez Canal, and we've seen it as a consequence of COVID. As COVID started to see countries locking down, people began buying more consumer goods which led to an increase in container traffic. Container demand has never been so high and this will impact upon prices filtering through to the High Street because, for example, if you were bringing a container into the UK from somewhere like Shanghai, it would have cost you around \$2,000 18 months ago. Today, you'll be lucky to pay less than \$10,000."

And as we mentioned at the start, they play a key role in this region's economy because North employs over 300 people at their quayside offices.

"The experience of our staff is unrivalled in the industry and we look after most shipping insurance claims. However, our biggest concern over the last 18 months has been the plight of seafarers around the world due to COVID restrictions. Crew were frequently stuck on board; others couldn't join their ships. At one point there were around 300,000 seafarers unable to disembark. Some will have been on board their ships for over a year. We felt as though they should be regarded as key workers as they kept countries such as the UK, stocked with the goods they need in everyday life."

In other words, North P&I Club is picking up where our shipyards left off to ensure that the North East is still a major player in the maritime industry and our local economy.

[www.nepia.com](http://www.nepia.com)

“  
...And that's why when  
something goes wrong,  
it can affect a country's  
economy...  
”





Paul Jennings



# MOVING HOME OR SAVING FOR A FIRST PROPERTY, WHERE IS YOUR MONEY SAFE?

Ryan Dias, relationship manager of Cascade Cash Management, has been working with individuals and partners with clients who need to protect money either saved for house purchases or released from house sales.

## Here, he looks at how people in the region can protect their cash during a home move or purchase transition.

"In order to boost activity in the housing market, in July of last year the government introduced the "stamp duty holiday" allowing homebuyers to complete a purchase on a property for less than £500,000 without having to pay stamp duty on it. This support is currently being phased out and stamp duty rates will return to normal from 1st October.

"The stamp duty holiday has been a great support for the property market where there has been a noticeable increase in the number of new buyers and properties on the market.

"The housing market, particularly in some areas in the North East, has boomed amid the COVID-19 pandemic, especially with many homeowners moving from cities to purchase homes with more outdoor space, in less dense populations or at the coast throughout the UK lockdowns.

"We have supported many individual clients to get the most from their cash savings as they have taken the opportunity to sell their property before buying their new home, and we expect this will be a continuing trend in the sector over the coming months following many clients utilising their unspent savings on home improvements.

"The Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) protects temporary high balances in your bank account, building society account or credit union account of up to £1m for 6 months (and there was even an extension to 12 months during the pandemic too). This protection begins from the date the temporary high balance is credited to an individual depositor's account, or to a client's account on an individual's behalf. Certain life events can cause you to have a temporary high balance in your bank accounts, one of which includes real estate transactions including property purchases, sale proceeds and equity release. We have supported many clients in making sure they get the best rates while in cash in these circumstances.

"Up to 30th September 2021 there will be a transitional period for the gradual return to normal stamp duty rates. As a first starting point, the stamp duty threshold will drop from £500,000 to £250,000 and by 1st October the threshold will return to its standard rate of £125,000. The obvious question is where does this leave the property market post the stamp duty holiday?

"Now that the relief is being phased out, the housing market is already beginning to show signs of change as the stamp duty holiday had the exact effect the chancellor had intended in fuelling a rising demand. The three-month extensions to the holiday were projected to benefit over 100,000 additional property buyers, however the level of demand has caused huge delays and will leave homeowners missing out on the full amount of relief.

"As for first-time buyers, during a recent survey carried out by Yorkshire Building Society, 44% of people hoping to buy their first home in the UK expect that the pandemic will actually help them get on to the property ladder sooner than expected. This is largely because more people have had the opportunity to save throughout the lockdowns imposed throughout the pandemic.

"Nearly half of those who completed the survey said they were able to add an average increase of more than £500 per month to their savings and Ben Merritt, senior mortgage manager at Yorkshire Building Society, said "the first-time buyer market is swiftly heading back to pre-Covid levels of mortgage choice and availability, and, with smaller deposit options having made a comeback, and new Government support on the table, first-time buyers could have good reason to be optimistic."

"In addition to this, first-time buyers can make a purchase with a lower deposit following the return of 95% Loan-to-Value mortgages under the scheme to encourage more first-time buyers to get onto the property ladder. The scheme is expected to run until December next year and applies to main residential properties up to the value of £600,000 – however it cannot be used on new-build properties.

"With demand staying high and supply increasing, it's likely the housing market and prices will remain very strong, though not quite at the frantic level we saw from November 2020 to March 2021 in the height of the national restrictions."

Cascade allows independent and unbiased cash solutions for a range of client types meaning savers don't have to choose only one bank, with all institutions accessed quickly and easily, daily. The service is the only one of its kind that tracks every bank and building society in the market - this data affords clients the best possible outcome from cash.

**More information on Cascade, its unique saving and its extended services are available at [www.cascade.co.uk](http://www.cascade.co.uk)**





Ryan Dias



# LOVE ONLINE TO BECOME SAFER WITH SUPPORT FROM THE EXPERIENCE BANK



A new digital business concept that is bringing access to love online safely is forging forward in development thanks to an introduction made by the philanthropic organisation, The Experience Bank.

**Offering its support, knowledge and access to some of the region's leading senior executive, non-executive and board advisory talent, The Experience Bank supports early start-ups. When owner Peter Neal was introduced to Elaine Parker, he knew he could help and that one of the advisors in the Bank, David Stonehouse, would be interested to know more.**

Elaine is the owner of Safer Date, an online dating website and soon to be app, that is the only one in the UK that carries out rigorous background checks to protect the users in every aspect.

Following a traumatic personal experience herself from someone she met on another dating site, Elaine took action. She researched all the other sites, looking into fake profiles and safety nets used to protect users. She was dismayed to find that very few, if any, checks were made leaving vulnerable people looking for love open to cat fishing, abuse, lies and physical harm. She said:

"After my own personal experience, I knew there was a niche in the market. For me it wasn't about making money, but about giving people who are looking for love a safe and enjoyable place to do so.

"Safer Date is the securest dating site in the world, designed for those who are looking for long lasting, deeper relationships. It is the only one with the level of background checks that we insist on for all of our members – both male and female. It uses the same real-time ID check as banks, runs global background checks with Interpol, the National Crime Agency, the Police, and other intelligence agencies, scours criminal records and checks financial wellbeing. It also checks to see if there is a history of addiction. Amazingly

the vetting process leaves no footprint, so it is perfectly harmless for those joining to allow us to do the checks."

David Stonehouse met Peter Neal a number of years ago and when he stepped down from his final CEO role, he let Peter know that he was keen to be a non-Executive Director in the region, with at least one pro-bono role. As a qualified accountant, and battle scars from successfully building and growing businesses for the last 30 years, he instantly recognised how he could help Elaine as an advisor to Safer Date. He said:

"Elaine is hugely passionate and her concept is brilliant. She has identified a popular route for people looking for love and made a pledge to find a way to keep them safe. Her own experience means she understands the trauma and she is putting her all into making sure this positive move for the online dating community happens."

"I am delighted to be on this journey with her, and we have developed a working relationship that is allowing me to advise her, prepare for investment and growth and be available to even more people via an app later this year."

The Safer Date website is already proving popular, but the app cannot come quick enough for Elaine. Elaine says the synergy between her and David was so apparent, that it was a natural decision to bring him onboard. She concluded:

"I am very focused on taking Safer Date to as many people as possible and David is fabulous support. I am so happy that he understands me, Safer Date and sees its huge potential to disrupt the dating scene."

Safer Date aims to reduce the targeting of vulnerable singletons and to protect people.

Last year in the UK alone, £62m was taken by fraudulent activity associated with online dating. Peter said:

"The Experience Bank recognises talented individuals and promising start-ups. I saw both in Elaine and was keen to get Safer Date the advice and support that will make it a real disrupter in its marketplace.

"David's guidance and experience is going to be invaluable and I look forward to watching the company progress."

Experience Bank Group incorporates The Experience Bank philanthropic, social enterprise company along with a commercial venture providing two, symbiotic services - EB Board Level Recruitment and EB High Performing Boards.

With this combination of specialist expertise, the Experience Bank Group is uniquely positioned to help organisations ensure they have not only the right skills in the leadership team and boardroom but also optimum board performance with higher value creation.

5% of all revenue from Experience Bank Group is gifted to The Experience Bank social enterprise to enable more start-ups, early-stage businesses, charities and social enterprises access to high quality, advisory and non-executive talent.

***If you are keen to know more, then visit [www.theexperiencebank.co.uk](http://www.theexperiencebank.co.uk). To gain access to The Experience Bank or for recruitment of a senior management or board position, email [peter@theexperiencebank.co.uk](mailto:peter@theexperiencebank.co.uk) or call Peter on 07843 329393.***

***Safer Date can be found at [www.saferdate.co.uk](http://www.saferdate.co.uk)***





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# PEOPLE DO BUSINESS WITH PEOPLE...

It's long been acknowledged that the key to a successful business is the relationships between staff and clients.

People do business with people after all.

And that's certainly an ethos that sits at the very heart of Mullen Stoker, the Durham-based chartered accountancy and IT firm, as director Stephen Green explains...

When Mullen Stoker founders Neil Mullen and Gary Stoker launched their accountancy and IT firm 11 years ago, they were determined to do things differently.

They wanted to create a firm that put honesty, integrity and the personal touch at the heart of their client offering – a business that was built on relationships.

And that's exactly what they've achieved.

Many of their clients – which range from sole traders to SMEs and large corporates – have been with them from day one. And the new business the Mandale Business Park firm brings in is usually through recommendation and word of mouth.

Director Stephen Green said: "We like to think that at Mullen Stoker we do things differently.

"It's not about the thrill of the chase or making promises we don't stick to. It's about looking after our clients from day one, with the personal touch that we were determined would be at the heart of every client relationship.



Stephen Green

"For us, it's not about our clients feeling valued at the start – it's about them feeling valued all the time. They have a dedicated contact from day one, and no matter when they need to speak to that person, they are available.

"People do business with people after all and that's something we never lose sight of. We pride ourselves on the fact that when a client comes to Mullen Stoker they stay with us and have no hesitation in recommending us to their own friends and work colleagues.

"That's something that cannot be underestimated."

Dave Gardener, owner of long-term Mullen Stoker client Peter Dodd Funeral Directors in Sunderland, said: "Mullen Stoker are fantastic because they speak my language which is so important.

"They make the whole process so simple for me which is great because it is a minefield and there are so many areas we have to keep on top of.

"I always feel like nothing is too much trouble for them, that they're always happy to go above and beyond for us and are on the other end of the phone if we have any questions we need help with.

"It's for that reason that I would class them as friends as well as our accountants and for a small business like ours, that is crucial."

Mullen Stoker was founded in 2010 and provides specialist accountancy and IT services. It currently employs 15 people with further plans to grow in 2021.

[www.mullenstoker.co.uk](http://www.mullenstoker.co.uk)

## ROBSON LAIDLER CERTIFIES AS A B CORP

Robson Laidler accountants and business advisors has announced it is the first business in the North East to receive certification as a B Corporation (or B Corp).

With offices in Newcastle and Durham, Robson Laidler has joined 4000 businesses globally and 400 in the UK who have certified as B Corps reinventing business by pursuing purpose as well as profit.

Robson Laidler has met rigorous social and environmental standards, which represent its commitment to goals outside of shareholder profit.

The B Corp certification addresses the entirety of a business' operations and covers five key impact areas of Governance, Workers, Community, Environment and Customers.

The certification process is rigorous, with applicants required to reach a benchmark score of over 80 while providing evidence of socially and environmentally responsible practices relating to energy supplies, waste and water use, worker compensation, diversity and corporate transparency.

Robson Laidler's MD Graham Purvis said: "Our purpose is to make a positive difference to people's lives and this spans across all our stakeholders from our clients to our people and community and this is engrained in everything we do. We set out to become a B Corp two years ago and during this time we have undergone rigorous assessment to meet the standards and



Robson Laidler MD Graham Purvis.

procedures that are so very rightly so set out in this certification.

"We hope that our commitment to doing business differently will be an inspiration to others and really help spread the idea that we can redefine success in business to be as much about people and planet as it is about profit. I am happy to talk to any business leader who would like to find out more about how their organisation can become part of this movement."

Chris Turner, Executive Director of B Lab UK says "We are delighted to welcome Robson Laidler to the B Corp community. This is a movement of companies who are committed to changing how business operates and believe business really can be a force for good. We know that Robson Laidler are going to be a fantastic addition to the community and will continue driving the conversation forward.



"We are pleased to have B Corps of all shapes and sizes as part of our community. Business is a powerful force and B Corps demonstrate that you can do good in any sector. Welcoming Robson Laidler is an exciting moment because they have an opportunity to lead the way within the finance industry. We and the rest of the B Corp community are really pleased to support them in paving the way for a new way of doing things".

The B Corp community in the UK, representing a broad cross section of industries and sizes, comprises over 400 companies and include well-known brands such as Bulb Energy, Innocent Drinks, The Body Shop and organic food pioneers Abel & Cole.

[www.robson-laidler.co.uk](http://www.robson-laidler.co.uk)  
[www.bcorporation.net](http://www.bcorporation.net)





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## PROPERTY TYPES – MORTGAGE COMPANIES HAVE DIFFERENT TASTES!

Ok – so you’ve found your dream home or perfect investment, now you need a mortgage to buy it.

**With a perfect credit history, and a long-term relationship with Vanilla Bank who look after your mortgage and current account, what could go wrong?**

Well, as implied by the name of our made-up bank, some mortgage companies like straight forward plain properties, with no quirks or unique features – in short, regardless of your own status, if they don’t like the property they won’t lend you the money to buy it!

A few examples where some banks may say no are: -

- **Freehold flats** – the majority of flats in England are leasehold properties – but some are freehold – which is an area most but not all avoid.
- **Short remaining lease on a flat** – virtually every lender has differing requirements, some look at the remaining term at the date of application, others require a certain remaining term at the end of the proposed new mortgage.
- **Tyneside flats** – these are local to the North East and therefore not approved by some lenders.
- **Land** – many lenders are nervous where there are more than two acres of land attached to a property.
- **High rise flats** – a development greater than six storeys can be an issue with some lenders.
- **Two kitchens** – an unusual occurrence, but a problem for most lenders.



- **Solar panels** – seen by most homeowners as a huge benefit, but these can be a problem mortgage wise.
- **Property above or close to non-residential properties** – this can be an issue with many Banks, but in our experience there is usually a solution somewhere in the mortgage market.
- **Not fit for mortgage purposes** – sorry about the jargon, but this can cover several areas including a lack of a kitchen or a bathroom, through to the condition of the property. Auction properties are often a good example of this.

With an in-depth knowledge of each lenders’ “quirks” a professional mortgage advisor can

help you avoid the disappointment and stress of a rejected application.

***If you would like to see what our clients have to say about us we have in excess of 240 Google 5\* reviews on-line and on our website from satisfied clients.***

**[www.innovateml.co.uk](http://www.innovateml.co.uk)**

*Paul Hardingham and Tony Ibson are Mortgage and Protection Advisers at Innovate Mortgages and Loans. Both have over 20 years of experience advising individuals and businesses across the North East of England. They can be contacted for bespoke advice at [paul@innovateml.co.uk](mailto:paul@innovateml.co.uk) or [tony@innovateml.co.uk](mailto:tony@innovateml.co.uk) or call 0191 2843723.*

*Your home is at risk if you do not keep up repayments on a mortgage or other loan secured on it.*



# COVID SUPPORT MEASURES ARE COMING TO AN END. IS YOUR BUSINESS READY?

By Michael Cole,  
Associate Partner at Haines Watts

The Government's support measures have been a lifeline for businesses across the UK over the past 16 months.

At the peak of the pandemic over 11 million people were placed on furlough through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, and £25 billion has been given out through the Self Employed Income Support Scheme so far.

And even though the return to (somewhat) normality will be a sigh of relief for many business owners, it's even more crucial to start forward planning now, with the support measures drawing to a close within a matter of months.

I've outlined some of the steps that business owners should be considering when planning ahead to help ensure that they're placed in the strongest possible position.

## Create a clear cashflow forecast

With the support measures ending, having a clear and robust cashflow forecast is vital for your business strategy and decision-making process. There are four key points I tell clients to keep in mind when creating a cashflow forecast:

- **Understanding your cash** - Be as methodical as possible and really drill down into your incomings and outgoings, this will go a long way in creating a strong forecast.
- **Knowing your industry and market** - Keep the bigger picture in mind, and have a clear understanding of what's going on in your industry and your market to create the most accurate forecast possible.
- **Planning for different scenarios** - Having different forecasts for the best - and worst-case scenarios will place you in good stead to adjust your strategy and plan no matter what the outcome is.
- **It's an ongoing process** - Review your forecast with your budget, plan and actuals in mind.

Cloud accounting systems can really lend you favour here, by streamlining your data and giving you access to real-time information to help you create a really robust forecast.



Michael Cole

## Unlock trapped cash in your business

Even though the grants and funding that your business might have been relying upon over the past year are ending, there could be trapped cash sitting within your business that you're not even aware of.

Whether it's Research and Development Tax Relief (R&D) and Patent Box, Capital Allowances or Creative Industries Tax Relief, tax relief can provide a significant cashflow injection to help ease your cashflow.

We'd always recommend consulting an advisor before submitting a claim, to ensure you're getting the most out of your claim, and assess whether the relief could have a potential knock-on effect on any of your other grants and funding.

## Is it time to review your systems?

With hybrid working here to stay for many businesses, now is the right time to be reviewing your accounting systems.

If you haven't already made the move on to cloud accounting, it can offer a real opportunity to completely transform the way you work, giving you access to real-time data on any device, it allows you to work with your team and your advisors from any location. This means that you can run your business from anywhere, whilst also

making working together much easier.

Getting set up is quick and easy, and can even be done remotely. Your advisor should be able to help train you in the software and ensure that you're getting the most out of it.

If you're already set up, it's worth questioning whether you're really maximising the software. With thousands of add-on apps, you can do everything from automating your billing and linking up to your bank account, to scanning receipts straight from your phone and sending invoices directly to your clients over email.

## Where to go next...

For business owners across the county, the support measures have undoubtedly been a saving grace. But with the end of the measures firmly in sight, now is the time to start working with your advisors and planning for the months to come, to ensure that your business is in the most resilient position possible.

Whether it's helping you to create your cashflow forecast, assessing your eligibility for tax relief, or helping to place you in the strongest position possible to face the coming months, our advisors are here to support you every step of the way.

[www.hwca.com](http://www.hwca.com)



# THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

Andrew Marsh, chair of Vistage for the North East and Northumberland, NED for numerous businesses and charities; and successful entrepreneur, has committed to imparting his knowledge throughout 2021 to help business leaders come out of the last year with a solid view for the future.

**In this latest series, he has discussed trust, communication and good execution. In this article he looks the importance of good governance.**

"What is governance? Does your company have it? Does your company need it? In exploring a new business topic, it is always helpful to start with the questions and work our way to the answers.

"In my world, governance is a strategic tool that can influence the performance of any company. Get it right, and revenues and margins improve, get it wrong and you waste significant resources and opportunities. Good governance is the process of providing scrutiny of performance with clarity of decision making.

"If your company has shareholders, stakeholders, a board and /or a senior leadership management team, then governance should be on your radar and if you don't have it, then my advice is to be making it a priority.

"Typical governance is referred to for companies with formal boards, but all organisations effectively have a board; at Companies House any person registered as a Director effectively creates a 'board'. Governance can be both formal, driven by the board (strategic governance looking at medium to long term) or it can be informal (short term), day-to-day governance completed by the executive team or founder/entrepreneur. If you have both, it is essential that the two are interdependent and so must work hand in hand.

"I would recommend you start early and build in good governance from the beginning or as soon as you can – the depth and detail must be dependent on the status of the company, the challenges it faces, where in its journey it is. Just don't put it off as you could regret it. The best way to start is to think about the challenges you will face in next three years and shape it around that – don't do governance for today, think of the future.

"Good governance provides transparency for all stakeholders on decision making and control within the company. Shareholders may want the formality and indeed many investors demand it given they are providing their cash for you to deliver the business plans so they will want security. PLC and other listed companies MUST have it as part of being on the stock markets. Others will choose to have it because it just makes business sense. In recent surveys it emerged that 87% of firms experienced improvements in sales and profits when they instigated governance. 91% of companies reported an upturn in performance when they restructured their thinking and actions in response to governance.

"Benefits include 1) diversity of perspectives - providing wider inputs, insights and options, 2) ensuring focused actions/performance and 3) providing clarity of how decisions are made and who can make them. All of which increase business sustainability... It also focuses on a healthy working culture and practice, as well as being a marketer's dream as it builds a positive reputation. With all these benefits, what's not to love about having a governance structure in place, whatever your size or ambition?

"Gauging the amount and style of governance is key for all organisations. Too much red tape/process and you risk losing agility and speed; too little and you risk drifting off plan and decision-making chaos. There are frameworks and standards that can help you in your thinking i.e. the FRS UK Code of Governance and Charity Commission Code of Governance framework. But you can also look at businesses that you feel have good governance and learn from them!

"At the Experience Bank Group, we work with companies to improve their Governance Effectiveness using our 5 foundations of success. You cannot achieve governance without great information linked to your vision/plans, clarity of processes, clear leadership, diverse composition of the board and robust dynamics within them. Given the amount of topics a board could be discussing I wanted to share with you my top 10 core areas for consideration in your governance discussions:

**"1. ESG.** Environmental, social and governance reporting. What impact do you determine your company should have and how and when is that achieved? Make commitments to your community and to things that matter today and make them happen.

**"2. Cyber Security.** The world has moved online. Have you? Are you protected? What are your parameters for protecting your staff, your customers, your suppliers? It can feel rather daunting but what a huge relief you will feel to have it in black and white.

**"3. Compliance.** What boxes do you HAVE to tick and how? What boxes is it helpful for you to tick? And which ones see you going above and beyond duty but will give a return? Governance is particularly helpful if your company has gone through very quick growth, or is evolving, as it makes sure that nothing that must be compliant can fall through the net.

**"4. Strategy and board responsibility.** The roles of the senior management. Look at what is right in front of you and needs doing. But more importantly look at the future and what, if you get this right (or wrong), it will look like?

**"5. Risk.** What are your risks? Form a risk register and make it form part of your board and management meetings, make sure it is updated regularly. Have solutions, responses and impacts thought out fully. To be prepared, is to be in part ready to stop something bringing the company to the ground. Many disasters can be avoided with good governance in risk management, spotting something early or responding in the right way can be invaluable.

**"6. Reporting and managing external relationships.** How do you stay abreast of what is needed to be done, how do you respond and how do you report to stakeholders and the public? How could you bring about change in your industry? Do you want to be in the limelight and fight for regulations, or do you want to play your role quietly? Governance makes sure that decision makers behave the same way when it comes to sensitive actions.

**"7. Recruitment and growth.** HR. Diversity. All these conversations form good forward-looking decisions and shape the future of any decent company. Behaviour and expectations of the board – knowledge needed, skills, commitment, dedication to time. You can't expect to have a good board, if they don't know what is expected of them.

**"8. Finances.** Are there ways you must behave within financial constraints? Do you forecasts include unforeseen events and are they watertight? Do you expect certain reports from the finance team? Are you regulated? Could or should you be? What needs to happen to reach that regulated status?

**"9. And finally dealing with damaging challenges.** Crisis Management. Disaster recovery. It's not always comfortable thinking about these things, but they are essential conversations that need to be on paper as frameworks.

**"10. External scenarios.** What is going on in your markets, what are your competitors doing, UK economy, wider economies and world-wide that could have an impact. Examples of where companies' governance hindered things include Blockbusters v Netflix, Amazon v traditional Retail, consumer changes in their spending habits, Covid accelerating online and virtual working

"In recent years, the most used buzz word has been strategy. Compliance of course has been a necessary focus for a good while. But boards and leaders need to change and do so, quickly. Going forward, both strategy and compliance must be part of a much wider governance conversation.

"So, my final tip, is to build your team accordingly, be well informed by them, have a strong cohesive approach and be confident that your company can only improve with good governance!"

***If you have a question or think Andrew or one of his peer groups could help with the governance and structure of your company, then please contact him on [andrew@marshbusinesstransformation.co.uk](mailto:andrew@marshbusinesstransformation.co.uk).***

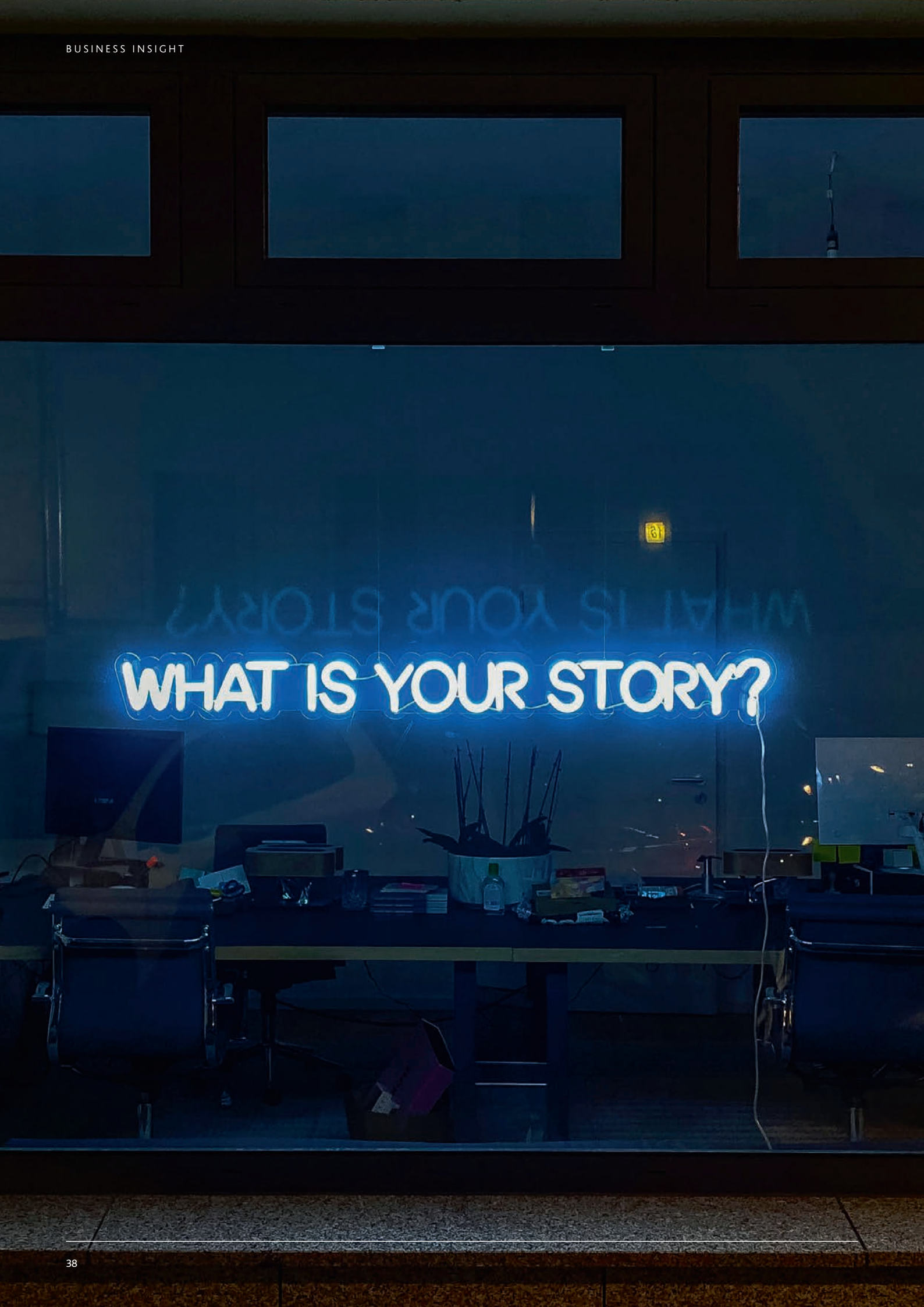
***Andrew also takes part in a number of podcasts and videos which can be found on his LinkedIn, on Experience Bank Group's LinkedIn or on [www.theexperiencebank.co.uk](http://www.theexperiencebank.co.uk)***





Andrew Marsh







# WHAT DOES WHAT YOU DO, DO?

What a strangely worded little question for a business.  
But it's a good question.

**It's a good question because whilst most businesses can tell you what they do, few are good at telling you the actual results of what they do. And that's a big problem.**

Why? Because customers don't actually want what you do. They want what you do, does – for them.

But it gets worse. Because even if we as businesses do focus on the results of what we do, we then have to communicate 'what we do does' in an engaging way. In an emotional way. We have to communicate 'what we do does' in a way that gets us noticed, remembered and chosen. And we have to sound different, too. Or we just blend in. When we communicate, we should 'own' our difference so that we sound like us and only us. Aaargh! Tricky.

At Harlands we talk about this kind of thing with clients quite a bit. Because telling the right story, in the right way, increases a brand's profitability. And that's what Harlands look to do – one way or another – with all clients.

Here's how a few brands, brands that you already know, show that they understand the difference between what they do, and 'what they do does' – by storytelling the right thing.

## Storytell The Right Thing

Lynx makes young guys smell nice. That's what they do. But their most compelling and commercially impactful brand storytelling is, of course, around seduction. Because seduction is what they want us to believe they do, does. That's the story their customers buy into – and buy.

Persil laundry products are powerful cleaners and stain removers. Yet they storytell about warm and functional family units and, in particular, Persil position themselves as a token of maternal care. In recent years, there is not unsurprisingly a playing-down of mum as the sole user of the washing machine! There is, quite rightly, a blurring of maternal and paternal. But the parenting and care narrative remains. Because they continue to storytell around helping us present our kids and their clothing, better.

Gillette is a brand driven by the delivery of supreme shaving technology. That's what they do. Yet the focus of their storytelling is, of course, confident male grooming. Grooming that affects how a guy is perceived and therefore how he feels about himself. Improved confidence is what the Gillette brand is 'for', if you like. That's what the consumer buys, so that's the headline of the storytelling.

And if BMW tried to woo us with stories relating to the spring rate of their suspension, or the padding, ergonomics and supportiveness of their bucket-seat frame and construction, everybody (except perhaps the technically geeky) would nod off! BMW does not headline with the practicalities relating to how they create a great driving experience. BMW headlines with 'The Ultimate Driving Machine'. They've been headlining that way for almost 50 years, since 1973.

## Focus On What You Do Does

Lynx gets you the attention you crave.

Persil facilitates better parenting.

Gillette enhances male confidence.

BMW delivers the ultimate driving experience.

These brands know what their customers buy into – and buy.

So as you can see, if your brand and marketing spend is helping me to understand what you 'do', that's the functional benefit. And I'm not so interested in that.

'What you do does' is where it's at. The psychological benefit – to me. That's the story you should be telling. Now all you have to do is to find it – and tell it.

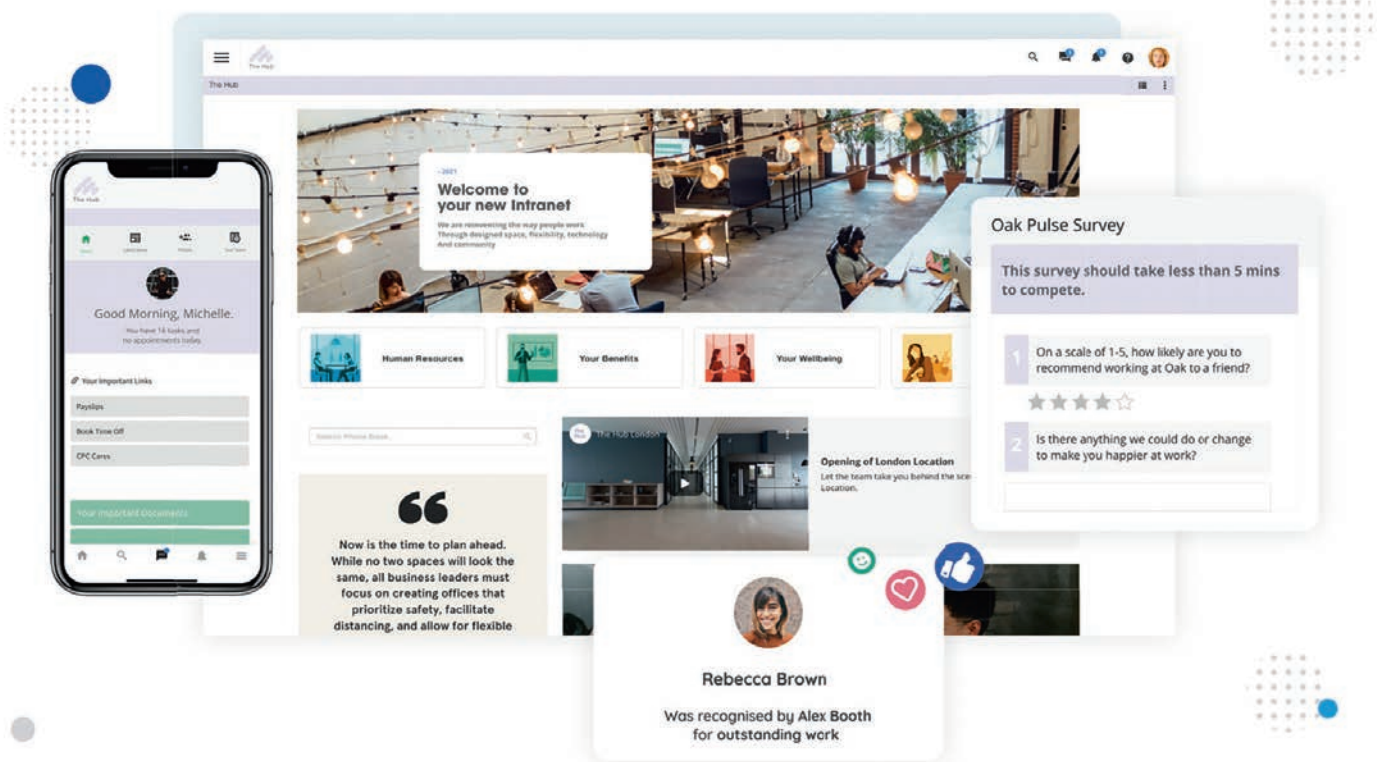
[www.harlandsaccountants.co.uk](http://www.harlandsaccountants.co.uk)



Darren Wingfield



# MAVEN COMPLETES £7.4 MILLION SERIES A INVESTMENT IN OAK ENGAGE



## Pioneering employee engagement platform secures further funding to scale rapidly following impressive growth

Maven Capital Partners has led the £2.6 million investment in cloud-based internal communication and employee engagement platform, Oak Engage. The transaction has now completed the series A round, in which Maven has invested a total of £6.025m to date, alongside a further £1.375m from private investors and regional funding.

Oak is a globally scalable cloud-based platform with flexible software that makes it suitable for businesses of all sizes, used by hundreds of thousands of people every day across a multitude of sectors. Oak Engage allows businesses to engage and connect their people through its mobile app and SaaS (Software as a Service) platform.

The cloud-based, next-generation software provides a range of internal communications tools that integrate seamlessly with office applications, helping improve productivity with feeds, collaboration hubs and advanced search.

Despite the pandemic, Oak has continued to grow strongly, and the recent investment will enable the business to scale further to support the lucrative customer contracts it has secured over the last 12 months, as well as create 26 new jobs across its sales and marketing divisions.

Oak works with some of the world's biggest brands including Aldi, Five Guys, Halfords and ITV,

and have become intranet software experts and thought leaders within the employee engagement industry.

The Finance Durham Fund, established by Durham County Council and overseen by Business Durham, originally supported Oak in 2018 to strengthen the company's sales and marketing, expand the roll-out of its software, and develop its team. The Fund can support the growth of businesses located in or looking to relocate to County Durham. Following the investment Oak established its head office function in Durham and launch a training centre for customers of its intranet software where 15 of its staff are now based.

Since the initial investment, the business has experienced strong growth, and now supports a number of enterprise-sized corporates with an impressive customer base of FTSE 100 and multinational clients who join the list of household brands the company already works with, such as BooHoo and NEP Inc, Group.

Led by a seasoned former Silicon Valley executive, Will Murray, who has a successful track record of scaling technology businesses and was a key member of the management team of Turnitin, a US software company which recently sold to a private equity buyer for \$1.75bn.

Michael Vassallo, Investment Director at Maven, said: "Oak is a proven, fast growing technology

business led by strong, experienced management team. The platform is globally scalable and as employee engagement is becoming increasingly recognised as pivotal in the overall success of a business, Oak continues to secure a number of impressive customer contacts. We look forward to working with Will and the team as the company scales further and continues to expand."

Will Murray, CEO of Oak, said "With the work we have done so far we are just beginning to see how transformational our new approach to the company intranet can be. This further injection of capital further secures our place as industry leaders within the intranet software and internal comms industry. We will continue to invest in growth, our technology and in our product as we continue to push forward with the support of investors.

"Products like our intranet software can help businesses connect their people, boost employee engagement, and promote wellbeing, giving everyone a voice at a time when they need it most. This will be key now that the majority of people will want some sort of flexible working situation going forwards. There is so much more to come from Oak Engage in the coming months and years."

***If your business is in need of finance to help unlock its growth potential, Maven may be able to help. Contact our team today on 0191 731 8590 or visit [mavencp.com](https://mavencp.com) to find out more.***



# Finance Durham Fund

Debt and equity funding available between **£150,000 and £2 million** for businesses in, or looking to relocate to, County Durham.

## How can Finance Durham help my business to grow?

A simple alternative to bank finance, the Finance Durham Fund is transforming the financial landscape for businesses across County Durham.

We can back companies of all sizes and across most sectors which contribute to business growth and job creation within the County.



Purchasing new  
machinery



Capital  
expenditure



Exporting  
abroad



Investing in  
new products



Hiring a  
new team



Filling gaps in  
working capital



Sales and  
marketing



Management  
buyouts

If your business is in need of finance to help unlock its growth potential, we may be able to help.

For more information please contact:

**info@financedurham.co.uk | T: 0191 731 8595 | [financedurham.co.uk](http://financedurham.co.uk)**



# MHA TAIT WALKER NAMED AS ONE OF THE MOST ACTIVE M&A ADVISERS IN THE NORTH EAST

The latest Experian M&A Review for the first six months of 2021 revealed MHA Tait Walker Corporate Finance continue to rank as one of the most active M&A advisers in the North East, with eight disclosed transactions completed in the period several of which were of a significant size and of a cross border nature.

**Momentum continues across the deal making landscape and the appointment of a new Corporate Finance Manager, Mike Williams, signals the teams confidence in the immediate term and is a position that is key to the growth strategy of the firm's Teesside office. This follows on from the appointment of a Senior Executive to further strengthen its transaction support and due diligence capabilities.**

Lee Humble, Associate Partner said: "I am positive the autumn will bring its own challenges - a period in which we expect our debt advisory capabilities to increase in prominence as businesses continue to recover from the pandemic. However, it is so pleasing to see that many businesses have seen the opportunity to grow which has been attractive for potential investors and buyers, creating a buoyant M&A market for the region."

"The deal market in the year to date has been very busy with many deals completing in anticipation of a much-vaunted potential rise in Capital Gains Tax for company owners in the budget on 2 March. This CGT increase never happened and instead the tax conditions for SME company disposals remain strong at present - though we all expect that the Chancellor Rishi Sunak will increase taxes in the upcoming budgets."



Lee Humble

In the first half of 2021 the team advised the following completed deals:

- The sale of CCTV installer Hadrian Technology Limited to Marlowe plc. Hadrian implements CCTV solutions, operating software, digital cloud-based storage, and ongoing maintenance primarily to clients in the supermarket sector across the UK.
- The Investment by Trimountain Partners into Abca Systems Group, a £25m turnover company firm which installs and maintains across a broad range of fire and security systems.
- The sale of a nationwide provider of Cloud, Security and Managed Service solutions
- The acquisition by Victory Innovations, a US medical technology business, of a UK based European distributor.
- The acquisition of a group of children's nurseries.
- We assisted a family- owned business undertake a management buyout which

will see value realisation for the long-term owners and ensure succession of the business in the hands of the existing team.

- The sale to an employee-owned trust of a professional services firm.
- The investment by Maven into Oak Engage.

The most recent twelve months has been the busiest for the team for a decade and that shows no sign of slowing just yet as the economy begins to recover.

Steve Plaskitt, head of Corporate Finance, completed the sale of long-established Lord Tool Hire to One Stop Hire Group in July and says that more deals are on track for the second half of the year.

**Steve Plaskitt, Partner, Lee, and the team remain on hand for any business considering mergers, acquisitions, disposals or capital raising. For more information, please contact 0191 2850321**





## TEESSIDE BUSINESSES MUST HELP TO CLOSE THE SKILLS GAP TO ENSURE FREEPORT SUCCESS

Teesside faces a skills shortage and issue with talent retention that could threaten the area's chance for Freeport success, but a Teesside business advisor sees all businesses having a role to play in helping to close the gap.

**Mayor Ben Houchen and MP Jacob Young have warned of Teesside's skills shortage and the risk it poses of allowing other areas of the North East to benefit from the Freeport while Teesside suffers.**

Andrew Moorby, managing partner at MHA Tait Walker and Head of its Teesside office, believes that businesses and education need to continue to work together to reduce the skills gap and talent retention issue.

Andrew said: "As the largest planned Freeport, Teesworks is offering us 18,000 long-needed jobs. The business and education community in the region need to work closely together to ensure that the jobs the Freeport creates are attainable for people in the region. If we don't, then Teesside won't benefit from the growth promised by the Government.

MHA Tait Walker has identified that the skills problem can't be solved by recruitment alone. Andrew said: "We take on graduates and trainees who we train ourselves as well as providing them with greater access to online learning through our MHA training hub and national MHA Training Academy, so they can develop their careers and acquire the skills our industry needs. As a firm, we recognise the importance of training and development and have put this at the forefront of

our business and have recently created a Learning and Development function within the business to help improve training and talent retention.

"Although up-skilling starts with local education, businesses cannot rely purely on this and every organisation has to develop its workforce and train them in the skills Teesside needs. Otherwise, staff shortages and skills gaps will continue, and costs will rise for businesses."

He said: "Many key sectors in the area are aware of the skills shortages and are working to resolve these problems. Development of training programmes and up-skilling challenges are just two of the solutions that will undoubtedly help to close the skills gap."

Andrew cites construction as a leader in using bespoke training. Andrew said: "Construction understands that the green revolution has necessitated the need to adopt different training methods and modern technologies. Some construction businesses have set up their own training programmes to address their skills shortage and it has been a huge success for them.

The business community is also largely positive that this skill gap can be addressed. A study conducted by North East based law firm Womble Bond Dickinson found that 52% of respondents within a Freeport zone believed that they would

create more skilled people over the next 12-24 months.\*

"Local employers and educational institutions need to continue to work together to create the relevant training and support for workers who have the potential to thrive in the Freeport.

"An example of educational support that is needed for Teesside is one of the Eton-funded sixth form colleges, to give young people in our area the access to the highest possible standard of education. With three academies agreed to be established in the North, it would be great to see one of those being Teesside to help bolster the Freeport workforce."

"The following months will prove crucial, but with the correct support from private and public bodies I have no doubt that Teesside will see overwhelming economic growth and prosperity as a result of the Freeport."

Andrew said: "Teesside has a long history of being a leading player in manufacturing and construction, made strong by hard working, skilled craftsmen who take pride in their jobs and their home region. The Freeport is an excellent opportunity for the regeneration and growth of this legacy."

\*[www.womblebonddickinson.com](http://www.womblebonddickinson.com)  
[www.taitwalker.co.uk](http://www.taitwalker.co.uk)





# QUAYSIDE CENTRAL TO CITY'S FUTURE

By Stephen Patterson, Chief Executive of NE1 Ltd

If the pandemic has taught us one thing, it is that cities must adapt to survive. The enforced closure of cities and most businesses almost overnight in March 2020 accelerated changes that were largely underway. As we build back and reopen, it is crucial that our return does not simply re-establish the status quo but uses the opportunities that Covid provided to be more aspirational and visionary.



**I know we have said it before, but we need to create a bigger, better future for Newcastle, the North East and all its existing and future businesses and residents.**

The Quayside is one of the city's greatest cultural and architectural assets and we want to emulate what has been achieved in global cities such as Copenhagen, Melbourne and San Francisco who have worked collaboratively, invested time and money into transforming their waterfronts into vibrant, economically and socially vital parts of urban life as well as major international tourist destinations.

San Francisco in particular provides tremendous inspiration for Newcastle and other cities looking to transform their urban waterfronts. One of the key lessons from SanFran's success is how people were put at the heart of the redevelopment. Everyone in the city, not just residents and business owners living nearby, but the whole city were involved in the plans to reshape the waterfront and from the outset people understood, supported and were enthusiastic about the vision and its final goals.

With c£750m of development earmarked for the Quayside in the forthcoming years, now seems the perfect time to establish an equally ambitious and collective vision for the Quayside here in Newcastle. One that provides a solid foundation for a new, vibrant future for the Quayside enhancing what we've already got; our iconic bridges, historical architecture and relatively new assets like the Baltic and Sage and develop wider plans to transform

the space. Change and development is crucial for any city, but we need to make sure that the Quayside, which was central to the city's original creation and economic prosperity, continues to play its part in making Newcastle great now, and in years to come.

One clear message from successful urban planning teams globally is that to be successful, the plans need to be individual and authentic to the area's history, geography, architecture, neighbourhoods and people.

This summer NE1's Summer in the City programme has had a strong focus on the Quayside, creating spaces to attract visitors, encourage them to spend more time here, soak up the atmosphere outdoors and to celebrate its natural attributes.

A series of summer pop-up parks and installations have transformed over 700 metres of riverside space from the Guildhall to the area past the Pitcher and Piano, collectively viewed as a linear park with seating and activities along its route. A spectacular, 3D artwork and a huge 75 metre pavement vinyl, both created by internationally renowned artists, have taken social media by storm and got people visiting and talking about the Quayside. One recent social media post, a photograph of our 3D artwork, prompted a huge response with thousands of likes and a tremendous public response with hundreds of positive comments and reshares. Huge planters with trees, plants and grasses positioned along the riverside and major installations like the Wave Field seesaws, have all given people more reasons to visit and spend time in this part of the city. All are temporary and will remain in place throughout the summer holidays.

*Continued over...*







Stephen Patterson





*Continued from previous...*

As well as making the Quayside a great stay-cation destination, these installations have been a trial, a test to see how things could look and how the space could be permanently transformed. Rerouting the buses from Wesley Square allows us to test how viable this would be and what other changes would be needed to deliver permanent transformations in the area.

The response to our efforts so far has been phenomenal – the public and businesses in the area have loved the changes and it has given people a taste of what the future could hold. Residents have been overwhelmingly positive and supportive of NE1's Summer in the City activities on the Quayside and are delighted with the transformation. It has whet their appetite for more permanent installations and for more to be made of the Quayside public realm in the future.



Whenever we have asked people what they would like to see more of in the city, they have consistently called for more greenery. As such, this was one of the first starting points for this summer's activity and, working with partners, NE1 is also looking at greening and sustainability projects on the Tyne itself that will deliver multiple environmental benefits. Working with experts in floating eco-systems, we are exploring installing floating pop-up parks, mini eco-systems on the Tyne. However small, these floating parks will deliver significant environmental benefits including carbon capture and helping to clean the river. Initial plans are for one small floating eco-system that will be positioned on the water in front of Wesley Square, this will be the first of its kind in the UK to be sited on an estuary. We would love this project to grow and again we are taking inspiration from across the globe including Chicago's Wild Mile, which aims to create the world's first mile-long floating eco-system.

NE1 has always been ambitious for the city, its people and for the Quayside. We hope that the strong foundations of working collaboratively and collectively with the city council, business, and the residents, combined with expert help and guidance, mean that we can begin to develop a plan that delivers on all of our aspirations and ambitions for the Quayside, and bring together all the fantastic developments on both sides of the river.

[www.newcastle1ltd.com](http://www.newcastle1ltd.com)



# GRANT FUNDING - ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

With the worst of the pandemic hopefully behind us, for many SMEs simply returning to business as usual is good enough.

**But should firms be actually using this time to build back better? Shak Asghar, of Middlesbrough-based business support consultancy Nudl, believes so.**

Here he explains why businesses across the North should be looking at funding options to allow them to grow, rather than just standing still.

"It's great that we're getting back to normality and I know that the past year has been so, so tough on many businesses – it's a relief to just get on with daily life.

"However, as the saying goes, if you're not moving forward, you're falling behind, which is where funding comes in – it's a risk-free way to raise the capital needed for any type of growth initiative.

"That's the main reason I set up Nudl; to make accessing this type of cash easy and straightforward, so business owners don't have to take out loans or overdrafts just to get ahead.

## Money for nothing

"One thing I often hear from businesses is that they're doing fine as they are, with loyal clients and a steady stream of work, but guess what? No matter who you are, you could always be doing better.

"And that's why grants are so amazing – it's free money, with no risk and no repayments, to help firms try something new and leave their comfort zone.

"There are so many things it can be spent on, from new premises to staff training, so I don't believe there's a business out there that couldn't make use of a little extra capital.



Shak and the team

"Having said that, we also know that another reason that a lot of company owners don't apply for financial support isn't because they don't want it – it's because they don't know how to go about it.

"A good funding application not only covers how much money you want and what you'll spend it on; it also needs to give a full overview of your business, your aims and your achievements – and can make all the difference between success and failure.

"At Nudl, we work with firms to explain the whole process without jargon or complicated business speak before teaming up to create the strongest application possible.

"We want to take the hassle out of applying, meaning more businesses can get the cash they're entitled to.

## Spend, spend, spend

"There's a bit of a misconception that funding can only be spent on physical things, such as buildings or equipment, but that's far from the truth.

"In reality, there is funding available for whatever

a company needs to grow, whether that's recruitment, training existing staff or paying for PR and marketing support.

"For example, with the world becoming increasingly online – particularly since the pandemic – something we see a lot of at the moment is grant funding to boost a team's digital presence, whether that's to support training or to get someone in to take over that aspect.

"The important takeaway from this is that the funding isn't just there for bricks and mortar, so if that's not what a business needs – and in many cases it isn't – that's fine; it won't have any bearing on the success of the application.

"At heart, all these grants – and, just as an example, the North East Growth Hub currently has 75 options for funding on its website alone – are about boosting businesses in all industries across the North – who wouldn't want a bit of that?"

**For more information on Nudl and its range of services, get in touch with the team on 0191 580 7069 or email [info@nudl.co.uk](mailto:info@nudl.co.uk)**



# HOW TO ENHANCE YOUR REPUTATION DURING THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Bryony Gibson, managing director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, shares some do's and don'ts that will help you build credibility when navigating the recruitment market, regardless of the outcome.

**It's no coincidence that the most successful companies have strong brand equity and an abundance of great people.**

Almost always the result of long-term planning, careful and consistent reputation management, and excellent communication, if you flip this on its head, there is a lot that people climbing the career ladder can learn from the way top brands gain trust and stand out from the crowd.

If you are career ambitious, creating a personal brand that supports your work goals should be part of your development.

Social media offers the best platform to raise your profile and, if you are committed and consistent in your approach, communities like LinkedIn can amplify your voice, build your network, and have a big impact on the way people perceive you.

In a candidate-led job market, it is too easy to lose sight of the importance of this. Skilled people looking for a new challenge are in the driving seat right now. In certain sectors, they have the pick of jobs and can almost be forgiven for getting carried away, but the status quo won't remain this way forever.

When it comes to looking for your next challenge, if you want to stay respected in your industry, then the key is to remember your long-term goals throughout the recruitment process. To help you navigate this with your reputation intact, here are some things to keep in mind:

## **Constantly communicate**

There is nothing more unsettling than not knowing what is happening during the recruitment process. Even after receiving an offer, if you need time to decide, make sure you keep people updated with



Bryony Gibson

your thinking. Silence is deafening. It never leaves a positive impression, regardless of the outcome.

## **Be decisive**

A couple of days to reflect on a job offer is perfectly acceptable but, whatever you do, make a decision. You would be surprised at how many people struggle with this but, if the job is right, you should know fairly quickly whether you want it or not.

## **Plan for success**

You don't have to take the first job you are offered but, if you are exploring several options, try to organise interviews as close together as possible so, if you get multiple offers, you can manage the decision-making process promptly.

## **Don't play games**

Avoid playing companies off against each other at all costs. In recruitment, honesty is always the best policy, even if you have two offers or want to attend another interview before committing to a new role. People will understand and respect that, but not if you treat recruitment like a game.

## **Be responsive**

The speed you react with shows a prospective

employer how interested you are and also how you are likely to act with their clients and the tasks they set.

## **Don't be greedy**

Negotiation is part of the process but there is a limit before it turns an employer off. If you want a job but are uncomfortable with the terms, discuss them at the earliest opportunity and be clear about why. I've seen many offers withdrawn when an employer doesn't appreciate the way a negotiation was handled and you risk appearing like money is your only motivation.

In all of this, the important thing to remember is that, whilst good people are in demand, employers want them to be the right people, so you still need to impress from start to finish.

It also helps to remember that the market you are working in is probably smaller than you think, especially in the North East, where people often talk.

How you behave and engage with a prospective employer during the recruitment process and, perhaps more critically, during an offer, is crucial to maintaining your reputation. It reveals a lot about your integrity and character and will leave a lasting impression, so make sure it's a good one.

For public practice advice and expertise, get in touch:  
[bryony@bryonygibson.com](mailto:bryony@bryonygibson.com) | (0191) 375 9983.



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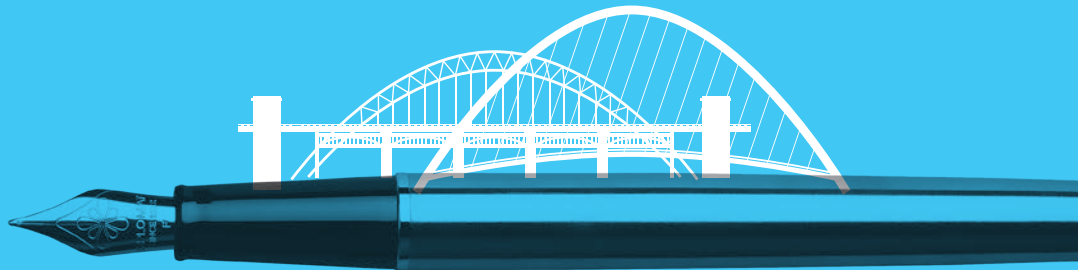


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L-R: Ammar Mirza CBE with Consul General, Dr Shashank Vikram, Graeme Mason, Corporate Affairs Director of Newcastle International Airport and Mike Clark, Director of Tynexe Commercial Ltd, developers of AirView Park.

## CONSUL GENERAL VISIT SHOWCASES THE REGION'S GLOBAL TRADE POTENTIAL

North East business and community leaders have welcomed the Indian Consul General, Dr Shashank Vikram, to the region as part of ongoing discussions to increase global export links and further strengthen bi-lateral trade opportunities between local and overseas organisations.

**Hosted by regional ambassador and entrepreneur, Ammar Mirza CBE, Dr Vikram was guest of honour at a reception and roundtable event to champion North East businesses, discussing potential inward investment, new jobs creation, emerging industries and worldwide market opportunities as part of the UK and India's strategic growth and economic recovery plans.**

He also visited the Tyneside Scottish Army Reserve Centre at Kingston Park, Newcastle, as well as the development site of the proposed multi-million pound 'International Space Station', a dedicated, centre of excellence 'trade hub' which is soon to be constructed at AirView Park.

The 10,200 sq ft office development will help SMEs launch, scale-up and take advantage of export routes via neighbouring Newcastle International Airport, whilst also supporting in-bound trade from overseas. It will provide companies with greater access to Indian, Turkish, Middle Eastern, Pakistani and Dutch markets via a collaborative business model offering world-class expertise and connectivity through trusted partners.

Local dignitaries including North of Tyne Mayor, Jamie Driscoll, and Colonel Peter Winton (HM Forces, British Army 204 Tyneside Scottish Regiment Royal Artillery), as well as North East industry representatives from NewcastleGateshead Initiative, the Malhotra

Group, the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP), Newcastle International Airport, North East England Chamber of Commerce (NEECC), Invest Newcastle and Asian Business Connexions, were in attendance.

Ammar Mirza CBE, explained, "This was a fantastic trade event and a real opportunity to demonstrate and showcase the strength, breadth and diversity of North East industries to key stakeholders. Our discussions were very productive and identified many different ways that mutually-beneficial, collaborative partnerships could become the catalyst for strategic growth, not just for individual companies but also the region as a whole.

"The North East has so much to offer and significant opportunities exist going forward for all parties. By engaging and working more closely together, we can help to attract overseas companies that may be looking to the UK as part of global investment plans, here to the region, and at the same time, provide emerging SMEs with access to new markets when developing their export potential. We're therefore delighted to have welcomed Consul General, Dr Vikram, to the region and welcome further discussions with delegates moving forward."

Consul General, Dr Vikram, who has worked on behalf of the Indian Government in South Africa and is now based in the UK, added. "The North East presents a unique set of opportunities to strengthen the already robust trade relationship

between India and the UK. We look forward to working together to explore these opportunities and the synergies presented by the region through the International Space Station Trade Centre.

"We also take this opportunity to thank the Mayor, Mr Jamie Driscoll, members of the business community, the Indian diaspora in Newcastle, the Chamber of Commerce, officials from the airport authority, the 101st Regiment Royal Artillery and Mr Ammar Mirza CBE for organising and hosting the roundtable to promote trade, tourism and technology as India celebrates its 75th year of independence."

Mayor of the North of Tyne Combined Authority, Jamie Driscoll, said, "It was good to meet Dr Vikram in person - we'd met online previously. Trade is a win-win, and we're building a strong spirit of cooperation with the Indian Consul General's office. The North of Tyne is an outward looking region, and we're keen to expand on our exports and bring firms here with inward investment.

"The North of Tyne offers first-rate support to companies wanting to locate here, and our support for SMEs to innovate includes specialist advice, grants, loans and equity investment. There really is no better place to do business."

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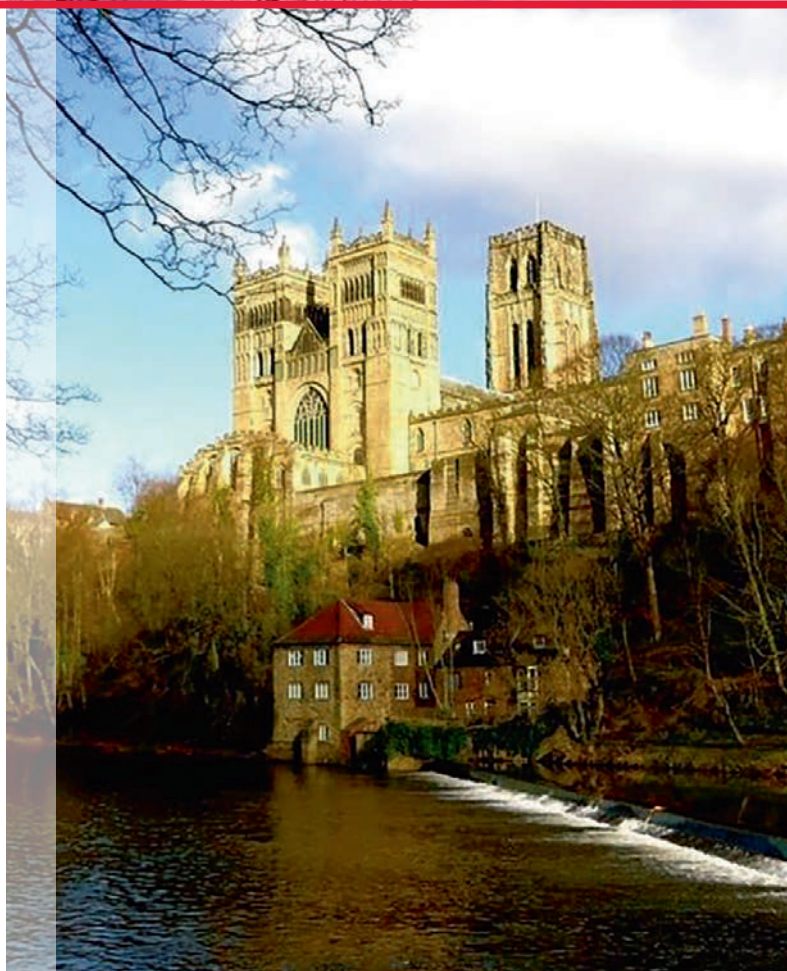
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Patricia Alexander

## SHARED INTEREST IS NOMINATED FOR TWO AWARDS

The Third Sector Awards provide an opportunity for voluntary organisations of all sizes to celebrate their work and the real difference they make to society.

**This month, Shared Interest Managing Director Patricia Alexander tells us what it means to be shortlisted for this year's awards.**

"We are delighted to announce that both Shared Interest Society and our charity Shared Interest Foundation have been recognised at the Third Sector Awards.

"Shared Interest Society has been shortlisted in the Enterprise of the Year category and Shared Interest Foundation for the Small Charity, Big Achiever category.

"Being shortlisted for these awards is a fantastic accolade and a real celebration of the work Shared Interest has achieved.

"The last 18 months have been extremely challenging for so many people, and being shortlisted demonstrates the commitment of everyone involved in Shared Interest.

"Last year, our financial services had an impact on almost 400,000 individuals, with 70% of our finance going directly to producers. However, for every farmer or handcraft maker we are able to help, there are many more in great need of finance, and even more so in light of the current crisis.

"Our members are incredibly loyal, and have continued to support us. We are actually seeing



Shared Interest Foundation Manager Kodzo.

our Share Capital increase. We recently reached the milestone of £50m, which is vital so that we can continue to carry out our mission of reaching those smaller vulnerable groups who are otherwise unable to access finance."

Shared Interest Foundation Manager Kodzo Korkorts, said: "We are proud to have been shortlisted for the Small Charity, Big Achiever award.

"This year, we have worked with in-country partners to deliver projects in rural communities across Africa and Latin America. Thanks to support from individuals, and funding from trusts, we have enabled people to learn new skills in cocoa farming, beekeeping, and water conservation.

"We also re-launched our Livelihood Security Fund in response to the Covid-19 pandemic to support farmers and workers affected in these communities."

A Third Sector spokesperson said: "The importance of the work charities, individuals and sector organisations have done throughout the pandemic – to support their beneficiaries, raise awareness of crucial issues and drive best practice among their peers – cannot be overstated. We want to thank the individuals and teams working their hardest to deliver at a time when they have never been more needed."

Winners will be announced at an awards ceremony in London on 17 September.

[shared-interest.com](https://shared-interest.com)





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Sarah Ellis, Co-Founder, Amazing If

2021 Hybrid conference | 16 November | Hilton Newcastle Gateshead & Online

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This year we have our best speaker line up yet! Highlights include:

- **Sarah Ellis** of Amazing if on **The 5 skills to succeed in a Squiggly Career**
- CEO **Lysa Morrison** on **Mastering motivation to Create Highly Engaged Teams**
- Former professional boxer and Commonwealth Champion, **Stacey Copeland** on **Why Gender Stereotype Should Never be a Barrier**
- **Paul-Jervis Heath**, Founding partner and CCO of Modern Human on **Beyond the Hybrid Model**

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## OVER 300 COUNTY DURHAM BUSINESSES BENEFITED FROM £6M RECOVERY GRANT



Cllr Elizabeth Scott, Durham County Council and Sarah Slaven, Business Durham.





The Durham Business Recovery Grant has supported 318 businesses across County Durham to overcome the challenges caused by the pandemic and help safeguard over 3,500 jobs.

**Launched in January, the grant funded by Durham County Council was aimed at businesses affected by the COVID-19 crisis who were developing credible plans to meet the challenges caused by the pandemic – such as purchasing new equipment, developing new products, expanding into new markets, and adapting their operational models.**

The grant scheme, overseen by Business Durham, the business support service for Durham County Council, offered businesses with a clear recovery plan, grants from £1,000 up to a maximum of £40,000 and contributed 75% towards eligible recovery plan costs, with the applicants expected to meet a quarter of the project cost.

Due to high demand for the grants, an additional £1m was added to the fund bringing it to a £6m scheme, and Business Durham together with colleagues in the Funding and Programmes team at Durham County Council worked hard to assess and process applications quickly.

Grants have been awarded to companies varying in size from micro-businesses to those employing up to 250 people in County Durham from a range of sectors including: business services, construction, healthcare, information and communication, retail and hospitality, leisure, manufacturing and engineering, and tourism. A high proportion (95%) of grants have been awarded to micro or smaller businesses employing up to 50 staff.

Flamingo Bar & Café in Seaham was awarded a grant of £14,900 to purchase new equipment which enabled the café to speed up service and adapt its premises to adhere to COVID-19 secure requirements by creating an outdoor food storage area, so it could increase seating and serve more customers.

Hannah Jackson-Harrison, Owner of Flamingo Bar & Café, said: "Durham County Council have been amazing throughout the whole of the pandemic, and I just don't think we would have muddled through if we hadn't had the help in the form of business support grants from them. The grants came through very quickly and communication from various departments within the Council has been fantastic. The Business Recovery Grant has enabled me to improve systems, increase seating and speed up service."

Aycliffe Fabrications received a £32,200 grant which it put towards the cost of the purchase of two new pieces of machinery enabling it to expand the service offering and open up new markets.

Christine Bewley, Managing Director at Aycliffe Fabrications said: "Aycliffe Fabrications were delighted to receive funding from the Durham Business Recovery Grant. With the help of the consultant assigned to us it was easy to discuss not only our future plans but where our business had come from and how the grant would enable us to move forward after a difficult year."

Sarah Slaven, Business Durham's interim Managing Director, said: "We are delighted to have been able to support over 300 businesses within the last six months by awarding grants from the Durham Business Recovery Grant.

"The comments we have received from the companies demonstrate just how important this grant scheme has been to help them get back on track for the future, and to safeguard vital jobs and livelihoods in the county. We hope that with the support from the grant scheme, these businesses can continue to thrive, creating more and better jobs and contributing towards a strong competitive economy for the future."

Cllr Elizabeth Scott, Cabinet member for Economy and Partnerships at Durham County Council, said: "Over the past 16 months, County Durham businesses have displayed immense resilience, adaptability and innovation, as they continue to navigate the challenges of the pandemic. It has been fantastic to see companies diversify to survive by expanding into new markets and manufacturing different products.

"However, we appreciate how difficult it has been for businesses and it is vital that we do what we can to help businesses recover and look to the future. Durham County Council launched its £5 million Durham Business Recovery Grant scheme earlier this year to demonstrate our commitment to local businesses, enabling them to adapt and thrive, safeguarding jobs and developing a sustainable economy for the long term. It is fantastic to see we have been able to support over 300 companies across the county and we wish them every success for the future."

[www.businessdurham.co.uk](http://www.businessdurham.co.uk)



Flamingo Bar & Cafe used the grant to make improvements.



## COMMUNITY HONOUR FOR HELPING HANDS

Staff at Helping Hands Community Care have been honoured with a 'Community Champion' award from their local MP.

Hexham branch manager Pam Smith and the team recently received the award from MP Guy Opperman for services to the community.

Helping Hands, the largest independent homocare organisation operating in Tyne Valley and across Northumberland, has played a key role in the frontline fight against the coronavirus outbreak.

Pam and her team were nominated for going above and beyond during the pandemic, continuing to provide home care, meals, essential shopping, and overnight care to vulnerable people living in local communities in and around the Hexham area.

The Hexham-based organisation continues to manage its biggest logistical and organisational challenge in its 30-year history. A dedicated team of more than 500 homocare support workers have continued to travel around homes in the county providing vital services to the elderly, disabled and vulnerable people during this crisis.

Management has had to cope with increased staff shortages as personnel have been self-isolating, showing symptoms or have been ill with COVID-19. Social distancing rules meant that branch offices in both Hexham and Cramlington had to be reorganised and transferred to a new system of remote, home-based working.

Guy Opperman said: "It was fantastic to recognise



From left Yasmin Ryan and Pam Smith of Helping Hands, with MP Guy Opperman

the brilliant work of Pam and the whole Helping Hands team who have been nominated for this award by the community. Their work has helped to support the most vulnerable throughout this terrible pandemic."

Pam said: "It has been a very challenging period due to the Covid pandemic, however, it is greatly appreciated that the community have recognised the continued hard work that Helping Hands staff have provided throughout this difficult time."

David Harrison, MD of Helping Hands, said: "The last year and a half has been unlike any other situation or crisis the organisation has faced. The stress on the support team and families we support has been constant.

"I am so proud of how everyone across the organisation has stepped up to meet this challenge. The MP's Community Champion Award is a lovely way for the staff to get some recognition and 'thank you' from the communities they serve."

## SEAWARD INVESTS IN NEW STARTERS TO SUPPORT GROWTH

A North East electrical test and measurement company has announced several key appointments as it invests further to support demand and continued international growth.

Seaward has seen 17 new people join in the last two months in various production, logistics, design

engineering, customer service, operations and purchasing roles as it gears-up activities at its Peterlee head office and manufacturing facility. A new engineering manager has also been appointed to oversee product development and quality assurance.

With an office also in Tampa, Florida, Seaward currently employs around 170 people and is a market leading manufacturer of electronic test and measurement instruments used in a wide variety of electrical, medical, industrial and energy sector applications.

The company is investing further in its workforce to secure capacity to meet the demand for products and services over the last six months and drive it forward as domestic and international markets expand.

The new jobs follow an increase in sales revenues across all sectors in 2021 - up by 20% compared to previous years - with expected further growth during the rest of the year. The company has plans in place to continue this double-digit growth in turnover with an ambitious new product development programme and additional expansion of its international capabilities.

CEO Chris Callan said: "This is an exciting time in Seaward Electronics. We are building on the success of the past and investing to secure the future. We have a strategy to grow and increasing our engineering capability is a key part of this strategy."



New starters at Seaward join as the firm invests further to support demand and continued international growth

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# HOME THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD...

## SWAPPING "UP NORTH" FOR THE FROZEN NORTH

There is a saying that home is a place where you grow up wanting to leave, and grow old wanting to get back to.

**I certainly think there is more than a grain of truth in this. Although I run a think tank and business consultancy company from Stockholm, Sweden these days the North East is never far from my thoughts.**

### Northern roots

I was born in Aldbrough St. John, North Yorkshire then moved to Darlington as a toddler. The North East - along with a loving family and friends - has been the starting point for everything. 45 years later, no matter where I live or travel, it is still the centre of the world, although COVID-19 restrictions have enforced a separation that will be familiar to many with friends and family living outside the region.

I went to school in Darlington before heading off to University in France and Belgium as well as England. By this time I had decided that I wanted to see a bit of the world and it would be great to get a job that would facilitate this while also picking up the tab!

After working for the European institutions and a trade association in Brussels, I was employed by an international communications agency when I got the opportunity to lead operations in the Nordics, Baltics and Central & Eastern Europe. Stockholm therefore became the new base, despite the freezing winters and the equally bone-chilling taxes.

### Different approaches to COVID-19

While the North East and the rest of the UK has been hit by successive lockdowns under the pandemic, Swedish life has been less impacted. Many schools did not close while gyms, restaurants, shops and bars have kept their doors open throughout the COVID-19 crisis, albeit with restrictions in place. The majority of the population



Glen Hodgson

who can be working remotely - and many will continue to do so this autumn and beyond - while following the light-touch rules.

### A Swedish affection for the North East: just don't mention Brexit

Brexit is a bone of contention for Swedes and is viewed with sorrow and resentment by many. Swedes like the English and have a particular affection for people from the North East: it must be the common Viking roots! Our sport, music and fashion are all keenly followed across the country. Swedes also see England as an important trading partner as well as a great place to spend a long weekend. London may top the charts but I am trying to shepherd Swedes up to the North East and promote the merits of the region to as many as I can at every opportunity.

### My jewels in the crown

Most of all I miss family and friends when I think about home, as well as the openness, friendliness and biting humour of North East folk. Our region has so much to offer too and if I had to make a selection of my favourite places then a few locations would stand out. If the weather is

anywhere near decent then Saltburn should be top of the list. Have a game of crazy golf overlooking the North Sea and then stroll along the beach before picking up a delicious battered cod and chips and then take the Cliff Tramway for some great views of the pier and the coastline.

Equally impressive - and often overlooked - is Darlington's South Park. This is home to a fascinating mixture of trees, birds and even an African Grey Parrot that is never lost for words. The park is equally beautiful in summer or winter for a walk. You will even find a piece of track from the world's first railway and a canon captured from the Russian army during the Crimean War. Something to check out with an ice cream in hand.

My heart remains in the North East, and I will make every effort to promote the area as a cheerleader and - hopefully - an ambassador. Our region is a slice of heaven: it may be that we need an element of distance to fully appreciate it as such.

**Glen Hodgson was born and bred in the North East but now lives in Stockholm where he is the Founder and CEO of Free Trade Europa.**

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Ammar Mirza CBE

## MOTIVATION REQUIRES MOTIVE

I find it amazing how many people I meet that live on “someday island”. Someday I am going to quit smoking, someday I am going to have a healthier lifestyle, someday I will spend more time with the family and so the list goes on, and people give up before even trying.

**Alternatively, there are those that start something with the best intentions and then give up as they were simply unmotivated. Take for example New Year resolutions, hands up how many have tried and failed within a matter of weeks, if not days, of their new found focus.**

I must admit that I was one of those individuals, that is, until I really started to question my motives. **You see what a lot of us don't realise is that motivation, the power to remain focused and succeed, requires a motive.** A compelling reason that resonates with you, the why you should do something and more importantly, being clear on what is in it for you. The value proposition.

Take for example Sir James Dyson, the inventor of the dual cyclone. Here was an individual that was absolutely motivated and was resolutely focused. So much so that he didn't give up, in fact he kept

trying 5,127 times before he eventually succeeded in his invention. Crazy, some of you may think, but I say amazing. **What an incredible individual that demonstrated the ability of having desire, direction and the discipline to succeed.** Above all else Sir James Dyson had a goal and a plan and focused relentlessly on achieving it.

Now here is a statistic on planning and goals. **For every one minute spent on planning you can save up to 10 minutes of action.** Funny how many of us just simply get up in the morning and let our emails, telephone calls, social media and general activities dictate our day, getting to the end of the day and mistaking activity with achievement.

**Yet if we simply had a plan and were clear of our goals we could achieve so much more.** Just try it, the night before each day start writing down what you would like to get done and then single-mindedly focus on that list until it is complete.

Extend this planning longer term and schedule all of your tasks into a calendar and your life will dramatically change for the better. **Stop multi-tasking it doesn't work!**

As we have come out of lockdown with a bang, and everyone is competing for attention with digital noise a real problem, the ability to focus has become a big challenge. **We are all expecting to be able to do more as we became so productive working from home.** Which makes planning even more important.

Meeting people physically takes a lot more time, rather than simply zooming from Zoom to Zoom. Take the time to plan what meetings are important and must happen face to face as opposed to those that can happen virtually. For me I am looking at 70-80% virtual and 20-30% physical. Whilst I love meeting people, I recognise the efficiency in virtual meetings. Be clear on why you are meeting and the motive behind what you are trying to achieve from the meeting. **You may be pleasantly surprised as to how many unnecessary meetings you can remove from your day, motivating you further to success.**

**Ammar Mirza CBE is Chair & Founder of Asian Business Connexions, Chair of the NELEP Business Growth Board, Chair of the IoD North East (North) and holds various positions across the public and private sectors.**





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## SETTING BOUNDARIES AT WORK

The concept of “Boundaries” has always interested me. I’ve been told so many times that I need to set some. This was often rather unhelpful information - because being told to set some boundaries, actually knowing what your boundaries are and how to go about setting them are different things. Can we buy some from Amazon?

**My favourite definition of boundaries is from Brene Brown as she explains that “boundaries are making clear what is ok, and not ok, and why”.**

We’ve run a series of webinars this year around this topic. When we asked participants how problems with setting boundaries impacted them, we were not surprised to see that having boundaries trampled all over led to all sorts of problems - anxiety, burnout, not being able to cope with demands and having to leave work, difficulties with co-workers and managers...the list goes on.

How do you say no to your boss when they ask you to do a task you don’t have the capacity to do? How do you negotiate with colleagues, when you can’t drop everything to help them with their task? How can you put your priorities and workload first (without being seen as being selfish and unhelpful?).

Why do we find it tricky to set boundaries at work? So many reasons...

- We are scared of what others think
- We don’t know how to say no
- To avoid having conflict with others
- We are worried about what the consequences could be
- Because it feels more important to please others than help yourself
- It’s work - you do what you’re asked to do
- Weird power dynamics with managers
- We don’t know how to do it - we’ve never been taught the skill!

In addition to this, many people have been working from home on and off during the past 18 months, so work and life are squishing together and you don’t know where “work” ends and “life” begins.

So what can you do? Here are some quick tips that may help you figure out when your boundaries are being overstepped at work and what your boundaries are.

**Notice** - your body knows when your boundaries

are being impacted. Notice when you feel annoyed, frustrated or irritated by people at work (or even yourself).

**Record** - make a note of it, write it down somewhere private.

**Calm down** - when you’re feeling like you’re in more of a reflective space, go back to your note.

**Get curious** - ask yourself some questions. What was it that upset, annoyed or triggered you? Ask yourself what it was specifically about the situation that bothered you so much? What could you learn from the situation? What does that tell you about your needs?

**Then sprinkle on some compassion.** How can you show kindness to yourself, or the other party? So you’re not having to carry this resentment around with you.

This will give you some useful information to start to understand where your boundaries are. Then you can figure out how to use that information to start putting some boundaries in place.

### About Work Pirates

Many business leaders have people problems they don’t know how to solve. We created Work Pirates, which is like the A-Team, for organisations to give leaders the confidence, courage and tools to do things differently to tackle these problems, feel less stressed and have a happier, more innovative workplace with more empowered employees.

*Find out more at [workpirates.com](http://workpirates.com) or get in touch with Michelle at [michelle@workpirates.com](mailto:michelle@workpirates.com)*



# IN CONVERSATION WITH...

## CLARE WOOD

Director at Turner & Townsend

### Tell us about your role at Turner & Townsend.

I am director of infrastructure across Yorkshire and the North East. My area covers Northumberland to South Yorkshire and includes our offices in Newcastle, Teesside, Leeds and Sheffield.

I manage a team of 60 and I lead the business unit, which covers bidding and business generation, business strategy planning, budget management and resources and delivering the very best for our clients.

### What services does the organisation provide?

Turner & Townsend is a world-leading professional services company, with over 100 offices across the globe. We offer independent advice, transforming performance to safeguard the commercial interest of clients embarking on investment programmes across real estate, infrastructure and natural resources.

We deliver services covering the full spectrum of consultancy, project delivery and post-project operations.

### What's your proudest business achievement?

My proudest business achievement was being appointed director of infrastructure project management for Yorkshire and the North East. I have been at Turner & Townsend for eight years and have progressed from a senior project manager, to associate director and now to my current position.

I am very grateful the organisation believes in me and has supported me on my career journey. I have been involved in several challenging projects which have helped me gain skills and experience to support my development.

I am also incredibly proud of the Turner & Townsend team. It has seen huge growth and we have a brilliant ethos. We have also developed a fantastic graduate programme which is attracting and developing the skill set of young people; this is our future and I am proud we are focusing and investing in this area.

I'm one of five Mental Health First-Aiders in the region and knowing that I have positively impacted even one person, makes me immensely proud. Studying Human Cybernetics at Reading University, I never imagined my career would include this role, but aside from how incredibly important it is, I have found that being a Mental Health First-Aider has drawn out of me the human side, the compassion, the empathetic side of me and that has had a positive impact when engaging with clients. I take a moment to stop, reflect and question whether there is some context as to why a client has said (or not said) something in a certain way.



Clare Wood

### What challenges have you encountered?

COVID-19 has certainly been a challenge and has very much changed the way we work, particularly at the beginning of the pandemic. I spent a lot of time talking to the team and to clients to ensure I was very visible and accessible to them.

Fortunately, we have developed strong client relationships and even though, in the early months, we couldn't physically be with them, they trusted the team to get the job done and we all worked harder than we have ever done to ensure consistency and to keep communication flowing.

Each year we look for growth both in the business and in the quality and size of the team, the latter being a challenge as good people are very much in demand. That said, we are prepared to wait to get the right person based on their expertise and our sense that they will be strong team players who will support our business ethos and enhance our team spirit.

Being a mum and a wife and trying to progress with a career is always a challenge and one that I am not sure I always got right or was successful with at times. My husband provided wholehearted support, he took more than his fair share at times when I was busy and overall, I feel we all benefitted from this shared responsibility. Not only has this allowed me to achieve my aspirations, but I also feel like I have set a great example to our children, that with hard work and focus they can achieve and be what they want to be.

### How has the industry changed since you arrived at the company?

The industry is continually evolving, sustainability and legacy is now a huge focus for us and many of our projects have carbon net zero as an essential outcome. Turner & Townsend has launched our new Purpose, Values & Vision as part of our 75th Anniversary which sets our ambition for the next stage of our journey. At the heart of this has been

how to we create a better industry which can help solve some of the big problems faced by society.

Clients are also looking for digitisation and our services are evolving with that in mind. New software is available with lean processing and efficiency a high priority. Our suite of digital products is increasing to provide assurance, transparency, and clear/real time easy-to-interpret reporting to clients.

### Who are your heroes in and out of work?

Outside of work my hero is my 22-year-old daughter. She is a nurse, working in a covid environment at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham. It has been unbelievably tough for her, so young in such a terrible situation but she is stronger than she knows, and she is my inspiration.

The team at Turner & Townsend continues to inspire me. Graeme Braithwaite, a director and my line manager, who brought me in to the company is someone I very much admire and I am extremely proud of all of my team, who have really pulled together during the pandemic. We have fantastic camaraderie and it is a very positive environment to work within.

### Is there a mantra you always aspire to do business by?

Be open and fair. I try to always give an honest and open answer to a question. I will also decline to do something that I couldn't do to the best of my ability or something that I don't believe is fair to everyone involved.

### How do you like to unwind?

I like to spend time with my family and friends, be that walking our border terrier, Tilly. I also enjoy barre and yoga classes and my happy place is in the garden.

[www.turnerandtowntsend.com](http://www.turnerandtowntsend.com)





“

...We need to lobby politicians and effect a raft of radical behavioural changes...

”



# BURN BABY, BURN

With fires across Europe, floods across China and indeed across parts of the UK throughout the year now, anyone denying climate change must be far closer to the "flat earth society" than the scientific community or indeed reality itself.

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**There have been many references in recent years to the "Anthropocene" era, testament to the fact that economic models of constant growth in post-Thatcherite/post-modernist variants on the American dream may enhance the well-being of individuals, but is frankly toxic to the planet and other species upon it.**

It is the supreme arrogance that we prioritise our species over others. The position of "species supremacy", licences us to dominate the earth unchallenged, except our very ecosystem is now telling us that this cannot go on.

Now I'm not into apocryphal messages, life will go on however hard it gets, but does it absolutely need to be this way? We heard about the loss of life in Algeria fighting fires, we have also heard about the loss of life and homes in America, Greece and elsewhere. These numbers pale into insignificance next to the lives lost in the animal kingdom in those very same areas of which the reporting is negligible.

A child fell into a gorilla enclosure in an American zoo last year. The resident gorilla paid for that poor parental supervision with his life. This happens routinely. We have less than 1200 mountain gorillas remaining to eight billion humans. Yet species supremacy brings out that result. How would I feel if it was my child exposed to increased risk with a "no kill" extraction policy? Well, my child might be a bit better supervised anyway, but it might be the consequence we all have to live with by keeping animals in captivity to preserve species as a primary aim rather than preserve Homo Sapiens.

Many parents will rebel at what I've just said, but the fact is that if we are serious about avoiding the extinction of major species and extinction events ourselves, we have a very limited understanding of the behavioural and attitudinal change we will have to effect to make a difference.

It will involve meticulous conservation, high penalties for ecological crimes such as dropping litter. Hypothecated taxation to offset the effect of industry activities and their impact on the environment whether that's deposit schemes for bottles and other packaging or boycotting polluters.

The problem is the biggest polluters are China and America. Globalisation models have led to a high dependency both in supply chain, investment and economic futures of the well-to-do and influential in our community. We have been happy for China to pollute in exchange for low prices and investment opportunities. How do we feel about paying more, shareholders receiving less as we produce things locally and for fair wages? Are we at last entering the realm of Eco-leadership in corporate life?

How will we feel about banning all journeys of less than two miles unless they're in electric vehicles? How do we ensure that policies are integrated? It's very well switching to electric cars, but that's not a whole solution. The production of lithium is less impactful than coal but significant nonetheless and we need a lot of it. Remember you might switch a car to electric, but the

micro plastics in the tyres remain the same ending up in the sea where they are assimilated into the food chain. We must embrace the complexity of this if we are not to have unintended negative consequences.

It was unimpressive when a certain cheese company recently advertising nationally its packaging as 40% less plastic. Sound positive, but 60% remains in the packaging and unless complete biodegradable without toxicity, it's effectively a 'virtue signal', a fop to the public to salve consciences that does far less good than it implies. Like the Emperor Nero, we literally fiddle, only this time it is the earth that is burning.

You didn't open this magazine to have such apocryphal reading. You wanted to see your business featured, promote some new approach, you wanted some business intelligence and what's happening in the market, what your rivals and colleagues are doing, you wanted upbeat messages, messages that collude with the illusion of onwards and upwards. Then Cliffy comes along with this critical realism and his penchant for 'inconvenient truths'. Do go to a nicer coach than me!

We all need to take action. Whether that's eating less meat, turning the thermostat down a bit, walking instead of driving, flying less and sharing things a bit more. Repairing rather than replacing, can be fun in a world, where pushbuttons are preferred to the kinaesthetic joy of tools. It's about learning some of the things we gained in lockdown about being together, enjoying our homes, experiencing the benefits and joys of our own land rather than jetting off somewhere else!

Most of all it's about recognising that every species matters, and we have in our hands the preservation and stewardship of the planet. We need to lobby politicians and effect a raft of radical behavioural changes.

Political commitment, Individual behaviour and corporate and social responsibility that embodies radical, real change, not palliatives, virtual signals or small measures in the 'direction of travel', is really the only way.

Most importantly, speaking truth to power is paramount both locally and nationally. Don't sit on your hands on this one, it's everyone's responsibility!

**Contact me direct for more information,  
david@gedanken.co.uk**



# WELL-BEING AND HEALTH FOR BETTER PERFORMANCE

We have been dazzled by high-performing athletes this summer from the delayed Euro 2020 and Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics.

**While athletic feats and the incredible performances on the pitch, swimming pool, and track are all impressive and require years of training and dedication on the part of the athletes, many of us neglect that succeeding in our nine to five jobs - especially fast-paced and highly pressurised ones - also requires care and attention to our minds and bodies.**

Whether it is in sport or the corporate world, opportunities to gain tangible improvements to one's performance are critical for success.

This is very much the mantra of Northern Gas and Power's Head of Health and Well-Being Sam Cooper. He states: "The reality is, in a business we are just people, much in the same way that athletes are just people - people who are working towards very specific outcomes.

Sam Cooper brings his expertise in health and well-being to the leading energy procurement and management business, helping his colleagues from all roles and disciplines to maximise their performance and achieve professional and personal excellence through small, sustainable personal changes.

He continues: "People here can benefit from increasing their well-being and their performance, and access tools that help support that. It's my role to help bring that expertise and knowledge into this setting, so that colleagues can benefit from it and increase their performance and well-being and ultimately thrive here."

Sam acknowledges that health and well-being tactics in organisations are often "disjointed" and are "single-faceted" in that they focus only on one of the components that comprise total well-being.

"Physical, mental, and social health are all components that are central to well-being," he says. "It doesn't matter if you are an Olympian, a Premier League footballer, or you're working nine to five, the reality is that these tools apply to everyone."

Sam's love for the science behind health and performances, as well as seeing those he works with achieve their goals, drove him to develop an individualistic and holistic approach to performance training from which even office job workers can benefit.

He worked in the private, public and voluntary sectors consulting on evidence-based health and well-being interventions designed to improve well-being and increase performance.

Before joining Northern Gas and Power, Sam worked in high-performance sport with professional athletes for over a decade. He managed multi-disciplinary teams in a range of disciplines geared towards finding opportunities to improve in some of the most competitive environments in the world. He most recently worked with Newcastle United.

"My passion comes from the science behind it all," he says. "What I love about it is that it will never be finished - it is always expanding. What brings the natural reward for my role and the reason why I can enjoy my role so much is because I help bring those tools to affect the lives of people. When I see that happen, it makes my job a wonderful one to have."

Sam's programme dovetails wonderfully with the existing culture at the energy management company, one that is demanding and pressurised but exceedingly rewarding. Because employees buy into the culture, he observes, and that it can truly change their lives, there is a hunger and a recognition on their part that treating their whole self is crucial to success.

"The way we go about our business here is that we treat it like a high-performance sport. It is demanding and pressurised, but it is rewarding, and you can't help but be influenced by it. What I am most impressed about it is that the people here buy into that mindset and believe that they can improve things for themselves and contribute to a wider future for themselves."

To ensure that employees from all departments and roles get the most out of their performance, Sam has built a one-to-one, individually focused programme from the ground up at Northern Gas and Power. Every person devises an action plan with him that contains small, achievable, and, most importantly, sustainable steps to improve their person. A person's action plan comprises of small, accessible changes to the way they do things, be it what they eat, when they



Sam Cooper

wake up or arrive to work, or how they do their work. Through action planning, Sam and his colleagues create a realistic plan to change one's life. These changes are only effective if the goals are intrinsically sourced, he says, and the individual programme is built around that. Extrinsic motivation - one that is imposed on an individual by others - is fleeting and not substantial.

"What one wants to achieve is intrinsically motivated. The science and methodology provide the way to reach one's goals."

The programme derives from the philosophy of the "aggregation of marginal gains", popularised by British Cycling performance director Sir Dave Brailsford. "The philosophy is beautifully simple," Sam says. "Seek a one percent marginal improvement in everything that you do; when the marginal improvements are added together, they 'aggregate' to form substantial results over time."

This methodical approach to performance improvement is unattractive, Sam admitted in a recent article. "Everyone wants a quick fix - they want life-changing results overnight. Few seemingly want to work on small, accessible changes that get them there. This explains why the concept (of marginal gains) has yet to be widely monetised. For most, putting in groundwork to get long-term results isn't as attractive as the lure of finding an easy quick-fix."

To overcome this, Sam encourages his colleagues and clients to develop sustainable habits because these require little motivation. As his own example, Sam's lunch at Northern Gas and Power has been the same every day for the entire year: chicken, greens, grains, apple, and water. "It's an easy change because it's a habit - I don't have to think about it much."

Other ways to implement sustainable habits which he teaches range from simple to complex solutions. It can be as simple as getting back to the basics of making exercise that the person enjoys or is passionate about, such as swimming, hiking, or yoga, a regular part of a daily routine. An example of a complex solution is what he calls the "habit tracker." This "creates accountability for the small changes you're making," Sam comments. "By ticking off and 'tracking' each day, you follow through with the desired habit, and you're creating a visual prompt and effectively coaching yourself toward success. With each day that passes, and each subsequent 'tick' you give yourself, you're building self-efficacy."

Northern Gas and Power invests a lot into action planning for its employees because not only does it improve their work performance, but it also improves other aspects of their lives. It is a way to develop self-leadership qualities in all of its employees.

"The needs of everyone are different," he says. "We put the person in the middle and build out from there — a holistic approach. It's not a one-size fits all. It is led by the individual, and we find easy things to improve on. Sustainability is integral. When a person makes one small personal change, the person can then change other areas of their lives."

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Express Engineering's actuators have been specified for a new subsea carbon capture initiative.

## EXPRESS ENGINEERING SPECIFIED FOR 'GROUND-BREAKING' EUROPEAN OFFSHORE CARBON CAPTURE PROJECT

UK-based oil and gas subsea equipment specialist Express Engineering has been specified for a ground-breaking initiative that could significantly improve the decarbonisation of industrial emissions and ease the removal of harmful gases from the environment.

**The development, which has the backing of the Norwegian government, sees Gateshead-based Express Engineering participating in a long-term environmental project that will allow liquefied CO<sub>2</sub> to be transported by undersea pipeline to a subsea storage facility located in the North Sea.**

Involving carbon storage specialists Northern Lights and leading carbon capture technology firm Aker Carbon Capture, the project is due to become fully operational in 2024 and will allow industrial sites in Norway and companies across Europe to capture and store their carbon emissions safely and permanently deep under the seabed off the Norwegian coast.

Express Engineering, which recently opened a new 48,000 sq. ft. purpose-built test and assembly centre on Team Valley, Gateshead, is supplying subsea actuators. They are being shipped to Aker Solutions' plant in Curitiba, Brazil, where they will be installed on to the master valve block on a new sub-sea tree that will control the pipeline.

When initial trials start in 2022, the actuators will

form an integral part of the flow control system when injecting the CO<sub>2</sub> in to a redundant well – the subsea system has been specifically adapted to reverse the flow to lock in carbon gases below the sea floor rather than operate in their usual role supporting the extraction of oil and gas.

Equinor, Shell and Total are all investors in Northern Lights – Norway's first licenced operator for CO<sub>2</sub> storage on the Northern Continental Shelf and a major part of the Norwegian government's 'Longship' carbon capture initiative.

The project is part of Express Engineering's move to position itself further in developing cost-effective solutions for the global energy transition sector.

Gary Thirlwell, managing director, said: "We are working in partnership with our customers to harness our subsea engineering capabilities and experience on ground breaking projects such as this one, where we can provide rapid turnaround solutions to help meet the many tough environmental challenges that we all face.

"It's great to be involved in the Northern Lights initiative – the first of its type in Europe – where we are utilising our capabilities and actuator technology.

"It takes Express Engineering further into the exciting carbon capture arena, allowing us to invest in securing a cleaner environment while opening up new green opportunities for our technologies in the global market for advanced engineering solutions."

Express Engineering is a leading manufacturing, assembly and testing specialist for the subsea energy sector. Working with customers like TechnipFMC, Baker Hughes and Aker Solutions, the company is a significant exporter of products, operating within various geographical areas, including the North Sea, Gulf of Mexico, east coast of Brazil, east and west coasts of Africa and Australasia.

**More at [northernlightscs.com](http://northernlightscs.com) and [express-engineering.co.uk](http://express-engineering.co.uk)**



# BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND EDUCATION



Michelle Rainbow

As summer fades into a new academic year, the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) continues its drive to bring industry and education closer, with the ultimate aim of improving skills in the North East workforce. Skills Director, Michelle Rainbow, gives a preview of what's to come in the three main skills programmes, and how business can get involved.

## **North East Ambition: Working with schools, colleges and employers to deliver outstanding careers guidance from primary education to employment.**

Since the pandemic, we want to harness the positives that have come from new ways of working and highlight the great work that is still being done by businesses to build relationships with schools and colleges.

We've produced a work experience framework which will make it easier for businesses to deliver work placements, virtually or in-person, giving young people valuable experience and creating links with the next generation of employees.

The process of embedding age-appropriate careers guidance in primary schools is making huge progress and evidence around the importance of introducing younger children to the opportunities open to them is building.

And business leaders continue to support schools and colleges as Enterprise Advisers, lending their expertise to bridge the gap between education and industry. We're aiming to partner more Enterprise Advisers with SEND schools in the region, and help businesses develop high quality work experience for pupils with special educational needs, so that no child is left behind when it comes to realising their ambitions.

**Education Challenge:** Working with partners to

support school leaders, teachers and governors to reduce the gap between our best and lowest performing schools.

Businesses are central to this work, as we know that placing employer engagement at the heart of the curriculum has huge benefits for children and young people. That's why we're continuing to support the expansion of the Ford Next Generation Learning pilot, which creates employer-led learning partnerships with schools.

We've also developed a new, data-driven approach to personalising careers guidance, using live data from students to help schools and employers make sure that the experiences they're providing are having results and match the interests of young people. So if a school has a large number of pupils who want to go into engineering, we can help the staff work with local employers that fit their needs.

We're also working to raise awareness around the opportunity to be a school governor. Strong and diverse governance is essential in achieving high quality education, and we want businesses – especially SMEs – to understand more about how they can get involved in governance.

**Post-16 skills:** Placing employers at the heart of meeting skills needs in post-16 education.

In January the government published its Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth white paper which sets out reforms to

post-16 technical education to help people to gain skills they need in the workplace. One of the ways we're supporting this agenda is through a series of industry insight sessions, which help curriculum staff and careers leaders understand the changes and growth affecting industries from electrification and the wider green economy agenda through to the life sciences and digitalisation of construction.

We're also involved in supporting the broader technical education agenda through working to promote apprenticeships, supporting the roll out of the new T-level qualifications which involves cross sector working with employers and universities, together with ensuring progression pathways into higher technical skills through our partnership with the region's Institute of Technology.

The North East is also home to the country's only College Careers Hub, bringing colleges together to prepare students for the world of work. Ensuring a pipeline of skilled talent is available to business is crucial if we're to achieve our aim of creating 100,000 more and better jobs for the North East by 2024.

***By working with schools and colleges in the North East, your business can create strong links with the next generation of employees.***

***Find out more at [www.NorthEastAmbition.co.uk](http://www.NorthEastAmbition.co.uk)***



# TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION KEY THEMES AT NEAA EXPO



It has been a red-hot summer for the automotive sector, with a number of big announcements, including the £1 billion investment from Nissan, Envision AESC UK and Sunderland City Council to supercharge the region as a net zero leader.

**Britishvolt kept the temperature boiling with planning approval for its £2.6 billion giga plant in Blyth, which will be one of the largest ever industrial investments in the UK. The heat continued as Turntide Technologies acquired NEAA members AVID Technology Group, Hyperdrive Innovation and BorgWarner Gateshead.**

Meanwhile, Peak Resources announced plans to deliver a £112 million processing plant in the Tees Valley to produce the rare earth products critical for electric vehicles and renewable energy technologies.

So, the North East automotive supply chain has much to celebrate, not least the much-anticipated return of the North East Automotive Expo to the Beacon of Light in September, organised by automotive cluster, the North East Automotive Alliance (NEAA).

Key sponsors include Sunderland City Council, Invest South Tyneside, NA College and Advanced Electric Machines. Technology and innovation are the key themes that will flow across the Expo this year with a strong focus on Electrification, Industrial Digitisation and 5G Connected Automotive Logistics (CAL).

With over 120 exhibitors, Britishvolt as keynote speaker, a host of other forum and workshop

speakers including Rachel Chambers, chief operating office, DER-IC - North East and NEAA's EV North chair, Ryan Maughan, plus a showcase zone for demonstrations and displays, it is a long-awaited event which will reconnect suppliers and technology providers face-to-face with the exemplar automotive community, to facilitate business and knowledge exchange.

Meet the Buyer is also returning, sponsored by ThinkPrime and is supported by several buyers including Nissan, Komatsu UK, Gestamp, Cummins, Nifco UK, Unipres (UK), ElringKlinger GB, Britishvolt, Marelli and Kasai UK.

Paul Butler, CEO, North East Automotive Alliance, said: "I think it's safe to say we are all looking forward to seeing member organisations in person and under one roof, for the first time in over 18 months.

"We are at 90% capacity and have secured fantastic support, so the signs are there that people are ready to get back to networking and we have outlined the safety measures in place to all attendees.

"We would like to thank all of the event sponsors and speakers as we look forward to a day which will supercharge the sector."

[www.northeastautomotivealliance.com](http://www.northeastautomotivealliance.com)

## EXPO MAIN STAGE AGENDA

**09.30am-09.45am:**

NEAA Welcome - Paul Butler, CEO, NEAA

**09.45am-10.00am:**

Main Sponsor Welcome - Patrick Melia, Chief Executive, Sunderland City Council

**10.00am-10.30am:** Keynote Speaker: Britishvolt

**11.00am-12.00noon:** Electrification

**11.00am-11.20am:**

North East Electrification Capability and UK Eco System - Ryan Maughan, Chairman, EV North

**11.20am-11.30am:**

Driving the Electric Revolution Industrialisation Centres (DER-IC)- North East - Rachel Chambers, Chief Operating Office, DER-IC - North East

**11.30am-12.00noon:**

EV North Open Forum Panel

**1.00pm-2.00pm:** Industrial Digitisation

**1.00pm-1.15pm:**

NEAA Industrial Digitalisation - Paul Butler, CEO, NEAA

**1.15pm-1.30pm:**

Manufacturing Made Smarter - BEIS and Innovate UK

**1.30pm-1.45pm:**

Made Smarter Adoption North East Programme - Karl McCracken, NELEP

**2.30pm-2.50pm:**

5G Connected Automated Logistics (CAL)  
5G-Enabled CAL Project Update - Paul Butler, CEO, NEAA



# OCULUS HR AND OCULUS H&S: THE SHINING LIGHT OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND HEALTH & SAFETY



L-R: Louise Kennedy, Director of Oculus HR and Eddie Kennedy, Health & Safety Consultant for Oculus H&S

Oculus can take care of all your HR and H&S needs while you focus on running your business.

**Oculus:** a circular opening or window in the centre of a dome or wall.

**HR:** the department of a business that deals with people matters, contracts and policies.

**Health & Safety:** the laws, rules, and principles that are intended to keep people safe from injury or disease at work and in public places.

The well-established, Sunderland based Oculus group are growing their services for SME's in and around the North East.

Oculus HR have a refreshing view on HR and are also providing Health & Safety services to local businesses due to increased demand.

Did you know, if your business has more than five employees, you are legally required to have a written health and safety policy, a risk assessment, written arrangements, and have one or more competent persons to assist and guide with compliance?

All of this on top of running your business, can sound rather daunting!

Don't panic because Oculus HR and Oculus H&S have you covered on all aspects and have all the resources and expertise to do this for you.

"We work with firms of all sizes, but the most common businesses we are asked to help are those who are growing and reach a point where they need some HR and Health & Safety but can't afford or have time to set up their own department," says Oculus director, Louise Kennedy. "HR and Health & Safety work hand in

hand which means we're in the fortunate situation at Oculus of being able to provide both services under one roof."

Oculus HR and Oculus H&S provide various different levels of service to suit your needs. Oculus can step in to either lend a hand or manage everything on your behalf. They also carry out site risk assessments and can become your competent person for Health & Safety in the workplace.

Perhaps you just need help and advice on a one-off basis? No problem because Louise and her team offer an ad-hoc consultation service. Prices start from as little as £65 (plus VAT) per hour for ad hoc consultancy services and can be scaled up to a monthly retained service. Oculus, in a nutshell, can become your personal HR department.

You can also use Oculus HR and OculusH&S on a retained basis with monthly HR packages starting from £165 (+VAT) per month. One of their most popular packages is called Oculus Safeguard. It ensures details like contracts, legal status and policies are up to date. Letters can be drafted for any formal meetings or disciplinary procedures as required.

Oculus, in effect, can become a part of your business. If situations arise or you need to ensure aspects of staffing like redundancies, attendance, job descriptions, Health & Safety policy and procedure implementation are taken care of, essentially, Oculus will do the hard work for you.

If you'd prefer Oculus to have a more hands-on approach, then use their Advanced and Total packages which provide Oculus consultants attend meetings in person, devise training plans and review your business' HR and H&S position. Health & Safety can be a bit of a minefield to ensure you meet your legal requirements. Thankfully Louise and her team are all experienced in the legal requirements business' of all sizes must have in terms of protecting employees in the workplace.

Oculus can also organise training courses and masterclasses for you and deliver them either in person or online, providing the flexibility you need for your business.

Nothing is 'off-the-shelf' at Oculus. All services can be bespoke and tailored to your business and your specific needs, creating a unique service.

You can even use specially designed HR software called breatheHR. It's cloud based and automates a lot of the HR work, leaving you free to get on with running your business.

Oculus; a guiding light in HR and Health & Safety.

**To get your business off to a head start, either visit the Oculus websites:**  
[www.oculus-hr.co.uk](http://www.oculus-hr.co.uk) and [www.oculus-healthandsafety.co.uk](http://www.oculus-healthandsafety.co.uk)

**Alternatively contact Oculus directly on 0191 3055 188 or email [louise@oculus-hr.co.uk](mailto:louise@oculus-hr.co.uk) or [eddie@oculus-healthandsafety.co.uk](mailto:eddie@oculus-healthandsafety.co.uk)**



# OculusHR

## The Oculus Group, delivering professional HR & H&S services to SME's

Oculus are a well-established HR Consultancy business who also deliver Health & Safety Consultancy services to SME's, in and around the North East. With HR & H&S services combined, we are aligned to enhancing your business by providing up to date legislation and bespoke solutions, leaving you free to focus on the growth of your business, with peace of mind that you are compliant in every aspect.



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# OculusH&S

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# FOUR THINGS SMEs SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THEIR WATER SUPPLY

While the water market was deregulated in 2017 – meaning businesses could choose their own supplier – it was hoped it would herald a new era of consumer choice and increased switching.

However, in the four years since, that era has failed to materialise, with many SMEs still being unaware of their rights – and the benefits.

Furthermore, while environmental matters top the news agendas most days, many businesses are still unaware of the part water plays in this,

**Josh Gill, founder and CEO of Everflow Water, explains the top four things businesses still need to know about their water supply.**

I set up Everflow in 2015 as an ethical water retailer, with the vision of making things simple for customers, especially for our target market of SMEs.

And while we've certainly succeeded in that – winning a bronze award for Best Customer Experience at the 2021 UK Business Awards – there is still a long way to go when it comes to raising many SMEs awareness of their water supply.

## Market choice

The key things that many SMEs are unaware of is their ability to switch supplier at all; the narrative surrounding swapping utilities is still heavily weighted in favour of gas and electric.

The most recent Ofwat/CCW non-household customer insight survey found that: "As in the second year of the market, larger customers were more active than smaller customers; around a quarter (26%) of large customers had switched, renegotiated, or had considered switching or renegotiating in the last 12 months, compared to eight per cent of micro-businesses."

Meanwhile, Ofwat's annual state of the market report for 2019-20 also highlights that "smaller customers...continue to be less aware of and less active in the market".

Raising awareness has been one of my key goals from the beginning, as, at the time of deregulation, the messaging was very much focused on the big corporates, while the vast majority of the market was being ignored.



Josh Gill

## The benefits of switching

It's true, water historically has lower margins, which means there is a misconception that there are no great cost savings to be had from switching. However, customers regularly tell us that they have made significant savings by switching to us – an average of £150 a year.

And beyond cost, other benefits include more flexibility and improved customer service.

At Everflow for example, our average call waiting time is just 0.5 minutes and our annual complaint rate is just 0.18 per cent; it's no wonder, then, that we have a customer satisfaction score of 84% and a Trustpilot score of 4.5.

## How the industry is set up

We may sell our customers their water, but we don't actually supply it – that's the job of the wholesaler.

Wholesalers look after the network of pipes, reservoirs and treatment works to ensure that businesses get the clean water they need, and that wastewater is removed and treated.

Burst pipes? Blocked sewers? Installing water meters? All the responsibility of the wholesaler.

Retailers, meanwhile, issue the bills and collect payment for water and/or wastewater services, as well as managing customer queries, including those relating to wholesalers, such as leakage claims or meter requests.

Retailers are also responsible for obtaining meter readings and supplying them into the market's central database, as well as using them to formulate bills.

## Going green

Another thing many businesses are unaware of is quite how much water is wasted, and why this is a matter for everyone.

As the fastest growing water supplier to non-household customers, water efficiency matters to Everflow. We care about the long-term sustainability of the water supply, and about helping our customers keep their costs down.

However, many company owners are unaware of how to measure their water efficiency, so, in order to help them, we created an easy-to-use checklist to use on their site to give a quick overview.

It's not exhaustive, of course, but it's just one of the ways we're urging all of our customers to think about their impact on the planet.

Making water simple for SMEs has been Everflow's goal since day one, and raising awareness of facets of the market they don't understand is just part of that.

**For more information about Everflow Water, visit [www.everflowwater.com](http://www.everflowwater.com)**



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# MOTHER AND DAUGHTER BRAVE THE SHAVE

Lu and Maisie McGuinness are getting ready to 'Brave The Shave' and have their hair chopped off.

**Most contributors and advertisers will know Lu (O'Rourke) as the Designer of Northern Insight magazine since its inception in 2015.**

"We've been astonished at the support shown. We've raised over £800 so far, and people are putting themselves out for us - our hairdresser is coming into the salon on her day off to do the shaving, and Northern Insight photographer Simon Williams will be on hand to capture the moment! So look out for the after shots!"

The 'Brave the Shave' campaign was launched in 2015 by Macmillan Cancer Support and has so far raised £22.7 million to help those affected by cancer. Volunteers get their hair cut very short, in order to partially replicate and honour the experience a cancer patient goes through when they experience hair loss during treatment.

"I'm especially proud of my amazing daughter Maisie. This has been her idea and she's the one

driving this. She has even arranged to donate her hair to the Little Princess Trust. It's a scary thing for me, but even more so for a someone so young. For a 10 year old, her maturity impresses me more and more every day."

"People are saying that we're brave but I don't agree, we're choosing to shave our heads but people with cancer sometimes don't have that choice. I'd say they're the brave ones."

"I'm so proud of Maisie wanting to go through with this. I've lost immediate family and had close friends battle cancer, so this is our way to honour them and help Macmillan's support those battling with cancer right now."

**Lu and Maisie will be Braving The Shave on Saturday, September 11th. To make a donation on their fundraising page go to [bravetheshave.macmillan.org.uk/shavers/lu-mcguinness](https://bravetheshave.macmillan.org.uk/shavers/lu-mcguinness)**



L-R: Lu (O'Rourke) and Maisie McGuinness.



## SUPPORT PAYS OFF FOR ORBIS

**A North Shields Supported Living business that supports people with learning Disabilities and Autism has received a national award for the way it looks after its employees.**

Orbis Support provides supported living for disabled adults with learning

disabilities who wish to live in their own home. Their work supports people to live and be part of their community, playing an active and positive role supported by well trained, well paid and well supported staff.

The company, who now have more than 180 staff have been awarded the prestigious "2021 People's Choice Award" from the Living Wage Foundation which celebrates individuals and organisations that have made an outstanding contribution to the Living Wage Movement.

Managing Director Nigel Devine has always put a heavy emphasis on looking after his team. After a lifelong career in care with the NHS and local authorities he set up Orbis Support in 2016 and right from the start he decided to put his staff first.

"Too many people in the care sector are paid the minimum wage which can lead to a high turnover of staff which can then potentially have an impact on the care given to the end user. "Many of my staff have been with us since day one and that is because they are valued not only in monetary terms, but also by other benefits and working conditions," he said. "Making sure that my team is fairly rewarded has always been one of my priorities."

## POSITIVE CHANGES AHEAD AT THE FINCHALE GROUP

**A Durham based charity with almost 80 years of proud history has embraced the challenges of the post COVID lockdown by looking to the future and recruiting key new people into top managerial roles.**

Finchale Group based in Belmont's Mandale Business Park provides life changing support, training opportunities and routes to employment. The charity, which started life in 1943 as a rehabilitation and resettlement centre for disabled wartime servicemen continues to help ex-military personnel and veterans but has expanded and diversified to deliver high-quality employability and vocational training programmes for learners of all ages.

It's been a busy period of change and adapting for the charity following their move from a former

hotel building in Pity Me to their new location in 2019. Richard Annand VC House is newly built and contains accessible classrooms, meeting rooms and nearby they have a purpose-built construction skills academy. The move was phase one of a strategy to meet and deliver the demands of modern learning and now stage two has seen the arrival of new board members with specific skills such as finance, HR and entrepreneurial experience. The charity has also appointed a new Interim CEO and Chair of Trustees.

Neil Johnson takes the reins as interim CEO with a proven track record in people services sectors such as employability, educational skills and adult social care. He has previously held senior roles within these sectors including Ingeus UK, Coquet Trust and the Shaw Trust.



The new Chair is Jason Knights, Managing Director of Blue Kangaroo Design, a Gateshead based design agency that works specifically with entertainment character licensing and toy industry clients all over the world including Walt Disney, Universal Studios, Mattel, Tom, and Warner Bros. His business acumen won him a Board of Trade Award and he was made a Northern Powerhouse Export Champion.



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## SUNDERLAND MEANS BUSINESS...

A special festival this autumn will celebrate the changing face of business in Sunderland and highlight the city's successes.

**There can't be many cities in the country – let alone in the North East – that have enjoyed the level of investment that is currently taking place in Sunderland.**

From Nissan's ambitious plans for a futuristic electric vehicle hub to the transformation of the Riverside, there's never been such an exciting time.

And it's against this backdrop that Sunderland will be showcasing the city's opportunities, entrepreneurship and growth in its first Sunderland Business Festival.

The week long free festival will run from 4 -9 October and will be a mix of virtual and in person events, with expert talks and discussions on a range of topics covering everything from the strong digital scene in the city to the importance of up skilling and education.

As part of the festival the Bridges shopping centre is staging its own programme of events, with sessions including speed careers "dating", an entrepreneurs day and a spotlight on homegrown businesses which started life as a hobby and have become hugely successful.

A day dedicated to preparing for work – with everything from fashion advice to a clothes swap – is also planned, with the centre sharing how to move an online business into bricks and mortar.

The Bridges will also be home to a hub throughout the week, where – along with hosting certain sessions – visitors will also be able to pick up information on a range of subjects.

One of the messages of the shopping centre event – and of the festival as a whole – is for people to be fully aware of the opportunities that are open to them and how thinking more laterally can open up a whole host of doors.

To illustrate that particular point Karen Eve, Centre Director at the Bridges, has taken up the challenge and will be launching Let's Call Karen, where she will go into various centre businesses throughout the week and try her hand at other jobs.

"It was very important for the Bridges to be part of the festival and to stage our own programme of events," said Karen.

"Giving people a chance to get on the business ladder or to build their existing business is something I'm very passionate about and I hope we will help them get the tools they need."

Plans also include a jobs wall where employers can post vacancies for free along with vital advice for budding entrepreneurs on the essentials to starting their own business.

The Bridges' programme fits neatly into the overall theme of the festival, with a recruitment fair at the Stadium of Light and sessions looking at everything from culture to hospitality, with inspirational talks from business leaders.

"The event will bring training opportunities, taster sessions, skills development workshops and real job opportunities," said Ellen Thinnesen, Chair of Sunderland Business Partnership.

"We will hear inspirational stories and the whole festival will showcase Sunderland as a thriving, vibrant and smart city."

**For further information about Sunderland Business Festival contact [hena@ashmoreconsulting.co.uk](mailto:hena@ashmoreconsulting.co.uk).**

**For information about the programme of events at the Bridges and the recruitment fair at the Stadium of Light, contact [bernice@sortedpr.com](mailto:bernice@sortedpr.com)**

**City of  
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Business Festival**



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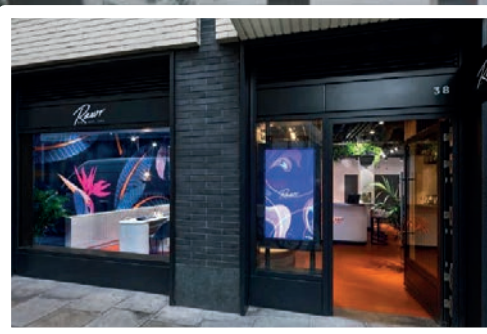
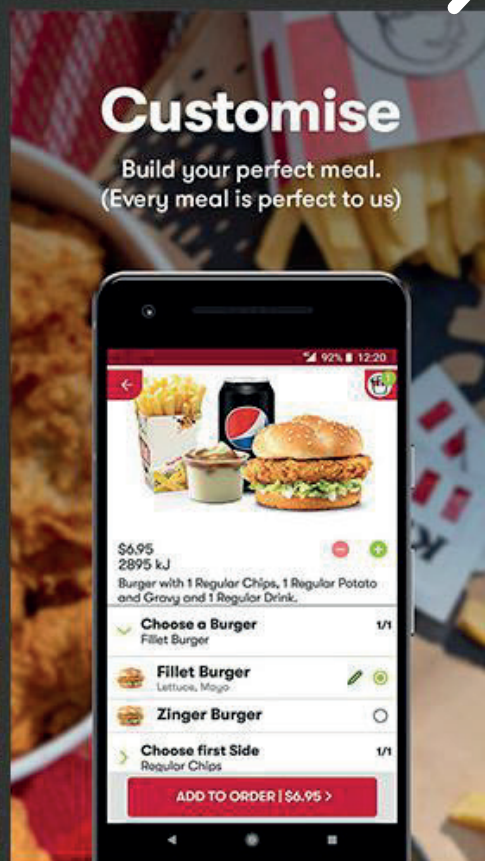
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# COACHING IS ALL SOFT AND FLUFFY ISN'T IT?

You may have come across coaching in some way, shape or form previously. You might have been coached, or you might be aware of coaching around you. I want to share with you my take on what coaching is (and what it isn't!)

**The difficult thing about talking about coaching from my perspective is lots of different things get badged as coaching. And, I love coaching, but it has built up a certain reputation and associations that aren't always as helpful as they might be.**

Let me draw a distinction between two other (extremely useful) development tools, mentoring and training. Mentoring and training are very much about giving information, sharing ideas, sharing of knowledge. They both rely on an individual imparting knowledge from one person to another. Coaching is the exact opposite.

Coaching in its purest form is when, as a coach, we learn pause and ask rather than tell. So coaching is not about imparting new bits of knowledge. From the coaches perspective, it's about helping the coachee (the person you are coaching) explore, understand and identifying new ideas, new ways of working, new possibilities for them as an individual.

This can be a massive challenge for new coaches, because if I'm honest it's much easier for us to lean on telling others what to do. I think this is because telling others what to do seems to come to very easily to us all.

When we train coaches, we often spend half a day breaking down these myths, ideas and preconceptions that people have about coaching. I remember one senior manager starting a three day coaching course saying: "Coaching is all soft and fluffy isn't it". By lunchtime (and unprompted) he stood up again, having learned what coaching was, and said "This could be the single toughest thing I have to do as a leader, I have to learn to stop telling other what to do." Yes, I would agree it is tough, and it is challenging, but boy oh boy is it rewarding! When you see the spark of a new idea or the flicker of flame grow stronger as someone identifies ways to overcome a barrier they saw as insurmountable. Or when your coachee finds new creative and effective ways to achieve their goals the personal satisfaction as a coach is incredible.



Nevil Tynemouth

So why would being able to coach help you as a manager, leader or business owner?

Well, the first benefit is you will be on track to getting the very best from everybody around you. Your team around you are going to be sharing new ideas and new approaches. Why does this help? Well, for one thing, it's not just your perspective and you are not just relying on your own thoughts, ideas and approaches. We trained one director in coaching techniques and they were adamant they were the authority in their business in a particular topic so coaching wouldn't work for them. We shared our coaching methods and asked them to apply the ask rather than tell approach. They were (extremely) sceptical and explained that his role as the technical authority was to give answers not to ask questions. It took around three weeks until he phoned me to tell me that he had asked a group of people about a complex technical problem, rather than tell them what to do. To his surprise the most junior member of the team came up with a solution that no one else (including him) had considered that was the best fix for the issue. He was astounded and hadn't realised how much talent and ability the people around him had. It's this kind of result you can get when you choose to coach and ask rather than just tell those around you.

Seeing organisations create a coaching culture,

one where people can ask for and get coaching, support and challenge from those around them is fantastic. When directors, leaders and business owners know what coaching really is. When they realise it's not just spending time with people one on one "telling them what they did wrong". When they take the time to explain to their teams what coaching is and how it will benefit them is key. In sports, underperformers, top performers and everyone in between gets coaching and support. It should be the same in business. Ask yourself, when did you last see a top performer being coached, supported, challenged and kept accountable?

Seeing a business owner who can ask the right questions, provide the right feedback, challenge, and keep accountable the team around them is brilliant. Coaching is a journey, and as a coach I am still learning (I'm only about 17 years in) and it is tough but if you really want to create a great team around you, coaching is a key tool you need in your own personal toolkit.

**To contact Nevil, email him:**  
[nevil@newresults.co.uk](mailto:nevil@newresults.co.uk), connect with him on LinkedIn or visit [www.newresults.co.uk](http://www.newresults.co.uk)

**To see the new coaching course from New Results:** [www.onlinelearning.newresults.co.uk/courses/coaching-skills-for-professionals](http://www.onlinelearning.newresults.co.uk/courses/coaching-skills-for-professionals)



## WHAT IMPACT CAN WE EXPECT?

The full scale of the impact of the pandemic on all aspects of employment is yet to be seen. With redundancies on the rise, and a lot of highly skilled and experienced individuals losing their jobs, there are arguably more qualified candidates for most vacancies on the market.

**It is worth remembering however that some companies are thriving and expanding their teams during this period. Schemes such as the kickstart scheme introduced by the government also provides opportunities for organisations to employ individuals who would otherwise be unemployed.**

The nature of recruitment is changing with most businesses operating remotely and with the implementation of social distancing. Companies are faced with new challenges of having to manage remote workforces and not dealing with people face-to-face. Recruitment processes have significantly evolved to cope with the new ways of working. Organisations which are critical to dealing with the pandemic such as the NHS, supermarkets and delivery services have had to adapt their recruitment processes to be able to bring employees and in some cases volunteers on board quickly to meet demands in service. Other organisations have also had to modify their processes, moving the entire process online, from initial interview to final interview. This means that most hiring managers will not have an opportunity to physically meet their new recruits and vice versa.

Certain aspects of hiring are still the same because of the Internet. The Internet has been a part of our lives for the last thirty years and businesses have been gradually updating their recruitment processes to really make use of it. In particular, it has been essential to use the Internet and virtual methods of communications to reach the younger job seekers, who have grown up knowing nothing else. Jobsites such as Indeed.com, Glassdoor and LinkedIn have created platforms for businesses to advertise their roles to far-reaching audiences and enables job seekers to



## recruitment with a difference

find a role that is perfect for them, whilst they are in the comfort of their homes, on their phone, tablet and laptop. The only real change we have seen hit this aspect of recruitment is that there are less jobs being advertised on these websites because of COVID-19. Improvement in email facilities and other communication technology such as Skype, Zoom and Teams provide opportunities for recruitment discussions, from agreeing job descriptions to hiring decisions. Moreover, an employer's brand and reputation as a good employer is enhanced by their ability to provide safe and viable options for socially distanced interviews (in particular video interviews), this will resonate well with candidates who are looking to work for a company that cares about the wellbeing and safety of their employees.

Traditional face-to-face interviewing techniques have relied heavily on cues and body languages as well as chemistry between the candidate and the interviewers. A lot of emphasis was placed on appearance, how smartly dressed a candidate is, their firm handshake, polite mannerism and even sometimes the respect they showed the receptionist on arrival. Recruiters and managers can no longer rely on these factors.

A discussion with a director of a new estate agency about how he recruited during the lock-down brought up some interesting points. Through the use of Zoom, emails and mobile phone calls he was able to develop a job description with his colleagues and sent it off to a recruitment agency, who then got back to him with a list of potential candidates. Having read the CVs of the candidates he identified the applicants perfect for the roles and organised a phone call to talk them through the next phase of the recruitment process. He told me that he was adamant to meet the candidates face-to-face as he "didn't feel comfortable employing

someone he'd never met". Determined to abide by the social distancing guidelines the director met with all of the candidates outdoors. He met the first candidate in the car park of a pub, the second on a train station platform and another in a car park where both parties stayed in their cars and spoke through their windows. He noted that all of the candidates had no problem meeting face-to-face because it meant the possibility of landing a job in such uncertain times. Furthermore, most of the candidates were on furlough so finding the time to have a meeting wasn't an issue and they didn't have to worry about their bosses wondering where they were. In addition to this, the director himself was able to get a true understanding of which candidates would fit the culture of the company.

Obviously, this is only one man's recruitment process and it is not meant to be a template for future recruiters, however, it does highlight the importance some hiring managers still place on face-to-face meetings and the need for finding a balance between following social distancing guidelines, ensuring candidates are safe and creating a hiring process that ensures continued growth for your business.

Definite benefits to online recruitment include access to a wider pool of candidates, effective use of time, cost savings and reduction in unconscious bias.

We are truly something different to the normal HR and Recruitment process. We've changed our recruiting model- with no upfront costs- added in our HR expertise to give you more streamlined approach to the whole structure.

***If you require a recruitment solution that is flexible, supportive and designed around your business please contact Inspired Recruitment on 0191 205 8020 today or email us at support@inspired-hr.co.uk***



# IS WORKING FROM THE OFFICE A THING OF THE PAST?

Now that we have received confirmation from the government that we can return to our workplaces, we are already hearing employers are seeing an increase in flexible working requests. We therefore set out below a brief guide to handling flexible working requests.

The statutory right to request flexible working applies to employees with over 26 weeks service.

## Stages In a Formal Flexible Working Request

1. Your employee submits a flexible working request form in writing.
2. Hold a meeting to discuss the request – this provides an opportunity to discuss the requested working arrangements in depth and consider how feasible the request is.
3. Consider the request – take into account any contractual implications, health and safety, financial matters, practical issues, as well as reflecting on how performance will be managed and what impact it might have on the team.
4. You may refuse the request if you have a good business reason for doing so. More information on valid business reasons can be found online.
5. Make a decision – the decision may be made at the meeting, or you may require additional information or need time to review the proposed working arrangement.
6. Allow for an appeal – arrange a meeting with a senior manager who has not previously been involved in discussions about the request. The outcome of the appeal is final.
7. Confirming the arrangements – do this in writing within one month of the changes taking effect so that all parties are clear of the agreement. Don't forget to update terms and conditions, such as holiday or pay.



8. Review – Once a flexible working request has been agreed it forms a permanent change to the employee's contract, unless otherwise agreed. As the business environment and individual circumstances are continually changing, you may wish to discuss with the employee setting a review period, say after six or 12 months. Review dates must be agreed in advance with the employee.

## Timescales

The process must be completed (including the appeal) within three months from the date that the application is received. If the process looks like it might take longer than three months you MUST get written approval from the employee to extend the timeframe.

Finally, the employee will not have a statutory right to make another request for the next 12 months.

*For a more detailed management guide please get in touch and we will happily send you a copy. [www.holgatehr.co.uk](http://www.holgatehr.co.uk)*

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## LAW FIRM FEELING GREAT WITH EIGHT NEW APPOINTMENTS

A North East law firm has strengthened its team with the addition of eight new recruits, as its growth plans continue to flourish.

Stockton-based Archers Law has made the appointments across every department of the business, bringing the total number of team members to 75.

Amongst others, Oliver Hebbon and Laura Dale have been promoted to associate

solicitors, while a business administration apprentice has been offered a full-time position following completion of their course.

The appointments will enable the firm to increase its capacity, meaning it can service more clients and continue to grow.

Chris Todd, Archers Managing Partner, said: "It's great to be able to expand the team in a range of areas, particularly the central support team, as this enables the business to grow across the board."

The firm is also recruiting a commercial property solicitor, a corporate and commercial solicitor and two legal secretaries.



## TOP LAW FIRM ASSISTS COVID-HIT BUSINESSES IN THE REGION

Newcastle-based commercial lawyers, Muckle LLP, have made a substantial donation to Open North Foundation to assist small businesses in the region struggling due to the ongoing pandemic.

The firm, which was formed in 1920 and has a strong history of supporting charities, offered its assistance after seeing the impact the Foundation was making to Covid-hit small businesses in the North East.

The firm was quick to offer support when the pandemic first struck the region's business community, most notably launching a series of COVID-19 specific podcasts and establishing a free service, which gave local businesses the opportunity to speak to a team of lawyers for advice on legal concerns arising from the coronavirus crisis.

In addition, the firm continued to pledge 1% of its annual profits to good causes, a number of which were COVID-19 related, including a £5,000 donation to the Coronavirus Recovery Fund.

## HAY & KILNER ADDS SOLICITOR TO AWARD-WINNING PRIVATE CLIENT TEAM

North East law firm Hay & Kilner has strengthened its industry-leading private client team with the appointment of Kirsty Allen.

Kirsty has moved into a solicitor role with the Newcastle-headquartered firm and is now working with clients across a wide range of

activities, including wills, trusts, probate, estate administration and tax planning.

Prior to joining Hay & Kilner, Kirsty ran the private client department within another North East law firm.

She said: "I've met members of Hay & Kilner's private client team over the years and was well aware of their excellent reputation, so when the chance came along to talk about joining the firm, it was one I was very keen to take.

"Being part of the team has been everything I'd expected and more so far, and it's great to be working alongside such highly-skilled and widely-respected legal practitioners."



## FLEXIBLE SUPPORT OPTIONS HOLDINGS ACQUIRE SERVICES PROVIDER

A specialist team of healthcare M&A lawyers from Mincoffs Solicitors' corporate team, led by Partner Paul Hughes, have advised Flexible Support Options Holdings on the acquisition of Interactive Development Support from Indigo Delta Group.

Originally based in Seaton Burn, Interactive Development Support Limited is a specialist provider of supported living services for adults and children

with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, autistic spectrum condition and sensory impairment, and is expected to compliment the high-quality care services which the wider Flexible Support Options group having been providing since 1996.

Michael Ladhar, a Director of Flexible Support Options commented: "ID Support is a fantastic addition to the group and we look forward to working with the current management team to continue the brilliant care and support being provided daily."

"We are delighted to have chosen Mincoffs to advise on this transaction as they possess exemplary knowledge and expertise about healthcare acquisitions."



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# SOLICITOR OF THE MONTH

## GWEN JONES

Commercial Property, emg Solicitors

### Did you always envisage a career in the industry?

Yes but not in the area in which I practice - I had always seen myself as working for the CPS in criminal law.

### What has been your career path so far?

I started as a paralegal in a large commercial property department in 2007 and never really left the area. My training contract followed, qualifying into the commercial property department of a well-respected North East Firm during the last recession. From there I moved following the birth of my daughter to another well respected long-standing North East Firm where I was promoted to Associate which gave me invaluable experience in managing a team. Then EMG.

### What have been the biggest challenges you have faced so far?

Qualifying during a recession was a shock to the system; going from the security of a training contract to being qualified at a time where instructions were not forthcoming and having to diversify quickly in an changing market was challenging but also an opportunity to grow. The pandemic has also been a challenge for everyone, when the first lockdown took hold people were naturally cautious and risk adverse resulting in fewer transactions progressing - there were far more important health matters to take priority! Since the easing of lockdown the challenge has been managing the instructions that are now incoming; the market is buoyant and managing the workload as well as managing client expectations is a daily challenge.

### Who do you most respect in your industry?

This is a tough question to answer as I have been fortunate to work alongside some excellent solicitors and Partners during my career who I really do respect. In the North East we have a wealth of experts across the legal sector - to name a few would do a disservice to those I did not mention (and I am sure that there would be words over a drink sometime as a result!) The team at EMG are inspiring on a daily basis - I'm lucky to work with a whole team of people I respect and the passion in our solicitors in particular those training and at the earlier end of their careers is totally inspiring!

### Which fictional lawyer would you most like to meet ?

Ali McBeal, I remember watching the show and thinking yes, that is the career for me!

### What is your greatest strength?

I would say that beyond the legal expertise that we all have in the industry first and foremost I am a people person and genuinely care and want the best for each client and for all of my colleagues. I can see when people need that extra support or just a check that they are ok and nothing is too great an ask. I am often the swan above the surface - taking stress away from others to get the transaction completed.

### What is your biggest weakness?

I am a perfectionist and can find it difficult not to have total control over situations.

### What are your remaining career aspirations?

To grow the team and to build a strong support system for junior solicitors within the firm.

### How do you see your industry evolving in the next ten years?

The last 18 months has shown that we can work remotely and that digital working can be very successful with the right infrastructure in place. I would envisage greater remote and flexible working and also a greater number of female lead firms, partners and senior solicitors throughout all practice areas.

### How do you like to unwind?

I walk, mountain bike and generally enjoy being outdoors with friends and family. When I can, I do love travelling, with Italy and France being top of my destination list.

[Gwen.Jones@emgsolicitors.com](mailto:Gwen.Jones@emgsolicitors.com)

0191 731 6460 [www.emgsolicitors.com](http://www.emgsolicitors.com)

“

...I would envisage greater remote and flexible working and also a greater number of female lead firms...

”





Gwen Jones



# THE COMMERCIAL DIVORCE - THE RISE IN UNFAIR PREJUDICE CLAIMS

Unfair prejudice claims have risen over the last 12 to 18 months, many triggered by the impact of Covid.



## What is an unfair prejudice claim?

A claim for unfair prejudice can be brought by a shareholder where the affairs of the company have been, are being, or will be conducted in a way that is "unfairly prejudicial" to shareholder interests.

Action is brought by a shareholder whose interests have been affected who can "petition" the Court for relief.

Whether a shareholder or a director, you should be aware of the requirements for a claim, as well as potential pitfalls.

## Requirements

A petitioner must demonstrate:

- 1) What action has been, or is being threatened, which is prejudicial to their interests as a shareholder.
- 2) How that prejudice is unfair.

## What does prejudice mean?

Prejudice is not limited to financial loss although loss in the value of a member's shares is the most common reason for a petition. The concept can include breaching a member's right to be involved in company management, decision making and strategy. The petitioning shareholder does not have to show that anybody acted in bad faith or with the intention of causing prejudice.

## Establishing if the prejudice is unfair

Even if the action is potentially prejudicial, it must still be "unfair". The Court will first consider the basis on which the shareholder agreed to become a member of the company, which is likely to be set out in Articles of Association and any shareholders' agreement.

Common examples of unfairly prejudicial conduct include:

- Failure to allow a member to be involved in



Ailsa Charlton

the management of the company or to be consulted on decisions in breach of rights under a shareholders' agreement.

- Failure to pay dividends for no good reason
- Payment of excessive remuneration
- Misuse or misappropriation of company assets

Mismanagement by the board of directors is not commonly unfairly prejudicial conduct unless directors' duties are deliberately flouted.

## Remedies available

The Court has a wide discretion to make appropriate orders to remedy unfair prejudice. Orders can:

- Regulate the conduct of the company's future affairs;
- Require the company to refrain from doing or continuing with an act complained of, or to do an act which the member has complained that

the company has omitted to do;

- Authorise civil proceedings to be brought in the name and on behalf of the company by such person/s and on such terms as the court may direct;
- Require the company not to make any alterations in its Articles of Association without the leave of the Court; and
- Provide for the purchase of the shares of any members of the company by other members or (more rarely) the company itself.

The most common remedy sought and order made by the Court is that the majority shareholder(s) buys out the minority shareholder for fair value. Fair value will be determined by expert evidence and will be adjusted to allow for the impact of the unfairly prejudicial conduct.

The Court will also consider whether the purchase value should be discounted to reflect the shareholding's minority interest.

## Process

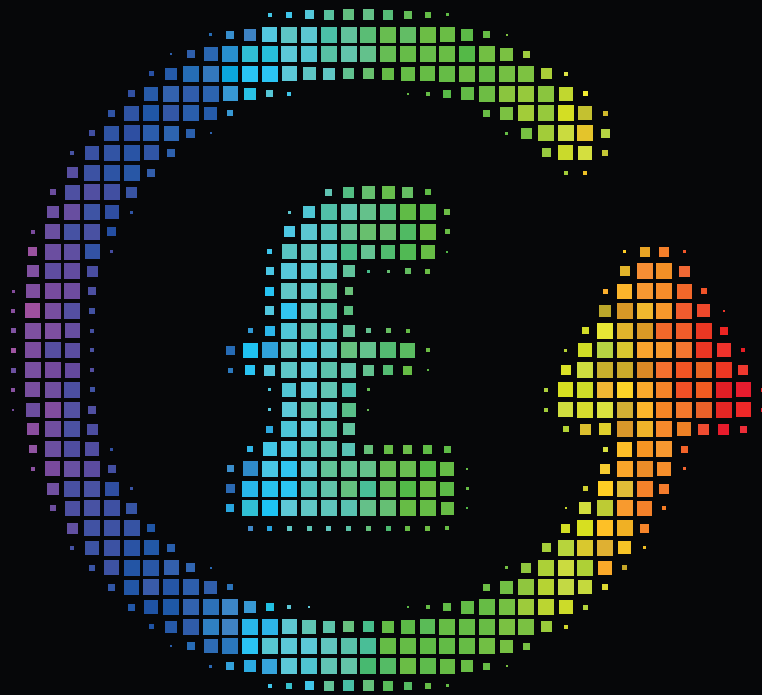
As with most litigation, the parties are expected to try to resolve matters without having to resort to Court proceedings. Where that is not a possible, a claim for unfair prejudice is begun by way of a petition.

These claims are complex and costly to pursue or defend and a distraction from the day-to-day running of the business. It is important to take early advice to see whether a resolution can be reached without having to issue a petition.

**Please contact Ailsa Charlton on 0191 211 7735 or email [ailsa.charlton@muckle-llp.com](mailto:ailsa.charlton@muckle-llp.com) for further information or top tips on resolving disputes. Alternatively, register for training to understand your director responsibilities here [bit.ly/3AvMF8o](https://bit.ly/3AvMF8o)**



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## WHY USE A SOLICITOR IF YOU ARE AN EXECUTOR?

If you have been appointed as an Executor you will be named as such in the Will of the deceased.

Many people appoint their friends or relatives to be their Executors without giving any thought to the legal responsibility involved. But if you get it wrong you may be liable to pay back large sums of money by way of taxes or overpaid state benefits that the deceased received.

**There is a lot to attend to and you may find the situation overwhelming.**

I was an Executor in the estate of one of my close relatives. I have over thirty years of experience as a Wills and Probate Solicitor and knew exactly how to handle the estate. But the task quickly became impossible to manage. I couldn't face going to the house, the place of a lifetime of memories. And so I held up progress. In the meantime the other beneficiaries started to complain. I therefore asked one of my colleagues to take over the case and they moved the matter forward swiftly.

**You may have been appointed as an Executor when you were much younger.**

If you agreed to be an Executor many years ago you may now realise that you simply can't cope with the physical demands of sorting out an empty house. It can be a huge and time consuming process. Even if the deceased was a very organised person it can still take up to ten hours just to sort through all the paperwork. Every item needs to be checked, you do not wish to throw out what you feel are very old Life Assurance policies held in the names of the deceased's parents. They could be worth a fortune. Or what about the slip of paper that we would recognise as a receipt for monies paid into an old savings policy that is still in existence.



Jaqueline Emmerson

**You won't have to worry about finding money to pay for a funeral.**

The first thing that I do if I am managing an estate is to look for a pre paid funeral plan. If I drafted the Will then I will have asked about this at the time. It is likely that if there is such a policy in existence I will have a copy of it stored with the original will. I also ask my clients to advise their friends or relatives that such a policy exists. If I haven't drafted the will then I need to go to the deceased's empty property and look for one quickly.

Could you face going into the deceased's empty home within days of their death to start looking for a funeral plan? Often I am the first person to go into a house after the death in the property itself. Sometimes what I find is not very pleasant. Perhaps you would be better off remembering your relative or friend in happier times.

If you appoint a funeral director without checking first to see if there is a pre paid funeral plan then you may be wasting money belong to the estate and ultimately the beneficiaries.

If there isn't a funeral plan it is still highly likely that you can avoid the stress of determining who will pay for the funeral. In many cases executors are distant relatives. They may not wish to find the money for a funeral only to have to wait a long period of time to recover this.

If I am involved in Administering an estate then I will ask to see proof that there is sufficient money available to cover funeral costs in any of the deceased's bank accounts. I will then contact a funeral director and advise that I will pay them from one of the bank accounts. As a solicitor, I am able to access an account in order to pay the funeral director prior to the Grant of Probate. This can actually take up to a year to obtain.

***If you have been appointed as an Executor and you don't know what to do next then you can always contact our Specialist Probate Lawyers at Emmersons Solicitors. We are all happy to have an initial FREE chat with you to determine how much help you will need.***

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# RACIAL ABUSE, FOOTBALL AND SOCIAL MEDIA. HOW CAN EMPLOYERS TACKLE RACE DISCRIMINATION?

Helen Scott is an Associate Solicitor at specialist employment law firm, Collingwood Legal. Helen Scott considers how employers can help tackle race discrimination in the workplace.

**The aftermath of the UEFA Euro football final last month, which saw England lose on penalties, resulted in a backlash of online racial abuse directed at a number of the England players. UEFA and others quite rightly condemned the "disgusting racist abuse".**

One well known estate agency firm is reported to have promptly suspended a manager for allegedly posting a racist comment on Twitter following England's defeat. Greater Manchester police and the Metropolitan police are said to be further investigating the matter following accusations that the individual's account was hacked, but this goes to show that unacceptable behaviour out of the workplace can have wider implications on employee's employment.

Racial abuse and discrimination are not acceptable online or offline. Both the Government and social media platforms have been scrutinized for not doing enough to tackle this issue, but what can employers do to try to ensure that employees are not subject to racial abuse or race discrimination in the workplace?

## Role as an Employer

Employers have a role to play in helping to stamp out racism in society, and should look to adopt an inclusive environment and take active steps to tackle the issue. All line managers in the workplace can and should play a vital role in helping to address discrimination in the workplace.

There are many ways in which organisations can actively reduce racial discrimination and adopt a more inclusive workforce. Outlined below are just some of many recommendations from a variety of sources, including a 2017 independent report published by the Government on Race in the workplace, that employers should consider:

1. Analyse and monitor data - Identify existing levels of ethnic diversity and use this data to assess whether there are any workplace inequalities. Encourage employees to disclose and report, explaining why data will help improve diversity.
2. Increase diversity and inclusion – Look to attract a wider, more diverse talent pool. This may require a review of both recruitment processes and selection processes for promotion. This can include having diverse interview panels and challenging inequalities, such as school and university selection bias.

3. Training is essential - Introduce more training, focusing specifically on race discrimination and including unconscious bias in the workplace, and ensure training is mandatory at all levels, specifically senior management and those involved in recruitment.
4. Look at policies and procedures in place – Ensure these policies address and promote diversity and then assess whether this is reflected in practice.
5. Encourage reporting - Ensure that employees are trained to spot, report and tackle racial harassment and bullying in the workplace.
6. Promote inclusive networks and mentoring – Establish inclusive networks and encourage individuals to participate. Put in place mentoring programmes, including both traditional and reverse mentoring, whereby senior management are mentored by individuals from different backgrounds to understand the challenges they face.

In addition to tackling inequalities, a workforce that is diverse and inclusive will not only harbour a positive work environment, but will also drive innovation and business performance. CIPD has a number of useful online guides detailing advice and tips for tackling racism in the workplace: [www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/tackling-racism-workplace](http://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/tackling-racism-workplace).

## Legal claims for race discrimination

Under the legal framework prohibiting discrimination, the Equality Act 2010, race is a "protected characteristic" and the definition includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins. The Act specifically prohibits direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation in the workplace on the grounds of race.

Any employee can bring a claim for race discrimination at work, and both the perpetrator and the employer can be held liable for such discrimination. It is therefore another reason why it is important that organisations adopt a strict approach to addressing discrimination in the workplace.

## Action against employees

Businesses finding themselves in situations whereby employees have been found to have



Helen Scott

posted abusive comments on social media further risk significant reputational damage by reason of the actions of their employee. The employee in question risks and faces action by the employer for such conduct, even where they considered it to be outside of the workplace.

In general, employers may have grounds to fairly dismiss an employee for misconduct outside of the workplace, where there are grounds to show that it has impacted upon the employment relationship by, for example, causing reputational damage. However, whether the conduct is linked to employment and justifies dismissal under unfair dismissal principles does depend on the particular facts. To be in the best position in these cases, employers should give clear information to employees about corporate image and expectations regarding use of social media via policies and communications.

## Comment

Racial abuse and discrimination has been very prevalent in the media, with the Black Lives Matter movement playing a big role. The racial abuse received by the England football players in the aftermath of the Euros has brought this issue into the public eye again. It is clear that racial abuse and discrimination must continue to be tackled, and employers have a responsibility and indeed legal obligations to prevent such behaviour and take appropriate action where an employee acts inappropriately.

***Collingwood Legal is a specialist employment law firm and we provide bespoke training to organisations on all areas of employment law, including HR management skills such as training line managers in how to have difficult conversations with their line reports and how to get the best out of their team.***

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# 86% OF EMPLOYEES ACTIVELY SEEKING JOBS CREDIT BROKEN PROCESSES. IT'S TIME FOR A CHANGE.

Leading automation experts, Nintex, reported that of the interviewees who claimed they were actively looking for new jobs, 86% named their company's broken processes as a factor. Furthermore, Nintex found that younger workers and millennials were more likely to blame poor processes for their desire to leave their job. This illustrates the level of importance efficient and clearly communicated processes play in a business. And with replacing an employee reportedly costing six to nine months' worth of salary, these ineffective processes aren't just losing you talent, they're losing you money too.

So, where to start? Well in the words of Maria von Trapp "Let's start at the very beginning". Onboarding is the first processes any employee will experience in your organisation, and it is imperative that this experience sets a positive tone, with Forbes suggesting that as much as 20% of staff turnover occurs within the first 45 days of employment. An effective onboarding process needs to set employees up on key systems and clearly communicate scheduling, role expectations, company culture, and key contacts as a minimum. But so often HR teams are so focused on keeping the day-to-day running that it can be difficult to find time to optimise these processes. This is where process automation comes into play.

Process automation tools, such as Nintex, allow businesses to automate tasks such as welcome emails, requests for IT teams to set up passwords and equipment, assigning tasks, and creating a first-day schedule, to name but a few. By



Justin Short

automating these repetitive, manual tasks, HR teams can streamline the onboarding process, offer a consistent experience to new employees, and reduce their workload, allowing them to focus on high-value tasks.

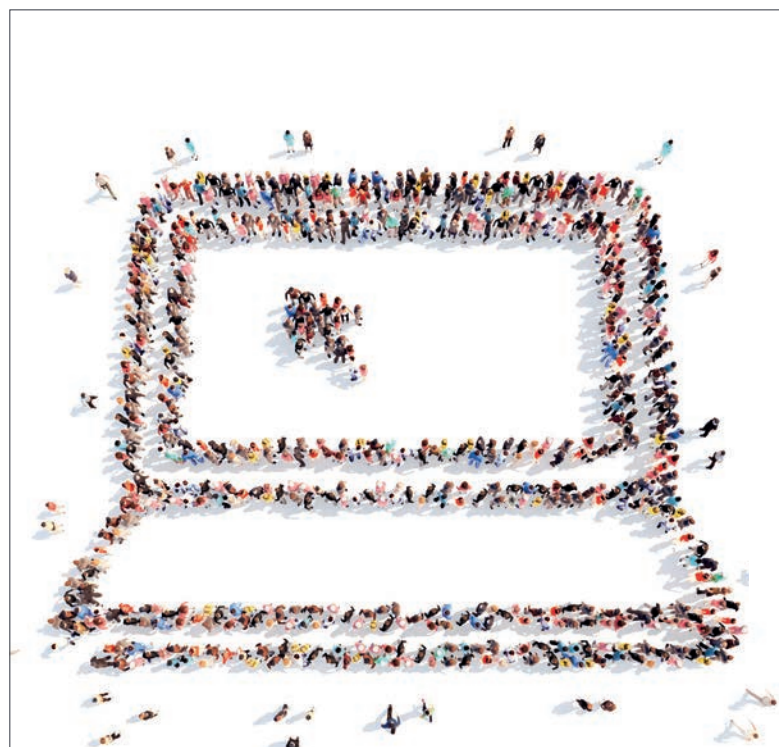
This evaluation, mapping, and automation of the onboarding process is becoming increasingly

important as we see more businesses undertake the onboarding of remote employees. With automated task notifications, lost paper trails and unanswered email chains no longer threatening to break down the onboarding process, meaning both new employees and those responsible for onboarding receive clear communication surrounding what is expected of them and when, no matter where they are working from.

Whilst improving processes such as onboarding can drastically improve employee retention, some loss is always inevitable. Just as Nintex can alleviate administrative pain points across the onboarding processes, it can do the same for offboarding. Offboarding processes must promote a send-off in which talent feels welcome to return, data security and access must be amended, and any role-appropriate knowledge must be documented. Similarly to onboarding, offboarding requires the completion of a tick list for HR; automating these processes or 'ticks' can ensure consistency and alleviate pressure on HR teams.

Investing in automating on and offboarding not only streamlines these processes but saves you money by supporting your employee retention – talk about return on investment!

**Find out more by calling 0191 4770365, emailing [enquiries@teamsynergi.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@teamsynergi.co.uk), or check out [www.teamsynergi.co.uk/synergi-hub/events](http://www.teamsynergi.co.uk/synergi-hub/events) to register for our upcoming automation-focused events.**



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## SAGGEZZA NAMED AMONG WORLD'S MOST INNOVATIVE TECH FIRMS

Global technology solutions provider Saggezza has been named among the world's '100 most innovative places to work'.

The company, which is headquartered in the US but has teams across the UK and India, including an office at Sunderland Software Centre, was ranked 89th in this year's Best Workplaces for Innovators list, compiled by Fast Company and Accenture.

It marks the third annual publication of companies around the world that most effectively empower employees at all levels to improve processes, create new products and invent new ways of doing business.

Also featured among the top 100 were global names such as IBM, Arup, SAP, CITI, Alibaba and Google, with Saggezza finishing just above Oracle, Walmart and London-based Isobar.

Arvind Kapur, Co-founder and CEO of Saggezza, said: "With the modern workforce becoming increasingly virtual and dispersed, successful companies need to ensure an innovation-focused culture works for employees around the world. Our investment in innovation not only benefits our clients, but our partners, staff and the larger technology industry."

As the only major business magazine recognition program that features innovation as a primary workplace perk, Fast Company's Best Workplaces measures innovation in three capacities: investment, initiatives, and culture.



## UTILITIES FIRM RECOGNISED FOR COMMITMENT TO CUSTOMER SERVICE AND INNOVATION

A Teesside-based utilities firm is making its mark across the country after being shortlisted for a number of awards.

Everflow Group, which has its headquarters in Wynyard as well as a site in Warwickshire, has been named as a finalist in no less than 16 award categories.

The group, which comprises business water retailer Everflow Water and utilities software provider Everflow Tech, has already won a bronze award for

Best Customer Experience at the 2021 UK Business Awards.

Other accolades it is in the running for include best digital transformation, contact centre, use of technology and customer service at the CX Awards, innovator and customer experience of the year at the Growing Business Awards and entrepreneur of the year at the North East England Chamber of Commerce awards.

Chief Executive, Josh Gill, said: "It's really rewarding to be recognised in so many awards this year, especially on a national scale."

"I'm particularly proud to have been nominated in so many customer service categories. Everflow was created to bring the water industry into a new age of first-class customer experience, automation and simplicity, so I'm delighted to see that it is working."

## WORK ON PROJECTS SECURES GROWTH FOR NORTH EAST TECH SPECIALISTS

New work in the education, defence and manufacturing sectors are among the projects that have secured growth for a North East technology firm over the last 12 months.

Gateshead-based Advantex sees positive signs of recovery for the regional and national technology sector as the economy continues to pick-up post lockdown.

The firm has won £1m worth of work from Galliford Try to provide ICT equipment and connectivity services to North of England schools, while new digital cabling has been installed onboard HMS Trincomalee. Other projects include technology and supporting services supplied to a major national drinks' manufacturer and Hitachi-Rail.

Another project led by Advantex, which encompassed developing 'smart' network technologies and machine learning, has led to improvements in the protection of people and



property at a major UK defence contractor.

Managing Director, Steve O'Connell, said: "Our focus on strengthening our position, sustainable growth and adapting the business to meet the challenges of the trading conditions caused by pandemic, has paid dividends with a robust financial and sales performance."

"The projects we have been involved in recognise our ability to take a strategic view of developments for clients while delivering high quality work and management services."

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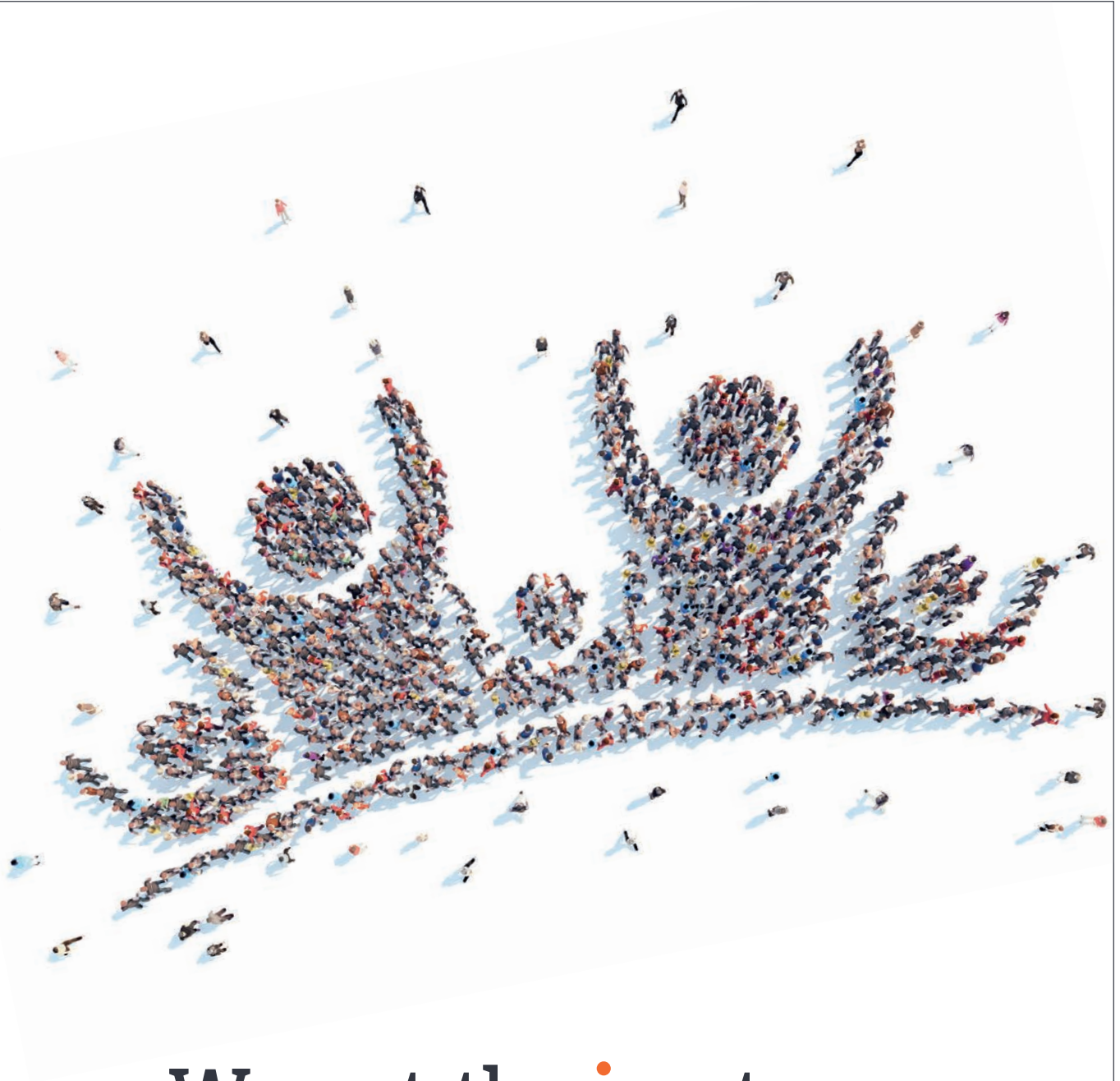
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Paul Sykes



# TALKING TECH AND DIGITAL

This month we talk to

## PAUL SYKES

Director at the Unite Group

### Did you always envisage a career in the world of Technology?

To be honest yes! I completed an apprenticeship when I left school with a company called Telephone Rentals who were merged with Mercury Communications shortly afterwards. I loved learning something new everyday and also being out and about across London working in many different kinds of businesses. I have never really considered doing anything else and still enjoy it so I guess I made a wise decision when I left school!!

### What attracted you to your current role?

As The Unite Group has continued to develop as a business we now have a team of directors, this means we have all been able to get away from dealing with absolutely everything like most small business owners! I am now able to focus primarily on the business and more importantly on building and maintaining relationships with our valued clients. I love my role in technology and it's great to keep current and up to date but I also love meeting people so for me it really is the ideal position! I also feel I now have a much better idea of the different services we offer and I love to find solutions for our customers! Nothing can give you more job satisfaction than knowing we delivered and put in a solution that makes a real difference.

Working on the business and developing plans with the director team is also really rewarding and The Unite Group is starting to grow into the customer service focussed business we are all striving for.

### How important has Technology been during the Coronavirus pandemic?

It's been Vital, we actually locked down and got everything in place a week before Boris made it official! That decision was one of the best ones we have ever made!! Once the lockdown was announced it went crazy and so many businesses were unprepared and didn't have any type of disaster recovery plan in place. Our team were at home and ready to go and we were able to get the majority of our customers online and working within a few days. The pandemic really opened peoples eyes to what cloud technology can offer and most importantly the flexibility it provides any business, I honestly believe most businesses are working smarter and more efficiently as a result of the changes they were forced to adopt! Hopefully it ensure they are more open to suggestions and improvements in the future.

### What tips would you give to someone looking to work in the industry?

Firstly accept that you will never know everything and commit to learning something new every day! It's a great industry to work in as it never gets boring! Technology continually improves and develops and this means everyone in the industry also has to keep up. I also believe it can be incredibly rewarding. I think starting an apprenticeship and developing a range of skills across the sector is the ideal way to develop and the guys who have taken that route with Unite over the years have all turned out to be great long term members of our team.

### Tell us the most exciting thing you're currently working on?

We have recently been working with a couple of long term customers on new ventures! This is exciting for them but also demonstrates that things are going well for them despite the challenges of the last 18 months. There are also a couple of exciting projects that I am working on to grow the business and add some additional services but I can't talk about them at the moment!

### What's your fondest memory of a career in the industry?

There are honestly too many to pick just one! The most memorable one was during my time in Australia where I was tasked with supplying communications and IT services for the Singapore army, they were using the Shoal Water Bay site in Queensland for military exercises and we had a few days to get everything in place for them. Driving for over 40 kilometers on a dirt road just to reach the site was an experience in itself.

### What are your remaining career aspirations?

I would love to see The Unite Group continue its development and become the trusted technology partner in our region. We are really lucky and have a fantastic team of people and it's a pleasure to work with them. On a personal level I love meeting and helping new clients and now the pandemic is over getting out to meet with them and if that helps to grow the business at the same time that's fantastic.

### What piece of technology would you be lost without?

Honestly? My Apple watch. I resisted getting one for ages and now I would be completely lost without it. Getting emails and messages and being able to work on the move is great and it also helps me with my daily fitness too. Making sure I walk my daily steps and meet my daily fitness goals has become really important.

### Who are your heroes and mentors?

As part of my degree I wrote a paper on the formation of Microsoft by Bill Gates and Paul Allen. In our industry windows and the current crop of cloud based products are used around the globe and the impact they both made in our industry and to the world is unprecedented. Understanding that they were also two guys from University with dreams and aspirations and what they managed to achieve is an inspiration to everyone. Away from technology then Ian Poulter playing for Europe in the Ryder Cup takes some beating.

### When not working, how do you like to relax?

I love all sports! I am getting too old to play football so having been a keen golfer for over 30 years I now try to enjoy this as much as possible. It's a great way to relax and can also be introduced into a business meeting! I also love to travel and spend time with my family.

[www.theunitegroup.co.uk](http://www.theunitegroup.co.uk)



# Lucid

TRANSPARENT TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS



## LUCID HAS EYES ON THE PRIZE

Norton-headquartered Lucid Technology Solutions has been shortlisted in the 2021 North East Business Awards, having been selected as one of three finalists from over 2,000 entries in the small business category.

Lucid, formerly Yarm Computers, has been in business for over 30 years and has a team of over 20 people. With services including IT support, connectivity, telecoms, CCTV and newly launched software application, Worktraq, Lucid supports businesses across almost every industry including law, videography, HR, warehousing, and finance.

Technology Director, Paul Alsop said: "It's a real honour to be shortlisted in these prestigious awards. To have been selected as one of three from over 2,000 entries is testament to the hard work and dedication that our staff show daily in providing the best possible service to all of our customers."

"We're really looking forward to the awards event, not least because this will be an excellent opportunity to see so many people face to face again after what has been a difficult 18 months for everyone. Win or lose, we will be celebrating in style!"

Lucid has three offices in Norton, Newton Aycliffe and Gateshead and achieved a record year sales-wise in 2020. The company prides itself on providing all of its services inhouse rather than outsourcing, including cabling which it has now been offering for several months.

The North East Business Awards event takes place at Wyngard Hall on Thursday 23rd September and promises to be a glittering celebration of businesses across the region.



Chronicle TeessideLive The Gazette  
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#NEBizAwards21

# FINALIST



## Small Business Award

[WWW.NEBUSINESSAWARDS.CO.UK](http://WWW.NEBUSINESSAWARDS.CO.UK)



**Worktraq**  
Location Intelligence



# Lucid

TRANSPARENT TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS



## Lucid Extend DMP Sponsorship

**Lucid Technology Solutions to Continue Rugby Club Partnership**

Darlington Mowden Park RFC are delighted to announce that Lucid Technology Solutions have agreed to extend their sponsorship of the club for a further 5 seasons. The local IT experts based in Norton have been supporters of the club since their move to the Arena in 2012, and will continue to provide technology support until at least May 2026.

Formerly known as Yarm Computers, Lucid rebranded in 2018 and moved to their new premises in Norton in 2019 as the business continues to grow year on year. Having successfully completed 30 years in business, their team has grown from 2 to over 20. The growth and ever-changing dynamics of technology has allowed them to expand as a company and focus on the provision of a wider range of support.

The renewed partnership will also see Lucid's logo appear on the DMP playing kit for the first time; featuring on the 1st XV playing shorts for the next 5 league campaigns. Speaking on the renewed sponsorship, DMP Chairman Mick Birch added: "Paul and the team at Lucid have been huge supporters of the club for the last 8 or 9 years and I'm thrilled that they've pledged their support for a

further 5 seasons. We're hugely grateful for their ongoing support, particularly given the difficult year we've all had, and I thoroughly look forward to welcoming them back to the Arena for a game in the near future!"



**Did you know Lucid do cabling, running, splicing terminating!!**



# Lucid

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**For more information on Lucid and the range of products and services they offer, please email [sales@lucidgrp.co.uk](mailto:sales@lucidgrp.co.uk)**



# GIGABIT NATION, ESSENTIAL TO OUR FUTURE

Both the UK and Scottish Governments have set ambitious targets to ramp up full fibre broadband coverage within the next few years. Their drive to become Gigabit Nations is because both recognise that the digital revolution is driving economic growth, social inclusion and equality of opportunity.

To give you an idea of the scale of the challenge, here at CityFibre our ultimate goal is to connect up to eight million premises to our full fibre network, investing £4billion in 100 towns and cities to do so.

That is eight million premises enjoying full-fibre access, free from any use of bottle-necking copper. The scale of the work and the investment is enormous, and it has to be, because the UK is still playing catch-up with many other countries in the world with higher levels of full fibre deployment and much faster and reliable broadband services.

The good news is CityFibre is growing fast, we're working fast and we are making a big difference both in the North East and the rest of the UK!

But, what does this mean to you?

Let's look at a test subject, we'll call her Jenny. She is in her 30s, commutes to her job in an office in Newcastle, has an elderly father living in his own home she keeps an eye on, and has two children, one of whom is diabetic.

A city-wide full fibre network enables all the enormous range of present and future technologies to work together to improve the lives of people. We call this a Smart City and Newcastle is well on its way thanks to hundreds of km of fibre optic cable buried under its pavements so far by CityFibre.

What would this mean for Jenny:

- It is predicted that 25-30% of the workforce will be working-from-home multiple days a week by the end of 2021. A resilient, speed-of-light, full fibre network will enable many more people – including Jenny — to work from home, improving productivity and reducing commuting
- When Jenny is needed in her office, a full fibre network linked to traffic cameras, sensors and other technologies will enable much smarter traffic management, designed to cut down on traffic jams and delays at rush hours



Jason Legget,  
Regional Partnership Director

- Her smartphone is now also linked to the smart TV in her dad's home, and she can link through it to check in with him and remind him to take his medication twice a day without having to leave her seat
- She is now much better able to focus on her diabetic child, and in any event improved technology linked to an app now allows her to carefully monitor glucose levels with far less intrusion and make whatever adjustments are necessary
- And all the above has left Jenny with more of the one thing money can't buy – time. She has decided to invest more of this in herself, and is taking an e-learning course that, when completed, will help propel her further up the career ladder

All these improvements to Jenny's life have been enabled by the digital infrastructure that full fibre brings. But as well as these direct benefits, there are many others that Jenny herself is less aware of.

All homes will be better connected. This will make things more convenient for residents but can also help social landlords better monitor and manage the condition of buildings. CityFibre is already working with landlords across Newcastle to connect resident's homes to not only access great

broadband but also help manage the environments in buildings, ensure they are safe and secure for residents and support the future deployment of smart technologies.

The smarter analysis of real time data will transform the way we manage our infrastructure. As a simple example, improved traffic flows and easier access to public transport information will help reduce traffic congestion, reduce carbon, and improve our environment and our health. In addition, it has been estimated that increased homeworking enabled by full fibre will take 2.5 million cars off our roads.

In a Gigabit Nation many applications connect wirelessly, but ultimately, they all rely on fixed infrastructure, and bandwidth demands will only increase. Fibre connectivity therefore plays a vital, underpinning everything to ensure maximum efficiencies and to truly future proof.

Our investment in fibre optic networks across the North East will underpin our economic future providing better quality broadband, from an increased number of competitive broadband providers and offering customer download speeds up to 80 times faster than today's UK average.

**Please register your interest for full fibre services at [www.cityfibre.com/notherninsight](http://www.cityfibre.com/notherninsight)**



## A RARE GEM

Aspire is the first company in the North East to achieve elite 'Black Diamond' status in the Extreme Networks Partner Programme.

**Aspire Technology Solutions has announced its Black Diamond accreditation from networking giant Extreme Networks.**

The Black Diamond Partner Program recognises an exclusive group of top partners who have made significant investments in obtaining skills and expertise across multiple technologies and cloud networking solutions.

Aspire are the first company in the North East to be awarded the elite status and one of only a small number of Black Diamond partners across the UK.

Steve Laverick, technical director at Aspire said: "We are delighted to achieve Black Diamond status. Investing in our people to enable them to provide a first-class customer experience is one of our core priorities.

"At Aspire, our mission is to deliver technology like no other. The accreditation gives us a specialised status and distinguishes us as the only IT provider in the region with the expertise to design and deliver cloud networking solutions at this level. This places us ahead of the curve when it comes to delivering the most innovative solutions on the market for our customers".

As one of the UK's fastest-growing IT companies, Gateshead-based Aspire was named North East Company of the Year at the North East Business Awards, 2020.

The growing company has set ambitious plans for improving digital innovation across the North East and just recently announced their



Steve Laverick, Technical Director at Aspire Technology Solutions

appointment by Newcastle City Council to deliver a next-generation full fibre network serving hundreds of public sector sites across the region.

Extreme Networks is ranked as a top networking company and has been recognised as a leader in the Gartner Magic Quadrant for the past three consecutive years, and the Gartner Peer Insights Customers' Choice for Wired and Wireless LAN Access Infrastructure for the past four consecutive years. The company has partnered with Aspire for seven years.

Holly Anschutz, head of channel sales UK&I at Extreme Networks said: "Any company that wants to become an Extreme Networks partner needs to demonstrate that they put

their customers at the heart of everything they do. We are proud to recognise the tremendous value Aspire brings to its customers day in and day out by welcoming them to our Black Diamond Specialisation Program, the highest and most elite tier in our partner program. Aspire continues to deliver against our shared vision of offering exceptional solutions and support which allow organisations to achieve infinitely distributed connectivity, wherever they may be located. We are looking forward to continuing this journey with Aspire to bring reliable, scalable and cloud-powered connectivity to organisations."

[www.aspirets.com](http://www.aspirets.com)



## NEW NORTH EAST APPOINTMENTS FOR NATIONAL HOME BUILDER, MILLER HOMES

Miller Homes has announced two new key appointments in its North East region to support its ambitious growth plans.

Sales Director, Aisling Ramshaw, and Commercial Director, Glen Hyland bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to drive sales and opportunities as the business grows.

Aisling Ramshaw brings 25 years' experience in the residential new build sector selling some of the UK's award-winning mixed-use developments both nationally and internationally. She joined recently from strategic land company, CEG, and has worked with various developers and agents over the years.

Aisling, who is a chartered surveyor and a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Marketing, said, "Over the next few years, I will be helping to grow the region to 600 homes per annum and expand the business to deliver much needed homes.

"I have always admired Miller Homes as they have an excellent reputation in the new homes sector and have an enviable track record for digital



innovation, which has really set them apart in recent times. It's really exciting to be part of such a successful and dynamic team."

Newly appointed Commercial Director, Glen Hyland, is responsible for the commercial team who manage the surveying and purchasing departments, responsible for all expenditure and control costs, taking a strategic overview from land acquisition to customer care initiatives.

Glen will use his expertise to assist with the preparation of budgets and strategic plans in both the North East and Teesside regions.

Glen said, "This is a great time to join Miller Homes as the company looks to expand its presence in the North East and Teesside. To join such a highly respected homebuilder is an excellent career opportunity and I'm really excited to be working alongside a fantastic team that will help drive further growth within the business.



## AWARD-WINNING TRAINING CONSULTANCY CELEBRATES 40 NEW BUSINESS CONTRACTS

A leading regional training and certification consultancy is celebrating 40 new contract wins, despite a challenging 12-month period, which saw the construction industry being affected by Covid shutdowns and forced to adopt new working practices.

The award-winning Carney Consultancy, which is a member of the Northern Counties Builders Federation (NCBF) and helps construction clients with quality, safety, health and environmental (QSHE) training and consultancy, has secured its 40 new consultancy customers mainly from business-to-business recommendations.



## BUILDING FIRM HELPS PRESERVE SUNDERLAND'S HISTORIC HERITAGE

The refurbishment of a Grade II listed building on Sunderland's High Street West, formerly the site where Binns, the Sunderland retailing legend was headquartered, is making excellent progress with Bishop Auckland-based Redfern Building Services (Redfern) having reached the end of the second phase of the building's transformation.

With an initial standalone appointment by Tyne and Wear Building Preservation Trust (TWBPT), the building's owner, to undertake a complete strip out of the building in preparation for its refurbishment, Redfern has been involved in the restoration and upgrade works at 170-175 High Street West since 2017 and has just completed Phase 2.

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## ASHFIELD TOWERS, KENTON ROAD, GOSFORTH

Ashfield Towers is believed to be one of the finest, late Victorian detached houses available within central Gosforth and offers one of the few and rare opportunities within the suburbs of Newcastle for a major refurbishment project to create a fabulous luxurious mansion in such a perfect location. The property, on a site of just over 1.4 acres, was built as a fine private residence for the successful wealth of the North East and has been utilised in more recent times by Westfield School until they vacated within the last 10 years. The house is surrounded by 20th Century detached and semi detached houses, with tall mature trees framing the beautiful grounds, and has many period features including beautiful window detailing, high ceilings, tremendous cornicing and a magnificent central staircase. There is a fabulous double storey coach house at the rear which also creates a significant opportunity.

### PRICE GUIDE £3.5 MILLION

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# SANDERSON YOUNG'S NEW HOMES CV



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ASHCROFT GRANGE, MORPETH



HEMINGWAY COURT, PONTELAND



FOXTON GLADE, LESBURY



ELMFIELD SQUARE, GOSFORTH



WYLAM GRANGE, WYLAM



WATERSHAUGH GATE, WARKWORTH



THE NEXT FOUR PAGES REPRESENT SOME OF THE DEVELOPMENTS WHICH SANDERSON YOUNG HAVE PROUDLY HELPED TO BRING OUT OF THE GROUND



BRUNTON WOODS, GOSFORTH



GARDEN MEWS, BLAYDON



JESMOND ASSEMBLY, JESMOND



SYCAMORE SQUARE, GOSFORTH

REGENTS PLAZA, GOSFORTH



ASHFORD GROVE, MITFORD



COACH HOUSE, HEXHAM



GLORORUM, BAMBURGH



ROSEATE VIEW, AMBLE



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COASTHOUSES, BEADNELL



HALLGARTH MEWS, WINLATON



MILL RISE, PONTELAND



GROVE PARK OVAL, GOSFORTH



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TOWERGATE, ALNWICK



TURNER SQUARE, MORPETH



BLACKSTONE LANE, SEAHOUSES



OAKFIELD GROVE, BLYTH



PLEASE LET US KNOW IF WE CAN HELP YOU BRING YOUR DREAMS OR CONCEPTS TO REALITY.

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THE LIMES, ALNWICK



HEXHAM GATE, HEXHAM



BEADNELL POINT, BEADNELL



BELSAY BRIDGE, BELSAY



JAMESON FIELDS, PONTELAND



HAWTHORN COURT, GOSFORTH



WEST FARM STEADING, EARSDON



NORTH FARM MEWS, RENNINGTON



RIDGE GROVE, STANNINGTON



SEA VIEW, LONGFRAMLINGTON



## NEW HOMES COMPLETE IN £9.4M BERNICIA DEVELOPMENT



Michael Farr, Bernicia Executive Director of Assets and Growth (left) and Ian Avis, Tolent Construction Manager, outside the new bungalows in Cramlington.

The latest phase of a £9.4m contemporary living complex in Northumberland has been completed with eight new bungalows ready to welcome new owners.

**North East housing association, Bernicia, is currently developing Rosebrough in Cramlington with 60 high-quality homes for mature people. It comprises of 48 self-contained apartments for rent, four Tyneside flats and eight bungalows.**

Gateshead-based contractor, Tolent, is delivering the scheme on behalf of Bernicia.

It has formally handed over the keys to the eight new, shared ownership, two-bedroom bungalows, all now reserved and ready to welcome new owners. The buyers purchased their plots off plan, choosing their kitchen and bathroom design with optional upgrades so it met their

exact specifications.

The bungalows are part of the Rosebrough development sited in the heart of Cramlington.

Michael Farr, Bernicia Executive Director of Assets and Growth, said: "This high quality Bernicia development is specifically designed with the long-term living needs of people aged 55 and over in mind.

"The new bungalows are finished to the highest standard, located within yards of the Manor Walks Shopping Centre, Cramlington train station and served by excellent bus links.

"They offer a superb quality of life for mature

people in a highly popular area, offering quality homes in communities people want to live in."

Ian Avis, Construction Manager for Tolent, added: "It is a pleasure to walk around the site and showcase the progress the team have made.

"The bungalows have been delivered to an exceptional quality and the team are now concentrating on delivering the contemporary living complex to the same high standards. We look forward to handing over this development later in the year."

Apartments are available to rent at Rosebrough. The two-bedroom properties have fully equipped modern kitchens complete with white goods with shower room and underfloor heating.

**More information about Rosebrough and to apply for an apartment here: [www.bernicia.com/rosebrough/](http://www.bernicia.com/rosebrough/)**





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Damiano Rea, Director, Heaton Property

## WE'RE ALL GOING ON A BUS TRIP

The forthcoming COP26 UN climate change conference in Glasgow does not appear to be resonating with the public. Perhaps it is the meaningless title (Conference of the Parties – thank you Google) or just maybe people can see it for what it is. An opportunity for world leaders to strut the stage, make some dubious commitments, grab some warm and fuzzy headlines, enjoy an agreeable dinner then jet off home.

**It didn't help that the Prime Ministers COP26 spokeswoman Allegra Stratton, suggested not rinsing our dishes will tackle the climate crisis. Social media erupted in hilarity and Greta Thunberg must have been thrilled. But that may turn out to be one of the more sensible proposals adopted in Glasgow.**

One thing is for sure. Our government will continue to throw home owner, landlords and tenants under the bus while proclaiming their green credentials to the world.

When David Cameron was first elected Prime Minister, he announced "the greenest Government ever". Astute observers noticed Nick Clegg smiling in the background. Green policies were Nick's red line for which he sacrificed his policy to scrap student loans and threw the Lib-Dems under the bus.

Fast forward to 2015 and Cameron is elected with an outright majority. One of his first statements, allegedly, was a desire to "get rid of the green crap". Enter Chancellor George Osborne and

Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, Amber Rudd and the Big Red Pen of State.

In the name of austerity, Rudd abolished free cavity wall and loft insulation grants (the cheapest and easiest fix to lower energy bills and address our carbon footprint). Next, she slashed Feed in Tariff to the bone, a scheme where solar panels on houses received a government subsidy. Solar power is possibly the only truly carbon free energy source but overnight, an entire industry went under the bus.

Next came Renewable Heat Incentive, a scheme to support home owners and landlords swapping carbon generating heating for renewable energy in the form of heat pumps and biomass boilers. Again, slashed to the bone. Even the most eco-friendly home owner or landlord comparing £3,000 for a gas combi boiler with £12,000 for an air source heat pump might decide to go for gas and plant trees at the weekend to offset the carbon.

But in a sudden volte face (a Saul on the Road to

Damascus moment or a flip-flop depending upon your level of cynicism) air source heat pumps are suddenly all the rage. Government has announced it will install 600,000 annually by 2028. Since only 27,000 were installed in 2019 it is clear our government is not short on ambition.

Air source heat pumps are expensive, we do not have enough installers and in many domestic applications they simply do not work. Or rather, they do not work without tearing the property apart and rebuilding the interior. Add that cost to your £12k purchase price.

I am not sure I will be glued to a TV screen for COP26. Rather, I think I shall watch a replay of Euro 2021. It is ages since I talked to my family in Italy and I have forgotten who won.

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Heaton Property is an award winning full-service estate agency from the North East set up in 2005. In June 2014 the company won gold in the Times/Sunday Times Agency of the Year Awards.



The continued adventures of...

# Ziggy!



## Hi everyone

Everything moving so fast and summer is nearly over. I've been spending lots of time having lovely long walks.

However, two weeks ago, I trapped a nerve in my shoulder and Dad had to take me to the vet. The vet stuck needles in me and made me take some yukky tablets but I am OK now and back on form.

We have not had Cally's birthday party yet [it is on the 28th] Can't wait for the cake and balloons! More on that next month.

## Dave from Wallsend asks:

**Q.** Several years ago I had my windows replaced with double glazing. After a few years, the south-facing ones became subject to occasional, unsightly internal misting. As there was a ten-year guarantee I claimed for renewal of the windows. The insurance company claimed that the condensation was normal and therefore refused the claim.

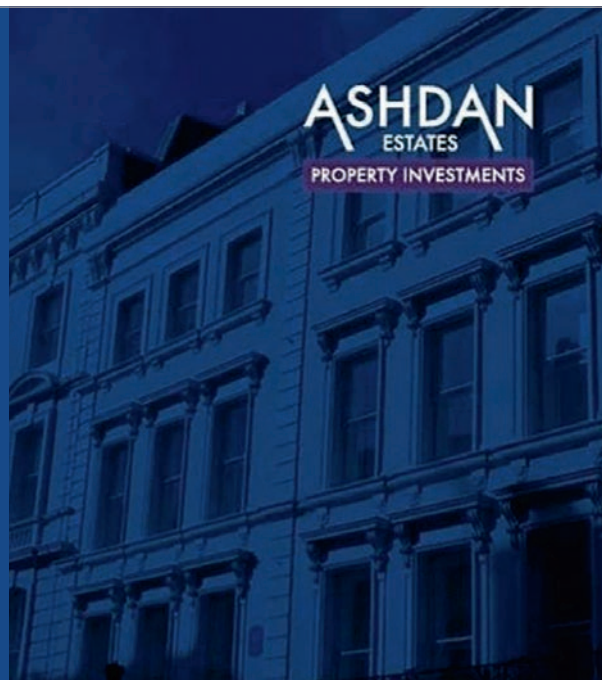
**A.** One of the great unspoken truths of sealed double-glazed units (SGUs) is that eventually they will all mist up. The time scale should be twenty-ish years in a perfectly made and installed window. But in poorly made ones it can be a lot less. Five months has been reported. So, in a way, the condensation is 'normal', in that it will happen eventually in all windows. But I would have thought you could expect that a ten-year guarantee would reasonably cover you against misting within that time. It depends on the insurers' small print.

Please send me your building queries through facebook - @WDLne, website: wdlnortheast.co.uk or through my Dad's good pal Michael Grahamslaw at Northern Insight on mjgrahamslaw@outlook.com



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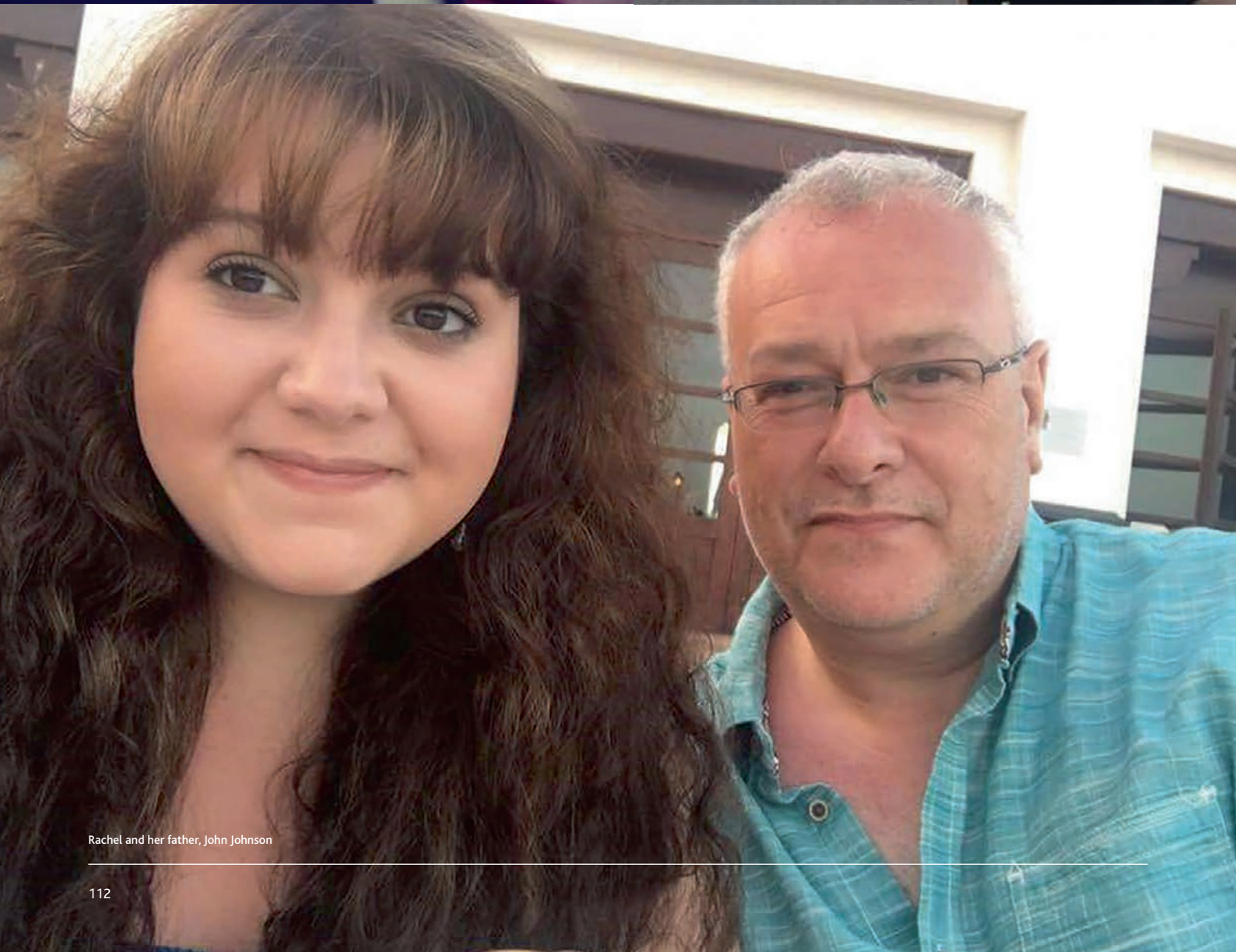
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Rachel and her father, John Johnson



# PROPERTY PEOPLE

This month we chat to

## RACHEL JOHNSON

Director of Ashdan Estates, who reflects on her career so far and working with her father John in the family business.

### Did you always envisage a career in property?

Separately, John and I had goals to get into property. Neither one of us were aware that we both had a joint dream of getting into property in the future, but after a conversation on our future goals and what we wanted to achieve, this discovery was made and a few months later we embarked on our journey.

### What attracted you to property?

Property allows for an individual to walk down multiple paths. For example, rental properties allow for someone to gain an extra income, whilst refurbishing a property for sales purpose puts your money to work for you. Additionally, as property is an asset which increases in value every year, it will always be a great avenue for making smart financial decisions, if you do your research!

### What changes have you seen in the market since you started?

The property market is a never-ending movement. Some months may see a decline in the amount of properties coming to the market, but being sold quickly, whilst some months show a vast amount of properties for sale/let but don't move as quickly. It all falls on the demand at that time. Through-out the beginning of the pandemic, property slowed down and became the slowest we had witnessed since starting our property journey. However, once the announcement of the stamp duty holiday, and it's extension, property became a fast-moving environment, whereby properties were coming to the market and almost immediately being sold/let. For us, this came at a good time as we were moving onto our next property, and took advantage of this fast paced market. With the stamp duty now coming to an end, the market is reacting, and multiple vendors are accepting offers on properties but not reaching a completion date. Whether this is because of the back-log from the 2020 pandemic or because of the amount of vendors trying to make the most of the extended stamp duty holiday is anyone's guess.

### How did you adapt your business to working through the pandemic?

As we are a family business, and most of our team reside in the same household, we were able to keep our team busy for the most part. When it came to outside members of our team, we were very strict on keeping social distancing rules, and we were lucky that at that time, we were working on two refurbishment properties, which enabled us to separate the team and keep the households separate. With our tradesmen, we opted for the same routine, and scheduled for our tradesmen to work in our properties at certain times, away from each other.

### How would you advise people looking to buy property?

Do your research! Buying property, whether it's your personal residence, or for investment purposes, always do your research. Look at other properties which have sold in that street or area, find out what estate agents are saying about the property, look at what you would want and need to do to the property and how this may impact on whether this property is the right one for you. Also, set yourself a criteria, and stick to it. Problems arise when you veer away from your criteria and you only have yourself to blame. If a property you are looking at doesn't fit your criteria, don't be afraid to say no and walk away.

### Tell us the most exciting thing you're currently working on?

Having recently agreed the purchase price with the vendor, we are about to execute an Option Agreement to purchase a piece of land in Co. Durham. This will be the first of our planned larger projects, where we will design and construct a residential development of several properties for open-market sale. In keeping with our ethos of delivering projects to the highest standards of quality, the properties will have exciting designs and will provide exemplary standards of finish using high quality materials. This project will be a Joint Venture with one of our preferred investors, so will hopefully be the pilot scheme for exciting things to come. Our sister company Ashdan Consulting will also be involved in providing quantity surveying and project management services on the scheme, and this combined approach is a key part of our vision for the Ashdan Group businesses going forward.

### What's your fondest memory of working together in the property industry?

With a relatively young business, our journey working together is creating lasting memories on each project every day, and we are seeing how we are growing during the property journey on every project we undertake. Pinning one fondest memory down is difficult, but it would probably be our first project that started our property journey together – the refurbishment and sale of an inherited property in Burnopfield, Co. Durham, following the death of my Grandfather at the grand age of 96. Whilst the emotional ties to that property certainly influenced the process, seeing it transformed into the catalyst to kick-start the new business was fantastic and a very fitting legacy.

### What are your career aspirations?

Now there's a question! Given our age difference, our career aspirations will no doubt also be very different. The purpose of setting up the business was to create something which delivered our aspirations across that spectrum; to provide an opportunity for security and a fantastic career path of personal and wealth development for me through business ownership and growth, and financial freedom for John after working for many years making money for other people, as well as being able to build a legacy which will benefit all of the family. More time on the golf course is also something which is in his future plans!

### Where's the best place to live in the North East, and why?

In my opinion, it would be the small village of Lanchester, County Durham. With its picturesque views, village environment and welcoming feel, it is definitely the best place to live! For myself, it holds fond memories of my childhood, spending time with friends and fun times with family, so it's an obvious choice!

### When not working, how do you like to relax?

I like to relax by spending time at the gym and pool, visiting new restaurants with friends, and cooking new recipes, but as we all live in the same household we spend a lot of our down-time with each other and the rest of our family.

[www.ashdan-estates.com](http://www.ashdan-estates.com)





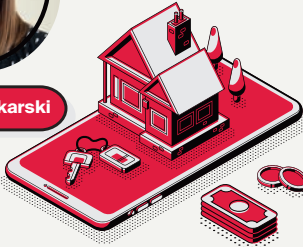
James Platts

## Residential Consultancy

We value residential and mixed-use property portfolios and transact land for residential development.

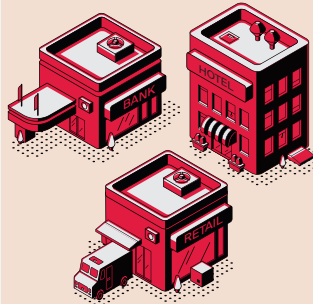


Ashleigh Tokarski



## Commercial Property Valuation

We value all types of commercial property.



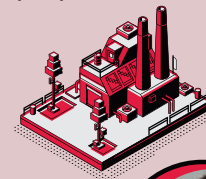
Kevin Scully



Dan Matthews

## Property Management

We manage shopping centres, offices, business parks and industrial properties.



Peter Bowden



Jason Wall



Daniel Walton



Dickon Wood

## Commercial Property Investment

We buy and sell investment properties.



## Lease Advisory

We negotiate rent reviews, lease renewals and lease re-gears.



Emily Seager



Judith Summers

## Building Consultancy

We project manage new builds, extensions, refurbishments and fit-outs and carry out building and dilapidation surveys.



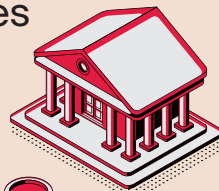
Ian Tew



Tom Jackson

## Business Rates

We assess if a property has been correctly valued for business rates and, if not, we negotiate reductions.



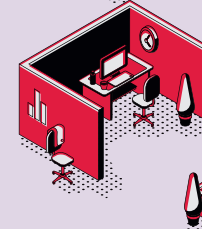
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Fiona Kent

## Office Agency

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# GENERATION FOR CHANGE (G4C) AWARDS SHINE SPOTLIGHT ON REGIONAL TALENT POOL



Eve Wilson, G4C Future Leader winner, 2020.

Generation for Change (G4C) has announced the shortlist for its 2021 Awards, supported by headline sponsor, Northern Counties Builders Federation.

## The awards will be held at the Newcastle-Gateshead Hilton Hotel in October.

The award categories include, Apprentice of the Year – Technical & Trade, sponsored by Northumbrian Water Group, New Professional of the Year, sponsored by CA Group Ltd, Student of the Year, sponsored by Bowmer+Kirkland, Trainee of the Year, sponsored by Wates Construction, Commitment to Employee and Training Development, sponsored by Faithful + Gould, G4C Future Leader, sponsored by Northern Counties Builders Federation and Mentor of the Year. The drinks reception sponsor on the night is Turner & Townsend.

G4C is the young professional voice of the UK built environment industry and an integral part of Constructing Excellence for the last six years, with North East regional winners having gone on to win at the national final.

The regional G4C Future Leader will go forward to the Constructing Excellence National Awards in January.

Turner & Townsend is one company hoping to emulate the success it has had on both the regional and national stage in recent years.

Darren Laybourn, director, North East strategic lead – UK & global head of healthcare at Turner & Townsend, said: "The development of our people is at the heart of our business and we have established a graduate programme which aims to attract, develop and retain local talent, so that the workforce of the future remains in the North East.

"We have a number of colleagues shortlisted within the award categories, which is testament to their ambition and determination to progress through the company. We are also incredibly humbled to be shortlisted, as a company, for our commitment to employee training and development, something we can all be very proud of. We wish all nominees the best of luck on the night."

Tony Kay, president, Northern Counties Builders Federation, said: "Developing and nurturing the

skillset of our future workforce is crucial. As such, we were keen to show our ongoing support for the G4C Awards as headline sponsor.

"I am sure that everyone will be looking forward to the night. It is a chance for many people to meet in person once again and showcase the great talent that we have within our region."

Catriona Lingwood, chief executive at Constructing Excellence in the North East, said: "This is the sixth year of the G4C awards and we are pleased to be back with a live event highlighting the top talent of our young workforce.

"We have had an incredible number of entries, demonstrating the high calibre of talent we have in our region, we wish them all good luck and we would like to thank Northern Counties Builders Federation for its sponsorship and continued support."

[www.g4c.org.uk](http://www.g4c.org.uk)



# FIRE, FLOOD AND FOULUPS

I'm sure that all property owners are well aware of the wisdom of insuring your property and it is of course usually a requirement if we have a mortgage on the property, whether it is residential or commercial. The issue is how much to insure one's property for and this is where many people are left in the dark.

When I was young, I remember having this discussion with my father (who believed he was the fount of all knowledge on any given subject) he told me how our family house in London was insured for around £10,000 when it's market value was around £30,000 (I did say this was when I was a boy!) I queried this with him, and he told me then that it is "once for cost of rebuilding, once for land and once for profit - that is how houses should be insured". I should point out that he never worked in property in his career.

Now, I have talked about this more recently, and various other people have explained to me that this still stands true or alternatively that a property should be insured for one and a half times its market value since we have to allow for demolition of the existing building.

I have to tell you that both of these are totally erroneous and both likely to cause problems in the future. The principle of property insurance is to replace what was there before and so if the property is damaged then we need to recover the cost of rebuilding it to the extent that the damage has caused.

This applies to all classes of property, but I thought the easiest way to explain this to people is to look at housing – because it is something that almost every reader of this magazine will have an interest in.

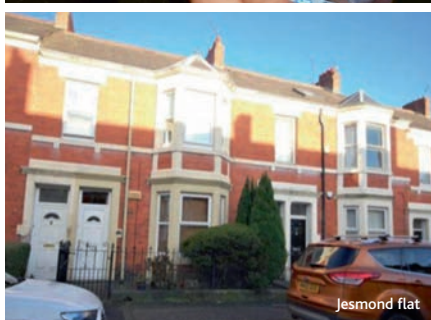
Here's a Tyneside flat – which most of the readers will recognise! Its in Benwell and it sold in January last year for £39,950. What would you insure it for? £13,330 (my father's formula)? £60,000 (the alternative view)?



Benwell flat



Philip Bowe



Jesmond flat

And another Tyneside flat – this time in Jesmond. This one sold in May 2020 for £170,000 – so should it be insured for £56,700 or £255,000?

The truth is as in the old adage – and current day television programme – its all about "Location, Location, Location". I think in reality people are well aware of that. Rebuilding costs and therefore sums insured bear little resemblance to market value. According to the BCIS these flats should each be insured for around £170,000.

However here at BIV BOWES we are launching our new service, primarily aimed at commercial property owners (although possibly of interest to homeowners too) where we will provide a more bespoke figure to take into account individual circumstances. For example in two apparently

identical homes even next door to each other, one may have a "B&Q" kitchen costing say £3,000 to replace and one may have a "Poggenpohl" kitchen costing £30,000 to replace. The same principle applies to commercial properties and because we will (unlike some others) make a proper inspection of each property we can give a better standard of report.

Another mistake many people make is to say that it is rare for a property to be completely "taken out" by an insurable incident. This much is true, but an insurance company that believes the whole sum insured is half what it should be might only offer £1,500 for the B&Q kitchen above or £15,000 for the Poggenpohl one. A sobering thought.

In reality, it can all be summed up in four words: "Ensure you Insure...correctly!".

***If you disagree, tell me! If you agree, tell me! I also write on my LinkedIn profile every Wednesday morning at about 8.30 – follow me at [linkedin.com/in/philipbowe](https://www.linkedin.com/in/philipbowe).***

***[www.bivbowes.co.uk](http://www.bivbowes.co.uk) Tel: 0191 462 6 264***





## SIX NEW APPOINTMENTS TO SUPPORT GROWTH AT O

Newcastle creative communications agency O has announced six new hires following a raft of client wins.

The appointments include Tracy Appleby as head of creative studio, appointed to lead O's growing creative team which includes brand development, graphic design, animation and videography.

Other new faces include account managers Rachel Hodgson, Emma Roberts and Laura Watson and account executives Thomas Pearson and Andrea Dromard.

After a successful rebrand and a year filled with client wins, O agency has welcomed a cohort of new starters to the team. The six new starters bring a vast array of talent to the growing team and their appointments reflect the growth the business has seen over the past year.

## WHAT'S IN A NAME AS CARTER GETS CARTER

In a weird coincidence that even Morpeth planning consultant Tony Carter couldn't have planned, he and a university intern discovered that they both have one thing in common – their names.

Tony Carter's business: Carter Smith Planning Consultancy provides a one-stop shop for all aspects of planning, from small-scale householder extensions to complex planning applications and appeals. The firm, based in the town's Coopies Lane, works with landowners, developers, charitable organisations, government bodies, local authorities, parish councils, businesses, farms, and private individuals.

Ulgham and Newcastle based PR agency, Highlights PR have worked with Carter Smith since the firm was established and owner Keith Newman contacted Tony to see if his university intern could visit him to learn about his business and write a magazine article for his portfolio.

Bizarrely, the young intern was called Carter Smith, a remarkable coincidence where Carter Smith visits Carter Smith.



Tony said: "Carter isn't a common Christian name at all so the fact that he has the same name as my company is almost unbelievable. Our name comes from my surname and my wife's maiden name Smith, so it is amazing that I've met a real Carter Smith – it's a small world."

Carter from Whickham is studying media at Northumbria University and was delighted with the visit to Morpeth.

"I've been shadowing Keith for a number of weeks, and I couldn't believe that he had a client with the same name as myself. I was very impressed with Tony's firm, he told me how he helps his clients and then I interviewed him for a magazine article. It was a great experience being able to go behind the scenes and it will help me with my future career in journalism," he said.



## BUTTLE'S PARTNER WITH MEDIAWORKS TO TAKE FIRST STEPS INTO DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

One of the UK's longest-established independent builders' merchants, Buttle's, has chosen to team up with future-thinking digital agency Mediaworks to build its brand awareness.

The partnership with Mediaworks will mark new steps in its digital transformation as the 100-year-old business moves to develop its visibility and unique customer understanding in an online and offline environment.

Mediaworks is initially being tasked with developing improved brand awareness among the younger generations of tradespeople around Buttle's core regions in North London and the Home Counties through Mediaworks' PR services.

Hannah Brunton, commercial manager at Buttle's, explained how the business recognised its need to evolve to stay aligned with the contemporary tradesperson: "We've been looking for a communications partner that understands our needs as a traditional business wanting to grow its business. Mediaworks' plans have excited and challenged us in equal measure, and we believe this approach that will help us to achieve our long-term objectives."

Mediaworks combines traditional PR practices with digital insight, data, and social listening to help its clients better understand how their customers source relevant information and understand what drives their behaviours.

Mediaworks CEO and founder Brett Jacobson said: "The global impact of the last 18 months has seen online usage increase at a rapid rate. With almost ten years' worth of online activity happening in that time, a digital presence is a critical factor in any business's development.

"The construction and build industries are no different in seeing its need to adapt business practices to keep pace with digital demand. It's great to partner such an historic brand like Buttle's who, even after 100 years in existence, recognise the need to future proof their brand and take ownership of their future."



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## NORTH EAST TRAVEL INSURANCE SPECIALIST APPOINTS GROWTH EXPERTS R//EVOLUTION TO SUPERCHARGE DIGITAL STRATEGY

Just Travel Cover, the award-winning Travel Insurance broker based in Sunderland, has partnered with revenue growth specialists r//evolution to implement a digital strategy to kickstart its recovery after Covid-19.

Specialising in Travel Insurance for people with pre-existing medical conditions and with no upper age limit, Just Travel Cover has already seen more than 100% growth month-on-month following the easing of travel restrictions and is now looking to capitalise on the increase in demand.

North-East based growth specialists r//evolution will implement a robust SEO strategy with the aim of making Just Travel Cover the go-to place for people looking for cover, as well as supporting other digital projects as the broker aims to bounce back from a challenging time through the pandemic.

The appointment comes after r//evolution successfully designed and built Just Travel Cover's new customer-focused website with a view to implementing a wider digital strategy which will include social, search and display.

Speaking of the partnership, Gill Burgess, Managing



Director of r//evolution, added: "We have seen a rapid upturn in organisations investing in digital performance enhancement projects to accelerate their bounce-back. The partnership with Just Travel Cover provides a great opportunity to supercharge their growth strategy. We know how difficult the last 18 months have been for the travel industry and we're delighted to see that the recovery is underway. We're excited to help them profit from the increased demand for travel insurance by introducing a results-driven SEO strategy."

Just Travel Cover is an award-winning travel insurance provider based in the North-East of England. They work with some of the world's leading insurers and have helped more than a million people, many of whom have pre-existing medical conditions, find insurance since 1999.



## EXPORT AMBITIONS FOR HIGHLIGHTS PR

A North East public relations consultant has started building bridges to help him span the Atlantic to achieve a career ambition to work with businesses in the USA.

Keith has recently helped Kevin Brewerton, a martial arts world champion, actor, author and artist living in Los Angeles who grew up in Jesmond Dene to promote his latest book. The experience of working transatlantic via Zoom has ignited a lifelong career ambition for Keith.

"Working with a client in LA was great, and I had to consider a number of issues including time zones, culture, contacts for distributing his press release and even the way my work was written. Now, I want to get more clients there as I've the confidence, experience and support to make my ambition a step closer to reality."

One of Keith's clients, Jason Knights from Blue Kangaroo Design works with household brands and travels all over the world to discuss major contracts and commissions. His expertise and knowledge led Keith to a free programme of advice workshops held over several weeks from the Department for International Trade (DIT) looking at exporting goods and services.

Victoria Gemmill, DIT Northern Powerhouse Regional Team and Head of North East Region, said: "It's fantastic that the DIT was able to provide such a positive experience to Keith when he faced a steep learning curve to understand the intricacies of exporting and how to position his business to attract new clients in his target market."

Keith is looking to sell media training, crisis management and general press releases to expats in Los Angeles who need support to promote themselves back in the UK.



## SUNDERLAND BID STRENGTHENS ITS TEAM

SUNDERLAND BID has strengthened its team with the appointment of a new marketing, events and administration assistant.

Amy Nunn, 23, from South Shields has taken up the new role, which will see her involved in the BID's busy programme of events along with providing general support to other members of the team.

Amy comes to the BID following five years at Newcastle's Fenwick store, where she worked her way from the shop floor to an administrative role.

She studied digital film production at university along with a marketing module and now hopes to use some of these skills while working with the BID.

"It's a very exciting opportunity for me and I love the challenge of a job where no two days are the same," said Amy.

"I am learning a great deal at the same time and am already working on some really exciting events such as Halloween and Restaurant Week, along with on the BID's newsletter and social media.

"Sunderland BID does such amazing work, it's great to be part of it."

Sharon Appleby, Chief Executive at Sunderland BID said Amy was a welcome addition to the team.

"We were really impressed with Amy's enthusiasm and her understanding of the role," she said.

"Although she's only been with us a short time, she's already proving invaluable and we are delighted to have her with us."

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and experience has been invaluable to the company"

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"Nicola has been fantastic to work with, her first email campaign for  
us resulted in a conversion that is now a closed sale."

*Kieran Turnbull, Zenith Systems*



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# HARVEY & HUGO FOR PAW-FECT PR

Charlotte Nichols is one of those people who has a constant flow of ideas tumbling out of her head. She was destined for a life in PR.

**Her first decision was to launch her own PR and marketing business. The next one was a tad trickier... what to call her business. So, rather than go down the bog standard route of using her name or something totally obscure, she decided to go for what was staring her in the face.**

Her two dogs... Harvey and Hugo.

Sorted.

That was in early 2009... in the depths of the recession. Not ideal.

Things could only get better after what was a decidedly difficult time for every business.

Her business flourished. She attracted local and national clients like Ideal Bathrooms, PD Ports, GARDENA and Darlington Building Society. She also built a team around her.

And then COVID-19 arrived on our shores.

"It's weird really, but the one good aspect of the pandemic was that people got used to adapting themselves and their business," says Charlotte. "Everyone had to be flexible in their approach for the simple reason that it was impossible to carry on as normal. As we now know, 'normal', or what is close to normal, wouldn't happen for 16 months. We continued to support all of our clients and even moved away from our traditional way of operating with clients on a retainer. We went back to the format I used in the early days of Harvey & Hugo by using a 'Pay-as-Hugo' approach to PR. Clients certainly appreciated that move and I'm delighted to say that the vast majority have stayed with us.

"We will help our clients in any way we can. We want to be a part of their journey and, as we've seen since March of last year, ensure they navigate their way through a crisis."

And a crisis is what Charlotte has steered her Harvey & Hugo business through. She's been so successful that the company is on target for its best-ever financial year and she's recently revealed a £60,000 investment. The money will be spent on consultancy work to grow its sales and marketing as well as implementing search engine optimisers to help with online advertising. She's also adding additional members to her team.

In typical Charlotte fashion, she's even found time to launch what is, in effect, an updated version of how she started the company.

"'Pay-as-Hugo' will frequently be the best solution for many firms. It works for their immediate PR, marketing and social media needs and invariably works so well that they move onto our retained service which ensures a steady flow of input from us. So, we've launched an e-commerce platform called Pay-as-Hugo.com which offers its services on a fixed-fee, flexible basis. It's our 'snacksize' service and eliminates any possible confusion and keeps things simple. Clients contact us and tell us what they need, we devise an action plan, agree on pricing and then put wheels in motion."

Of course, some firms like to plan ahead so that is where the Harvey & Hugo retained services will be a preferred idea. However, Charlotte still keeps things simple. You have a choice of social media, PR or content marketing... or all three. Harvey & Hugo will then work alongside your in-house team or, as many clients do, work as though they are your in-house team for as many days per month as you require.

Oh, and if you would like to build your own PR and marketing team or keep them updated with regular refresher courses, Harvey & Hugo can help courtesy of their 'Hugoversity'. Charlotte and her team will deliver bespoke training courses to ensure that your marketing, PR and social media team is super-efficient. Either they'll visit your offices or you spend a day with the Harvey & Hugo 'Pack'. Alternatively, if you are looking to set-up your own department or are looking to add a new staff member, Harvey & Hugo will do the leg work for you and source the ideal candidate.

If you'd like a taster of what you can expect from Hugoversity, why not attend one of the regular Harvey & Hugo seminars which take place across the region? Now that the COVID situation is easing, these will be resuming in the near future.

Oh, and just in case you think Harvey doesn't get a look in with all the Hugoversity and Pay-as-Hugo.com, he has his own online newsletter, Harv-e-news, and is the face of the retained services. He's also known to throw in the odd 'Harv-price' offer from time-to-time too.

***To find out what Harvey & Hugo can do for you and your business, the best idea is to have a chat with Charlotte Nichols. Give her a call on 01325 486 666 or email her via the excellent website [www.harveyandhugo.com](http://www.harveyandhugo.com) which will give you loads of useful info.***





Charlotte Nichols



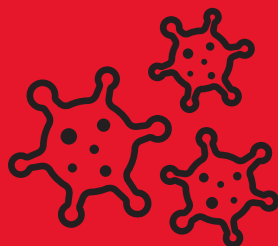


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# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

## LIZZIE SELBY

Managing Director, Peachy Digital

Generally, I wake up at 5am (darn body clock!) and will often do '5am club', in the sense that I catch up on some emails, do some coverage checks and so on with a coffee and enjoy the peace before the rest of the family is up. At least once a week I'll attend a 6.30am networking event which has been online for the last 18 months so hasn't necessitated the early morning drive to Darlington!

With marketing, no two days are ever the same – one of the reasons I love my job so much – but each day will involve speaking to our clients, monitoring ongoing campaigns, brainstorming ideas for new ones, and speaking to relevant third parties such as the media, event organisers and suppliers. I love speaking with people so I really couldn't be in a better role!

Breakfast is typically granola with Greek yoghurt, or something left over from supper the night before (which people always find very strange). It's not uncommon for me to have homemade curry for breakfast...

I'll head to the office a couple of hours later which is at the Evolution Business Centre in Northallerton where first order of the day is to get the coffee machine on! It's a lovely drive through North Yorkshire countryside, only about ten minutes and will be accompanied by listening to my rather eclectic playlist (from Erasure to Blink 182 to Rolling Stones and some Cyndi Lauper for good measure!)

**9.30am** The other 'resident Peach' Lindsay arrives, and we'll have a good catch up on work for the day ahead, any immediate actions and priorities, and grab a quick brew. We also have Ellen who works part time remotely from Dublin, and Chloe our placement student who is based in York for university but travels in as required as well as working remotely.

We'll have a cracking playlist on in the background as we work away and the office is very much two extremes – I am always too warm so sat with my fan on and bare arms, Lindsay too cold so wrapped up in cardigans and blankets and making sure I don't sneak the air con on!

Lindsay is pretty switched on nutrition-wise and eats all manner of delicious but healthy things, often bringing things for me to try. I never thought I'd enjoy some of them, but I'm a convert! Though



I can still be found chomping my way through blocks of cheese at will.

**10am** I have a call with a chef who supports a CIC we are involved with, Foodie Book Club, and we discuss ongoing PR for the project as well as some creative ideas to widen our reach while supporting their independent projects. I love being involved with this, we work with the director, Lee Majhen-Todd on what she calls her 'proper job' too (Lee & the Sweet Life), and Foodie Book Club is all about supporting mental health through a love of food and reading. It's been really helpful for many over the pandemic.

**11.30am** And it's a quick catch up with Ellen and Chloe to see how they're getting on with the projects they are working on, and to update them on other bits we have in the pipeline.

**12pm** We'll have a working lunch, nattering while eating and enjoying an obligatory brew – always Yorkshire Tea. Sometimes a walk down the road to town, or just a bumble round the business park to get some fresh air. I'm a big believer in taking a break from your screen and both Lindsay and I often come up with our most creative ideas when we are out of the office. And if nothing else, why wouldn't you take the opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors?

**12.30pm** I'm generally back at my desk and cracking on. Most days the early afternoon is focused on various Zoom calls or meetings out with clients, the majority of whom are in the North East and North Yorkshire, but also Manchester, Macclesfield and Preston. Today it's a Teams call with a client and their main supplier for a particular line of products, and we're pulling together a strategy with the supplier's marketing

team to really drive their relationship forward in the eyes of end users.

**2pm** It's an onboarding session with a new client in the food industry, visiting their site and carrying out a deep dive into the history, ethos and objectives of the brand and its products. We'll use this to pull together a strategic plan that guides both us and them going forward as we deliver their PR and social media. They send us home with tasty treats, too!

**4pm** Back to emails! Another round of coverage checks and picking up on anything new which has landed while I've been away from my desk. Today it's the great news that we have been given the social media contract for an ethical fashion brand, so I focus on pulling together the assets and information we need to make a strong start on that.

I try to finish work at **5pm** so that I can spend some time with the children, make supper and so on. Cuddles on the sofa are always a very important part of the day (I'm glad my 12 year old hasn't reached the stage where she doesn't want to cuddle me anymore!) and I always make time to chat to the girls about their day. My husband usually gets home around **6pm** and sometimes his children are with us during the week, so it can be pretty hectic!

I'll then have a final admin tidy up at around **8/9pm** when the children are in bed, just to set myself up for the day ahead tomorrow. It's usually bed no later than **10pm** following a chamomile tea.

[www.peachydigital.co.uk](http://www.peachydigital.co.uk)



A hand is shown squeezing a ripe peach, with juice dripping into a glass filled with yellow juice and ice cubes. The background is dark with water droplets.

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# BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND KNOW-HOW WITH QUALIFICATIONS

Personal career development is a big commitment, especially for most of our students who are already in busy jobs.

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And although we pride ourselves in helping you put a relevant qualification on your CV, you'll pick up from the Student Stories below that "it's not the destination but the journey" that matters too.

## MEET AMBER...



### CIM Certificate in Professional Digital Marketing (L4) Marketing Manager at Properties Unique

Amber achieved an outstanding merit grade despite lockdown, redundancy and searching for a new job. She believes it has been beneficial to learn the different aspects of digital marketing, which Amber has quickly put into practice in her new position. She thoroughly enjoyed learning about all the various industries from her classmates and gained extensive knowledge and diverse perspectives from everyone. In addition to achieving this sought-after qualification, Amber is delighted to have made some great connections and friends along the way. Her hard work has paid off, and she now wishes she had taken up a CIM course sooner!

“

*Marketing was not a career I had thought about before, but it was always something I have been interested in. When I had the opportunity to move into the Marketing department at my previous job, it was an opportunity I could not refuse. I did know some of the basics of Marketing, but I felt it was important that I learnt the theory to put it into practice and have the knowledge to enable me to progress in my career path.*

”

## MEET MIRANDA...



### CIPR Professional Diploma in PR (Level 7) Head of Communications and Marketing for the NHS Business Services Authority

The course has made Miranda more confident about decision making, which her colleagues have noticed. She is now evaluating key activities and using data and insight much more than ever before. This Master's level course has enabled her to reflect critically on best practice and process improvements. She says investing in her personal development was rewarding, that she is immensely proud of the results she achieved during the pandemic whilst leading the NHSBSA's communications response at the same time.

“

*I started as a journalist and then moved into the PR industry almost 20 years ago. It's been so long since I've done any formal studying, I felt I needed to gain a professional qualification to validate my experience. I was a bit apprehensive about studying after such a long time, but I needn't have worried. I enjoyed setting aside time to research and write and think about what I was doing. It was also great to be supported and challenged by the tutors and peers, who were a great knowledge source.*

”



## MEET MATT...



### CIM L6 Diploma in Professional Marketing (Digital Strategy)

#### Communications Manager at Virgin Money

Matt was keen to improve his knowledge and understanding of digital marketing practices to increase his future career prospects. Now he has finished the qualification, which is at a BA (Hons) level, he has a real sense of achievement; there were times when he found it challenging to juggle his learning alongside home commitments and a full-time job. Now he has graduated, he is pleased to have stuck with it and now fully appreciates the increased technical knowledge he can call on alongside his experience.

“

*I have finished the course with a real sense of achievement; there were times when it was challenging to juggle my learning alongside home commitments and a full-time job. Now I've got my qualification; I am pleased I stuck with it and delighted to have increased knowledge to call on. My situation meant that I needed to defer a module; it helped me massively that I could do that and continue my learning at a better time to suit my circumstances.*

”

We never truly understand the journey until we've taken it! However, we all have lessons to learn and experiences to enjoy along the way. All our five-star google reviews, student stories and high pass rates reveal our students love their journey with us and appreciate the results that have helped them become more confident in their contribution.

It's never too early to start your professional qualifications, why not start now. Our new term starts in September, and we will continue to teach virtually across all CIM & CIPR qualifications. However, if you are situated in the NE, Cumbria, or Scotland, you can also benefit from face-to-face tutorials if you wish.

**For any questions or queries, don't hesitate to get in touch with us at [hello@nesma.co.uk](mailto:hello@nesma.co.uk) or phone Lucy on 07734 22 22 54.**

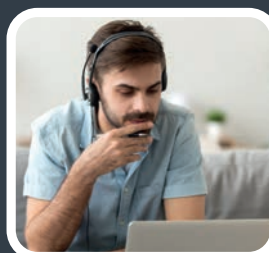
# nesma

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# ...WHAT MAKES YOUR BUSINESS A WINNER?..

The Olympics have just finished with great success for Team GB. Highlights PR's Keith Newman asked some of his RADAR members to tell us what makes them a winner to their customers.



"With Northland Wills Trusts & Probate, our clients and their families are the winners. Not only do we provide a high-quality service, but we also provide this at a fair price to provide you with peace of mind that your affairs are in order. We give bespoke advice and explain the consequences of acting [or not] so you fully understand the implications before deciding on what is best for you."

*Neil Fraser, Northland Wills*  
[enquiries@northumberlandwills.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@northumberlandwills.co.uk)



"Off The Grid Adventures is celebrating an Olympic Success of their own. Ten young people have gone from student to Activity Leader by passing the AQA Level 2 Activity Leader Awards and gaining employment with us on the Northumberland HAF (Holiday and Food Programme) for 11-16 years at Dukes School in Ashington. The group have been running some fantastic Olympic Games themed challenges for young people and have a planned a huge, exciting summer of fun for all! to enjoy."

*Paul Kirkpatrick*  
[www.offthegrid-adventures.co.uk](http://www.offthegrid-adventures.co.uk)



"The reason working with dwmedia makes it a winner for your business is that we provide ongoing support, our clients can call us and we will always support them as much as possible, we also try to link people up with others as much as we can meaning everyone can be a winner!"

*Daniel Wilkinson*  
[www.thedwmedia.co.uk](http://www.thedwmedia.co.uk)



"For me, the winner in these games has been the recognition and acceptance of the psychological aspects of sport and mental health. I help my clients with various issues including anxiety and performance pressure (whether that's at work or in social settings). Seeing Olympians show that it's acceptable to acknowledge issues and difficulties in coping with an aspect of their life helps those of us who are not 'Olympians' speak up, acknowledge that we need assistance, and ask for help. Winning in my business is people reaching out to me for help."

*Anne Morrison, Therapist and Coach*  
[www.annemorrison.co.uk](http://www.annemorrison.co.uk)



"The fact that we reconnect your team after a rollercoaster of a ride for the past 18 months and unite them behind the common cause of figuring out a new way of working in the future to help your business deliver even better results."

*Lorna Watkinson*  
[www.vibrant-thinking.com](http://www.vibrant-thinking.com)



"Although many of us have been spell bound by the Olympics others have been focusing on winning gold at those special family events that have been delayed over many months - weddings. By creating exquisite millinery, concentrating on the smallest couture details in tandem with attentive customer service, I ensure that every couture hat or headpiece I create makes my clients dreams come true. My clients get their gold medal in a hat box - their medal is their millinery eye candy"

*Margaret Woodliff Wright*  
*The Northumberland Milliner*  
[www.margaretwoodliffwright.com](http://www.margaretwoodliffwright.com)





"There are no shortcuts to being an Olympian' a little like our handcrafted drinks. We could have our drinks machine made; however, would it feel the same if we were to mass-produce them? Quite simply there wouldn't be that personal touch, the effort and honing of the artisanal skill to create the perfect winner. We are proud to have won silver medals, at The London Spirits Competition, for all three of our gins which are themed around the shared mining heritage of the Ruhr Valley, Germany and the North East. Our Bergmann (Miner) and our Vogel (Bird – a canary) were worthy winners and our Renton (named to celebrate my own mining ancestors) also won Gold being named as best German Gin at The Gin Guide's competition. Why not come and try for yourself at Unit 20, The Stack, Pilgrim Street, Newcastle."

Bryn Jones, [www.houseofruhr.co.uk](http://www.houseofruhr.co.uk)



"Be Kind. No Excuses" will always be the Champion. The Gold standard. Because there is no competition. It's THE ONLY book of its kind. Unique. Individual. Special."

Rie Pearson, Author  
[bekind.noexcuses@gmail.com](mailto:bekind.noexcuses@gmail.com)



"What makes me a winner? I could talk about awards won which proves I'm consistent, but if you ask my clients, they'd say it's because they get much more than great photos. They get modelling tips, baby settling tips, introduced to networks, and a friend!"

Tina Stobbs, Captured Forever  
[www.capturedforeverbyts.co.uk](http://www.capturedforeverbyts.co.uk)

To find out about the benefits of becoming a RADAR member, contact [keith@highlightspr.co.uk](mailto:keith@highlightspr.co.uk) or call on 07814 39 79 51. [www.highlightspr.co.uk](http://www.highlightspr.co.uk)

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## “DOES THE LIFTING OF PANDEMIC RESTRICTIONS SIGNAL THE DECLINE OF THE ONLINE GROCERY MARKET?”

**The past 18 months has seen such a shift in the behaviour of UK consumers that it would be a brave person who predicts where we'll be going in the next 18 months, given that firstly, the pandemic is most certainly not finished (whatever certain politicians may claim...) and secondly, its effect as a catalyst to speed up and magnify trends that were already in evidence pre-February 2020 is only now being understood.**

Whilst online grocery shopping had been growing in recent years, especially amongst the young in urban areas, it was given an enormous boost by the pandemic as people isolated and naturally felt wary about going out to do their regular shopping in the face of potential virus transmission. According to Kantar, UK consumers spent an additional £3.3bn on online groceries in April to June 2021 than they had in the same period in 2019.

But online grocery deliveries do have the drawback of forcing consumers to be available at set times to receive their delivery – fine when Covid restricts normal social and work activities, but inconvenient for most once life returns to a hectic normality with consumers unwilling, or even unable to commit to a set delivery slot or pre-planned menus cooked at home.

The net result has been that the growth of online grocery shopping has completely flattened with an albeit considerable 13.4% share of the market and just 0.2% increase in annual sales. Sounding a

bell of relief to traditional retailers, it appears that most UK consumers still prefer to physically shop for their groceries.

However, what has been very interesting is the growth of the rapid delivery market – it may not have hit the North East in a big way yet, but think Deliveroo with a small basket of grocery essentials or luxuries – and you get the picture.

These fast-track services usually work from their own distribution centres, rapidly delivering small quantities of groceries, sometimes in under 10 minutes. The IGD (Institute of Grocery Distribution) values this 'quick commerce' sector at £1.4bn and predicts the market will more than double in size to £3.3bn in the UK. Now given that the total market for small grocery baskets (less than £25 value) is estimated at £40bn (Kantar), there's a huge potential for growth which has seen multi-million pound investments in the establishment of the major players who are competing for dominance especially amongst their key urban, under 35 years age market.

Getir launched in the UK in January with the help of a £300m investment but was already well established nationwide in its native Turkey and available in Paris, Berlin and Amsterdam. The UK's Zapp launched in 2020 and already has nine fulfilment centres in London, whilst Weezy has services in London, Bristol, Brighton and Manchester. Other newcomers include the German brand, Gorillas, and Dija with Tesco trialling its own rapid delivery service, Whoosh,

offering to deliver small orders within 60 minutes. Asda has launched Express Delivery, Aldi has started small scale trials with third party delivery companies and the established ready meal delivery brands of Deliveroo, Just Eat and Uber Eats are watching from the side lines.

Just as the pandemic has disguised the disastrous consequences of Brexit, it has also changed the retail landscape incredibly rapidly, offering consumers changes in behaviour which may have taken years to become established otherwise.

Where the market will go is anyone's guess but a rapid growth in the service seems inevitable given its popularity with young urban consumers who use the service to both replace traditional physical grocery shopping and also as a top-up service for last minute items. Perhaps just as important is the changing demography of general online grocery sales – originally seen solely as the domain of affluent and young consumers, the pandemic has opened the sector up to a wider and older audience who may well extend their use to rapid delivery services having seen how easy and convenient it is.

***Do you need some assistance with your marketing, PR or design? Do you need to review your strategy or do you want to know how we can help your business? Email your questions anonymously to us today hello@silverbulletmarketing.co.uk or Tweet us (not so anonymously) @SilverBulletPR.***



# DFE APPROVES DEMERGER TO BRING PRIMARY SCHOOLS CLOSER TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Prior to the start of the summer holidays, we received notification from the Department for Education (DfE) that we have been granted permission to go ahead with our plan to split Bishop's Primary School into five separate schools.

**This exciting development, which will come into effect ready for the start of the new academic year, is the culmination of over 12 months' worth of consultations and planning to improve our primary offer and bring each school closer to the heart of its local community.**

In its current format, Bishop's Primary is one of the largest primary academies in England, with over 1,500 pupils spread across its five campuses in Ashington, Newbiggin-by-the-Sea and Lynemouth.

Our proposal to separate the school to create five primary schools in their own right was well-received by staff, parents and the wider community, with the demerger set to bring with it a number of key benefits for our pupils; including an additional £2.5 million worth of Government funding over 10 years to support the purchase of new resources including IT equipment, books and teaching materials. Each school will also benefit from a simplified admissions process and will have its own dedicated Head Teacher, as well as support from our new Executive Head Teacher and the wider NCEA Trust.

We're very excited about the demerger and believe that this is the right step to allow us to build on the success achieved by Bishop's as a single school, while retaining all of the positives we enjoy from working together across the Trust.

Watch this space for more information coming very soon!

**To find out more about Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust, visit [www.ncea.org.uk](http://www.ncea.org.uk)**



Alan Hardie



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# SMART NEW PARTNERSHIP GIVES CHARITY A 'TRY'



A new partnership has been struck up between a fast-growing media business and one of rugby's best-known charities.

**Smart Outdoor has agreed a new partnership with the My Name's Doddie Foundation. Founded in November 2017, Doddie Weir and his trustees launched the registered charity, My Name's Doddie Foundation, with one simple vision - a world free of motor neuron disease (MND).**

The agreement will see Smart use its large digital screens across Scotland, including Murrayfield, Edinburgh Gateway and Edinburgh Waverley, to promote the charity's work and raise awareness of MND. Approximately 1,100 people are diagnosed with the condition every year in the UK and up to 5,000 adults in the UK are affected at any one time.

In exchange, the Foundation will use Smart's large mobile events screens for a range of events organised as part of its fundraising activities, exploring opportunities to partner for the benefit

of the charity and the digital media business.

Mark Catterall, chief executive of Smart Media Group, said: "As a big rugby fan, I am absolutely thrilled that we are able to support Doddie and his incredible work to raise awareness of MND.

"We have a growing presence in Scotland, including a prominent site at Murrayfield, where a great many major sporting occasions take place, attracting a huge number of fans in normal times. To be able to reach so many with messages about the Foundation, its incredible work, and indeed to be able to raise awareness of MND, is amazing, and we're proud to be working in partnership with this brilliant charity."

The partnership is one of several charity agreements that Smart has in place. The business has provided more than £50,000 worth of free advertising in the last 12 months to various charities and appeals.

The business - which reaches 12.5 million people a week through its 227 screens across the North East, North Yorkshire and Scotland - has supported charitable campaigns, including Feed the Bains, a partnership between NHS and Iceland to recruit Delivery Drivers to Help Feed the Nation for free in a bid to support the effort to beat Covid, as well as Parkinsons UK, a charity that is close to the heart of Smart Outdoor founder Mark Catterall.

Jill Douglas, CEO of the My Name's Doddie Foundation, said: "We are delighted to be working with Mark and the team at Smart Outdoor and would like to thank them for their support. The locations of the digital screens mean a great many people will be able to see our messaging, learn about our fundraising activities and help raise awareness of motor neuron disease. It is a great example of how business and charity can work together to make a difference."

**To find out more about Smart Outdoor, visit [www.smartoutdoor.co.uk](http://www.smartoutdoor.co.uk)**



A photograph of a dimly lit library or bookstore. Tall wooden bookshelves filled with books line the walls. In the center, an open book lies flat on a wooden surface, its pages glowing with light. In the background, a red 'EXIT' sign is visible above a doorway. The overall atmosphere is quiet and scholarly.

NORTHERN

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# INSIGHT

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ANNUAL INDEPENDENT EDUCATION FEATURE

*A guide to some of the finest schools in the region.*



# A SENSE OF BELONGING AND BELIEF IN EACH OTHER

By Geoffrey Stanford, Headmaster, RGS Newcastle



It is now over a year since the death of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement prompted us all to reflect on how we should support race equality and I have been looking back at what we have done at the RGS to promote inclusion over recent months.

**We have also had cause to reflect on the widely publicised death of Sarah Everard and the testimonies contributed to the Everyone's Invited website. Sense of belonging and Belief in each other are two of the four pillars of the RGS ethos so addressing issues of both racism and sexual harassment clearly sit at the heart of our values and our wider support for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. It is also worth noting that the breadth of the social backgrounds of students attending on a bursary is central to the vision of the school and this diversity also brings very positive benefits to the RGS community.**

Since the RGS became co-educational twenty years ago our proportion of girls has continued to rise and now stands at 44%. Last year, for the first time ever, our Lower Sixth Form had more girls than boys. Similarly, over a third of our pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds and this means that individuals can very much be themselves as diversity is celebrated for being the norm. Furthermore, the results of our girls are very much the equal of those of our boys and, in our most recent results analysis, non-white British pupils performed marginally better than the overall cohort. However, Love of learning and Ambition to succeed, which are the other two pillars of our ethos go far beyond the narrow pursuit of academic results.

Over the course of the last year, we have proactively sought to understand the lived experience of our current and former pupils. We started by forming an advisory group with representation from

parents, staff, governors and Old Novocastrians. In the autumn term, we engaged a leading diversity consultancy to conduct a survey of all pupils and staff to understand their experience of race that could be benchmarked against the experience in schools around the country. This has been followed up more recently with focus groups of pupils and parents as well as a survey of our alumni and we have listened to a wide range of opinions in the process. Indeed, it has been important for us to understand what has happened in the past and what is currently happening to be able to provide the best possible experience for every one of our pupils going forwards.

As a school, we are prepared to hear and act upon any uncomfortable truths, as any organisation serious about truly embracing equality should be. We already have an incredibly diverse student body and it was therefore not surprising to find that we were largely perceived to be a very inclusive community. While it was reassuring to receive this confirmation, we certainly came across instances where things have not been right and we cannot afford to be complacent going forwards. In seeking to deliver on our aspiration that every child should have the best possible experience of school, we want to create an open culture that allows us to identify early when things are not right so that we can put in place appropriate interventions. Every year we take students from a wide variety of backgrounds and with diverse prior experiences. Every year, however, we therefore have to engage with all of our new joiners, quickly bringing them

on board with the expectations of an inclusive RGS community.

We have already identified and are implementing a number of actions to improve what we do in the short term and I have been delighted by the range of student-led initiatives too. The process of change will inevitably require persistence and a long-term campaign across the whole of society but I hope that the RGS can play our part in moving that agenda forwards. The areas that we are already identifying range from changes to what and how we teach through to how we provide role models to our students. On our senior leadership team we have a 50/50 split by gender and this balance is reflected throughout our staff and governing body. However, like many institutions, we need to do more to improve the ethnic balance of our employees as well as other forms of diversity. While this may in part reflect the demographics of the region, we are actively looking at our employment practices and working to attract high quality candidates from diverse backgrounds into teaching.

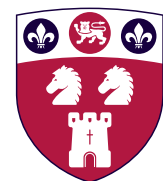
Some of the initiatives that we are implementing may take time to come to fruition and each incremental change may seem relatively minor in its impact. However, every individual can make a difference and little things add up. I hope that future generations will look back on this period as a cultural turning point where society really learnt to appreciate and celebrate diversity in all its forms.

[www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk](http://www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk)



**The Royal Grammar School, Newcastle's 30 acre site**, is located in the heart of the City, immediately opposite Jesmond Metro station.

**RGS's first class facilities** include state of the art teaching resources, a sports centre which features a 25m swimming pool and rock climbing wall, a Performing Arts Centre including a professional standard theatre and brand new library, art studios and an expansive Sixth Form Centre.



**RGS**

**The school's innovative approach to teaching and learning** produces consistently outstanding results, which places the RGS Senior School first in The Sunday Times' independent schools' North East league table, and the RGS Junior School tenth in the independent schools' nationwide league table.



**RGS's offers unrivalled co-curricular opportunities**, where any student can explore their passion and achieve their potential, inside or outside of the classroom.

RGS offers before and after school care which is included in school fees.



**Our admissions key entry points**, are Y3, Y5, Y7 and Y12.

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THE SUNDAY TIMES  
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## A FRESH START

By Simone Niblock, Headteacher,  
Durham High School.

By the time this goes to print, teachers and students will be sharpening their pencils and revving up their brains after the relaxation of the holidays, in preparation for the new academic year. As we try and resume some sense of normality, here are some of the things that I will be discussing with my staff and students as we start Autumn Term 2021:

### Be kind to yourself

There has been a widespread recognition of the psychological impacts of the pandemic across all sections of society. It may take some adjustments to return to full-time in-school working for staff and students, so we all need to be mindful of our own levels of stress and how to ameliorate this.

### Be kind to others

Not everyone coming back to work or society will be feeling confident about the situation so it behoves all of us to be respectful of other people's boundaries and concerns. It has never more important to live the hashtag #bekind.

### Be inspired

This Olympic Games has introduced us to many new talents, with Sky Brown's achievements probably being one of the most inspiring for my students. However, an athlete who did not compete at the Olympics but who is going to be featuring in one of my future assemblies is Nadia Nadim, an Afghan refugee whose father was murdered by the Taliban when she was 12. She fled to Denmark on the back of the truck and has since become a professional footballer, representing Denmark almost 100 times. On top of this, she has completed a medical degree and, just to make us all feel totally inadequate, she also speaks an incredible nine languages fluently and is on the Forbes list of the Most Powerful sportswomen in the World. If she is not an inspiration to all of us, I don't know who is!



Simone Niblock

### Be intellectually active

For every person who managed to read all of the Russian classics during lockdown, there will have been many who read the first pages of *Crime and Punishment*, and then went back to binge-watching *Virgin River*... No judgement, honest! Therefore, the new academic year is a time for new intellectual pursuits in addition to the quotidian demands of work. I remain an avid reader but I was late to the party with regards to podcasts: I have only just started listening to them and have realised how intellectually stimulating many of them are, with the Gemma Collins one being the exception here. During the last six months, I have learned about topics as varied as the theology of Pre-millennialism and the Rapture, the secret life of the caterpillar, plus the Gin Craze of the eighteenth century.

### Be physically active

If you are anything like my husband and me, you may have been very regulated and disciplined

during the initial lockdown with your regular exercise intake: the only items of apparel that I had to change last year was my footwear as I had managed to wear out a pair of trainers and some walking shoes. However, during subsequent lockdowns, standards slipped a little, shall we say, and the discovery of the aforementioned *Virgin River* box set on Netflix, plus the exceptional *Unforgotten* on the ITV Hub, meant that the trainers were a little less used. However, during the summer holidays, we renewed our walking targets and are adamant that we are going to exceed our own ambulatory expectations throughout this year and beyond.

Finally, whatever the new academic year brings, I hope we all have a happy and healthy start that continues throughout the year.

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## NCFE ANNOUNCES ASPIRATION AWARDS WINNERS CELEBRATING STUDENTS AND TEACHERS AFTER AN EXTRAORDINARY YEAR FOR EDUCATION

Each year, the NCFE Aspiration Awards highlight the incredible achievements of learners, teachers and centres across the UK, and this year was no exception. Attracting a record number of entries across four categories, the 2021 judging panel spent hours reviewing and deliberating over the high calibre of candidates.

Headquartered in the North East, NCFE is an educational charity and leader in vocational and technical learning. The awards programme, which was founded in 2018 to honour the success of learners, educators, and educational organisations across the UK, has grown in popularity year on year.

The four categories are Teacher of the Year, Learner of the Year, Centre of the Year and Against all Odds, all of which celebrate those who have gone above and beyond in their teaching, teaching or support in vocational and technical education. The winners all have their own truly inspiring story, showcasing their commitment to education and their determination to succeed despite the most extraordinary of years.

NCFE awarded their Learner of the Year award to Katie Albert from Blackpool and the Fylde College. Katie demonstrated a true passion for working within the education sector when starting her journey at the college in September 2019, completing the NCFE CACHE Level 2 Diploma for the Early Years Practitioner alongside an additional maths qualification and an industry placement. Through her hard work and determination, Katie was then able to progress onto the T Level in Education and Childcare – the government's new flagship educational programme, providing a vocational alternative to A Levels.

Described by his colleagues as an "outstanding Technology teacher", Gary Rayworth from Chorlton High School won the 'Teacher of the Year' category. Gary is the Curriculum Leader for Technology and Computing at the school where he introduced and now teaches the NCFE level 2 Technical Award in Graphic Design. Many of the learners in Gary's classes are from disadvantaged backgrounds and some often find school challenging, however, he has managed to transform his learners through his passion for teaching.

The Centre of the Year award went to Yuzu Training who was the first provider to gain significant progress since the pandemic in a recent Ofsted report. They were also praised for their delivery of the NCFE CACHE Level 2 Certificate in Understanding Safeguarding and Prevent, and their brilliant relationships with employers and local enterprise partnerships. These partnerships are key to help the delivery of the courses which tactically meet the economic needs for its regions and ensures their learners have the skills and knowledge needed to progress in their careers.

Lucas Reynard from Eastleigh College took home the award in the 'Against all odds' category. Lucas hasn't let challenging circumstances stop him from achieving his goals and is a remarkable example of an inspirational young learner. In their

award nomination, Lucas's tutors described how, in the past year, when Lucas faced the challenges of homelessness and major health issues, he managed 99% attendance (only missing a lesson for a doctor's appointment), maintained quality and timely completion of his work and achieved A\* results. Lucas's tutor, Nicola George, who nominated him for the award, describes Lucas as having "excellent work ethic, enthusiasm, and hunger for taking on opportunities and responsibilities, alongside his desire to help his fellow learners."

Zac Aldridge, Director of Qualifications and Assessment at NCFE, added: "We were overwhelmed by the incredible response to this year's Aspiration Awards. The amazing work being carried out by learners, teachers and centres across the UK during such a challenging year is truly humbling and incredibly inspiring. Seeing such commitment to education is what drives us at NCFE to do all we can to make a real difference, and we'd like to pass on our sincere congratulations to everyone who was nominated."

**To find out more about the Aspiration Awards and read the winner's stories in full, visit:**  
[www.ncfe.org.uk/aspiration-awards](http://www.ncfe.org.uk/aspiration-awards)



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## A SEQUEL TO BELIEVE IN?

By Kieran McLaughlin,  
Headteacher, Durham School.

The summer is traditionally a slow time for Hollywood blockbusters, but this year we saw a sequel to last year's media circus around public examination results for 16 and 18 years olds. I'm not sure what movie moguls would have called it (Exam Results II – Williamson's Revenge?) but it contained some of the hallmarks of the original whilst providing some new twists in the tale.

To recap, last year saw a situation, now routinely referred to as "the exam results fiasco", where the government asked schools to award "centre-assessed grades" to pupils based mainly on previous performances of earlier year groups. Pupils were rank ordered in their year and grades were allocated roughly in similar proportions to the usual outcomes for that school. As a way of moderating this, Ofqual employed an algorithm to check that the outcomes nationally for pupils would roughly be in line with previous years thereby avoiding the dreaded grade inflation. This wasn't an entirely unreasonable undertaking, but when the algorithm produced some unusual results, such as pupils being judged to have failed an exam they hadn't even taken, the outcry was so large that the algorithm was abandoned and the original grades given by teachers were allowed to stand. Inevitably, because teachers generally want their pupils to do well and the usual exam bomb-outs weren't there, overall outcomes were significantly higher for the year group, causing problems for universities and other follow on institutions.

So, armed with their experience, how did the government deal with the situation this year? In short, not terrifically well. Their first, and I believe worst, mistake was to cancel exams in their entirety for this year's cohort, despite having spent months insisting that exams would take place and failing to plan for the consequences if they didn't. So, in January, when it became clear that the worst of the pandemic was not yet over,



Kieran McLaughlin

the government were forced to scrap exams without any clear replacement in sight.

Mindful of the furor of the previous summer, it was clear that one thing Ofqual (the regulatory body charged with overseeing examination standards) were not going to countenance was any moderation of grades by algorithm. So, eventually, schools were told that grades for both GCSE and A Level were going to be awarded once again in the absence of formal public exams; these grades were helpfully renamed "teacher-assessed grades" so that everybody would be clear exactly where responsibility for them would lie.

So, dutifully, teachers worked hard to design assessments for pupils and the pupils worked hard to do well in them. Certainly internally, schools employed a robust quality assurance procedure so that teachers and heads, who ultimately signed off on the process, were confident that the pupils had produced work which justified the award of the particular grade in each case. So far so good, and certainly good for a cohort of pupils whose education had been disrupted even more seriously than their immediate predecessors.

However, in a development literally no one couldn't have foreseen, the distribution of top

grades was higher even again than last year and significantly higher than a "normal" year. To be clear, this isn't due to teachers' over-predicting or grades being "given away" but simply due to the fact that if you change the nature of an assessment the outcomes of that assessment would change too. Every child who got an A this year deserved to do so, but there is no doubt that they have less opportunity to demonstrate that worth in a normal exam year.

So, what's the problem? In many ways for this year's cohort, there isn't one. However, the consequences for next year's exam cohort, whose education will have been disrupted too, are significant. Do we return to a "normal" distribution of grades for those pupils and live with the fact that they will have had a rawer deal than the class of 2021? Or do we maintain the distributions of this year, thereby "baking in grade inflation" after many years of work to resist it? Neither solution is ideal and, perhaps more worryingly, it is a decision only the government can take.

**For further information about Durham School, or to arrange a visit, call 0191 731 9270, email [admissions@durhamschool.co.uk](mailto:admissions@durhamschool.co.uk) or visit [www.durhamschool.co.uk](http://www.durhamschool.co.uk)**



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# CHOOSING A SCHOOL THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOUR CHILD

By Tony Jackson, Headmaster,  
Barnard Castle School

Choosing a school for your child is one of the most challenging and important decisions you will have to make, and we do not underestimate the magnitude of such a judgement.

**We place enormous emphasis on ensuring each and every pupil feels a sense of belonging at 'Barney'; only then will they come close to maximising their potential.**

It is important your child flourishes whilst at school, which are the most important and formative years of their lives. At Barney, our students exceed their academic potential as a result of inspiring teaching, delivered in an easy, open and respectful environment at the heart of which are the caring relationships that exist between the teachers and students.

The achievements of Barney in recent times are as a direct consequence of the teachers and wider ancillary staff who spend every day inspiring, supporting and guiding our young people. Barney has always possessed a wonderful environment, with happy children and staff at its heart.

Whilst we are extremely proud of what our students achieve academically, we also recognise the vital importance of preparing the next generation for an ever-changing and increasingly competitive and global marketplace.

We expect our pupils to work as hard as they can, and do as well as they can. However, we tell them that academic success will only open a door; it is what they do when they walk through that door that counts.

As such, we pride ourselves on our co-curricular activities because it is in these environments that most life lessons are learned. We want our young people to problem-solve, work in a team, demonstrate leadership and have emotional intelligence. Resilience and humility must also be



Tony Jackson

at the very heart of our young people. All these attributes are delivered most effectively through extra-curricular activities.

Be it missing out on a part in a play, or performing on stage, or standing with teammates to defend a goal or a try line; winning and losing. All these experiences help develop in our children the attributes they will need, and the more exposure they can get, the better, which is why our activity programme is so varied. Beyond the traditional spheres of music, drama and sport, we currently offer more than 100 activities to our students, which includes a bespoke 'Mind, Body and Soul' programme for Year 7 and 8s. We often find that a number of our pupils create and lead their own activities as well, demonstrating leadership and innovation.

We want Barnardians to be the types of people who light up a room when they enter it. This requires confidence, resilience and compassion, all built up over a period of time, and in a variety of ways, both within and beyond the classroom. No leader can achieve anything major without

the influence of the staff who make it happen. This is especially the case in our school.

We tell our parents that our collective role, as parents and teachers, is to arm our children with the tools with which to clear the path ahead of them, not to clear the path for them. This means we have to allow them to fail at times, in a supportive environment. If we do that together, we are doing our best to prepare our young people for the challenges ahead.

Situated on the outskirts of historic market town Barnard Castle, we run an extensive transport service from across the North East and in North Yorkshire to Barney. We also provide full or flexible boarding options in our friendly, welcoming boarding houses.

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## REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL

Newcastle School for Boys pupils give reason for celebration in the face of this year's exam challenge.



**In what has been another unique year for education and exams, pupils at Newcastle School for Boys receiving their A level and GCSE results this summer gave reason to celebrate with an excellent set of results.**

Over 90% of the school's A level students secured their first-choice university place, with almost half of the grades awarded to the boys at an A or A\* grade with a 100% pass rate across the board.

50% of GCSE grades awarded to the Year 11 cohort at Newcastle School for Boys were awarded at the top grades nine to seven, with a 100% pass rate across the board. Almost half of the boys also received at least one grade nine with many receiving multiple.

Alex Newman, the School's Deputy Head for

Teaching and Learning said, 'Our boys have demonstrated their levels of performance through a robust and externally endorsed process, and we are delighted with their results which are both thoroughly deserved and truly reflective of their ability.'

The boys leaving the Sixth Form now go on to pursue a range of subject options and passions including Economics and Finance at Newcastle University and Music at Leeds Conservatoire, to pursuing a professional rugby career at Newcastle Falcons whilst studying Psychology and Sport and Exercise Science at Newcastle University.

The majority of the pupils who received their GCSEs will now go onto study A level and CTEC courses in the School's sixth form alongside a full enrichment

programme designed to develop the boys' character, employability and life skills beyond their academic grades.

David Tickner, the School's Head said: "This is a time to celebrate the achievements of our boys and the character they have shown in the face of the significant challenges posed by the pandemic. We are very proud of their hard work, resilience and achievements."

***Newcastle School for Boys is an independent school for boys aged 3 to 18 in its Nursery to Sixth Form provision based in Gosforth.***

***For more information about Newcastle School for Boys, visit [www.newcastleschool.co.uk](http://www.newcastleschool.co.uk) or contact [admissions@newcastleschool.co.uk](mailto:admissions@newcastleschool.co.uk)***

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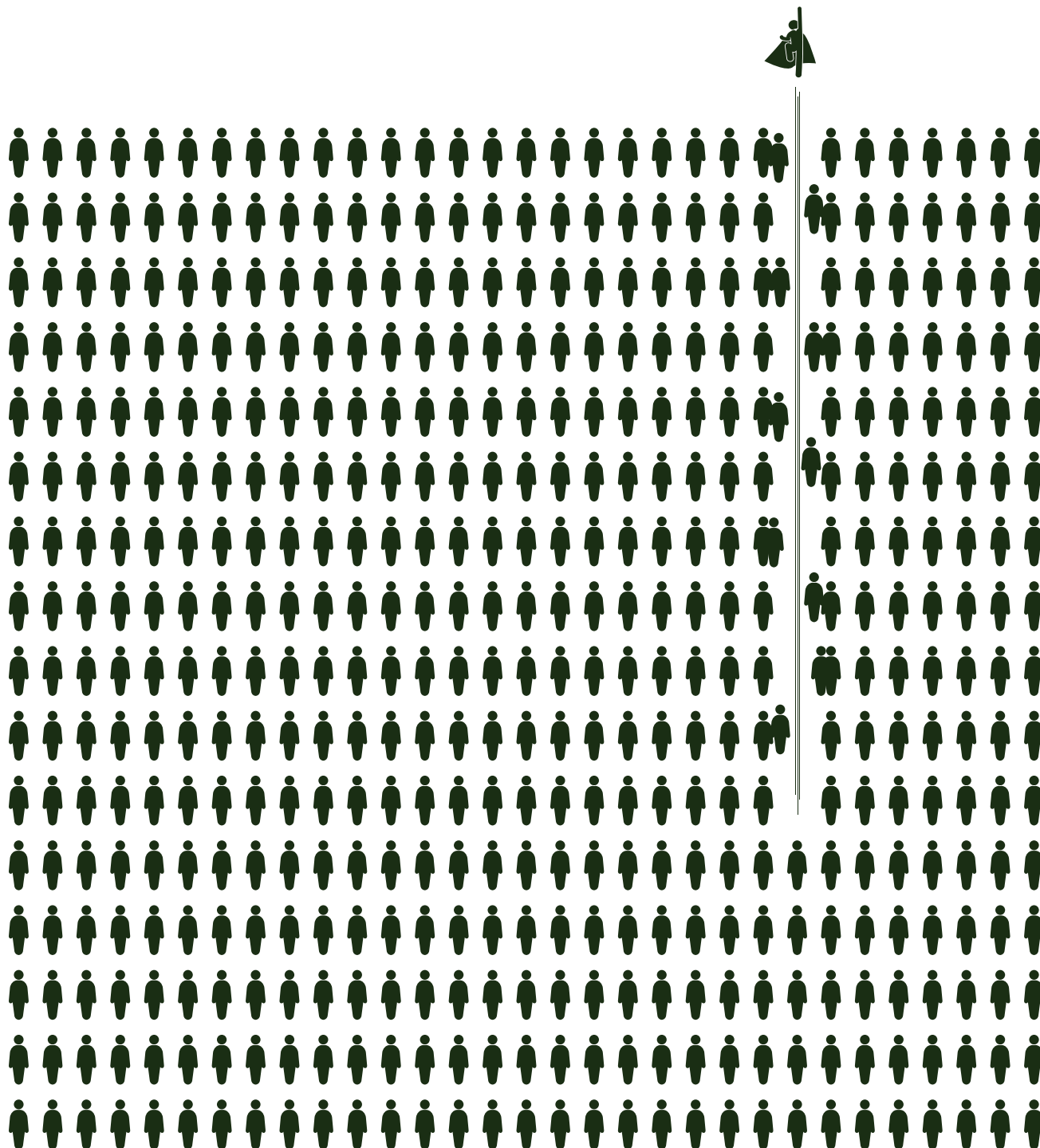
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## NORTHUMBERLAND SET TO STAR IN NEW CHILDREN'S MYSTERY BOOK

A serving police officer with a passion for the work of a famous children's author has used her creative detective skills to help her fulfil a lifetime's ambition to write a mystery book in the style of her childhood fictional heroes.

Zoe Billings (41) from Poppleton near York in North Yorkshire is the author of "The Mystery of Tully Hall" which is based on her love of Enid Blyton's children's adventure stories including the Secret Seven and the Famous Five.

Brought up on the adventures of the Famous Five (Julian, Dick, Anne and George and their dog Timothy,) Zoe has amassed a huge collection of Blyton books, memorabilia and videos as well as the original "Look In" artwork for the iconic 1978 TV series.

"Blyton's books and the Famous Five TV series were full of positive role models for me and taught me personal values such as respect, integrity, caring, and truth telling. When you add plain and simple fun, with good old-fashioned adventure, you have the perfect children's book," said Zoe.

"Like Blyton, my characters represent positive role models and promote in children the values of honesty, kindness, hard work and courage."

The book is set in the fictional Tully Hall in North Wales and revolves around the renovation of the Hall and the mystery surrounding the theft of priceless antique silver objects. Due to the popularity of initial sales, Zoe is currently writing and researching the second book in the series which will be set in rural Northumberland.

The Mystery of Tully Hall by Zoe Billings and illustrated by Sarah King is available from Amazon.co.uk.



## MICKEY MOUSE IS BACK IN TOWN!

Disney On Ice is back with a magical adventure for the whole family! Audiences will discover what it truly means to be a hero as Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse and friends from around the Disney Kingdom come together to take families on a journey through timeless tales when Disney On Ice presents Find Your Hero skates into Utilita Arena Newcastle from 9th-12th December this year. Featuring more than 50 Disney characters, this production includes something for everyone, from modern tales to timeless classics

Ailsa Oliver, General Manager of Utilita Arena Newcastle, added: "We are absolutely thrilled

that Disney On Ice is returning to the Utilita Arena Newcastle this year with this exciting new show. I know our family audiences have really missed their yearly trip to see Disney On Ice; it's a fantastic opportunity for families to come together, have an amazing experience at the Arena and make fabulous memories filled with fun and laughter. Every year Disney On Ice produces a truly scintillating ice spectacular, where the electricity in the atmosphere is positively tangible. It's great to see kids in their fancy dress costumes, singing along to the songs and totally engaged with the magic unfolding. Quite often the parents are enjoying watching their kids enjoying the show as much as the show itself! We can't wait to welcome everyone to this year's show in December, we'll certainly be getting into the Christmas spirit by then!"

## MUSIC'S WILD BOY RETURNS TO HIS ROOTS TO 'ROCK N RAISE'

DURAN DURAN and Power Station superstar Andy Taylor will be returning to his roots for a special night of music for one night only.

The Cullercoats-born musician will be headlining Rock n Raise at Newcastle's Wylam Brewery on 15 September.

Andy will be performing a set of his greatest hits from Duran Duran, The Power Station, Robert Palmer, his solo projects and tracks from his forthcoming album.

Andy has also invited some very special guests to join the party - Luke Morley from Thunder and Spike from The Quireboys will be performing acoustic sets, while Planet Rock's Wyatt will be playing everyone's favourite rock songs.

Lorraine Crosby's 'She Will Rock You' will also feature helping to create a memorable night of music and fundraising.

The charity gig, which is expected to sell out, will raise much needed funds for its organiser, the Sir Graham Wylie Foundation, along with Teenage Cancer Trust and Newcastle's Nordoff Robbins Music Therapy



Andy said: "I couldn't think of a better charity to be part of. I know personally how music changes lives and I can't wait to bring the house down to help young people in the region."

The Sir Graham Wylie Foundation gives 100 per cent of its donations directly to good causes, such as Nordoff Robbins Music Therapy Centre, Jesmond, which was built by the foundation and now delivers life transforming music therapy to children and young people from across the region.

Dave Stone, director of Wylam Brewery said: "It's always an absolute pleasure to work with the Sir Graham Wylie Foundation helping raise vital funds for local charities."

Doors open at 7pm and tickets, which cost £25, are available online from [www.ticketweb.uk](http://www.ticketweb.uk)

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# CAMERA, ACTION...

Ever wondered how blockbuster films such as Harry Potter, Atonement, Indiana Jones, Elizabeth and 1917 chose the North East to film some of their scenes? Or how much-loved tv series such as Vera and children's favourite Dumping Ground are supported to film within the region?

**Northern Film + Media (NFM) are the North East's screen industries development agency with a key agenda about making the North East as attractive and accessible as it can be for high profile film and tv production.**

The organisation has been around for many years, we're talking the days of regional development agency One North East and UK Film Council, when there was a huge importance put on filming in the UK. And there seems to be some sort of renaissance with filming in the UK booming.

Now in a post-pandemic world, with film and tv production at an all-time high across the UK, plus a commitment from the BBC to push more of its productions into the nations and regions and to develop a north east voice, the work NFM do across the North East to position the region as an attractive offer to production companies big and small, global and local, is more important than ever.

NFM work with every local authority within the North East and specific locations on what they call 'filming friendly'. This status gives production companies the confidence to know that they will be supported in all aspects of their filming and time at the location. The production service team at NFM act as a mediator between production companies and locations to establish relationships and ensure both sides are happy with the proposals and arrangements ahead of filming.

Filming in the North East brings many boosts to the economy, from tourism to jobs, as well as a sense of pride – who doesn't love seeing our beautiful region in feature films and some of our most loved tv shows?

Why should you put your business forward as a location? NFM's Operations Director, Gayle Woodruffe, explains,

"Being part of a production and seeing how it works is fascinating; especially when you see the final film – your property on the big screen. Better than that, productions usually compensate you financially for your time and the inevitable disruption. We are here to support location owners and representatives at every stage of production."

As well as its locations work, NFM also provide vital support to individuals, companies and SMEs looking to establish themselves in the industry as well as those who have been longstanding members of the screen industry. This is done through a number of projects including the successful ERDF funded Tees Valley Screen, North East Comedy Hot House, the NFM Crew Academy, Sizzle, Made In Britain, Producer Fast Track and Blueprint.

The NFM Crew Academy is a unique structure which not only provides professional development to crew members from the region of all ages and stages of their career (from those fresh out of education to those who are well established and looking to progress further in their career), but also supports crew members in helping them find work on visiting and local productions. It provides a series of other support options including masterclasses with top industry experts, mentor schemes and advice workshops as well as running twice-yearly 'bootcamps' which help support newcomers to the industry with a series of fact-finding workshops.

Jobs in the screen industry are wide-ranging and one thing NFM would love to see is more people looking to cross into the industry having gained experience in other sectors. Project managers and accountants are extremely important to productions, so if you feel you've got the skills to do this and fancy switching industry, get in touch with NFM via [info@northernmedia.org](mailto:info@northernmedia.org)

**To find out more about NFM and its projects visit [www.northernmedia.org](http://www.northernmedia.org), or drop them a line at [info@northernmedia.org](mailto:info@northernmedia.org)**







Filming of the movie Atonement (2007) on Redcar beach.



# IN CONVERSATION WITH...

## STUART LANDRETH

A 50% shareholder in Frisk Radio Ltd. Owner and operator of Frisk Radio – a station targeting an 18-35 demographic in the North East of England and providing affordable advertising options to local businesses.

He is also a 50% shareholder in a computer software company, BeeBox Systems Ltd, who manufacture background music and digital signage systems for the leisure industry. They have systems in bars, pubs, restaurants, bowling alleys and cruise ships which are managed by a network of resellers who provide sales and service on a regional or "by-market-sector" basis. On top of that, he owns Landreth Enterprises Ltd., which operates a mixed-use office building in Blyth, where rooms are rented to small, start-up businesses in the retail and beauty sectors.

### What were your career ambitions?

Strange one that...I never really had any! I knew I was always 'good with computers' so would probably be destined for the IT industry – most likely as a software developer.

What I didn't expect was that I would end up being 'my own boss'. I paid very little attention to business studies at school, yet when the first company I worked for folded due to spiralling debts, I knew that I had developed some fantastic software for the leisure industry, and with the right team behind it, it could be the base of a profitable business.

It was the case of learning on the job! Cashflow forecasts, business cliché lingo like 'going forward', how to deal with people (a particularly difficult skill to master for a computer programmer).

### Your current roll within Frisk Radio?

Founder, Director, Head of IT, Software Developer, music-team member and coffee maker – because nothing gets done until coffee gets done!

Radio is a very expensive business – the only way to succeed is to wear many hats and learn to juggle work around.

I took the idea to create a dance-music-led radio station and wrote all of the software required to manage the station from scratch to try and keep down licencing costs. I spent hours listening to music to try and come up with the ideal playlist to appeal to our target audience of grown-up millennium era clubbers. And to glue the tracks together, I learned the ins-and-outs of audio production so I could knock up jingles and sweepers in-house.

### Proudest business achievement?

The purchase of 5 Stanley Street in Blyth – which is the building where Frisk Radio is based.

I felt it was important that Frisk had a permanent residence which could be remodelled as the station and company grew. At present I rent out the unused space to fledgling start-ups in the retail and beauty sectors which provides a source of revenue while simultaneously helping out local businesses.

Blyth has faced many problems over the years, with drugs abuse and the running down of the town centre. It's great to be able to connect with young entrepreneurs who are driving enterprise forward in Blyth, and to help them along with trading space, marketing support and business advice.

### How has the industry has changed?

In radio, the biggest change has been the closure of local radio stations with staff being made redundant, and the output networked from corporate head-offices in London or Manchester.

There are very few stations now who are actually based in their own transmission areas. Once Frisk is live on all 3 North East DAB transmitters, we will be at the geographical centre of our region and hope to cover news and events relevant to Newcastle, Tyneside and Northumberland.

### What are you currently working on?

We are now in the 'final countdown' to launch. We are busy installing and testing the equipment in the Blyth studio, and finalising the schedule of presenters and shows ready for our DAB debut.

As well as that, I'm busy refining the contact management software that supports the sales process – making it as easy as possible for our sales team to on-board new sponsors and advertisers to the station.

### Tell us about the team you work with.

I've known Mick for about five years. He used to fix the equipment at Newcastle's legendary 'Pop World' club where I used to DJ. Chatting to Mick, I learned more about his company CTS, which installs and maintains audio-visual equipment in homes and commercial venues. Through banter on Facebook we discovered a shared love of dance music, and after trialling the Frisk format as an internet station, Mick pushed me to try and find a way to get it on to actual broadcast radio. When the small-scale DAB opportunity came along, Mick was the logical choice to bring on-board to help develop and finance the plan.

Anne, our sales manager, was introduced to us by an agent. We knew that we needed someone who was the 'best in the business' and I have every confidence that Anne is going to deliver us some amazing results.

As well as the core team, we have a whole host of talented DJs and presenters who will work hand-in-hand with a fast-growing promotions crew to drive the Frisk product and get the brand out there in the North East.

### What is the best piece of business advice you have been given?

*'Go big or... go bigger', Grant Cardone.*

When I first seen him on Secret Billionaire, I absolutely hated this guy. His over-the-top, cocky stance and 'no b\*\*\*\*\*t attitude' seemed very out of place. However, I did come to admire his techniques and persistence when I saw he became a great leader and inspiration to his team and followers.

### What has been your biggest challenge?

It's chicken and egg for a new radio station – and a huge gamble.

You build a kick-ass station, but nobody knows who you are. You need to promote your station, so you invest in a promotions team, in, merchandise, in a PR company. The bills rack up, but you still struggle to sell because 'nobody knows who you are'.

You also don't have any listener figures: You can subscribe to a system called Rajar which 'estimates' your figures based on the results of a few hundred pseudo-randomly chosen members of the public filling in a paper diary. But this outdated method severely penalises small and new stations like Frisk.

That is the challenge. However, Frisk has built up a blazing social media following; feedback from industry colleagues has been fantastic, and our app downloads are increasing every week.

We have every confidence that there are businesses out there that will be happy 'to take a punt' on Frisk – and get a very good deal on sponsorship or advertising for themselves!

### Who are your heroes inside and outside of your business?

Grant Cardone, I mentioned before, David Allen I'll come on to...The dragons off of Dragon's Den. All great business people.

*Continued...*





## THE RHYTHM OF THE NORTH EAST



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### How do you unwind outside of business?

I love to swim. It's great to be able to get away from a computer, switch off my brain and do something physical. Although the ironic thing is I start having more ideas while in the pool – something to do with the increased oxygen levels to the brain I'm told.

Cooking and basic gardening are also pursuits I find relaxing; particularly when Oliver, my one year old son, offers to 'help' by throwing spatulas around, and decapitating border plants.

### Favourite book/CD/DVD?

**Nightmare** – the 'choose your own adventure' book series, based on the hit 80's Children's ITV gameshow where contestants donned a goblin-like helmet and were [mis] guided around a computer-generated dungeon in an attempt to solve a quest. Well, the interaction of jumping about different pages of the book kept me occupied during most of my childhood, anyway.

I am also a big fan of **'Getting Things Done' by David Allen**. It teaches you the art of time management through the four D's. For every e-mail, task, order or document, you have to pick it up and decide what needs to be done. You either have to DO it (if it takes less than five minutes), DELEGATE it (to someone else), DEFER it (to a calendar or task list) or DELETE it.

**CD's** - Well I have shelves full of them, vinyl records too, I couldn't possibly pick a favourite, but **'Saturday Night', by Whigfield**, was probably my first purchase.

**DVDs** - Ummm... I have the complete box set of cult 90's leisure centre sitcom 'The Brittas Empire'. I love the Brittas parody of management - overcomplicate everything and p\*ss everyone off!

In all of my businesses, I strive for the opposite: Simplify the process (unlike Brittas); document the process with a flowchart (just like a Nightmare book); and delegate it to a trusted team member (David Allen -style).

With this methodology, I hope we can build Frisk into a successful radio station, and perhaps into a massive media brand.

If not, it's back to the pool for another front-crawl-induced 'Go Big or Go Bigger' idea.

[www.friskradio.com](http://www.friskradio.com)

Stuart Landreth



# IN CONVERSATION WITH...

## MATT PAGAN

Star of the Tyne Theatre and Opera House' pantomime this Christmas; *Sleeping Beauty* talks to Jackie Marston about what we can expect from this years' performances:

**Matt 28, originally from Carlisle but now residing in Denton Burn, Newcastle, tells us why this year is going to be remembered for all the right reasons. His character, The Prince will be looking to defeat the wicked Carabosse and awaken his true love, Sleeping Beauty from her 100 year sleep.**

Matt, former winner of Britain's Got Talent with Collabro gives us a little insight of what to expect from this years' panto.

### **Well Matt, what can the audience expect to see?**

"After the disappointment of not being able to perform on stage for such a long time, we've literally pulled out all of the stop for this years' panto. It's going to be spectacular, and we can't wait to get cracking. Everything they've come to expect from the region's favourite panto, but a few extra surprises are planned for this year, to make up for our audience not being able to come in 2020."

### **What do you enjoy the most about working with Enchanted Entertainment's panto?**

"Their sheer professionalism. Nothing is left to chance and the team are great to work with. Catching up with great friends like Charlie Richmond, the joker of the group and Lewis Denny, who plays The Dame is what I am most looking forward to though."

### **What is the hardest part about being in a panto?**

"Trying to keep a straight face, when there are such comic geniuses that I work alongside. They often try and make you laugh, especially if yours is a more serious part and I can sometimes really



Matt Pagan

struggle with that, as I am a bit of a giggler anyway!"

### **What are you personally looking forward to?**

"Seeing all the faces of everyone enjoying themselves again in a theatre. As an entertainer/performer, this is what I have personally missed the most. When you're used to a live audience, no amount of Zoom performances will ever cut it. I literally cannot wait!"

### **When do rehearsals start?**

"November, but we'll have the scripts well before then, so we can learn our lines. Scripts can change, depending on the circumstances, but the rehearsals are our chance to ensure that it is the professional show that our audiences have come to expect."

### **How long have you been doing panto for?**

"Since 2013, and apart from the 2020 pandemic, I've done every year since then. It's in my blood now and I can't imagine ever not doing it. This years' performance is extra special too, so the audiences will be in for a few surprises. I can't tell you what they are though, as I'd have to kill you if I did!"

***Enchanted Entertainment's pantomime performance of Sleeping Beauty can be seen from December 3rd 2021 to 3rd January 2022 – Tickets available from the Box Office on 0844 249 1000.***

***Group bookings 0191 243 1171.***

***Box Office opening times – Monday to Friday 10am-3.30pm and event days.***

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## ALVOR, PORTUGAL - THE HEART OF THE ALGARVE

By Caroline Preston

2021 and the familiar pattern of travel confusion continues, but at last, with a scattering of destinations permitted, there's an actual real possibility of travel.

**I last visited Portugal's Algarve region around 20 years ago, still remembering my feeble attempt at golfing... what can I say; I tried, the assessment is, I'm more suited to the clubhouse.**

And so, with Portugal 'green listed' and so much I still hadn't seen, this was to be my destination, a sun-worshipping, food exploring, cultural adventure in the Algarve.

Since busy, touristy tack isn't really my thing, I chose pretty Alvor, a smallish town located in the heart of the Algarve around an hour from Faro. This former important Moorish fortified town (Al-bur) and its harbour ooze Portuguese charm, the pretty narrow streets and ancient medieval castle and church make for pleasant viewing. Sadly you'll not see anything older since the obliteration of Alvor and its surrounding areas by the great Lisbon earthquake of 1755, one of the deadliest earthquakes in history.

Alvor is a sun worshippers paradise, a quiet, and pristine sandy beach that stretches no less than 3.5km. Some areas are well-served with facilities that include beach bars, restaurants and lifeguards, perfect for families. The coastal area immediately beyond the beach remains marvellously under-developed with long wooden walkways that host beautiful views of estuary wildlife.

Alvor itself, having grown out of the old town, offers hotels and accommodation for most budgets. Hotel Alvor Baia was my choice, around half a mile from the centre, it's a largish complex with a huge pool and spacious modern rooms and apartments. It has all the facilities you could possibly want, with meals included so, hotel dining we dispersed with frequent eating out. This small town provides a surprisingly wide range of eateries, and as a fan of fresh seafood, this could not be better. Each evening the harbour would buzz with locals and holidaymakers alike, all keen to sample the catch of the day fired up on the smokey harbourfront grills at sunset.

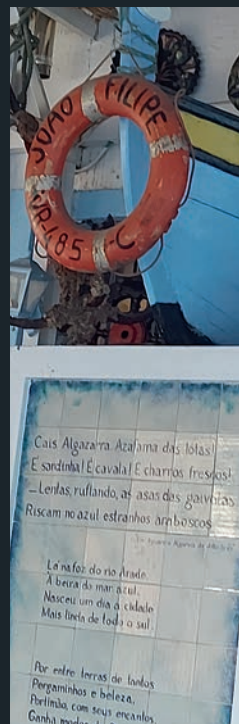
Conveniently located Alvor, is close to so many fantastic day trip destinations, by car or by organised tour, venturing outside your resort is an absolute must. A trip to the beautiful city of Lagos saw us tour the city in a 100%

electric-powered tuk-tuk, for history, culture and views of the famous caves, this is an absolute highlight. Other day trips followed, including the historic city of Silves and the pretty mountain village Monchique and its Mount Foia views.

Just 7km from Alvor is the port city of Portimao, a destination with the chance to see some more normal Portuguese life. As a former industrial fishing port, this city's economy is now mostly tourism and leisure. The old fishing docks have been re-imagined, now a scenic promenade where street art honours its heritage. Although there's little industrial fishing, seafood is still most definitely 'on the menu', and many excellent eateries exist. A solid recommendation is restaurant Marisqueira-a-Fabrica, freshness and quality without the tourist price tag; try the Arroz de Marisco (Portuguese seafood rice) delicious with a glass of local wine. You know you've had a great trip when you realise life doesn't get any better than where you are at that moment, so, if you're thinking of Portugal, try Alvor, it's the heart of the Algarve for a reason.

[www.thejarvisjotter.co.uk](http://www.thejarvisjotter.co.uk)

[www.instagram.com/thejarvisjotter](https://www.instagram.com/thejarvisjotter)



### Travel notes:

Caroline travelled with TUI Airways to Faro [www.tui.co.uk](http://www.tui.co.uk), staying at the 4-star Alvor Baia Resort Hotel, Alvor [www.hotelalvorbaia.com](http://www.hotelalvorbaia.com), June 2021. Car hire with Europe Car at Faro Airport via [www.europecar.co.uk](http://www.europecar.co.uk). Restaurant Marisqueira-a-Fabrica can be found on Av. Afonso Henriques near the museum of Portimao, [www.instagram.com/marisqueira.a.fabrica](https://www.instagram.com/marisqueira.a.fabrica). The Lagos Tuk Tuk operated by Nuno Silva, Tukano Tuk Tours [www.facebook.com/tukanotuktours](https://www.facebook.com/tukanotuktours)





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# OUT AND ABOUT - ANNAN, DUMFRIES, GALLOWAY



Annan is the first authentic Scottish town beyond the border. You can get a real sense of being “abroad” in an authentic Scottish town, which now has its own distillery producing again after a gap of around 100 years. Split your ticket at Newcastle, from where there is a £24 off-peak day return. From Chester-le-Street it’s £53.70 which you can cut in half by splitting.

The initial welcome to Annan can be quite disconcerting. Coming out of the station and heading straight ahead north into the town, you come across an abandoned, but Category C listed, derelict edifice, formerly known as the Central Hotel. When I arrived in Annan on 2nd June there were birds flying in and out of the broken first floor windows and curtains flapping from the upper stories in a spooky scene reminiscent of Disney’s Phantom Manor. Any child with an active imagination would be mightily impressed. No wonder the town council want the building, which is probably past restoration, taken down.

The rest of the town is much more attractive, with plenty of red brick buildings and plenty of interesting architectural details. The distillery, a mile north, is reached by keeping to the right of the hotel and continuing ahead, crossing over the High Street to pick up the B722 north out of the town. After passing the town football club and crossing over the bridge with the A75 bypass way below, then look for the brown signs left to the distillery.

The distillery is now in full production, based in a building first used as a distillery and which closed in 1918. Tours are available to see the production process, with the obligatory and very welcome tasting at the end. There’s a pleasant café serving food and the opportunity to sit in the courtyard and enjoy the pretty site. Jim Murray’s Whisky Bible declares that “we have a truly world class distillery in our midst”, which produces the Man O’ Sword, the smoulderingly smoky whisky named after Robert the Bruce and the Man O’ Words, Robert Burns. I enjoyed my visit, and was pleased to learn that the owners of the distillery have a new project also related to the Bard, Robert Burns, in Dumfries, where they have been refurbishing the Globe Inn, which was the Scottish National poet’s favourite howff (meeting place/pub). An opportunity for an overnight visit to Dumfries some other time, I think.

Retracing my steps into town, I reached the Galabank, the Annan Athletic Football Club ground. There’s a path which goes round the back of the stadium and winds its way down to the riverside and is a very scenic way to get back to the town centre via the Ever Holm Park. Annan’s High Street has a variety of shops and there are plenty of places to eat and drink. However, allow time to see the Annan Museum which is normally open 11am to 4pm, but sometimes closes for half an hour at 1pm for staff lunch breaks.

Annan Museum is in a renovated former library, with permanent and temporary exhibition spaces located on the ground and first floors. Artists represented include George Wright (1851–1916) and William Ewart Lockhart (1846–1900). Lockhart is most famous for the painting commissioned by Queen Victoria entitled “The Jubilee Celebration in Westminster Abbey, June 21 1887, which took him three years to complete and is now in the Royal Collection. Finally, Annan’s innovative railway turntable can be seen in the National Rail Museum in York.

Get a free map of the area from [streetmap.co.uk](http://streetmap.co.uk) using the postcode DG12 6AW.  
[www.annanadaledistillery.com](http://www.annanadaledistillery.com) Alex Nelson, [alex@nationalrail.com](mailto:alex@nationalrail.com)



For a copy of the UK rail map, extract below, visit [www.railmap.org.uk](http://www.railmap.org.uk)

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## WL DISTILLERY IN HIGH SPIRITS AS THEY ANNOUNCE MOVE INTO STACK NEWCASTLE

WL Distillery have their sights on further growth with their recent move into the popular STACK Newcastle

At unit 20, WL Distillery not only stock their own range of award-winning gins, but also plan to be a hub for other local up and coming spirits brands from across the region. Ranges from House of Ruhr, the Sunderland based supplier of award-winning handcrafted spirits and liqueur distilled by artisans in the Ruhr Valley, Germany will be stocked. Alongside, Northumberland drinks firm Artisan Drinks whose well established tonic and mixer brand are stocked in bars such as the Dolce and Gabbana Martini bar in Milan.

Scott Wilson-Laing, Founder and Managing Director at WL Distillery said: "I'm all too aware how difficult the last year has been for businesses across the region and here at WL Distillery we managed to adapt our



business strategy like many others to field the pandemic. We have however, been able to benefit from strong growth which has been supported by securing an array of industry awards over the last few months.

The opening of the unit at the STACK Newcastle is a great opportunity to further build our visual presence and also a chance to work with key local suppliers and producers such as House of Ruhr and Artisan Drinks to showcase the great range of products supplied in the North East.

Alongside established brands the site aims to showcase and work with up and coming brands and producers and act as a platform to show the very best in what is available."

## FORMER ART GALLERY MANAGER LAUNCHES NEW CAFÉ VENTURE AT THRIVING JESMOND BUSINESS HUB

An art graduate and former gallery curator has reapplied her artistic flair and follow her passions to open Burds, an all-day brunch and coffee specialist situated in Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Sarah Tod, formerly Assistant Manager of Castle Fine Art Gallery in Newcastle city centre, has launched Burds, a café and coffee shop with a commitment to providing excellent quality, locally sourced food and drink, named due to its location on Burdon Terrace in Jesmond.

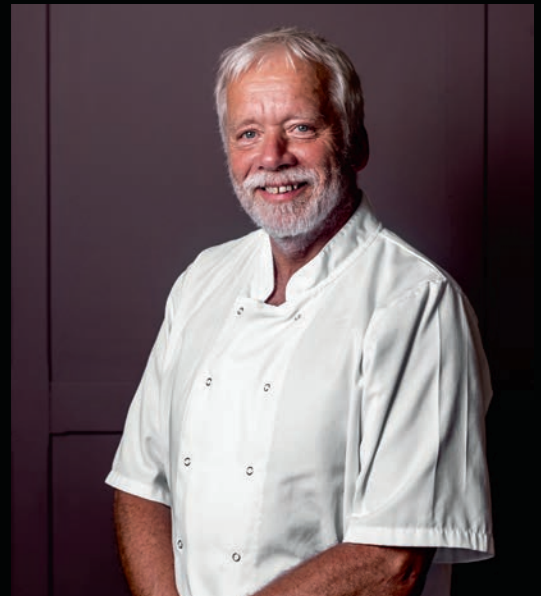
Burds is set to be a big hit with guests keen to sample the all-day brunch menu created by popular local chef Ross Sinclair, formerly of Kith & Kin in Whitley Bay, including dishes such as 'Eggs Benny', nduja baked eggs with goats' cheese, fennel and Spanish



toast and their best-selling beetroot and goat's cheese salad.

Burds is situated in the redeveloped Gatehouse at the entrance to Adderstone Group's Fleming building in Jesmond. The Gatehouse is Grade II listed and has undergone a sensitive refurbishment and extension, including restoration of the original brick walls, stone steps and exposed timber trusses. The café has seating within and also hosts a generous outside patio dining area.

Sarah, originally from Carlisle but now from Jesmond, said: "It has always been a passion of mine to set up a café like Burds. I loved my time with the gallery but when this opportunity arose, I knew I had to take it."



## AWARD-WINNING HEAD CHEF JOINS AWARD-WINNING WEDDING VENUE

Award winning North East wedding venue, Ellingham Hall, has welcomed a new Executive Head Chef, John Blackmore, as it prepares to reopen after the pandemic.

John Blackmore is an award winning chef who has cooked for the Queen, and helped Newcastle United become the first premier league club to feature in the Good Food Guide.

John began his illustrious career after scooping two 'outstanding student of the year' awards at college. John became an apprentice at the Intercontinental Hotel, London's Park Lane, and was awarded the Intercontinental Hotel global 'Best apprentice chef of the year' award.

After working in a number of hotels across the continent, John moved to the North East and set up Blackmore's Narrowgate with his wife Penny. John's culinary expertise saw Blackmore's Narrowgate awarded 'county restaurant of the year' within its first year of trading. John said "To be awarded county restaurant of the year was such a proud achievement. We were up against some amazing restaurants in Northumberland". It was at this time that John really managed to put Alnwick on the culinary map.

John and Penny went on to own the Tankerville Arms, Eglington, before John began a career at Newcastle United. It was during this time, as Head Chef of the Maggie Restaurant, that John gained the biggest achievement of his career to date. When talking about his time at the football club John remembers "I was chosen to cook for the Queen, and that is the highlight of my career. It was in 1997 when the Queen opened the Siemens factory, and was received by Sir John Hall for lunch. She was a really nice person and it was such an honour to be chosen to cook for her".

General Manager David Fordham-Scott said "I know first hand that John is a chef of the highest calibre, and I am very much enjoying working with him again. The rest of the Team are thrilled to welcome John to Ellingham Hall. He brings a wealth of experience and exciting ideas with him."

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# SPREAD YOUR WINGS AT THE BLACKBIRD By Holly Grahamslaw.



On a lazy Sunday afternoon, I recently visited the Blackbird pub with my partner Josh to sample their renowned Sunday lunch offering. Situated in the heart of Ponteland, the Blackbird acts as a real hub within the community, catering for both locals and out-of-town customers alike.

Originally a castle built in the 14th century, the rural pub upholds many charming features, including slanted ceilings, historical artwork and rustic decor, whilst promoting a cosy, comfortable atmosphere, with snug booths, ambient lighting and brickwork fireplaces. The pub also benefits from a large outdoor beer garden, which caters for al-fresco dining and drinks within the summer months.

During our visit, we enjoyed our Sunday lunch in the venue's dining area, which is set aside from the main bar and offers a more luxurious and intimate dining experience. With beamed ceilings, plush leather seating and historical features, this is a character-filled space which promotes feelings of comfort and relaxation. Feeling thirsty, we decided to kick off proceedings with a bottle of Via Nova Pinot Grigio Blush from the pub's expertly crafted wine list, although customers can also delight in the range of delicious beers and real ales available.

At the Blackbird, the menu is subject to seasonal change, although diners can expect the usual country pub favourites, including beer battered haddock & chips, hearty sandwiches and tasty meats & pies. The real treat at the Blackbird, however, is the attention to detail provided by Head Chef Ralph and his team, as the kitchen prides itself on delivering exquisite, high-quality food combined with a contemporary twist. The venue's Sunday lunch offering is equally impressive, with a range of roasts and unique dishes available. This is indeed gastropub dining at its absolute finest.

Having worked up an appetite, we were delighted by the arrival of our starters. Josh sampled the tempura king prawns served with a tangy sweet

chilli dip and fresh side salad, whilst I decided to try something a little different with the ham hock & cheddar croquettes. Coated in breadcrumbs and filled with lots of creamy goodness, the croquettes were served with pea shoots and a zingy burnt onion ketchup. The starters proved both flavoursome and nutritious and awoke the palate in anticipation for our mains.

Following on, we both opted for the traditional Sunday roast, accompanied by the usual fixtures & fittings including crispy roasties, Yorkshire pudding and fresh vegetables. Meat lovers will certainly find their home at the Blackbird as customers can choose from a range of meats, including roast leg of lamb, topside of beef and a vegetarian nut roast. On this occasion, I devoured the breast of chicken, which paired nicely with a generous helping of creamy cauliflower cheese. Josh meanwhile tackled the hearty trio of meats, which included beef, pork and turkey – wowza! Drowned in lashings of gravy, the roasts offered both quantity and quality and were indeed some of the best we had ever tasted.

Despite feeling fullish, we were eager to sample the pub's dessert selection. I enjoyed the rich warm chocolate brownie and pistachio ice cream, whilst Josh gorged on the sweet sticky toffee pudding, served with butterscotch sauce, honeycomb and vanilla ice cream. Both desserts were extremely tasty and satisfying, and rounded off a thoroughly pleasant meal at the Blackbird.

All in all, the Blackbird combines hearty pub dining with a modern, luxurious twist, making it the ideal location for both family meals and romantic occasions. Throughout our meal, we also noted the excellent service provided by the venue's friendly



staff, which made it clear why the Blackbird is a firm favourite among diners in Ponteland.

The venue also offers a plethora of choice from its takeaway menu, so customers can enjoy the Blackbird's delicious dishes and Sunday lunch from the comfort of their own home. With lockdown restrictions now eased, however, if you want to spread your wings, the Blackbird provides the perfect place.

**The Blackbird can be found at North Road, Ponteland, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE20 9UH. For more information, visit [www.theblackbirdponteland.co.uk](http://www.theblackbirdponteland.co.uk) or call 01661 822684.**





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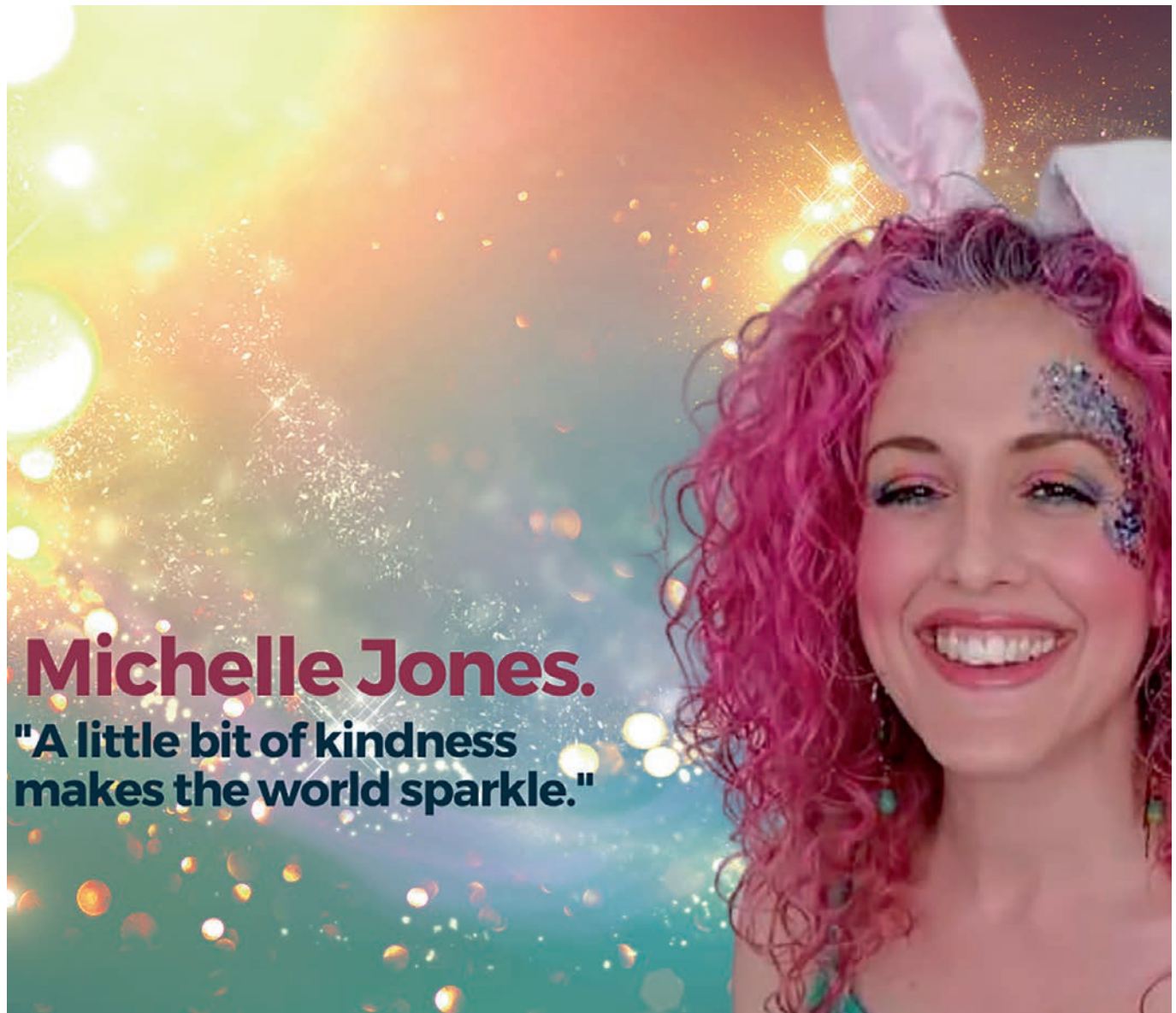
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# Michelle Jones.

**"A little bit of kindness makes the world sparkle."**

## DO YOU IDENTIFY AS DISABLED?

A question that I have struggled with throughout my adult life, not wanting to accept my situation as I saw it, as a negative.

**In the development of the idea for Kind Currency I started to share my story. Who I am and my journey so people understand 'why' Kind Currency. Some call it 'personal brand' but as I'm not skilled at branding, marketing, or social media, it's just me talking to you, being open and honest.**

Since the day I realised I needed to 'put myself out there' to develop this start-up; unlike my wedding consultancy business where I've hid for years behind the beauty of love; opportunities have presented.

Opportunities where my 'negative' situation could make an impact, create challenge, and deliver change. Most of these opportunities I have found scary as they've mostly been about sharing my story deeper and to a wider audience. I could run away and hide but that isn't going to help anyone, and I so badly want to help so many and ultimately be a voice to help society

be kinder and more inclusive.

In January, Small Business Britain started a new campaign to shine a spotlight on Disabled Entrepreneurs called d:Entrepreneur 'a disability does not define who you are', they approached me about a blog for their campaign about being a Disabled Entrepreneur. That question, do you identify as disabled?

I am proud to say, Yes, I do. I am proud to have accepted my chronic illnesses and invisible disabilities and to have moved forward positively creating a life under and over the obstacles.

Society for so long had skewed my own perception, companies being employers, played a major role in my negativity towards my own situation. I was embarrassed and scared and felt, well, worthless. Over the years, however, I have been educated through my own experience along with being inspired by others; the conversation to challenge and change society's

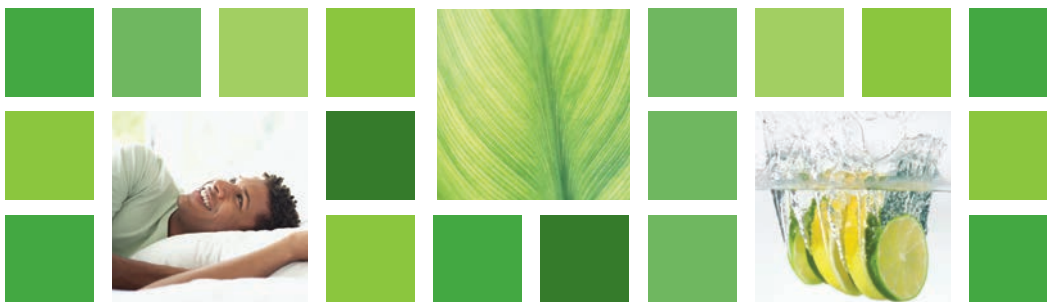
perception of disability and most importantly, the person, is very much needed!

On paper I am unemployable, but the truth is so far removed from this. Beyond the disability are individuals with so much talent, not just because of who we are but also because we have developed incredible skills and experience through living a life with disability. We are super resilient and are an asset to society.

Of course, living a life with chronic illness and invisible disabilities is challenging but it is certainly not negative, in fact my life is beautiful, and I feel privileged and grateful for the experience.

**Michelle Jones, Founder of Kind Currency,**  
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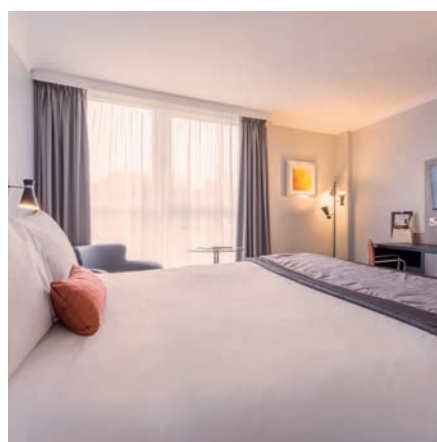
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#### Leisure Facilities

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- Fully equipped gym
- Sauna
- Steam room
- Whirlpool
- Beauty salon\*\*

#### Dining/Entertainment

- The Open Lobby has been introduced to reflect the way people live and work today. It combines the front desk, lobby, restaurant, bar, lounge area and business centre into open space:
- To Go Cafe: Offers quick take away food and drinks 24 hours a day which proudly serves starbucks.
- Bar: Our high tables that join onto the bar are great for single travellers.
- Dining Area: The Open Lobby dining is flexible and relaxed with a range of seating options, including high and low tables and booths, to suit guests' needs.
- All Day Dining: We offer 24/7 dining options which mirror high street dining and pricing.
- Media Lounge: Replaces the traditional bar area, and is designed like a laid-back living room with comfy seating.
- The E bar: A great space to work or just get connected with lots of power points, wireless printer and more.
- Pop-Up Lounge: This semi private meeting area can be reserved for free, with comfy seating and a large TV where guests can plug in and show films and presentations.



#### Holiday Inn Newcastle - Gosforth Park

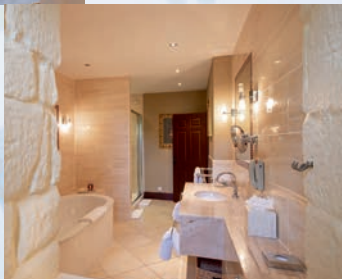
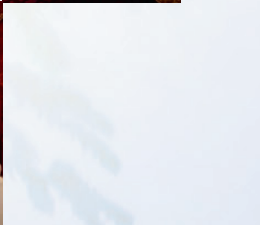
Great North Road, Seaton Burn, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE13 6BP

**T:** 0191 2019988 | **F:** 0191 236 8091 | **E:** [info@hinewcastlegosforthpark.co.uk](mailto:info@hinewcastlegosforthpark.co.uk) | **W:** [www.hinewcastlegosforthpark.co.uk](http://www.hinewcastlegosforthpark.co.uk)

\*Usage restrictions apply

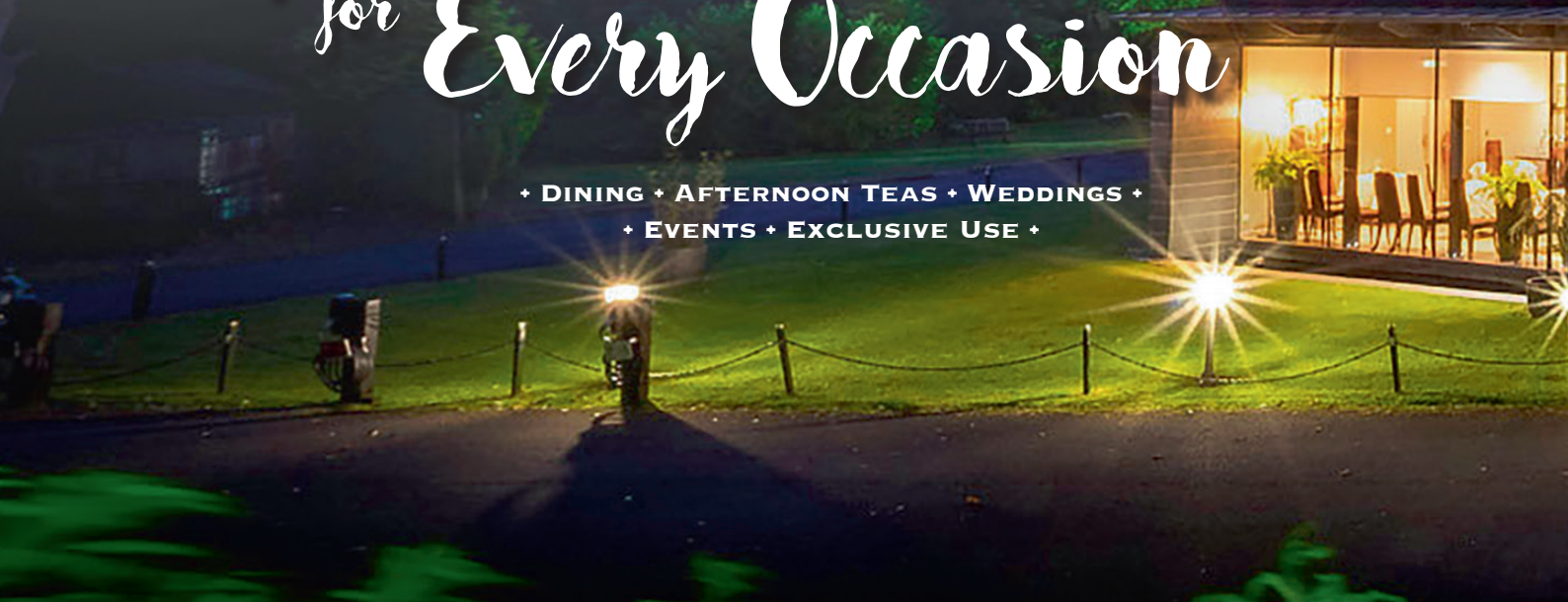
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# MEET THE STACK RETAILERS

Stack Newcastle has become a powerhouse of its own making in recent years. The popular haunt is better known for its late-night antics and unrivalled street food, but nestled among the exterior units of Stack are an abundant of independent and bustling small retailers – offering the very best in their craft.



**If you'd rather enjoy your poison of choice at home look no further, for W L Distillery have arrived. This Durham based distillery have chosen to set up shop in the heart of Newcastle, stocking their own range of award-winning gins alongside other local up and coming brands from across the region.**

Perhaps personal pampering is on your mind, then Stack is your go to for some brow maintenance, lash extension or a splash of luxurious perfume. New comer Get Glam have recently set up their salon in Unit 28 to offer a wide range of beauty treatments so you can keep on top of your personal maintenance. Their services include, threading, tinting, waxing and HD brows - everything to keep those brows on point and eyes popping.

Follow the scent of luxurious Amber and Oudh and you'll find Luxury Scent, fine purveyors of authentic and alcohol-free perfumes. Indulge in their wide range of body and home fragrances, combined with the finest of notes not often found elsewhere.

Much sought after services can also be found within Stack Newcastle's growing directory of independent businesses. For the tech-savvy, or should we say unlucky... Device Care are on hand to rescue when disaster strikes. Specialising in mobile, tablet and PC repairs, expect nothing but unrivalled customer service and fast repairs.

From hardware to dresswear, Stack Newcastle is also home to tailoring service, Golden Stitch. With express alterations at the hands of experienced owner Ali, your garments will be ready and waiting before you've even finished that first drink in Stack's Plaza.

New kids on the block, Pods & Salts, have a strong focus on providing the best pod systems, nic-salts and a wide range of CBD products to interested customers. With CBD a growing trend in holistic health and lifestyle, you'll be sure to find the very best in CBD liquids, bath bombs, face masks and drinks within their unit.

They say retail therapy is the best therapy, but that's before anyone's had the chance to sample SecretTaart's selection of cakes and patisserie delights. The love and passion project of Patricia Marques – SecretTaart is renowned for its elegant, luxury edible gifts that leave a lasting memory long after the final bite.

And if you've room for more, Stack is also home to the UK's Bubble Tea Kit specialists, Manhua Cha! Created by bubble tea lovers Carine and Dave, their vision was to provide one of a kind, comic themed bubble tea – taking a delicious hidden gem from the streets of China Town and sharing the fun of popping fruity juice balls with all.

If bubble tea doesn't hit the spot, then maybe a shot or two of coffee will. Stack Newcastle's resident coffee shop, Coffee YOLO, is open everyday bringing you some of the most delicious tray baked treats and most importantly a flat white to knock your socks off. The sister brand of YOLO Townhouse has become a regular favourite for city workers and morning commuters - but the real show stopper is their amazing signature hot chocolates that are perfect for those Instagrammable pics!

Every home deserves a touch of greenery, and that's certainly the main ethos of the mother and daughter duo who have decided to root their brand – Plantopia - within Stack. With a corner, glass-fronted at the bottom of Northumberland St, you'd be easily mistaken for thinking Stack has turned its fingers to a spot of greenhouse gardening. Specialising in indoor plants of all shapes and sizes, the lovely ladies at Plantopia have all the knowledge and care, whether your fingers are green or you're just starting on your horticulture journey.

**Stack Newcastle is open every day 10am – 12midnight. All retailers are independent and therefore opening hours may vary. Please check their social media pages for more information.**









# MY WEEKEND

## CHRISTIAN ROWE

Managing Director of Executive Compass and is based in Newcastle at Hoult's Yard.

Christian oversees the preparation of bids and selection questionnaires for its clients which range from owner-managed SME businesses to multi-national companies.

Here he tells us about his weekends.

### Do you ever have to work weekends?

I don't have to, but I often choose to. Thankfully I enjoy my job, so time spent crunching numbers, looking at draft tender responses, or getting ahead for the following week is always a pleasure. Responding to occasional weekend calls from a potential new customer is always appreciated by them. The Executive Compass client base includes many SMEs whose owners often work weekends themselves and look for urgent help when writing tenders. We've built some great long-term relationships through being highly responsive at times when people don't always expect an answer!

### Are most weekends the same?

For me during the pandemic they probably were! I became obsessed with walking and most Saturday mornings involved a trek with my wife to a coffee shop and back; then I'd watch my son play football, before dashing off to either play cricket or watch more football. Sundays are a bit quieter; I always start with Andrew Marr and a nice breakfast then more family time with a walk before lunch. Sunday afternoon is often spent working, interspersed with some televised sport before a relaxing evening with a bottle of wine. I enjoy the odd theatre trip, cinema visit, football away trip, or live music somewhere and we like to go walking in Northumberland or the Lake District around Penrith – where my wife grew up.

### Do you find it hard to switch off?

Sometimes when I have some pressing decisions on my mind it is hard to switch off but often, I don't really try to switch off – as I said earlier, I enjoy my job! Some of my best ideas come to me when walking the dog or playing cricket!



Christian Rowe

Photo: dwmedia

### What do you do at a weekend which you can't fit in through the week?

Studying mainly – I'm just finishing off a two-year part-time MBA with Durham University. The course has been excellent, and I've learnt a lot, but the extensive reading and assignments take up a lot of time.

### Morning exercise or a recovery lie in?

A bit of both! I'm not a fan of gyms or jogging and so my mornings tend to include a short lie in and then some light exercise to wake me up. Bobby, our dog is 11 years old now and a half hour stroll is sufficient for him, which suits me.

### Do you prefer a big night out or a night in the house?

Definitely a night in the house – with some decent red wine or craft beer watching some rubbish on Netflix, or losing at scrabble to my children. Not sure I can remember what a big night out is!

### Do you watch or play sport at a weekend?

Cricket is my main sporting activity – I play for Kirkley in the Northumberland League and the game takes up most of the afternoon and evening. We do play some midweek cricket, but the longer weekend game is more enjoyable and less frantic – including the dash to the ground for 6pm midweek starts. I wish I had time for golf as well as I really enjoy that but just can't find the time.

### Where do you like to eat out at a weekend?

Great question, there's so many good local restaurants in and around Newcastle! My favourites include Francesca's in Jesmond, the Blackbird in Ponteland and San Lorenzo on Gosforth High Street, with a special mention to the Valley Junction also in Jesmond which serves the tastiest and freshest curries!

### How important is the weekend to you?

It is very important – Friday night takeaways with the wife and children, looking back at the week and catching up together is an important time – then me being a taxi driver for their activities is equally important to them!

### What's the best thing about weekends?

Time with the family, nice meals, pleasant walks, and thinking time alone on the cricket pitch for me!

### Of a weekend, you'll usually find me most happy...?

Opening the batting (hopefully still at the crease!) looking out toward the Cheviots at Kirkley Cricket Club with the ground looking resplendent and not a cloud in the sky!

To find out more about how Executive Compass can help your business, contact [Christian@executivecompass.co.uk](mailto:Christian@executivecompass.co.uk) [www.executivecompass.co.uk](http://www.executivecompass.co.uk)



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## THE EAGLES HAVE LANDED

They're the driving force behind the Vertu Motors Arena – the North East's most vibrant and versatile new venue. We talked to Eagles Community Foundation CEO Sam Blake and her multi-talented colleagues.

It was Ruth Bader Ginsburg who said 'women belong in all places where decisions are being made'. Step inside the impressive foyer of the Vertu Motors Arena, home to the Eagles Community Foundation (ECF) and Newcastle Eagles Basketball Club, and it's immediately obvious that many of the key decision makers here are women.



L-R: Taylor Rendles, Sam Blake, Susan Hunter, Rachel Sweeney.





Maddy McVicar in action for Newcastle Eagles WBBL team last season behind-closed-doors.

Vocal ECF Chief Executive Officer Sam Blake leads from the front. The former Olympic swimmer oversees every aspect of a slick operation that puts the Vertu Motors Arena front and centre of the local community and pitches the vibrant venue as the new home for large scale sporting competitions, high profile corporate events and, most recently, as an accessible and welcoming Covid vaccination centre.

Then there's Susan Hunter. Back in the late 90s, one of the most familiar faces on the North East basketball scene went from wide-eyed fan to junior coach before becoming a key cog in the wheel of a community sport programme that continues to go from strength to strength. The ECF's Chief Operations Officer has been there, done that and worn the tee shirt during a two-decade association with the Eagles.

In 2019 Rachel Sweeney joined from Close House Golf Club as Events, Food and Beverage Manager and don't forget Taylor Rendles. Once a shy and retiring apprentice, the ECF administrative officer and coach has risen through the ranks to take



L-R: Rachel Sweeney, Sam Blake, Taylor Rendles, Susan Hunter.

on increased responsibility across the board — organising everything from player and coach diaries to the day-to-day running of the Vertu Motors Arena.

"There's been a renewed focus on women in sport in recent years and the #ThisGirlCan campaign proved to be really effective in terms of encouraging increased female participation," said Sam.

"But we provide opportunities for girls and women at the Vertu Motors Arena from top to bottom, on and off the court. The management team of the ECF is female-led and we're proud of the fact that so many women are key decision makers within the organisation.

"On the court the Newcastle Eagles WBBL team had a fantastic run to the Playoff final last season — the biggest game in the women's basketball calendar in this country — and won thousands of new fans across the country on the back of some amazing performances live on Sky Sports.

"They're a real focus for the club and the ECF this season. Again, they represent strong female role models on and off the court and can inspire girls to pursue their dual career dreams."

Maddy McVicar is a compelling case in point. The US college graduate made her debut for Newcastle Eagles WBBL last season and will head up the ECF's ground-breaking STEM project this year — encouraging young people to get excited about science.

"Maddy's completing her Master's degree in Mechanical Engineering at Northumbria University and returning to the WBBL team," added Sam. "We feel she can really break down the stereotype of what a scientist is and she's a great role model for aspirational women across the North East."

For Susan, the chance to be part of a proactive team willing to enable positive change is an opportunity she relishes. "It's a privilege working at the Vertu Motors Arena," she said. "Finding and owning a permanent home for the ECF seemed like a pipe dream for so many years but Sam and Paul Blake (MD, Newcastle Eagles) put their heart and soul into making this happen.

"I can remember the first day I walked through the doors at the start of 2019. I experienced feelings of joy and trepidation because we'd never run our own building before.

"Fast forward to the summer of 2021 and we've staged international sport, hosted major

conferences, welcomed thousands of kids through the doors and operated within a global pandemic.

"In the last 12 months we've been home to a food bank, delivered sports packs to under-privileged communities, opened up as a testing centre and, most recently, become an NHS vaccination centre.

"We always knew we could be a hub for community sport. Who knew we could do so much more?"

Taylor readily admits she never believed her time with the ECF would extend beyond a week. Ten years down the line and she's yet another shining example of the strong female presence underpinning an ambitious and forward-thinking organisation.

"I wasn't very confident at all when I was first offered a job at the ECF," she admitted.

"Slowly but surely I came out of my shell. I was encouraged to take on more responsibility and I was supported every step of the way.

"In the last 10 years I've done anything and everything...from working behind the bar to setting up match night equipment and from erecting NHS pods to organising player visits to schools.

"It's been a whirlwind and a steep learning curve but I've loved every minute."

Given her team's growing experience, resilience and confidence it's little wonder Sam sees the Vertu Motors Arena going from strength to strength.

"We're ready for anything," she added. "Earlier this summer we hosted 16 of the best men's and women's basketball teams in the country across four days at a time when strict Covid protocols were still in place.

"A few weeks later we had a thousand boxing fans inside the main arena and both events were live on Sky Sports. The pressure was on but once again we showcased just what a fantastic facility we have here.

"Right now we're talking to all kinds of entertainment-focused and corporate clients, as well as welcoming back our community groups post-lockdown. Our ambition is to make the Vertu Motors Arena the go-to destination for indoor events on Tyneside and I have the team to make that happen."

**To find out more about the Vertu Motors Arena and hosting your next event or meeting at the venue visit [vertumotorsarena.com](https://www.vertumotorsarena.com)**



# DRINK IN THE HISTORY AT NEWCASTLE'S NEWEST CAFÉ BAR

5|Quarter at The Common Room, Newcastle upon Tyne.  
Newcastle's newest café bar has opened in the grand surroundings  
of one of the city's most important historic buildings.

**5|Quarter café bar has opened within The Common Room on Westgate Road – a building which was formerly known as the Mining Institute and which has recently opened its doors after a two-year refurbishment.**

Liz Mayes, Chief Executive of The Common Room, explains: "5|Quarter is packed with features that give clues as to the story of The Common Room, which was originally built in the 1800s as the headquarters of The North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers.

"So as you look around, you'll spot golden pineapple chandeliers inspired by those which once hung in The Wood Hall and beer mats featuring one of the Northern coalfields, and you will be walking in the footsteps of some of our region's engineering greats, who spearheaded innovations that changed the world. We're proud of our region's heritage and wanted to create a space that showcases that – as well as offering a fabulous array of food and drinks!"

5|Quarter takes its name from a seam of coal which was worked by miners in North East pits and it is located on the ground floor of The Common Room, just moments away from Newcastle Central station.

Assistant Food and Beverage Manager, PJ Percy, who has previously won numerous cocktail competitions including two North East Bartender Awards and also a Special Recognition Award for Outstanding Contribution to the North East LGBT Community, said: "Joining this inclusive team means the world to me and new ventures are always so exciting. To see 5|Quarter grow into the vision we had at the planning stages in such a short space of time makes you proud of the team's achievements."

Opening in time for breakfast and staying open until late, 5|Quarter offers a range of beers, wines and cocktails inspired by the North East's mining heritage – including the specially-created Graft and Glory cocktail, which celebrates the pioneering engineers that invented, innovated and campaigned to make mining safer, from the very building you can step inside today. Food options such as sharing boards and tapas will be developed over the summer and an outside terrace is coming soon.

As well as 5|Quarter, spaces within The Common Room include the spectacular Victorian Wood Hall with magnificent vaulted ceiling and stained glass windows, which is available to hire for weddings and events, and the Edwardian Lecture Theatre, built to deliver ground-breaking lectures on engineering in the 19th century and now offering the perfect setting for presentations.

**5|Quarter is open from 8.30am until late, Monday to Friday, and from 10am until late on Saturdays.**

**Find 5|Quarter on Facebook and Instagram as '5 Quarter Café Bar', and on Twitter at @5QuarterBar.**



*The Common Room of the Great North was established in 2017 to manage the redevelopment and refurbishment of the former Mining Institute building following an award from The National Lottery Heritage Fund of £4.1m towards the initial project costs of £7.1m. Further funding to reflect the project costs due to the pandemic have seen a grant increase of £950,000 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund and £440,000 from other sources. The revised project costs due to covid-19 now stand at £8.9m of which c£1.2m is left to raise.*

*The Common Room, Neville Hall, Westgate Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1SE.*









## Bob's Dad's Secret Chicken Curry

### Ingredients

3 medium chopped onions  
2 mild green chillies  
3 medium chicken breasts  
Tin chopped tomatoes  
2 large potatoes  
Tub natural yoghurt  
Coriander stalks  
Vegetable oil  
Fresh ginger  
Salt  
Haldi  
Chilli powder  
Garam masala  
Dry fenugreek  
Tomato purée

### Cooking method

- Warm 2 table spoons of oil
- Once hot add chopped onions
- Keep stirring until onions become translucent
- Add finely chopped green chillies, ginger and salt
- Add a teaspoon of haldi, keep stirring
- Add half a tea spoon of chilli powder and garam masala
- Once all spices have been stirred add chopped tomatoes
- Add diced potatoes, once 50% cooked add diced chicken
- Add some crushed dry fenugreek once chicken is cooked
- Add a table spoon of tomato purée
- Add half a tub of yoghurt
- Garnish with some fresh chopped coriander and ginger



## Mama Arora's Curry

### Ingredients

4 chicken breasts\*  
2 large onions  
Tin chopped tomatoes  
Garlic & ginger paste  
Fresh coriander  
Haldi  
Chilli powder  
Garam masala  
Salt  
Channa masala  
Dry fenugreek  
Cumin powder  
Coriander powder  
Chilli flakes  
Ground fennel seeds  
Tomato purée

### Cooking method

- Finely chop two onions
- Warm two table spoons of vegetable oil in a pan
- Once hot add the onions
- Keep stirring until they are golden brown
- Add a table spoon of garlic ginger paste (equal amounts of garlic and ginger puréed with a touch of water)
- Then add the tomatoes, keep stirring and try and mash the tomatoes up so you get a nice thick masala, at this point add some salt to taste, I would put a pinch or two of salt
- You may need to add some water at this point, might be worth adding about 250ml
- Add 1 tea spoon of haldi and mix into masala
- Add 1 tea spoon of chilli powder and mix into masala
- Add 1 tea spoon of garam masala and mix into masala
- Add 1 tea spoon of channa masala and mix into masala
- Now add a pinch of chilli flakes, pinch of fennel powder and a pinch of coriander powder
- Add your diced chicken and keep stirring until the chicken has cooked
- Once it's cooked add a small handful of dry fenugreek, remember to rub it together and crush it into the masala.
- Add a tea spoon of tomato purée and mix into the dish
- Finally add some chopped coriander to the dish

\*This recipe can be used for beef, lamb, fish or even vegetables







## A WALTON & SUTHERLAND WEDDING

Whether it's your big day, or you're a guest that needs a suit to last through a busy wedding season, Walton & Sutherland make wedding dressing simple and sophisticated.

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## NORTHUMBERLAND GOLF CLUB CAPTAIN'S COCKTAIL PARTY

Tim Weightman, Captain of Northumberland Golf Club was delighted to hold their annual Cocktail Party on Wednesday 28th July.

Over 120 guests attended the club's first indoor event since lockdown and enabled prize giving for Captains Day and the Club Championship.

The event was also an opportunity to welcome new members to the club.

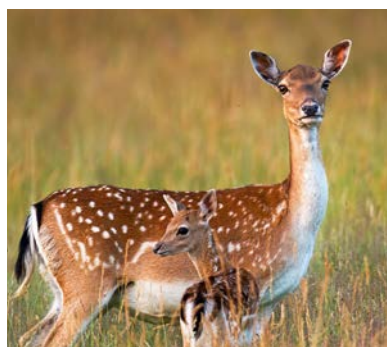






# *Championships, Challenge & Charm. New members welcome*

## **The Northumberland Golf Club**



Founded in 1898, **The Northumberland Golf Club** is steeped in golfing history, designed in golf's Golden Age by Colt and Braid, the world famous golf architects. The friendly club regularly hosts national and regional championships, including the Open Regional Qualifier.

Its challenging course set in and alongside Newcastle Racecourse, is constantly evolving but is still accessible to a wide range of golfers. It is a pleasure to play all year round.

Please get in touch on 0191 236 2498 or visit



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**Northumberland**  
GOLF CLUB





## ON THE TEE BOX - TYNESIDE GOLF CLUB

### Setting

Tucked away in tranquil surroundings perched high on the 'Falls' of old Ryton Village, about 10 miles west of Newcastle City Centre. It enjoys magnificent views over the River Tyne and the beautiful Tyne Valley.

### Length of course

White: 6068 Yellow: 5825 Red: 5481  
Par 70 for Gents Par 73 for Ladies

### Course Type

Classic 'Harry Colt' in design and layout. Parkland but blessed by nature with a sand and gravel base that offers excellent drainage and all year-round playability. Every hole is unique and offers players a great variety of shots and views.

### Facilities

18 Hole course layout with historic pavilion clubhouse and bar.  
6 Hole Par 3 course  
Driving range  
Distance control area  
Practice short game and putting greens  
Pro Shop with Head PGA Professional Gary Vickers.

### Longest Drive

Visually impressive the elevated tee box of the Par 5 10th hole measures 501 yards and gives the longer hitters the opportunity to open their shoulders to carry the sneakily positioned ditch. Carry it and it will give you the chance to get on in two with another well struck shot.

### Toughest Hole

Nicknamed the 'coffin' for good reason, the Par 4 13th Hole measures 404 yards and starts with a narrow drive that forces players to make a strategic decision off the tee. Layup safely with an iron shot short of the trouble, but this will leave a blind approach, or take a driver to carry the narrow part of the fairway that will then if successful open up the green. Out of bounds all down the right-hand side acts as a magnet to many shots and certainly gets your attention for the full length of the hole. Narrow coffin shaped green (hence the nickname) means any pitch or approach shot must be accurate. A bogey is often a good score to move onto the next hole with.

### Signature Hole

Elevated Par 3 12th Hole measuring 177 from the back tees. Several tee box options are available to alter the hole length and view. If you aren't distracted by the magnificent views of the Tyne a well struck shot will get you nicely on to the green and a birdie opportunity awaits.

### Course Record

62

### Competitions

Historic members club that offers players a strong competition option for their membership. Full weekend and midweek fixture list that runs throughout the year, which is sure to satisfy even the most competitive of golfers.

### Prices

Summer Green fee £30.00  
Monday – Friday £35.00 Sunday  
Full membership £820.00  
6 & 5 Day membership options available along with intermediate and junior rates.

For further details contact: [peter.smith@tynesidegolfclub.co.uk](mailto:peter.smith@tynesidegolfclub.co.uk) [www.tynesidegolfclub.co.uk](http://www.tynesidegolfclub.co.uk)





## SOS GROUP STRENGTHENS SUPPORT FOR BLYTH SPARTANS

Office technology company, SOS Group, is proud to be renewing its support for Blyth Spartans this year and the firm's directors have been among the crowds enjoying a very positive pre-season for the club.

For a third time, SOS Group is proud to be the club's shirt sleeve sponsor and they have also increased their pitch-side advertising. The Team Valley-based company is also continuing to provide a photocopier and laser printer to assist with retail operations and match day administration at Croft Park.

Based on the Team Valley, SOS Group has numerous clients in Northumberland and a strong reputation in the sports industry.

In recent years it has provided digital office equipment services at competitions including the IAAF World Athletics Championships, the Special Olympics GB National Games, British Swimming Summer Championships and World Para Athletics Championships.

The company also works closely with start-up businesses to provide expert office services support and advice.

Andrew Skelton, director at SOS Group, says: "We're extremely proud of our association with Blyth Spartans and it really means something to us seeing our name on the shirts when the players run out."



## NEWCASTLE MILITARY STUDENTS MARCH TO GATESHEAD

Learners at a top Newcastle military training college have decamped to a new base, over the Tyne, at Gateshead.

MPCT Newcastle's Military Preparation College has moved from its previous home at Sandyford and will now conduct its programme at Gateshead College's Academy for Sport, at Gateshead International Stadium.

The move means that, along with enhanced learning and career opportunities, the MPCT students will have access to world class sports facilities.

MPCT Newcastle is one of 29 colleges across England and Wales, providing a range of academic, functional and health and fitness courses along with training in physical fitness, public speaking, and communication.

The colleges are unique in that all their instructors are ex-British Armed Forces personnel, who use their military backgrounds to help learners set and reach the targets that will progress them to their chosen careers.



## ELITE TOGETHER AIM TO DRIVE HEALTH AND FITNESS BUSINESS WITH THE APPOINTMENT OF TWO NEW DEPARTMENT HEADS

Weight loss, fitness and mindset specialists elite: Together have appointed a new Head of Sales, Julie Weir, who joins from financial advisors Joslin Rhodes, and a new Head of Marketing, Mark Robinson, who moves from North East drinks manufacturer Fentimans Ltd.

The aim of this new structure is to build on steady growth figures throughout the pandemic and expand their customer base within the North East and North Yorkshire. The Elite business model focuses on providing customers with expert advice and enjoyable weight loss solutions that will result in long lasting positive changes to their health and lifestyle.

The new department heads will be looking to secure additional customers and add to thousands of proven success stories through tailored online and studio coaching programmes that offer professional and comprehensive support. Clients that are successful in achieving their agreed goals, can reward themselves with a full refund on their training fees.

Founder of elite:, Paul Alexander, commented: "It's great to see the business moving in the right direction whilst simultaneously changing people's lives in the process. We regularly achieved great results from our studio programmes before and even throughout the pandemic when permitted, but between August 2020 to August 2021 whilst lockdowns were enforced, we also helped 780 people lose a combined 12,212lbs in weight through our online 'at home' classes - that's basically the same weight as 2 ½ Range Rovers! Our process works and we are the team that our customers can trust. The pandemic had a huge negative impact on a lot of people, so we're keen to share our message, attract more customers and help give them their confidence back to improve their quality of life."

As a result of the new partnership with Gateshead College, learners will be able to follow in the footsteps of the professional athletes who trained at Gateshead College's Academy for Sport.

They will also have regular access to the college's sports pitches, Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA) within the Academy for Sport's grounds and the 400m running track at Gateshead International Stadium.

There is also a sizeable outdoor area in which learners can hone their drills, displays and military skills.

MPCT Newcastle Regional Operations Manager, Laurence Corbett, said a key attraction of the new site was the further learning and career opportunities offered by the college.

"Gateshead College provides excellent progression routes for learners who don't join the British armed forces," he said.

"And, of course, the partnership works both ways, so learners at Gateshead College who wish to pursue a career in the military will have the opportunity to progress to MPCT in order to prepare for entry to the British Armed Forces."

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# NUFFIELD HEALTH NEWCASTLE STRENGTHENS ITS MANAGEMENT TEAM



L-R: Alex Seward, Sales and Services Manager, Caren Morrison, Matron and Phil Middleton, Hospital Director. Nuffield Health Newcastle Hospital is following Public Health England (PHE) Covid-19 guidance regarding the continued use of PPE within a hospital setting.

Nuffield Health Newcastle Hospital in Jesmond has strengthened its senior management team with two strategic appointments.

**Phil Middleton has been appointed as hospital director and Alex Seward as sales and services manager. The duo brings more than 40 years of healthcare and service expertise to the team.**

From Northumberland, Phil is a chartered accountant, spending most his career in the healthcare sector. He previously worked for Nuffield Health in the North and Midlands supporting hospitals and gyms with finance and commercial operations.

His new role focuses on all aspects of management, governance, development and service delivery within the hospital to ensure a safe, caring and person-centred service for patients.

Phil said: "Nuffield Health invest in and develop their staff at all levels and my own career has certainly progressed as a result of it. Having moved internally into regional and project roles, I'm glad to come back to Newcastle as hospital director and work with some of the same lovely staff and the best consultants in the region.

"Nuffield Health has played a big part in the response to the Coronavirus pandemic. During 2020 and into this year we have worked with the NHS to keep high priority services going when the main NHS hospitals were treating Covid patients.

"At Newcastle we supported Newcastle, Gateshead and Cumbria NHS Trusts with elective surgery and diagnostics. My first job is re-establishing our private services in a safe and structured way, managing the transition back to 'business as usual' for our consultants, staff and patients, in a safe Covid risk-managed environment."

Alongside Phil, is Alex Seward from Newcastle, a qualified physiotherapist, he has previously worked for Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Gateshead, Hartlepool United Football Club and Connect Health.

Before joining Nuffield Health Newcastle Hospital, Alex worked with the Care Coordination Centre on improving administrative pathways, on boarding new services and developing the links between the clinical and administrative sides of the business.

Alex said: "I am passionate about showcasing all of the good work that goes on here at the hospital. My focus is to create a platform to allow that to happen with an eye on the future in terms of developing current services and creating new pathways for patients.

"The whole team here have been amazing. I have felt so welcomed into the role and supported in my ideas to deliver important services to patients

across the region. It has been an extremely busy time for the hospital, having supported NHS activity for the past few months. The values of the staff and the morale of the teams are incredible to see."

Nuffield Health Newcastle upon Tyne Hospital has been providing private healthcare to people in the North East for over 40 years. Areas of specialty include cosmetic surgery, orthopaedics, male/female health, ophthalmology and weight loss surgery. It also provides a wide range of outpatient services and diagnostic scans. It has won Private Hospital Group of the Year at the Health Investor Awards on three occasions. The awards are designed to recognise outstanding contribution to healthcare through innovation and excellence in healthcare products and services.

Nuffield Health is a registered charity and the UK's leading independent provider of private healthcare. It currently runs 31 hospitals and 112 fitness clubs and diagnostic facilities located across the country to provide a cohesive approach to physical health and wellbeing.

**For more information, visit [www.nuffieldhealth.com](http://www.nuffieldhealth.com)**



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## WHAT'S YOUR IMMUNE AGE?

The last 18 months has shown us more than ever that we need to look after our immune system.

**How well you look after your immune system will determine how it and you will age. Recent studies have shown that our immune age is not necessarily the same as our actual age.**

Our immunity will decline with age, however, our lifestyles can determine how quick or slow this happens. Obesity, stress and excess alcohol can weaken our immune system whereas adopting healthy changes can help you turn back the clock and help you live longer.

With masks and social distancing about to become a personal choice, it's now more than ever that you need to look at boosting your immune system.

Here are a few examples to help you:

- Your immune system drops two to three percent every year from the age of 30. However, 125 long distance cyclists entered a study and they were shown to have immune systems equivalent to that of someone in their 20's. Therefore exercise is of huge benefit.
- Research showed those that walked 20 mins a day had 43% fewer sick days due to a common cold.
- Poor gut health can increase your immune age, therefore try to consume as many different plant foods as possible and keep your levels of protein up. A Mediterranean diet consisting of fruit, vegetables, wholegrains, oily fish and olive oil has a positive impact on aging cells.



David Fairlamb

- Exposure to cold temperatures has an anti aging effect, it can shock your system triggering a positive immune response.
- About one third of us are lacking in Vitamin D, it's not known as the sunshine vitamin for nothing. Make sure you expose as much of your skin as possible to soak in this very important vitamin. A lack of vitamin D has

shown to be linked to respiratory problems.

- Try to stick to regular sleeping patterns and aim, if possible, for at least seven hours. Our immune system fights infection and inflammation while we are asleep

[www.davidfairlambfitness.co.uk](http://www.davidfairlambfitness.co.uk)

## DAVID'S SUMMING UP

*Consistency in your training and life will promote results. Committing to a training regime and making it part of your life will help boost your immune system.*





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## BARRY SPEKER'S COMMENT

Was this what we were waiting for all these months? It arrived on Sunday 14 August. A crowd of 50,673 unmasked supporters watching Newcastle United lose 4-2 at home to West Ham. *NB: Chris and I were two of the few in masks.*

There was the excitement of a live match, Newcastle winning the first half and the England manager attending to see the talent on display. In fact Gareth was there to watch his godson Freddie Woodman making his premier league debut in goal for Newcastle - and Freddie nearly saved a penalty. A long hard season ahead but no pandemic as an excuse for not watching at SJP.

Our country's prominence in the world no longer derives from aspirations to remain a world power or our colonial legacy but from maintenance of English as the world's leading language, our greatest contribution to the world. Yet it seems that the creative contribution of 'British English' speakers to the vocabulary is diminishing and giving way to linguistic innovators in international call centres, technology and film franchises.

A report entitled 'The Rise and Fall of England as a Word Generator' finds our contribution is under 10% and falling. It is noted that the UK is now only the sixth largest country in which English is a common language - behind America, India, Pakistan, Nigeria and the Philippines.

Our language is being absorbed into 'global English' with a one million word vocabulary and perhaps the need for a lexicon in youthspeak. It is predicted that British English will survive in three places - the BBC World Service, the City of London and Buckingham Palace.

A storm has arisen alleging cultural appropriation of the 'Indian' curry. Chaheti Bansal (27), a Californian food blogger said in a video viewed 3.6 million times that the word 'curry' should be 'unlearned'; That it became prominent during British rule in India, an anglicised form of kari (sauce in Tamil), and was then adopted by the British East India Company.

In fact by the mid 18th century curries were being served in the coffee houses and restaurants of London. Queen Victoria was partial to a chicken curry with Dahl and pilau and in 2001, Robin Cook referred to chicken tikka masala as a true British national dish.



Barry Speker

Ms Bansal may not be familiar with Becky Sharp in Thackeray's Vanity Fair, tricking Jos into eating a fiercely hot curry saying 'I am sure everything must be good that comes from India'.

Indian food has infinite variety as I know from visiting many areas in India. The loose use of the word curry as a generic description may do no credit to this variety but it has been adopted with enthusiasm and affection by the many thousands regularly deciding whether to go out for a 'curry or a Chinese'. Do allegations of prolonging the evils of colonialism require us to talk of going out for 'Indian cuisine'. Must the Gosforth Curry Club change its name to the 'Gosforth South Asian Cuisine Club'?

The superb performance of Team GB in the Tokyo Olympics is rightly celebrated. It is the trigger for



similar financial support for the Paris Olympics in 2024 before which there may be a re-branding to Team UK in order to strengthen the Union - how about it Nicola?

At Eton, there may be concern, because their playing fields did not yield any medal winners for the first time in three decades. Old Etonians had won medals in the sitting-down sports (rowing, cycling, sailing and equestrianism) for at least seven Olympics in a row. They are obviously spending too much time producing politicians and Prime Ministers.

The new freedom and hot weather enabled the grandchildren's visit to the North East to include South Shields beach and funfair, Colmans Seafood Temple, The Sill and the Roman Wall at Steel Rigg, as well as the promised trip to St Mary's Lighthouse. Another memorable staycation.

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