

NORTHERN

# INSIGHT

NOVEMBER 2021

ISSUE 74



**ROYAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL NEWCASTLE -  
CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF CO-EDUCATION**

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

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# CREDITS

**Managing Director**

Michael Grahamslaw

**Design**

Lu O'Rourke

**Accounts Manager**

Lisa Grahamslaw

**Lead Photography**

Simon Williams (Crest Photography)

**Additional Photography**

Laurence Sweeney,

Matthew Redshaw

**Front Cover Photography**

Kevin Gibson, supplied by Royal Grammar School

**Editorial Contributors**

Jack Grahamslaw, Holly Grahamslaw,

Graham Courtney, Barry Speker, David Fairlamb,

Alex Nelson, Caroline Preston

**Social Media**

Daniela Silva (JAM Prints &amp; Marketing Limited)



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# FOREWORD

## Welcome to the November edition of Northern Insight.

As the night's inch in and the temperature bar plummets, we are delighted to bring you another jam-packed edition featuring the best of all the usual Northern Insight ingredients.

With the Autumn term in full swing, our cover stars are RGS Newcastle who celebrate 20 years of prestige co-education.

Elsewhere, life guru Steve Black shares his tips for combating the Winter blues and coping with the season challenges.

The 12th Anniversary of the ABConnexions annual dinner and Award Ceremony proved one of the highlights of the social calendar and we are pleased to bring you the social photographs from a glittering night for the Asian business community.

Finally, business improvement district NE1 reflect upon the Newcastle United takeover and what this represents for the club and its community.

All in all, much to enjoy over those dark winter nights.

Huge thanks to everyone who has contributed to what has been another hugely enjoyable issue to compile.

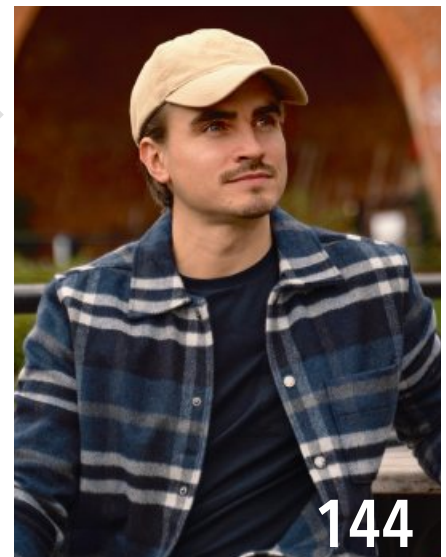
*Stay safe and well. Till next month...*

*M.J. Grahamslaw*

Michael Grahamslaw, Publisher  
[mjgrahamslaw@outlook.com](mailto:mjgrahamslaw@outlook.com)



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## DARLINGTON BUILDING SOCIETY NAMED BUILDING SOCIETY OF THE YEAR

Darlington Building Society was named Building Society of the Year at last night's MoneyAge Awards 2021.

The MoneyAge Awards celebrate the excellence, innovation, and professionalism in the personal finance space.

Christopher White, Chief Financial Officer at Darlington Building Society accepted the award and said: "It's a privilege to be named Building Society of the Year at this year's MoneyAge Awards. The event always showcases the most innovative ideas from across the financial services sector, and is fantastic to be a part of it.

"Darlington Building Society has gone from strength to strength despite challenging market conditions. Our first half results for 2021 were really positive. Our open for business approach during the pandemic, and wider members first ethos, provided our members with reassuring stability and a sense of connectivity at a time when the world was physically distanced.



## SUNDERLAND EMPLOYMENT RATE SET TO INCREASE POST-PANDEMIC

Sunderland is set to see employment rise post-pandemic, according to a new study released by Big Four accounting giant KPMG.

The report highlights how Covid-19 will permanently change the UK business landscape, with Sunderland listed as one of the cities expected to benefit, with a potential 1.2% rise in employment.

The increase is expected due to businesses adapting to new working environments and shifting to larger business hubs in desirable areas as a result of increased home working.

Having attracted Just Eat and additional investment from Envision AESC to the city in recent months - each of which will create hundreds of jobs - Sunderland is already providing significant employment opportunities to residents and serving as an engine of economic growth in the North East.

Councillor Graeme Miller, leader of Sunderland City Council, said: "Sunderland is undergoing major transformation and it's no surprise that we are set to see an increase in employment with our changing skyline and continued investment from global brands.



## BUSINESSES UNITE TO BACK WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

One of the country's fastest-growing sports is experiencing a post-lockdown boost thanks to a committed community of like-minded businesses.

Women's basketball is taking the UK by storm following the return of top-flight action to Sky Sports and the progress of the GB national team.

And hopes are high that the home nations' participation in next summer's Commonwealth Games will further elevate the sport's profile.

Newcastle Eagles boast some of the most exciting homegrown talents and overseas stars in the Women's British Basketball League (WBBL).

And a slew of early adopters from the local business community is backing a new-look roster following last season's run to the Play-Offs final.

"Last season was an historic one for our club as the women's team reached its first final as Newcastle Eagles WBBL," said Dan Black, Newcastle Eagles Sales and Communications Manager.

"Going into the 2021-22 season with an extended and increased level of support from the North East business community is a massive boost.

## EMG SOLICITORS CONTINUES TO GROW

A North East firm of solicitors is celebrating its continued success, with further recruitment and plans to open a third office.

EMG Solicitors, based in both Durham and Gosforth, Newcastle, is now to expand its area of operations, with the news it intends to launch a branch in the Lake District.

And the move comes hot on the heels of the practice receiving its first ever top tier ranking in the Legal 500 for its work in Tax, Trusts and Probate, with managing director, Emma Gaudern, once again listed as a "leading individual."



The practice has continued to grow, having doubled its number of team members to 73 in the past two years.

Emma Gaudern said "Last year we took on 23 new team members and are continuing to expand.

I've been delighted with the quality of candidates wishing to work with us since introducing our trainee recruitment scheme and I am looking forward to helping create the new generation of legal professionals at EMG."

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## CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE SET TO CREATE 350 NEW JOBS IN SUNDERLAND

A fast-growing customer service business is set to create more than 350 new jobs with a move into Sunderland.

ECO (EC Outsourcing) is opening a new base at Solar House, on Sunderland's popular Doxford International Business Park, as part of a wider recruitment drive that will see the outsourced contact centre business expand from a team of 450 to as many as 1,200 people.

ECO, which was established in 2013 out of Boldon Business Centre, supports clients in a range of sectors - in particular the energy sector - delivering both sales and service support.

Phil Westoby, chief executive of the North East business, which will keep around 300 home-workers as well as its office based staff, said: "We've won a number of significant projects that mean we are in a position to expand the business quickly, with an additional office that will become our customer service focused hub, creating new jobs and opportunities for local people.

"I've been involved in contact centres across the UK for over 25 years but always been attracted to the North East by its hard working culture, friendly people and accent. That's why I decided to grow the business in the region.

## NORTH EAST ENTREPRENEUR LAUDED FOR AMBITION



A North East chief executive has been named as one of the top 50 business leaders in the UK by a national newspaper.

Josh Gill, CEO of The Everflow Group, which is based in Stockton, has been chosen as one of the most ambitious business leaders for 2021 in a list produced by LDC, the private equity arm of Lloyds Bank, in partnership with The Times.

Launched in 2017 as part of Lloyds' broader Backing Business Ambition programme, the list highlights the most promising businesspeople the UK has to offer.

Josh set up The Everflow Group, which is comprised of water retailer Everflow Water and software developer Everflow Tech, in 2015 and since then has seen it become the fastest-growing water retailer in the UK.

He said: "In 2015, my ambition was to make water simple for business customers, who were traditionally poorly served by the water market.

"To have grown to where we are in such a short time is testament to the whole team's vision and hard work, so winning an award like this recognises everyone's ambition, not just mine."

## SUNDERLAND EMPIRE PUTS BUSINESS CENTRE STAGE AS IT HOSTS THE RETURN OF SUNDERLAND NETWORKING EVENT

Following a triumphant reopening Sunderland Empire is putting business centre stage this month as it hosts the return of Sunderland City Professionals Networks first face to face event of 2021.

Business owners and local business professionals from across a range of sectors were welcomed to the venue by Marie Nixon, Theatre Director at Sunderland Empire, alongside guest speaker, Bianca Robinson, CEO of national charity CEO Sleepout UK. Bianca updated guests about the charities vital work which brings business leaders together to fight homelessness. Businesses then had the opportunity to peruse the versatile front of house spaces whilst networking with business peers over lunch.

Brian Logan, Chair, Sunderland City Professionals Network, said: "I'm very excited to be re-launching Sunderland City Professionals Network at one of the most iconic buildings in Sunderland. The demand for the event has been phenomenal and I'm sure that the fact that the event is being held at Sunderland Empire has made this a sell-out, with a long waiting list.

With this being our first event back we've put a slight restriction on numbers, but it's planned that our December event at a venue soon to be announced will have unrestricted numbers."



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## CRITICAL PENSION DECISIONS AND THE NEED FOR PLANNING

We are great fans of pension plans here at Rutherford Hughes. For those working for employers who provide defined benefit/final salary schemes, they can look forward to a guaranteed income in retirement. However, this article is not really aimed at them.





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

For the majority who do not have these guarantees, their route is a defined contribution/money purchase arrangement. Here you build up the biggest pot you can to draw on in retirement, as needed, or to purchase an annuity.

Let me explain the attractions of the pension fund. Firstly, you and your employer (which may be your own company) can offset contributions against Income Tax or Corporation Tax. The investment then builds up in a tax advantaged environment

with no Income Tax or Capital Gains Tax to pay in the fund. The value of the fund is also outside of the estate for Inheritance Tax purposes when the owner dies. A tax-free lump sum can be paid out anytime after age 55, even if you are still working, which is typically 25% of the pot. A taxable income can also be drawn from this age, again even if you are still working.

The attractions are the tax breaks and the flexibility on offer.

However, for anyone with a pension pot in later

life, age 75 is pivotal for them. It is so important that advice needs to be taken years in advance of reaching this age.

So, what happens at 75?

The first is that there is a Lifetime Allowance (LTA) test. This is a review of the values of your pensions, whether taken or not, and checked against the maximum you are allowed before an additional tax charge is levied.

The next issue is that the tax position on death benefits changes. Pre age 75 the whole fund is available to the beneficiaries of the pension fund tax free and can be taken as a lump sum or drawn over time. After 75 any pay-out is taxable in the hands of the recipient.

This leads on to an important point. Many pension death benefits are paid to a discretionary trust whereby the pension member can endeavour to hold some control beyond the grave. For example, a letter of wishes to the trustee may state that the surviving spouse should receive a level of income but when they die the remaining funds should be distributed to "my" children. This is particularly relevant if there is a second marriage, and the spouse has children of their own from a previous marriage.

The problem is that such trusts are taxed very heavily and suffer income tax at 45%. So, from age 75 almost half the fund would go directly to HMRC! This leaves a lot less for the beneficiaries.

It may also be that whatever issues the trust was supposed to cover have settled themselves. Clearly it is essential to review the ongoing need.

Issues that need to be checked well before reaching age 75 are as follows:

- Do the existing plans allow benefits to be taken flexibly?
- Can they allow you to take your tax-free cash after age 75?
- Is a trust still appropriate?
- Are the funds invested appropriately for the client's objectives?
- What are the death benefits on the old plans (often restricted, sometimes just return of premiums paid)?
- Do several pensions need to be brought together which may save money?

This last point needs to be treated with care. If the individual transferring the pension is in poor health and does not survive two years, HMRC may take a proportion of the transferred funds to be part of deceased's estate for Inheritance Tax purposes.

Bottom line: seek advice well in advance of reaching milestone ages and make sure it is reviewed regularly.

***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 or [peter.rutherford@rutherfordhughes.com](mailto:peter.rutherford@rutherfordhughes.com) [www.rutherfordhughes.com](http://www.rutherfordhughes.com)***

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Headmaster, Mr Stanford and current Junior and Senior school students in the Main Hall



## COVER STORY

# RGS – CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF CO-EDUCATION

The Newcastle Royal Grammar School (RGS) is a remarkable school with a 500-year history of welcoming people from all backgrounds. From history's Vice Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood, to recent Nobel Prize molecular biologist Sir Gregory Winter, RGS has educated thousands of young people who have gone on to make an indelible mark on the world.

**Thomas Horsley, the original settlor of RGS pledged his legacy to the School in 1525. Almost 500 years later, RGS continues to flourish as the premier independent school in the North East of England and as one of the country's leading schools; RGS was proud to be recognised as the Sunday Times' North East Independent School of the Decade.**

Originally established as a boys' school, in November 2000, during the annual Prize Giving ceremony, James FX Miller, then Headmaster at the RGS, announced one of the most significant and arguably most beneficial changes in the school's history. After over 470 years of operating as a single-sex school, the RGS was to admit girls into the Sixth Form in September 2001, in the hope of eventually extending the co-educational principle to the whole school.

The decision to introduce girls into the school was not one which was taken suddenly. Low key conversations had in fact started in 1998 about the merits of co-education, reflecting on the ongoing changes in society. Following his appointment in 1994, James Miller, who had previously been Headmaster of co-educational school in East-Anglia, produced a paper for the Schools' Governors stating the case for allowing girls into the school. The reasons which he shared over two decades ago, are still upheld by James to this day. He believed that as a co-educational school, the RGS would better prepare its pupils for university or the world of employment. James also pointed out the good straightforwardly educational reasons too, for example how some subjects clearly benefit from a wider range of perspectives.

Due to the sensitivity of the issue, work progressed slowly and with discretion, and it wasn't until 1999 that the Governors decided they favoured the principle. At this point, Old Novocastrians (RGS alumni) and parents were consulted. Opinions of the RGS community at the time were mixed, from the incredulity that Newcastle's oldest learning institution should make such a profound change, through to those passionate that RGS and its highly academic education ought to be accessible to anyone.

The concept of co-education was initially led by RGS Chair of Governors John Fenwick, and his successor, Sir Nigel Sherlock, who oversaw the implementation of co-ed now reflects: "I consider that the introduction of girls into the school has been one of the most far-reaching decisions in the school's history and has played a part in further enhancing the school's all-round reputation, as well as better preparing our young people for the wider world. I believe that the culture has changed in a positive way but the essential ethos remains."

The first 22 girls to join RGS were indeed trailblazers. Joining what had been a boys' school for almost five centuries could not have been an easy transition. Fast forward to 2021/2022, and the current Upper Sixth Form is the first RGS year group to comprise more girls than boys, with girls now making up 46% of the overall school.



Celebrating 20 Years of Co-education at the Main RGS entrance.

Speaking about the 20th anniversary, RGS Headmaster, Mr Stanford, said: "Looking back, we are grateful to the then Chairman of Governors John Fenwick, who had the original vision, and to his successor, Sir Nigel Sherlock who implemented it. Under the leadership of Headmaster James FX Miller, aided by countless staff champions and student 'buddies' and not least, the families and first girls themselves, we embarked on the journey to co-education which today is so fundamental to the character and success of the school."

He continued: "At the RGS, we have no target; we simply admit the brightest applicants, regardless of their gender identity. Looking to the future we share a vision that those amongst the current student or alumni community who have in the past been considered on the margins – whether due to gender, race, religion, social background or any other reason – are in fact considered mainstream at RGS. It is our determination that uniqueness, in all its glory, should not only be tolerated but embraced and celebrated; it is the diversity of our community, our variety of perspectives, ideas and backgrounds that is our strength. We appreciate every member of our community's commitment to championing individuality."

[www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk](http://www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk)



# MATCH-DAY HOSPITALITY AT KINGSTON PARK



From three-course fine dining and live cooking to a traditional carvery and executive box hire with unrivalled views, our hospitality guests at Kingston Park can enjoy Northern hospitality at its best.

**As an added bonus, all our match-day packages include exclusive pre and post-match Q&A sessions with a host and Falcons' players giving guests the chance to meet the team off the pitch and access to the digital match-day programme and team sheet.**

## **Fifteen @ The Falcons**

Our Fifteen @ The Falcons package seamlessly blends a relaxing hospitality experience with your match-day attendance. Located on the first floor of our West stand, this package offers guests a delicious two-course carvery and private bar facilities as well as ensuring you can still be at the centre of the action on a gameday with Category A seating included in your package.

## **Premier Club**

Premier by name, premier by nature. Our Premier Club is the perfect combination of fine dining and attentive service, as well as offering first-class views of the game. Offering a tasty three course meal served to

your table, access to a private bar, half time refreshments, a cheese board and post-match snacks the Premier Club is ideal for guests looking to enjoy their match-day in style.

## **International suite**

Our International Suite offers customers the best of match-day entertainment with a little something extra. In addition to unrivalled views of the on-pitch action, this room also boasts a live cooking station where guest can choose from a selection of freshly cooked food.

Our International guests also have the chance to select from a variety of delicious starters and desserts on the day so they can personalise their fine dining experience with us. The International package also includes half time refreshments, a cheese board and post-match snacks.

## **West stand executive boxes**

Our executive boxes really are the pinnacle of match-day luxury. Perfect for corporate entertaining or personal special occasions all our

boxes include a three-course meal, pre-selected prior to match-day, half time refreshments, a cheese board and post-match snack as well as a dedicated bar host on hand to bring you refreshments from start to finish.

With direct access to balcony seating, you can be sure you'll get to enjoy all the match-day action from the privacy of your own area.

Our seasonal executive boxes also come with a number of branding and sponsorship perks, as well as availability throughout the year on non-match-days for hosting corporate clients.

## **Spend a whole season with us**

All our match-day hospitality can be purchased seasonally, as well as match-by-match, with seasonal guests gaining a whole host of additional perks including, priority booking for any games at Kingston Park outside of the seasonal package, your name or company in the match-day programme and on your seasonal seat, 10% discount on club merchandise, preferential rates for additional hospitality or sponsorship packages subject to availability and special offers and promotions for the Newcastle Thunder season.

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# STEVE BLACK TALKS ABOUT...

## THE WINTER BLUES – COPING WITH SEASONAL CHANGES

Steve Black, also known as Blackie, is well known in the sporting world for his positive mind, fit body approach. More recently he has been using that knowledge to help businesses, individuals and community groups through his latest venture Protean Solutions.

**Here he looks at how the changing seasons can affect our wellbeing and performance, and what we can do to be our best all year round.**

"The dark nights are drawing in, the weather is getting colder, the heating is coming on. It's that time of year again when summer has come to an end and we are on the run up to Christmas.

"Many love this time of year, enjoying the autumn colours and cosying up with a fire on. Others however, find this time of year hard. Driving to and from work in the dark, having to dress according to the wind, rain, snow, and cold.

"A lack of natural light and of course, a change of vitamin D to our bodies is often to blame for this. You can take supplements, but always get advice from the GP for yourself before doing so. And if it is leading to a condition more in line with depression then please do speak with professionals. If, like for many of us, it just creates an apathy and lack of motivation though, there are some things I would recommend trying.

"Firstly, if you can, change your routine. Try getting up an hour earlier and going to bed an hour earlier. This can give you more natural daylight and can also mean more restful sleep, which is a mood enhancer of its own. Always aim for at least eight hours.

"Next, look at your diet. Try to include good mood foods that feed your soul as well as your body. Warming home-made soups, comfort food and lots of warm drinks to keep your hydration levels healthy. Seasonal vegetables grow at certain times of year to give us the nutrients we need, so lots of root vegetables and leafy greens added in will give you vitamins needed. Calcium is also important at this time of year when your bones may feel stiffer due to the cold.

"Make sure you keep active. The inclination is to snuggle into bed, or curl up on the sofa, but make sure you aim for at least 20 minutes a day walking at your most comfortable pace, breathing in fresh air. Wrap up accordingly, and make sure you stretch and use every muscle in your body as you move. If you can do this in daylight hours all the better, but if not, an evening stroll has great benefits too. The air clears your mind, is good for your lungs, and keeps your immune system working.

"Find some good stimulation for your brain. Don't just watch TV when not at work. Try reading a book, listening to music and maybe some puzzles, sudoku or cross words to keep your

mind healthy and active. Also keep a journal. About work, about home, aspirations, what you are struggling with and most importantly, what you have achieved, from the smallest wins!

"At work, focus on small chunks of work at a time. Keep lists. I have a weekly and a daily list which I update constantly. Memory tends to be less sharp this time of year and it's a great way to make sure you don't miss anything important. Try to do face to face meetings where you feel safe to. Seeing real people and getting out and about is a great natural endorphin release, as well as being better for our bodies than sat on a chair at a desk all day.

"Focus on colleagues needs as well. Helping others lifts our own moods and makes us perform better too. If you are struggling, speak to your line manager and find some solutions. If you are a leader, find a peer to talk to and make a plan to support yourself. Lots of mentors can help with losing momentum at this time of year, and sometimes, just having a friendly ear makes all the difference anyway.

"Start some new career development or training. Set yourself a challenge and immerse yourself in it. A new qualification, a new self-taught skill, a target, a personal best. A goal helps keeps the mind fresh and focused, but remember it's not about the result, it's about the journey!"

"Most of all, be kind to yourself and to each other. Support and care and we will all thrive better. God bless you all!"

Blackie's 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)**







# SOS GROUP CELEBRATES 20 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

This year, SOS Group are celebrating 20 years of innovation and growth, and celebrating 20 years of supporting local start-ups and large multi-national firms alike to do the same.



The SOS Group team with directors (fore, l-r) John Behan and George Young

**Launched in 2002, the Gateshead-based office technology company has stepped up to meet many challenges and changes over the last two decades, anticipating new client requirements and embracing technological advances.**

The firm was set up by directors George Young, Andrew Skelton and John Behan and was initially based in Felling before moving to the Team Valley in 2006.

John Behan says: "In the early 2000s, I'd been working in London for a manufacturer and George and Andrew were discussing setting up a company in the North East and the timing worked beautifully for me to come home and join them."

"We'd spotted an opportunity in the market which, at the time, was focussed entirely on photocopying and scanning. We started with just the three of us company directors and one engineer and soon began to grow."

"It was an exciting time and we were up and running really quickly. In our first year we worked with the Labour Party to service their Annual Conference. That was a huge step forward for a fledgling firm and pretty daunting, actually."

"It all went well and we began working with a prestigious international hotel chain regionally the same year, a client we're proud to have worked continuously with since then. Now we look after their account on a national basis."

SOS Group supplies and maintains leading brand digital office equipment and offers a full range of office management services, including unified communications, IT support, document management, cost consultation and managed print services.

In addition, the firm's DDB Workspace Solutions Division supplies a range of furniture, designed and constructed in the UK, that helps tackle common issues including posture and lack of space.

As well as working with multinationals like Hitachi, SOS Group prides itself on the expert advice and support they offer to local start-ups. They have also developed a strong reputation in the sporting events sector and recently provided services at competitions including the IAAF World Athletics

Championships, the Special Olympics GB National Games, British Swimming Summer Championships and World Para Athletics Championships.

Now with 21 staff, in addition to the company's Gateshead base, they have hubs in Bristol, the Midlands, London, the North West and South Yorkshire to facilitate national client cover.

John continues: "Business has changed a lot over the last 20 years. The most significant change being around 2006 and the migration into software solutions. We were already looking at an archival retrieval product back then."

"Multifunctional devices, our copy, print, scan, remains a core part of our client offer but around 2013 we began talking more about IT and comms. Our client contacts are often IT managers because copy, print, scan is so often the end point on their network. It's now completely intertwined, so it was natural that we'd move into this area, too."

"We recently achieved the highly-prized IT security accreditation ISO 27001 and this really demonstrates that we have the policies, procedures and risk controls needed for robust IT security management."

"Cyber security is one of the biggest threats to every business in today's world, particularly with the increasing shift towards remote working. Accessing files securely and remotely is a key issue and gaining our ISO 27001 is a measure of how securely we treat client data and information. And of our expertise to support clients to do the same."

During the pandemic, SOS Group also achieved ISO 9001, the internationally recognised Quality Management System standard and maintained its commitment to community giving and support.

In fact, to encourage and support others pursuing their own personal and professional ambitions, SOS Group have donated more than £250,000 to charities, talented young individuals and community organisations since their launch.

John adds: "Celebrating this anniversary feels all the sweeter given the significant challenges faced by all businesses and community organisations over the last year and a half."

"If we've learned anything over the last 20 years, it's the importance of embracing opportunities when they come along. Be that new technology or changes to business practice."

"That's been a key factor for both us and our clients in navigating the challenges created by the pandemic. We've always maintained a strong commitment to investing in our own development and supporting our clients and community groups to do the same. We intend to keep doing just that and look forward to celebrating many more anniversaries to come."

**For more information, please visit  
[www.sosgroup-ltd.co.uk](http://www.sosgroup-ltd.co.uk).**





SOS Group Director, John Behan



SOS Group Directors (l-r) Andrew Skelton, George Young and John Behan





Louis Cleeson



# RISING STAR

## CASCADE - SUPPORTING THE FUTURE OF FINANCE

Twenty-year-old Louis Gleeson is one of Cascade Cash Management's (Cascade's) brightest rising stars, having joined the company for his sandwich year whilst studying at Northumbria University for a BA Hons on Business with Economics.

**As part of the team's commitment to be a business with purpose, Co-Founder and CEO Dr Emma Black is focussed on creating opportunities for young people keen to enter the industry, including supporting undergraduates in getting industry experience whilst getting their qualifications.**

Named for the second year in a row as the Most Innovative FinTech Company 2021, Cascade is the leading, award-winning, professional cash management company delivering an independent and transparent savings service designed to generate enhanced cash returns and increased depositor protection. The team are on a mission to get Britain saving, helping savers to reach their savings goals in a faster, smarter and happier way.

The Cascade team provide a hybrid approach for clients with savings pots above £100,000 in an outstanding relationship-led service built on the platform of their award-winning savings platform. Clients are supported in completing onboarding paperwork for each bank and building society. Savers can then use the online portal to view their savings in one convenient place, with the dedicated support of Cascade personnel. Clients include individuals, companies and charities. Partners of the service include IFA's, solicitors, and accountants, many of which self-brand the product for presentation to their own clients sharing fees on a 50/50 basis.

Having received the offer from Cascade, Louis was keen to get his teeth into the role so started part time in June to work over the summer. When the official academic year started on 1st September, Louis became a full-time client support assistant, and he is absolutely thriving.

He said: "From the age of 15 I knew my passion was to join the world of finance. I just wasn't sure what particular part of the sector excited me the most. Thanks to Cascade and the brilliant team here, I am enjoying finding out what I am good at and what makes me tick. Helping people with their savings is very fulfilling and I like supporting both the clients and the team internally. From the first day, I felt very welcome and don't feel like I am on a work experience year at all. The entire team is in sync with each other, all focussed on the same end goal, so I am learning so much, so quickly!"

Originally from Middlesbrough, Louis is an avid Middlesbrough season ticket holder. He also likes to play football and is a film fan. He has done work experience previously, but says this opportunity is much more than that and he can't believe how lucky he is.

Dr Emma Black welcomed Louis to the team saying it was an exciting time for him to join, with lots of new opportunities for the company and a new board to support the leadership team.

She said: "We are absolutely thrilled to have Louis with us over the next year. He's already become an integral part of

the team and we've already been having chats around what we'll do to keep him when he goes back to university! Louis has shared some great ideas coming into the service with fresh eyes and we've implemented some of his initiatives already.

"At Cascade we are keen to support the future of the financial sector ensuring that talented and forward-thinking individuals are coming into the industry to look after people's financial wellbeing. Louis fits that description very well, so we are dedicated to giving him the experience of being in a proper role and not just filling in his time for 'work experience'. Part of that has been giving him the opportunity to join me at meetings and seminars including a recent Vistage event, where he got to see networking at its best and watch a presentation by Nicola Cook.

"Louis joins us at a very exciting time and we all hope he thoroughly enjoys his time with us over the next year, professionally developing throughout that time."

Having recently announced an important expansion of its service, opening up the company's proprietary portal and its savings data to millions of savers in the UK, the team are restructuring in a commitment to create a more sustainable approach and attitude. Previously the service had been available to high-net-worth savers with more than £250,000, but the company is now open to balances of over £100,000, with new services launched for those with less than £100,000 too.

Along with the new positioning in the marketplace, opportunities to work on exciting concepts for clients and potential clients is becoming a company focus, especially in the team's commitment to do well, to do good. Establishing themselves as a business with purpose, the Cascade team will be working hard to enable people to 'Do Something Good' with cash, including raising funds for local charities and causes.

A new series of events is also on the horizon for subscribing members and visitors including Rapid Networking and Full Flow speaker events. A full day Deep Dive conference is also planned for 2022, with details to be released soon.

Louis concluded: "I am getting an amazing opportunity here with Cascade to truly get my teeth into client service and teamwork at a unique financial offering, and believe me, I am grabbing it with both hands. Thank you to Emma and the whole team for being so supportive!"

**More information on the company and career opportunities is available at [www.cascade.co.uk](http://www.cascade.co.uk)**





Dr Emma Black

## CASCADE FILLS AWARD CABINET AS UK'S LEADING CASH MANAGEMENT SERVICE

Cascade Cash Management has enjoyed an exciting phase of development during the last five years and recently has been recognised in a multitude of national and international awards particularly throughout 2021, putting the North East company in the spotlight in a number of industries.

**Most recently Cascade's managing director Dr Emma Black has been named as Cash Management Woman of the Year by Lawyer International in the Legal 100 2021 Awards.**

Dr Emma Black has also been named as Cash Management Woman of the Year in the official M&A Today – Global Awards – 2022; 10 Most Admired Women's Leader of 2021 by Industry Era Magazine; Finance Monthly Cash Management Service 2021; Global 100's Best Financial Technology Savings Business – UK and Corporate LiveWire Innovation and Excellence named Cascade as the most Innovative Fintech Company of the Year 2021.

In recent times Cascade has also received accolade from the Great British Entrepreneur Awards, Finance Monthly, Women in Finance, Financial Services Forum, Forward Ladies and the Corporate Excellence Awards too. Titles have ranged from Best Start Up to Best Customer Service and Most Innovative Fintech Company of the year 2020.

Dr Emma Black, who has taken the company on its journey, establishing a business with purpose, putting people at the heart of the proposition, said: "As a team we have all worked so hard, especially in the last 18 months, so to be recognised on so many levels is truly rewarding. We work with partners in many industries including IFAs and law firms, so to be acknowledged as a leader in each respective field has helped us attract more partners and advisors – we now have approximately 3000 advisors across the UK that subscribe to our online savings portal now across the UK.

"Innovation and customer service are two things that usually don't go well hand in hand together so we have worked hard to ensure that they do. And as we support many vulnerable clients such as those that have suffered bereavement or those who have recently divorced, our transparency and hands-on service is always popular."

In a nutshell, Cascade delivers an independent and transparent savings service originally designed to generate enhanced cash returns and increased depositor protection through professional cash management. Having administered £370m of cash savings by 2015, the company began the build of its unique online savings portal that has seen the team administer today over £1bn.

In a bid to create a more sustainable approach and attitude to savings in the UK, the company is ready to expand their offering to balances of £100,000 or more, with new services launched for those with less than £100,000 too.

The forward-thinking team has released opportunities for savers with less than £100,000 to benefit from the data collected by the team, creating a holistic approach via a Cascade Savers Community.

By joining as a member for just £5 per month, those who wish to make the most of their savings can receive in-boxed data with the country's current saving rates and links to enable them to move their own money manually outside of the Cascade portal.

Within the portal, 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.

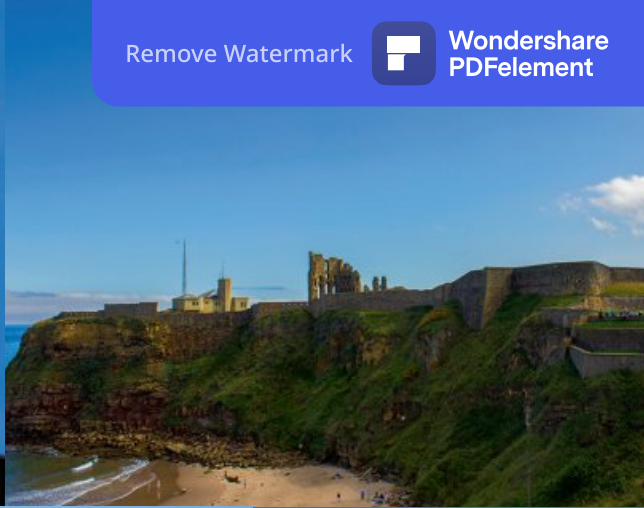
Dr Emma Black concluded: "It is this forward thinking that the judges have been recognising. The Cascade team help clients complete onboarding paperwork for each bank and building society selected for savers over £100,000. Savers can then use the online portal to view their savings in one convenient place, with the dedicated support of Cascade personnel. Clients include individuals, companies and charities. Partners of the service include IFA's, solicitors, attorneys and accountants, and many self-brand the product for presentation to their own clients too.

"We are excited to have applied for a Queens Award this year too, and have everything crossed for success in that as it would mean the world to all of the team!"

Many companies with cash funds currently make use of Cascade's services creating meaningful impact, with some clients earning up to £30,000 extra a year, whilst also enjoying increased depositor protection as the use of the portal affords savers increased depositor protection by spreading capital across different banking licences to maximise protection under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

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





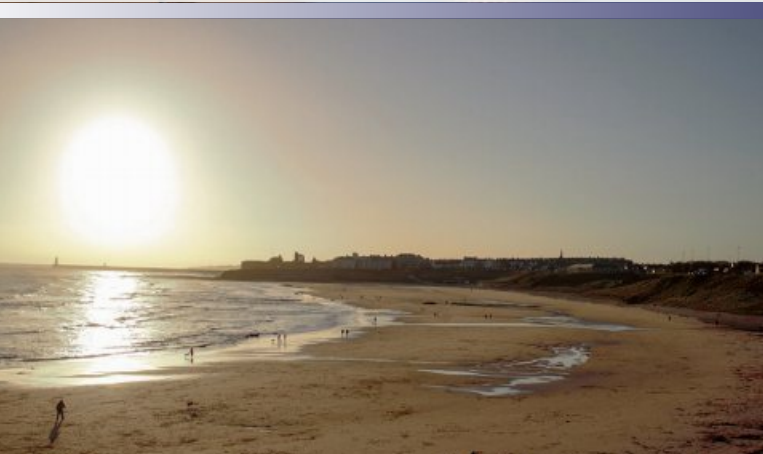
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tel: 0191 257 0355 mob: 07736 548 228 info@readmilburn.co.uk







## GOODBOY DIGITAL ACQUIRED BY GLOBAL LEADER WITH HELP OF NORTH EAST ADVISORS

Playco, the world's largest and most successful instant game developer, has acquired Goodboy Digital (Goodboy), the London based developer who created the PixiJS game engine and is known as a global thought leader in HTML5 technologies and game design.

Goodboy has for many years created world-class creative and gameplay experiences for global media brands like PBS, BBC and Nickelodeon. The acquisition strengthens Playco's position as

the leading web-based video game developer by adding world-class technical and creative talent. Goodboy, including Mat Groves, PixiJS creator and technical partner, and John Denton, creative partner, will be bringing their experience and insights as leading PixiJS contributors to Playco, a move that will turbo charge the open source project.

"From the very outset, it was clear that the synergy between Goodboy and Playco was irresistible. We've both arrived at the same point on the map via different routes, but we share the belief that HTML5 will usher in a new era of social, connected play," said Goodboy Co-Founder Mat Groves.

The corporate team at Mincoffs Solicitors in Newcastle provided legal advice to Mat Groves, John Denton and James Walker on the sale of Goodboy Digital, led by corporate partner John Nicholson and corporate solicitor Max Gilchrist.

## SE-TEK FOCUSES ON GROWTH WITH SUPPORT FROM LEADING ADVISORY FIRM

Sunderland based SE-TEK Limited has expanded its relationship with leading advisory firm Ryecroft Glenton (RG), as it experiences rapid growth following the completion of the Management Buy Out of Komatsu Mining's Sunderland manufacturing operation in August 2021.

Having advised SE-TEK's management team on the MBO through the firm's specialist corporate finance service line, RGCF, RG has now been retained to provide comprehensive follow-on financial advice and support through its Outsourced | FD solution.

Outsourced | FD is a flexible, but integral service, which provides SE-TEK's finance function, including measuring and tracking the financial performance and goals of SE-TEK, while enabling the business' owners to concentrate on growth.

Carl Swansbury, Partner and Head of Corporate Finance at RG, said: "The MBO has created a strong platform for growth for SE-TEK and we are delighted to be continuing to support the

business' continued growth and development. Our Outsourced | FD service, led by my fellow Partner Dan Cooper, provides SE-TEK with a fully operational finance function, which allows management to focus on the operations on the business, as well as giving the shareholders access to joined up, strategic tax, accounting and corporate finance advice."



## FINANCE DURHAM FUND LEADS £300,000 INVESTMENT IN PROJECT CONTROL TOOLS

The Finance Durham Fund, established by Durham County Council and overseen by Business Durham, the business support service for Durham County Council, has invested £185,000 in Project Control Tools, as part of a £300,000 funding package.

The investment through Finance Durham, which is managed by Maven Capital Partners ("Maven"), will provide the business with a relocation package as it expands to open a site in County Durham, as well as allowing the business to invest in its in-house product development to grow its portfolio, and enhance its sales and marketing function.

Project Control Tools delivers intelligent software solutions to enhance the delivery and profitability of projects, primarily for rail and construction industries. The company's innovative technology solution helps Project Management teams to streamline day to day tasks by saving time and reducing project spend.

Peter Smith, Investment Associate at Maven, said: This is a great opportunity for the Finance Durham Fund to provide a growing software business with a relocation package to join the thriving technology space within County Durham. We look forward to working with Fin, James and the team as it embarks on a programme of growth."



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Clear advice  
Creative thinking





"WHAT IF WE DON'T CHANGE AT ALL...  
AND SOMETHING MAGICAL JUST HAPPENS?"

## Business Distress and Insolvency is no joke.

Those in control of distressed businesses must proceed carefully.

Seeking good early professional advice usually means more options, and always means that a concerned director is much better informed.

Northpoint is an established local firm with a personable, pragmatic approach to best assist in business distress situations.

We advise on and act in most situations, including advisory and formal instructions, with fixed fees in many cases.

Call Greg Whitehead or Linda Farish for an initial confidential discussion with no obligation.

- Rescue/Restructure
- Voluntary Arrangement
- Administration
- Liquidation
- HMRC negotiation
- Law of Property Act
- Bankruptcy
- Partnerships



## Northpoint.

Licensed Insolvency Practitioners

**Greg Whitehead**

**Tel: 07900 241 464**

[greg@northpoint.co.uk](mailto:greg@northpoint.co.uk)

**Linda Farish**

**Tel: 07308 662 252**

[linda@northpoint.co.uk](mailto:linda@northpoint.co.uk)



# MORTGAGE APPLICATION DECLINED? DON'T DESPAIR!

We are often approached by distraught property buyers who have applied to their bank or normal mortgage provider only to be told "sorry – you don't meet our lending requirements".

However, a full review of your circumstances and research across the entire mortgage market can often provide a solution to rescue that dream move.

Although the same set of mortgage regulations apply to all UK lenders, each will interpret the rules in their own way and assess risks differently. Additionally, lenders constantly change their requirements, particularly as the economy emerges from the pandemic.

Some examples of areas which can have a major effect on borrowing amounts are: -

- 1. Monthly pension contributions** can cause severe restrictions - some lenders do not factor in these outgoings at all, others do include thus reducing borrowing levels.
- 2. Assessment of overtime**, commission and bonuses can give extreme variances.
- 3. Credit cards** – if you use these for day to day expenses, your mortgage availability can be restricted with some lenders even if you repay the card in full each month.
- 4. Buy now pay later** – these often have high monthly payments over a short period of time, but some lenders will take account of these when assessing borrowing levels.
- 5. Self-employed income and contractors** – an old favourite of ours – different lenders have many varied ways of assessing income and its sustainability. In addition, at the present time, this area of the mortgage market is particularly challenging without proper mortgage advice
- 6. Credit file** – again a regular theme – a poor score doesn't necessarily mean that you can't get a mortgage, whereas an excellent score doesn't



Paul Hardingham, Director of Innovate Mortgages and Loans

guarantee that all lenders will help!

**7. School fees** – seen by many as an optional payment, some lenders treat these as a fixed and permanent expense.

Lastly, the nature of the mortgage market is that the affordability calculators used by lenders can result in some large differences from lender to lender in how much they will lend to you. You may have approached your own bank or building society and be quoted a certain figure, but it could be that there are lenders much more suited to your needs who will offer a larger borrowing figure. For some people this can be crucial in allowing them to buy the property that they aspire to.

So whether you are looking to move house, re-mortgage or review your insurances, why not take

local, independent mortgage and loan advice to smooth the whole process. We would be delighted to help.

***If you would like to see what our clients have to say about us we have in excess of 250 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.*





# COULD MUSEUMS, ART GALLERIES AND THEATRES SPEND THEIR WAY OUT OF TROUBLE?

Tax relief is available to companies and organisations throughout the creative industries. Sara Andrews, tax specialist at Haines Watts, explains how struggling smaller art galleries, museums, theatres and orchestras can make sure they are benefiting from support in future.

**Arts and culture have experienced an exceptionally turbulent year with many projects struggling to make ends meet. While a Government handout went some way towards helping, a significant divide emerged between those exhibitions, art galleries and other live performance companies that could and couldn't claim for support.**

On the one hand, lots of major exhibits and attractions have had the financial clout to innovate during the pandemic. Allowing them to find new ways to reach audiences – either by digitising their offering enabling people to view, visit and participate online, or by expanding their offering to take their shows out on the road. Such organisations could be able to make claims for tax relief against much of that activity.

However, we work with smaller organisations, too. Art galleries, museums and community-scale theatres that have had to close their doors and furlough staff, who don't have the financial power to diversify.

## Visibility is everything

For those smaller organisations, the road to recovery might not be so clear. Even though easing restrictions should bring visitors and audiences back through their doors, they have lost 18 months' worth of momentum, of visibility, and of income. Meaning they haven't been able to invest in new exhibitions, and therefore won't be able to claim associated tax relief.

We want them to be able to invest in new shows

and new exhibits that will grab attention and bring audiences back in – and to do so knowing they could potentially claim 25% of their expenditure back.

The Creative Industries Tax Reliefs can be a crucial lifeline and one that we would urge creative organisations to bear in mind when they are planning for the years ahead.

## What are Creative Industries Tax Reliefs?

Creative Industries Tax Reliefs are available to help some of the sectors that have been hit hardest by the pandemic, including the Theatre, Orchestra, Animation and Museum and Galleries sectors.

We've seen the number of claims for the various reliefs rising year on year: since 2007, there have been £4.5bn-worth of film tax relief paid out. In the year ending March 2021, £380m was paid in high-end television programming relief and over 2,900 exhibitions have been supported since 2017.

But despite this uplift there are still a huge number of organisations missing out, with claims still much lower than Government predictions, especially when it comes to Museums and Galleries Exhibitions Tax Relief (MGETR).

## Museums and Galleries Exhibitions Tax Relief

MGETR was introduced in April 2017 to support museums and galleries in developing new exhibitions. The relief works by enhancing expenditure incurred in the exhibition process.

With some of our beloved museums having closed

their doors for half of the year and visitor numbers being limited, museums and galleries should consider if they are eligible to claim reliefs for 2020 and previous years.

Museums and Galleries Tax Relief (MGTR) is not open to commercial companies, instead, it's available to newly-developed exhibitions, either temporary or permanent, produced by charitable companies, their trading subsidiaries, or companies wholly owned by local authorities.

## Theatre Tax Relief

With social distancing measures having delayed many productions, Theatre Tax Relief can be the cash injection production companies are looking for at the moment. And as they say, the show must go on, so if you've had to create your production as a live stream event this year, as long as it meets the commercial obligations, you could still be eligible to receive the relief.

## Exploring Creative Tax Reliefs

It's not just about exploring the possible cash that could be locked in your business right now, but also to ensure any claims you have made previously or are in the process of making have been fully maximised.

*If you want to have a chat about how we can help you to improve cash flow and take advantage of grants and reliefs, get in touch with Haines Watts today. [www.hwca.com](http://www.hwca.com)*





Andrew Marsh



# THE IMPORTANCE OF A LEADER'S LIFE

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.

**Here, in his latest article, he talks about outer influences and impacts on a business leaders' life, and how it can affect performance.**

"Clearly, we are all human, even the highest paid, most powerful leaders. We all have lives outside of the office. We all have families, friends, pets, hobbies, past times, personal passions and spare time commitments.

"Many leaders use some or all of these personal angles to improve their reputation. To make others warm to them, or to appear approachable, normal and nice. Some choose to keep that aspect of their life separate in public perception, and often have two persona's – work and private.

"Neither is right or wrong. What is right, is that you find what works for you, for yours, and what helps you perform to the top of your ability. We've talked a lot in recent columns about work skills and techniques to be the best leader you can be. But what we will look at here is how you can be you and still perform like the best leader possible.

"At Vistage, we aim to help high-integrity leaders make great decisions that benefit their companies, families and communities. We advocate a work / life mix, not balance, as we believe effort is required in both, to be successful.

"General Colin Powell, a firm Vistage favourite in world class leaders, advises:

"Have fun in your command. Don't always run around at breakneck pace. Take leave when you've earned it. Spend time with your families."

"Great advice. But not always easy to do or justify when you are a leader. So how can you do this?

"Surround yourself with like-minded people at work and at home. Avoid people who take themselves too seriously. Find those who like to work hard but know when it is appropriate to play hard too. Have people you can delegate to and trust. Shift the load in a way that gets results from the entire team. A leader isn't a one-person solution – ever!

"Set your own boundaries. In one of my peer groups we deep dived the ongoing issue that many leaders experience around taking holiday. A good leader encourages his team to take their leave. A good leader also leads by example. It is important to have recharge time, so at the start of every year, block out at least four weeks for you. And stick to those four weeks. As they get closer, determine what you will do with the time, but make sure you, your family and your colleagues appreciate that there will at least four weeks every year when you are not in the business. Companies that prioritise well-being — including a culture that supports people's commitments outside of work — are more productive and profitable. The approach attracts top talent, reduces turnover, and sick leave.

"Create your own flexibility. Recent home and remote working showed us all that time best spent isn't travelling to meetings or a workplace. If working at home is feasible sometimes and saves two hours you can use to attend a family event later that day, then do it!

"When planning strategy and then delivering it, concentrate on what outcomes are needed. And find the shortest routes, that offer the most impact with least input, to achieve those outcomes. We've all heard the expression 'work smart', find your ways to put it into practice. This will help you prioritise instead of disappearing under a huge 'to-do' list.

"Consider all of your roles, for me it's husband, pet owner, director, coach, facilitator, business development, brother, son, farmer, administrator. I use a technique my good friend Brad Waldron advises, in understanding separately my own needs and the needs on the organisations I work with, and I apply his seven key metrics to highly effective people approach.

"So, each week I look at my roles and reflect – did I do something in each role? If not, my mix is out. For the next week I will remix and make sure I focus on all my roles. Each time we neglect a role we are taking from our emotional bank. We must always remember to deposit to our accounts are always in the black.

"Avoid burn out. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a great tool for ensuring you focus on health and wellbeing to be the best performer you can. Take on leisure activities that enhance your performance and carve set times to enjoy. If exercise boosts your adrenaline and reduces stress, then it's important. If reading calms you and builds your knowledge, reserve time for it.

"Finally, learn to say no. Not every dinner, every event and every meeting is critical for you to attend. Learn to choose the ones that bring the returns, and the others decline or give a team member the opportunity to attend, with responsibility being delegated to them.

"By looking after you, you set a great example. You will perform better, feel more in control and give off great vibes, instilling confidence....three great traits for a true leader."

***If you need support in getting your life / work mix on track to be a better leader then get in touch with Andrew at [andrew@marshbusinesstransformation.co.uk](mailto:andrew@marshbusinesstransformation.co.uk)***





# 'INTERESTING' BEATS 'BIG'

Big goals are good. But interesting goals are better.

When you set clear goals, you can work out if you're getting closer or further away from them. Then work out what it is that you're doing, or not doing, that's impacting progress. The clearer your goals, the more likely you are to achieve them.

But what kind of goals are best? Well, bigger goals are better than smaller goals. Because as people we are capable of much more than we think. But there's another force at play with goal setting. And it's this.

'Interesting' beats 'big'.

## Interesting Goals

Let's talk business goals. Turnover. Profit. Year-on-year percentage growth. Team size. Reserves. Square feet of office space. All fine. And if we apply the 'bigger is better than smaller' rule than we'll stretch the numbers we set. But isn't that all a bit, well, boring?

Consider these goals instead.

"I want to spend 100 days every year off-grid. On a mountain. Walking or cycling."

"I want to spend 12 weekends every year camping with my children. That's once each month."

"In five years from now I want a second property that I bought for £50k to £100k. I'll spend another £30k on it. Then the family can enjoy it and we'll rent it out also, generating £20k each year."

(Take a look at [www.wreckoftheweek.co.uk](http://www.wreckoftheweek.co.uk). You can make it happen).

"I want to grow 50% of the food my family eats. And generate 75% of the energy we consume. Within two years from now."

## The Ripple Effect.

A couple of things happen when we set interesting goals.

First, when you talk about them, or when others hear about them. You're smiling. They're smiling. There's enthusiasm. There's energy. There's excitement! All of which means you'll be more driven to chase them consistently, and to achieve them.

And secondly, with most people, there's a ripple effect. If you have interesting goals, other people want interesting goals of their own, too.

## First Things First

We hear lots of businesspeople talking about what they want to achieve. Business specific goals. But if you think about it, turnover for the sake of turnover or profit for the sake of profit is all a bit dull and pointless, really. It's what you want to do with this kind of success that really matters. That's what should be driving us. That's where the focus should be. Put first things first.

All of the things mentioned above. Fresh air and freedom on mountains, regular family camping adventures, property development and an amazing parallel life it enables, or sustainable approaches to living; they all need to be financed somehow. They can normally only happen as a result of good business performance. But isn't it better to be driven by something that you can feel and imagine and sense, rather than numbers on a spreadsheet?

And isn't it nice to imagine that by painting vivid and emotional pictures with your goal setting, you might be inspiring others to become more adventurous with their goal setting too?

Change your goals to change your world. And maybe the worlds of a few other people too.

Or to put it another way, don't be driven by making money. Be driven by making memories instead.

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Darren Wingfield







# FINANCE DURHAM FUND LEADS £300,000 INVESTMENT IN PROJECT CONTROL TOOLS



## Project management platform secures funding package to relocate to County Durham and invest in product development

The Finance Durham Fund, established by Durham County Council and overseen by Business Durham, the business support service for Durham County Council, has invested £180,000 in Project Control Tools, as part of a £300,000 funding package. The investment through Finance Durham, which is managed by Maven Capital Partners, will provide the business with a relocation package as it expands to open a site in County Durham, as well as allowing the business to invest in its in-house product development to grow its portfolio, and enhance its sales and marketing function.

Project Control Tools delivers intelligent software solutions to enhance the delivery and profitability of projects, primarily for rail and construction industries. The company's innovative technology solution helps Project Management teams to streamline day to day tasks by saving time and reducing project spend.

The business has developed two innovative platforms, SiteMate and StoresMate. SiteMate allows projects and businesses to digitise site and project management processes with the aim to aid compliance, monitor on-site performance and ensure a safe and successful project delivery. StoresMate tracks the use of tools, consumables, and stock on projects – and adds traceability and accountability on the use of assets throughout the ownership or hire lifecycle. The platforms are already used by a number of high profile customers including Network Rail, Balfour Beatty & Siemens

along with businesses of all sizes throughout the supply chain.

Digital solutions and data capture are high on the agenda for large companies looking to gain a competitive edge in the sector and create operational efficiencies. The UK rail and construction sector was valued at £1.4 billion in 2020. The sectors have an increasing need, for digitisation with the focus of making efficiencies in current paper based systems. With Covid19 leading to offices being closed and remote working, digital solutions continue to be in demand.

Backed by a strong management team with a range of technical and commercial expertise, CEO and Co-founder, Fin Gregory, has a range of industry experience working in key roles delivering projects at Network Rail, Balfour Beatty and TXM Rail. James Staines, COO and Co-founder, has over 10 years' experience in project management and has previously worked as a Health and Safety Advisor for Holland America Group and TXM Rail.

Fin Gregory, CEO and Co-founder of Project Control Tools, said: "We're really excited to close this investment round. We've worked really hard over the last few years to build our platforms, product awareness and loyal client base. Our main goal is to make the lives of our clients easier by offering easy to use, turnkey solutions which enable immediate digital transformation of all site and project processes. The investment will allow us to accelerate our growth plan, adding to our account management, sales & marketing and development teams and looking at other pain points we can solve in the industry."

James Staines, COO and Co-Founder of Project Control Tools, said: "It's a fantastic achievement for the business to secure the round of funding through Maven, Finance Durham and our Business Angels. We are very excited to be given the opportunity to move forward with backing and continue our

journey to what started from an idea on a piece of paper four years ago. We are grateful to our senior management team and our new investors for helping to make this happen."

Peter Smith, Investment Associate at Maven, said: "Project Control Tools innovative technology solutions make digitalisation easy for the rail and construction industries to remove paper processes from the site, streamlining efficiencies and saving time and cost. This is a great opportunity for the Finance Durham Fund to provide a growing software business with a relocation package to join the thriving technology space within County Durham. We look forward to working with Fin, James and the team as it embarks on a programme of growth."

Cllr James Rowlandson, Durham County Council's Cabinet member for resources, investment and assets, said: "Through the support from Finance Durham, we can ensure enterprising businesses with dynamic ideas, like Power Control Tools, have the right means to move to County Durham, enabling them to thrive while creating and safeguarding more and better jobs. We look forward to welcoming them to County Durham and continuing to support them on their business journey."

Sarah Slaven, Interim Managing Director at Business Durham said: "County Durham has a reputation as a home for innovative businesses. Finance Durham is just one of the ways we work to encourage entrepreneurship. By helping companies, like Project Control Tools, to access the growth funding they need, we can build on this reputation and create more jobs and opportunities. We look forward to working with James and the team to thrive in County Durham and achieving their ambitions."

**Contact Maven's local team today to access the finance or support your business needs to unlock its growth potential or visit [mavencp.com](http://mavencp.com) to find out more.**



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FD Finance  
Durham

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BD Business  
Durham





L-R: The Data Insight Team - Daniel Walker, Graham Dotchin and Callum McLaren

## CONTINUED GROWTH FOR UNIQUE DATA INSIGHT TEAM AT MHA TAIT WALKER

Leading independent accountancy firm MHA Tait Walker has welcomed a new member to their rapidly growing Data Insight team, after experiencing continued revenue growth.

**Daniel Walker is the latest addition to the team, joining from Engie where he worked as a Data Scientist. Daniel joins the firm as Data Insight Manager, broadening the scope of the team, which is the only Data Insight department within a North East independent accountancy practice.**

Having completed a Masters in Maths and Statistics at Newcastle University, Daniel secured a coveted place on the Knowledge Transfer Partnership as an Associate. The KTP programme sees individuals form a partnership between a university and a business, where Daniel began his career with Engie. In his time there, he delivered three innovative projects focusing on machine learning and optimisation methods, before moving on to MHA Tait Walker.

Daniel said: "I joined MHA Tait Walker because I saw how the Data Insight team were really making

a difference to businesses in the North East, and that it would give me the chance to continue to develop my own skills and expertise. As a team we instantly clicked, with our skill sets complementing each other perfectly, I'm really looking forward to working with Graham and the team."

The expansion of the Data Insight team supports MHA Tait Walker's growth strategy and development of services for clients. Graham Dotchin, Associate Partner said: "Daniel's appointment is an exciting addition to the team. His data science background is key to the progression of our services."

Despite the impact of the pandemic, the Data Insight team has continued to grow, highlighting the demand from clients for data-driven analysis.

The specialist team gather financial and operational data, so that businesses can quickly

make fully informed, intelligent and measurable decisions, with a focus on what really drives value and profitability.

Graham said: "The pandemic has cemented how business critical our service is. Many businesses found themselves scrambling for information when the pandemic hit, which we were able to provide them with. We are working with clients at all stages of the business lifecycle and addressing a range of challenges and opportunities that they face, but the common theme throughout is the value data is playing in supporting their decision making. With Daniel's skills, we can expand our unique services to SME's in the region."

Daniel joins after MHA Tait Walker welcomed 40 new recruits that signal huge growth for the firm.

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





Steve Plaskitt

## CASH IS KING

Steve Plaskitt, Head of Corporate Finance at MHA Tait Walker gives his views on how working capital impacts deal valuations especially since the Pandemic began.

**As every SME company owner knows managing cash and your working capital is critical to keeping your business running. "Cash is King" – it was before the Pandemic, and it still is afterwards.**

But when it comes to deals and valuations of companies how much Cash needs to be kept for working capital? And given the most recent two-year period how you do know what a normal amount is especially when the last two years trading have been anything but normal?

**The valuation of a company is not simply the valuation of the business**

In simple terms, the valuation of a company is the valuation of the business (typically a multiple of its maintainable profits) plus the excess cash that it has at the time of the sale less the debt that it has. Other than an overdraft or invoice finance, most of the debt in a SME is long term debt and doesn't move significantly from week to week in the company.

**Excess Cash is not easily defined**

Cash moves daily as receipts come in and payments are made; it will fluctuate with

regularity within each month e.g., when HMRC is paid mid-month or when salaries are paid at the end of the month; and it will move cyclically within each year e.g., due to seasonality of sales.

So, when it comes to define excess cash in a deal, there is always a debate about what the level of excess cash is and how much money is required to manage the working capital of stock, debtors, and creditors.

Too often this issue is not dealt with early during a deal process and is not fully addressed in heads of terms. This can lead to substantial changes in the expected value of a deal from the vendor's perspective, or in extreme cases, of deals collapsing later when neither the seller nor the buyer can agree on what is the suitable valuation adjustment.

You need to appoint a Corporate Finance Adviser to investigate greater detail and assess how the current trading and historic balance sheets could show a normalised working capital and cash position.

There is no set way to defining excess cash or normalised working capital adjustments – though some serial buyers may have their own preferred

ways, as would their corporate finance advisers.

At MHA Tait Walker Corporate Finance, our team is very experienced at deal handling and negotiation, and we have invested significantly in our data analytics and due diligence capabilities so we can advise both buyers and sellers from all perspectives.

Agreeing on the final valuation impact towards the end of a deal process becomes part of the final points of negotiation. Often this is when emotions are running higher, and it is being negotiated along with many legal matters which will have arisen during the due diligence period.

Even before the valuation adjustments are known, there needs to be a decision about exactly what legal mechanism will be used in the final share purchase agreement.

Due to the Pandemic, working capital patterns will have changed for many businesses and so negotiating excess cash and normal working capital positions in the final valuation impact is increasingly both an art and a science – the art of negotiation meeting the science of data analysis in due diligence.

***Steve Plaskitt is Partner at MHA Tait Walker Corporate Finance, he has helped many businesses with company disposals and acquisitions over the last twenty-five years and the firm has invested heavily in data analytics capabilities. For more information, please call 0191 285 0321 or email [steve.plaskitt@taitwalker.co.uk](mailto:steve.plaskitt@taitwalker.co.uk)***



# YOUR EYE ON THE REGION

## DAVID FOSTER

Managing director,  
Anglo Scottish Asset Finance

### Did you grow up in the North East or did you decide to relocate here in later life?

I was born and bred in Durham. In fact, I have never lived outside of a DH postcode and have no intention to. Anglo Scottish operates at a national level and I regularly travel for work but there is nowhere else I would rather call home.

### What is your favourite aspect of life in the North East?

The work life balance. It takes me ten minutes to get to and from the office and within minutes of arriving home, I can be changed and ready to leave for a game of golf or 5-A-Side football. We have a team at our Durham office that gets together every week to play football after work, that in itself shows the fantastic fluidity that life in the North East offers. The least desirable thing I can imagine is a two-hour commute home on a winter evening and only being able to enjoy the great outdoors on the weekend.

### What is the best view in the North East?

I am an avid golfer and, having toured all the main courses throughout the North East, I feel well informed to advise that the best view I have laid my eyes on in our region can be found at Bamburgh golf course. As someone who enjoys a healthy dose of competition, it takes a lot to derail my focus but, and anyone who has played here can attest, the view at hole four of Cheviot in the distance and Budle Bay to the right, is enough to stop anyone in their tracks.



David Foster

### What do you think it means to be a business person in the North East of England?

Throughout my years working in the North East – particularly as managing director at Anglo Scottish – I continue to be proven right about the resilience, support and opportunity within our region's business community.

Anglo Scottish has operated since 2005 and the culture we have built is something I am extremely proud of. Just the other day, I was looking at a stock image from 2013 and out of the near 40 employees pictured, there is only one person that has left due to retirement. That for me, is true success.

Having recently merged with Birmingham-based Capex UK, bringing both businesses under the Anglo Scottish banner, a priority was to emulate the culture and camaraderie we have achieved in the North East. For many companies experiencing exponential growth, one of the main challenges is to not lose the heart and soul of the business. As we continue to expand, my driver is to fly the flag for North East industry and the people working within it, for they are exemplars of what it means to do good business.

### What is next for Anglo Scottish?

We have set our growth strategy for the next five years and it is extremely ambitious, but achievable given our national foothold and dedicated team.

We are committed to growing our product portfolio including asset finance, motor finance and, in particular, prestige car finance, which we are launching this month.

We are able to offer finance for a range of prestige cars, starting with those in the £25,000 to £100,000 range, for example BMW, Mercedes and Range Rovers. We also cover higher value cars such as Lamborghini Hurricane, Ferrari, Porsche and supercars such as Lamborghini Urus and LaFerrari. In addition, we offer finance and equity release on classic cars, such as the quintessential British motor that is synonymous with James Bond, the Aston Martin.

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## GREEN LIGHT FOR CONFERENCE SUCCESS AS RMT ACCOUNTANTS HOSTS DFK UK & IRELAND ANNUAL CONFERENCE

More than 120 DFK UK & Ireland delegates came together to paint the town green at the association's annual conference, which was hosted in Newcastle by RMT Accountants & Business Advisors.

After missing out in 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions, DFK UKI's 16 member firms, along with international delegates, met once again to network, socialise and hear from inspirational speakers in a packed two-day schedule.

The event, which also saw Peter Winter of CBW hand over the DFK UKI chairmanship to Peter O'Connell of Shaw Gibbs, was sponsored by Silverfin, Keys Finance, Capitalise and Protiviti.

Ahead of the conference's welcome reception, a team of cyclists rode from the Brown Butler offices in Leeds up to RMT's headquarters in Newcastle in aid of Leeds MIND.

The first day featured a range of inspirational speakers take to the stage, including a brilliant keynote address from Geoff Ramm on offering clients 'Celebrity Service' and 'OMG Marketing'.

The afternoon provided a chance for everyone to enjoy a range of leisure activities, including gin tasting, clay-pigeon shooting and a walking tour of Newcastle.

The evening was capped by a drinks reception and meal at The Baltic

Centre for Contemporary Art, overlooking the Gateshead Millennium Bridge which was lit up in DFK UKI green, especially for conference delegates.

The second day featured an opening address from Martin Sharp and Bill Wright of DFK International, and concluded with another memorable keynote speech, this time from Lee Warren.

He blended psychology and sales with his background as a professional performer to offer an insight into how to be an outstanding business communicator.

There was a separate but equally comprehensive agenda for the young professionals who attended.

Caroline Cassidy, Executive Officer and Conference Manager at DFK UKI, said: "It was such a special event, and so fantastic to see our members back together because, that is the whole point of the association - the members and their teams really are the association."

"I would like to thank RMT for being such wonderful hosts and also our sponsors who helped to make the conference such a great event."

Mike Pott, managing director at RMT Accountants, added: "DFK includes some of the world's leading professional firms among its membership and it's a testament to everything that Newcastle has to offer that it chose to hold its first face-to-face annual conference for two years in our city."

"After so many months of being unable to see colleagues in person, it was great to be able to bring everyone together, and to have the chance to show our guests many of the fantastic things that are happening throughout our region."

[www.r-m-t.co.uk](http://www.r-m-t.co.uk)









# ACCELERATE YOUR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

By Palwinder Kaur, Director in Human Capital, Consulting at Deloitte

Digital transformation has introduced a new era of business and public service delivery.

**It is fundamentally reshaping the way organisations compete in the market and provide services to their customers or communities; it is not just shaping how they engage with them but what they offer to them. The data organisations collect is their best ally in providing real insights to build their future business.**

Now is the time to accelerate the transformation. The impact of COVID-19 lockdowns pushed organisations and leaders into totally uncharted waters. In many ways, organisations have shown incredible adaptability.

However, the pandemic has also made it obvious that many organisations are not as far on the digital journey as they thought, with research from Deloitte Digital highlighting that 33% of consumers do not think online services are good enough.

The impact of the pandemic has proven to be a disruptive force, accelerating change across industries. For many organisations, recent months have opened up a window of opportunity to push their digital transformation into a new gear.

## From 'doing digital' to 'being digital'

Many organisations swirl in an endless loop of 'doing' digital things and launching new digital projects – an illusion of 'being' digital – rather than making fundamental changes to business models, operating models or organisational culture. Becoming a digitally-savvy organisation requires coordinating digital technologies to make innovative changes in current business operations providing for customer needs.

Being digital means mastering three domains:

- **Customer** – differentiating the customer offering leading to top line growth or delivery of public services.
- **Operations** - efficient, predictable, low-cost operations, digitalising processes, automating work, analysing data to increase business productivity such as real time feedback on the customer experience.
- **Work** - radically changing how work is done to achieve business and organisation dexterity.

### Customer

Businesses should build a clear understanding of the customer, their expectations and their needs. It is also vital that a brand's digital ambition is aligned to its purpose and business values.

It's important to acknowledge that, in every aspect of business, data is the new fuel in optimising your business performance. Whether it's customer insights, understanding their behaviour or how they transact, collecting data is core to being a digitally-savvy organisation. This data can be used for analysis and performance improvement.

### Operations

Re-thinking how the organisation works must be considered whilst breaking away from the pre-pandemic ways of working that have inhibited improvement of operating margin and flexibility

(which is needed to constantly adapt to a changing situation). Technology leaders should create sets of components and assign accountability, as well as taking advantage of technology-enabled innovation and cloud-based opportunities (e.g., language recognition).

Teams should consider consolidating data from across their organisation to provide insights into customers and operations. Then look to apply advanced analytics to anticipate changes, develop scenarios and execute the right one when needed. These capabilities can be augmented with artificial intelligence, for example to offer products and services increasingly directed to the individual needs of the customer.

The technology that underpins the operations and customer domains present new cyber-security risks that need to be managed. Traditional approaches of securing the 'perimeter' may become impractical as the number of digital touch points with customers and remote employees increases. What's more, in regulated industries (e.g., financial services), teams must grapple with frequently changing laws and regulations regarding risk, security and compliance.

### Work

First and foremost, it is your people who are driving the digital transformation. If we can make the most of human adaptability to reskill and upskill the workforce, we can simultaneously augment humans and technology. When leaders think about investing in technology, they should first think about investing in training their people who can make the technology useful.

The best way to make your organisation more data-centric and digital is to invest in those people who demonstrate their adaptability, curiosity, and flexibility to get to grips with new technology and learn new skills. The focus should be on nurturing soft skills and knowledge for hard skills. Motivated employees are likely to remain curious and will take ownership of clearly defined business outcomes and make their own decisions. They take responsibility for their actions and accountability for their failures. They are intrinsically motivated to become influencers within their industry.

Change is much more likely to happen if you drive it from the top down. In digital transformations, the main implication is that you cannot expect big changes or upgrades to your organisation unless you start by selecting and developing your top leaders to embrace and champion the transformation.

In simple terms, digital transformation is how to future proof an organisation. It's about being able to innovate by putting offerings and experiences into the market rapidly, successively and at scale.

[pkaur@deloitte.co.uk](mailto:pkaur@deloitte.co.uk)  
[www.deloitte.co.uk](http://www.deloitte.co.uk)









Michelle Jones



Peter Neal



Chris Jelley

## KIND CURRENCY TO FLOURISH WITH PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT

Kind Currency is an exciting new Community Interest Company with The Kindness Fund charity at the heart of its purpose and thanks to philanthropic support from The Experience Bank, it will soon be flourishing.

**Kind Currency brings local ethical kind businesses together with kind conscious people/consumers in one community to create an economy of kindness to generate The Kindness Fund.**

This fund will provide opportunities and resources to the kind volunteers and carers who face their own challenges and adversities, and support community causes that society depends upon. When founder Michelle Jones was introduced to Peter Neal, founder of The Experience Bank, the two saw the value in each other and became excited to work together.

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 boardroom but also optimum board performance with higher value creation.

For founding entrepreneurs and small charities,

the social enterprise company, The Experience Bank, has a carefully curated network of inspiring, experienced people who can add value to many start-up businesses and small charities, and can match entrepreneurs to board advisors and non-executives who support businesses to become investment-ready or to successfully achieve the next phase of commercialisation.

Using this approach, Peter introduced Michelle to a number of NEDs and experienced business people from the region who could support her at an advisory level. And Michelle was delighted to appoint Chris Jelley to role of advisor to Kind Currency, with a view to him being a NED in the future. Michelle said: "The Covid-19 Pandemic highlighted how dependent we are upon the voluntary, charity and care sector whilst the deprivation gap widened further. There are currently 14.4m people living in poverty in the UK, with 20% of adults classed as disadvantaged. The mission of the fund is to close the disadvantaged gap and reduce the poverty rate. This will be achieved through the membership community, an opportunity to create acts of kindness with every £1 you spend. The membership will support

consumers to make kinder lifestyle choices and support local ethical businesses and help businesses provide their services and products with kinder values.

"With the support of organisations like The Experience Bank, and advisors like Chris coming on board to support and help bring in the investment needed to take it to the next stage, it is all now very real and exciting."

Chris Jelley is well known in the region for his role as Chief Technology Officer at Preventx Ltd. With experience across the board in technology and strategy he is well placed to support Kind Currency into a great position. He said:

"Michelle's enthusiasm is infectious and Peter's grasp of her needs and what I offer make us a perfect match. To any NED's and advisors I would recommend putting yourself forward to him, and any businesses with purpose who want to support a Kindness Fund should get in touch with Michelle – this concept is going to go a long way and those on the ride will all benefit themselves and, more importantly, others."

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



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## MINCOFFS SOLICITORS APPOINT NEW CORPORATE PARTNER

Mincoffs Solicitors has welcomed Luke Philpott as a new partner in its award-winning corporate team.

Luke qualified as a solicitor at a national law firm in 2015 and relocated from Manchester to Newcastle in 2018, working for 2 North East firms before joining Mincoffs Solicitors as a partner.

He holds a wealth of experience in all areas of corporate law and specialises in private equity and venture capital.

Luke also acted for 8 of the top 100 tech companies listed in the 2018 Northern Tech 100 League Table published by Tech Nation as well as acting for Boohoo.com.

Luke joins Mincoffs Solicitors at a time of notable achievements for the corporate team, having completed 69 transactions in the last 12 months with an aggregate value of £465m and ranking as the 4th most active legal advisor in the North East in terms of deal volume in the most recent Experian Market IQ M&A report



## THE ENDEAVOUR PARTNERSHIP ENCOURAGE LOCAL BUSINESSES TO SUPPORT TEESSIDE CHARITY

Teesside's largest commercial law firm, The Endeavour Partnership are urging local businesses to support Stockton based charity 'A Way Out' after their van was stolen.

A Way Out supports vulnerable women, young people and families across Teesside, to enable a life free from harm, abuse and exploitation whilst educating those in need of life limiting choices and behaviour.

The van is a crucial element of the service, enabling the charity to continue its work, from delivering welfare packages to moving families to safe accommodation.

In one three-month period during the pandemic the van allowed the charity to deliver 414 food and welfare packs across Cleveland.

Since hearing about the theft, the law firm has kindly donated £500 to the charity and are encouraging other local companies to get involved to help the organisation find a permanent mode of transport.



## MHA TAIT WALKER UNITES LEADING TEESSIDE FIRMS TO UNLOCK ECONOMIC POTENTIAL

MHA Tait Walker accountants and advisors recently brought together a group of corporate advisers, funders, bankers, and lawyers together with one of Teesside's business leaders.

Led by Lee Humble, Corporate Finance Associate Partner and chaired by Andrew Moorby, Managing Partner and Head of the Teesside office, the roundtable focussed on a review of the last twelve months and a look forward into 2022 and beyond, with consideration of the role the region will play in the wider UK economic recovery.

They discussed how Teesside can unlock further potential in the area over the coming years.

Teesside is thriving in the region with businesses continuing to grow in a wide range of sectors as well as political commitment and investment.

Lee Humble said: 'The roundtable was a great opportunity to share our views on the turbulence of the last 18 months and discuss the challenges we have all faced as well as reflect on a period of recovery and the role Teesside plays in this.'

## GARDEN PARTY PLANTS SEEDS FOR MORE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



A garden party in the grounds of a Cramlington property lawyer's office has sown the seeds for local charities and community groups to use the garden for the benefit of others.

Sue Shaw-Toomey runs her Toomey Legal practice from the historical Surveyors House in Cramlington Village with garden space of around 70 metres. The garden is ripe to develop vegetable plots, quiet reflection areas and flower beds to enhance the peaceful tranquillity of the land.

The garden is very private and secluded and has scope for use by community groups for activities which promote wellness and good mental health.

To launch the Toomey Legal Community Gardening Project, Sue held an open day in the garden for interested community parties and invited guests. The event also raised much needed funds for Oasis Community Housing, a charity which provides quality housing for vulnerable people.

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## FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE AT SWEENEY MILLER LAW

With a commitment to maintaining its ongoing growth trajectory, Sweeney Miller Law's Jess Fenwick and Damien Todd join Surbhi Vedhara as Equity Partners, whilst founder Paul Miller steps into a training and business development consultancy role at the firm.

**Reaping the rewards for its resilience and delivery of exceptional client service despite the pandemic, the firm has seen an increase in instructions across its key practice areas supporting both businesses and individuals in conveyancing, commercial property, company and commercial, family law, dispute resolution, private client and landlord and tenant.**

Jess and Damien's promotion lays a solid foundation for continued growth and reflects the firm's commitment to the career progression of its team. Like Surbhi, Jess and Damien started life at the firm as paralegals, then became trainee solicitors, qualifying and ultimately reaching the pinnacle of becoming Equity Partners. This pathway demonstrates the opportunity for members of the team to achieve their goals and the absence of 'glass ceilings' which many ambitious lawyers face in their careers.

Understanding that its team are its greatest asset, another example of the firm's future focus is the development of its own bespoke inhouse training programme. This has been designed to provide school leavers and graduates with structured, vocational based learning ensuring consistency in service standards, procedures, communication skills, administration, technical expertise, as well as embedding the core values of the firm – 'the Sweeney Miller Way'. 23 members of staff are currently undergoing the programme which was Paul's innovation that he will continue to build in his new role.



L-R: Paul Miller, Surbhi Vedhara, Jess Fenwick and Damien Todd

The firm's head count has increased by 15% in the last three years reaching nearly 75, and with a strategic commitment to scaling the business, its pipeline of future talent currently includes five trainee solicitors, six apprentices and 23 paralegals.

Commenting on the new partnership structure, head of Commercial and Commercial Property, Jess said: 'I am very excited about the future opportunities for the partnership. We are ready to take the firm to the next level and build upon the incredibly strong base that previous partners have put in place. Paul and Surbhi have created solid foundations and a growing reputation with business and private clients alike. The new partnership gives us the opportunity to expand this reputation through the continued provision of first-class legal services delivered with exceptional client care and relationships.'

'Since joining the firm I have witnessed the reward

given to those who are loyal and hardworking by the firm's readiness to promote and appoint from within. Damien and I are beneficiaries of this policy, and we are ready to continue this practice as a central part of our ethos.'

Damien, who heads the firm's Conveyancing team and is Secretary of Sunderland Law Society, added: 'I am privileged to become an Equity Partner in Sweeney Miller. This has been my ambition since I qualified, and I am extremely grateful to my colleagues, friends, and family for helping me reach this milestone. I am fully committed to the continued service delivery of exceptional client care which is at the core of our business model. We have created a vibrant professional firm with a strong foothold in the Northeast and long may it continue. I am extremely excited about where we can take Sweeney Miller and what the long-term future holds.'





Sweeney Miller Law was established in Sunderland by Paul in 2002 with a second office opening in Newcastle in 2014 to service increased client demand. As well as working with clients in the North, the firm is instructed by individuals and businesses from across the UK, including London. The firm's focus on service excellence and growing reputation has helped to attract recent instructions involving large commercial landlords, including PLCs, extensive property development projects, business sales, acquisitions, mergers and management buyouts, as well as exceptional growth in domestic conveyancing, private client and family work. This increased activity has resulted in a 25% uptick in turnover in the firm's latest financial year.

Through years of client facing experience, the team understands that most SMEs have limited options - they can instruct large national firms

with higher fees, or they can use a local high street firm that may not have the necessary expertise. Sweeney Miller fills that void by providing affordable, pragmatic and quality legal services. Busy with their 'day job', business clients appreciate the firm's tailored and partner-led approach, avoiding the cumbersome processes of some of its larger counterparts.

Reflecting on the rapid growth of the firm, Managing Partner Surbhi said: 'Paul and I have been blessed with an exceptional staff group who all deserve our thanks for their loyalty and dedication. Paul has steered the firm to its current position in which it enjoys a regional and national reputation. However, we always knew this day would come and Jess and Damien are ready to step up and take the mantle forward. Paul's absence will be felt around the office, but I look forward to working with the new Senior

Management Team in the next phase for the firm. Paul will remain as a Consultant concentrating on the training and development of the next generation of staff and thus ensuring our continued strength in depth.'

In response to his new challenge ahead, Paul commented: 'It is with mixed feelings that I step down from my position. I have thoroughly enjoyed my 18 years building the firm, from its inception, with Peter Sweeney to where it is at now. The past eight years, with Surbhi have seen significant growth (with a few challenges along the way). I have been blessed with unbelievable staff of whom I can't speak more highly. The firm is in safe hands, and I look forward to my training & business development role to ensure our reputation continues to grow.'

**To find out more, visit [www.sweeneymiller.co.uk](http://www.sweeneymiller.co.uk)**





## SWEENEY MILLER LAW CELEBRATIONS

On the evening of 15th October, Sweeney Miller Law's staff, clients and guests celebrated the news that Jess Fenwick and Damien Todd join Surbhi Vedhara as Equity Partners, whilst founder Paul Miller steps into a training and business development consultancy role at the firm.

The drinks reception at Leila Lily's in Newcastle, was an opportunity to reflect on the firm's remarkable achievements, thank staff and clients for their loyal support, as well as looking ahead to future growth plans under the new partnership structure.

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







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# TOP TIER CLIENT PRAISE FOR MUCKLE LLP



Jason Wainwright, Managing partner.

North East commercial law firm Muckle LLP has once again been praised by its clients and listed as a leading firm in independent rankings published earlier this month.

**Muckle LLP's Legal 500 UK rankings - which are based on independent research and client feedback - have remained strong in 2021, with clients praising the firm for their 'client care and communication' backed by 'strategic knowhow and expertise'.**

Legal 500 awarded Muckle a top tier status in 11 areas across the firm including Corporate and Commercial, Property, Dispute Resolution, Charities, Education and Banking and Finance.

For over 10 years their Debt recovery service has remained top ranked and they remain the only Northern law firm to be ranked nationally for sport. Their IT and Telecoms and Property Litigation teams have also achieved top tier status this year.

A number of lawyers were praised in the latest Legal 500, with 38 in total singled out as specialists in their field. Andrew Davison OBE, head of corporate, was once again listed as a 'Hall of Fame' individual, a ranking which recognises law firm partners who are at the pinnacle of the profession.

The firm's responsiveness and down to earth approach were highlighted in client's feedback with clients commenting:

"We are generally impressed by the responsive nature of the team and the ability to have one focal client partner who leads the delivery of advice by their team. We are also impressed generally by the quality of advice in complex unique situations. We were impressed by their seamless transition to efficient working practices and its lack of impact on us as a client."

"I think what makes Muckle stand out is their client care and communication. They have all of the competencies required and a broad base of expertise to work from but in comparison to others they are more client-focused and easier to engage with."

Managing partner Jason Wainwright said: "These outstanding results reflect the hard work our teams put in every day, going the extra mile to deliver an exceptional service to our clients. I'd like to thank all our clients who took the time to take part in the research process.

"We've improved or maintained our position in every area, with more top tier rankings than ever before, showing that we continue to have a strong national, regional and local presence from our North East base. Muckle is proof that you can remain independent, retain your regional focus and perform at the very highest level.

"It's fantastic recognition and one I believe reflects the values that run through our firm. Much of our client's feedback pointed to our strong team ethic and joined up approach, and it's encouraging to see our values really shine through in their quotes.

"We're recruiting at the moment and hiring and developing the right employees, who are highly skilled and committed to our values, is incredibly important to us."

The full Legal 500 listings can be found at [legal500.com](https://legal500.com)

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# WILL FLEXIBLE WORKING BECOME THE DEFAULT UNDER THE GOVERNMENT'S NEW PROPOSALS?

Charlotte McBride is an Associate Solicitor at specialist employment law firm, Collingwood Legal. Charlotte McBride considers the Government's proposals on reforming the current legislation on an employee's ability to make flexible working requests.



Charlotte McBride

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the changes this has brought to working culture in the UK has reformed the way employees and employers think about flexible working. According to statistics from the Office of National Statistics (ONS), in April 2020, 46.6% of people in employment worked from home, compared to 11% in the corresponding period in 2018. The ONS subsequently reported in June 2021 that 85% of adults working from home wanted to adopt a 'hybrid' approach going forward, with a mix of both home and office working. Therefore, greater flexibility and a shift from traditional practices is clearly in high demand making a change in the current flexible working legislation a hot topic.

## What are the current rules on flexible working requests?

Under the current legal framework employees (and not workers or other individuals) can make a statutory flexible working request and only once they have completed at least 26 weeks' continuous service with their employer. The employer is then obligated to respond within a reasonable time frame and the entire process (including any appeal) should be completed within three months of receiving the request.

If the employer refuses the request, the refusal must be based on one or more of the 8 business reasons detailed in the legislation. An employee is only permitted to make a request once in any 12-month period.

## Why might this change?

For many, the shift to flexible working arrangements during the pandemic was a welcome adjustment, allowing individuals greater time and freedom

to better manage their work and personal commitments. The Government's ambition is now to adopt a "world class approach to flexible working" in order to "build back better" following the challenges brought by the pandemic. The Government wants to focus on all forms of flexibility and move away from the default 9-to-5 office-based job. The Government hopes that the proposals outlined in its consultation document will bring greater benefits for both employees and employers.

## What are the Government's proposals?

The Government published its consultation document on 23 September 2021. The key proposals for reform include:

1. Making the Right to Request available from 'day one' of employment.
2. To consider whether the current eight business reasons for refusing the request will continue to be valid.
3. Requiring the employer to suggest alternatives when they refuse a request (where possible).
4. Make changes to the current administrative process of flexible working requests i.e. amend the timeframe in which employers are required to respond and to potentially remove the restriction on one request every 12 months.
5. Greater emphasis on allowing temporary adjustment requests.

The consultation period on these proposals will close on 1 December 2021. It will be interesting to see the outcome of this process, and how our traditional model of working culture may be permanently transformed as a result.

## Comment

Not only has the pandemic encouraged a greater shift to flexible working arrangements, but recent Employment Tribunal decisions have demonstrated the need for employers to respond appropriately to flexible working requests and genuinely consider these before they dismiss them. As publicised in the news, the Employment Tribunal in the recent case of *Mrs A Thompson v Scrancrown Ltd T/a Manors* found that Mrs Thompson, a Sales Manager at a London-based estate agency, was indirectly discriminated against on the grounds of sex when Manors refused her flexible working request, including a request to finish an hour earlier every day to pick her child up from nursery before it closed. The case highlighted that an employer's justification for refusing a request should not outweigh any potential discriminatory impact on an employee as was regrettably the case here.

It is situations like this case that the Government's proposals aim to support, allowing employees greater opportunity to better engage and have a two-sided conversation with their employer about flexible working practices that can suit both parties.

Collingwood Legal is a specialist employment law firm and we provide expert advice to organisations on all areas of employment law, including assisting HR and business-owners on dealing with flexible working requests and drafting flexible working policies or delivering bespoke training to staff.

To find out more, contact Charlotte McBride at [Charlotte.McBride@collingwoodlegal.com](mailto:Charlotte.McBride@collingwoodlegal.com), or call Charlotte on 0191 282 2883. [www.collingwoodlegal.com](http://www.collingwoodlegal.com)





James Bray

## JAMES JOINS ROBSON LAIDLER TO DRIVE DIGITAL GROWTH

Robson Laidler Accountants in Newcastle and Durham has expanded its marketing team with the appointment of James Bray as digital marketing executive.

**James Bray, 21, from Gosforth has joined the firm after graduating from Northumbria University with a first-class B.A. (Hons) degree in Entrepreneurial Business Management.**

James will support the firm with its business development targets, underpinned by an aggressive marketing strategy.

Whilst studying, James set up his own small business, where he taught himself digital marketing skills. This, combined with his experience in a sales role whilst studying makes him a great addition to the growing team.

James said: "I am excited to be joining the Robson Laidler team, I feel I can make an impact by bringing some fresh digital marketing ideas to the table.

"After hearing about Robson Laidler's goals for expansion, and more importantly, its strong value-based culture, I knew this was a rare opportunity I wanted to be part of."

James will focus on boosting brand awareness and increasing audience touch points and engagement, through podcasts, video and an organic and paid marketing content strategy.

Robson Laidler head of marketing Gemma Graham said: "We have grown our team by more than 70% in recent years and recruiting James into the marketing function of the business will only help us to further develop and achieve our business goals.

"For us marketing isn't just about driving sales, it's about showcasing everything that is great about our business from the excellent service

that we deliver, to the work we do in the community, our health and wellbeing initiatives and our values-based culture.

"Digital marketing is fast paced and ever-changing and James has the passion to ensure that Robson Laidler is ahead of the curve with the latest trends as we continue to focus on high growth areas of our business including business advisory, healthcare and tax consultancy."

Robson Laidler is a 100-year-old firm that has offices in Jesmond and Chester le Street with a total headcount of over 90 staff including accountants, tax advisors, business advisors and wealth managers.

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





## THE RISE IN OVER-50S DIVORCE

When I began assisting divorce clients in the late 1980's most of them would be in their late twenties or early thirties. Today the vast majority of my clients will be over 50 and this has been the case for at least ten years.

**If you listened to your friends in the pub, you may well be given bar room advice that bears no resemblance to the way that such cases are settled.**

Traditionally divorce solicitors would try to maintain the matrimonial home at all costs on behalf of a lower earning wife who was going to look after the children whilst her ex-husband went out to work.

But when dealing with divorce clients in their fifties the situation is completely different. Quite frequently the mortgage will be very low or non-existent. Therefore there would be a considerable amount of equity to play with. The property may also be more valuable as the couple traded up throughout their marriage. An entirely different scenario to dealing with low equity and a lower value matrimonial home which would have been the case earlier in the marriage.

### Future mortgage costs

Time and time again solicitors put forward a deal whereby one party maintains the house and the other will keep their pension. But how can this possibly fair upon the other party?

Rick and Elaine are both 53 years of age. They have a house worth £750,000 with no mortgage. They both have savings, their cars are paid for and they both have pensions. Rick's pensions are worth £950,000 and Elaine's £100,000.

Elaine wishes to retain the matrimonial home I am told, Rick can retain his pension and we will adjust savings to make everything equal. But it won't be equal will it? It may have taken Elaine and Rick over twenty years to pay off the mortgage. For Rick to buy himself a new home may well involve him having to take out a new mortgage. He would therefore have mortgage interest payments to make for years ahead, stamp duty, legal fees and removal fees.



Jacqueline Emmerson

### The pension conundrum

Rick's pension is quite high. He wants to go on working and contributing to his pension. But soon he will have reached his Lifetime Allowance of £1million+ meaning that when he wishes to take his pension he may well be taxed at 55%.

It was always the case that a higher pension would probably be offset against equity in the matrimonial home. But this is no longer the best way forward in many instances, it is not very tax efficient.

### We ain't no Silver Splitters!

It is necessary to be more creative when dealing with an over 50's divorce. That's why I'm doing it differently. Some people refer to these clients as Silver Splitters!! As someone who is over fifty I actually find this term to be rather insulting. It almost assumes there is nothing left to give, and yet many people achieve bigger and better things in life once they have created financial freedom and their children, if they had any, have grown up.

In Elaine and Rick's case I would potentially suggest that the matrimonial home is sold. They should split their pensions and savings equally - their current incomes and future earning capacity must be taken into account as this may cause an adjustment.

They should also have their pensions valued by a specialist. You cannot swap like for like. Even if they both had a pension worth £500,000 it is highly unlikely that would result in the same monthly income. If Elaine had an NHS pension and part of Rick's pension was self funded then her pension would pay out substantially more per month than his.

It can be very difficult to obtain a mortgage in this age group, lenders criteria can be very strict. And don't assume that either party will be able to, or will want to, go on working in order to pay off a mortgage; ill health, the need to look after your own parents or redundancy could all come your way. Or, after years of working very long hours to build up assets it may well be time to reduce working hours or cease working altogether.

When dealing with a younger family who have children then the needs of those children would be the focus of any financial settlement. In particular, the need to make sure that they have the stability of their home and that maintenance is paid to support them. However, when dealing with a couple over fifty I am more likely to concentrate on a mortgage free home, the ability to maintain that property - what if the boiler blows or the roof needs to be fixed? There is also the need to have enough money to live on upon retirement. That's where taking time to sort out pensions is essential.

### Helping you and your future

One of my most important roles is to obtain a settlement for a client that helps them not just now but in ten or twenty years time. Whilst my client can often only deal with now, my task is to protect their future.

***If you would like to chat about any of the issues outlined here then please don't hesitate to contact me - [je@emmersons-solicitors.co.uk](mailto:je@emmersons-solicitors.co.uk)***





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### **For businesses**

We offer a range of support from ad hoc legal advice to tailored HR services for any businesses requiring HR support in matters including employment contracts, handbooks, policies, procedures, template documents, staff

training, seminars. We advise businesses on a broad range of employment matters including disciplinaries, grievances, redundancy, TUPE, working time, all forms of discrimination, whistleblowing, maternity and paternity rights, and holidays, and we also offer representation in the Employment Tribunal.

### **For employees**

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*For an initial discussion please contact Paul Lott on 07752508303 or email on [paul.lott@elmwoodslaw.co.uk](mailto:paul.lott@elmwoodslaw.co.uk)*

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## 2021 NORTH EAST ENTREPRENEURIAL AWARDS

Held by the Entrepreneurs' Forum, the 2021 North East Entrepreneurial Awards celebrated entrepreneurs leading dynamic, innovative businesses and making a genuine change to the North East.

Winners included Dame Irene and John Hays of Hays Travel, Lee Hutchinson of Double Eleven, Bill Scott OBE, Dan Parker of Aspect Facades and Steven Rawlingson of Samuel Knight International. Delivered in partnership with ION, the awards were also supported by the Malhotra Group, Ward Hadaway, IA Growth, Qrious and Agilico.







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## GLOBAL BUSINESS, LOCAL ROOTS

Headquartered in Newcastle, and with additional offices in London, Bristol, Dallas, Chicago and Boston Samuel Knight International (SKI) has become one of the leading names in energy and rail recruitment sector supplying direct hires and full project manpower solutions.

**At the helm is CEO Steven Rawlingson, who founded the business in 2014 after identifying a gap in the market for project manpower and consultancy services within the energy and rail industries.**

After securing seed-stage support, SKI faced serious scaleup challenges in its third year when it saw exponential growth. Revenues increased 400% to hit £10m but back at the office, support functions needed to be strengthened.

Steven said, "It looked like we were going to be a 'could have been special' business. I had grown it too quickly and was in a bit of a pickle."

To learn more about sustainable growth, Steven joined the Scale-up Leader's Academy, delivered by the Entrepreneurs' Forum.

"As a member of the Forum, we knew we'd be surrounded by similar minded people, but it's been a breath of fresh air to work on our challenges with other entrepreneurs."

"The Scale-up Leaders' Academy allowed me to reassess and learn how to keep the four key plates of my business – people, strategy, execution, cash – spinning in the right way."

Starting with an intimate team of four, in just six years, SKI has grown into a 70-person team, with an estimated turnover of £22m year end of 2020 – firmly moving towards their goal of achieving £100m turnover.



Steven Rawlingson

The company's impressive growth is testimony to its unrivalled services, its people and the innovative solutions the company provides to its clients.

By utilising the latest technology and online resources, SKI uncover the most sought-after talent, allowing them to stay at the forefront of the recruitment industry, and deliver the very best candidates with speed and utmost attention to detail.

In 2019, SKI secured further investment to finance the next phase of growth and celebrated the launch of SKI in Boston and Chicago.

And despite the pandemic, both the UK and USA branches grew by 90% - 100%, with the company being on track to achieve £30 million in sales.

Their continued success and determination for further growth led Steven to the finals of the 2021 North East Entrepreneurial Awards

where he won the Scale-up Entrepreneur award.

For Steven, the lessons learned throughout the Scale-up Leader's Academy have been instrumental in his success so far, and in the firm's future ambitions.

"It really changed my mindset and helped me get the business back in line. I learned to think like a CEO. I can't tell you what it did for me."

Delivered by the Entrepreneurs' Forum, the Scale-up Leader's Academy is a six month programme of dedicated support that will help you prepare to grow your company faster and more sustainably.

***We are currently inviting applications for our 6th cohort of our Scale Up Leader's Academy which starts in January 2022. To find out more and to apply, visit [entrepreneursforum.net](https://entrepreneursforum.net)***





ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

...A NOT FOR PROFIT SOCIAL ENTERPRISE...

# *The 12th Anniversary ABC Dinner & Awards Ceremony*



The Asian Business Connexions Anniversary Dinner event is, without doubt, the largest celebration of Asian businesses and individuals in the North, attracting significant VIP's and celebrity speakers. The last 18 months has been a challenge with all business and personal areas adapting to the impact of Covid. In 2021 we have more of a reason and need to come together and celebrate the significant and sustained contribution of the Asian community from across the North East.





ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

# Words from the Chairman...

## *Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault*

Ammar Mirza CBE Chair and Founder of Asian Business Connexions



**I had a dream. The dream was to live in a region that recognised and respected individuality, celebrated diversity and encouraged inclusion. This dream was shared with a small group that all had a similar vision, and a plan was formulated to make it so. As without a plan, a dream is simply a fantasy.**

Our plan. To establish the most inclusive region in our United Kingdom, through the creation of a not-for-profit social enterprise that aimed to connect, support and promote the Asian and wider communities. Whilst the goal at the time was maybe not as ambitious as it is now, as stated, it certainly was a major challenge and filled with risk.

In 2008 we were in the height of a Global crises, as a consequence of a financial meltdown, where banks literally broke. When I was sat around tables discussing support and engagement, representing the private sector, questions were asked. Who was representing the ethnic minority groups and how were they engaged? No one was able to answer this question.

In parallel, Jalf and I were regularly approached by members of the Asian community seeking help and assistance. It was these factors that we pulled together a group of merry men and women to try to do something about this lack of representation, the inequality and division that existed.

My late father, who was one of the foremost community leaders within the North East, the general secretary of Newcastle Mosque, and an advocate for community cohesion coined the name Asian Business Connexions (ABC).

Jalf and I were encouraged, guided and supported by our later fathers and their friends, and numerous other individuals helping create our first board. A number of these friends have continued to devote their time, effort and energy to ABC selflessly, for which I am eternally grateful and we wouldn't be here without them.

Yet never in a million years could we have planned for a global pandemic that in itself appears to be racist, killing three times as many ethnic people in comparison than White. Creating more division, empowering racist beliefs, and showcasing some of societies worst behaviours. From footballers, food workers, to frontline staff all reporting abuse, and public sector organisations being called out for being institutionally racist. No one should have to tolerate any type of physical and mental abuse, and nor should we allow it.

Through our work at ABC, we have always tried to positively address the challenges that exist within society and communities, not shying away from having difficult conversations or holding people to account. Getting out of our comfort zones to address discrimination, division and intolerance. We have created a collaboration between the North West, Yorkshire and North East to establish the largest Asian representative body within the UK.

Since its inception, Asian Business Connexions has rightly prioritised the Asian community, however our ambition has always been to take an inclusive approach and recognise that it is only through cohesion, collaboration and a common purpose that our community can truly come together.

Our #InclusionbyDefault campaign aims to improve inclusion within the workplace through raising education on BAME recruitment and barriers to inclusion within the workplace to make the North East the most inclusion region in the UK. Our membership programme consolidates an extended network of diverse businesses who share our commitment to inclusion and equality.

Our speakers were purposefully chosen as leading lights. Both Fatima and Shareen are true trailblazers. Incredibly inspiring role models that have created something truly special demonstrating that being an Asian female isn't a barrier, but a platform for success.

We wouldn't be here without our sponsors and supporters, we are very grateful for everyone that has contributed to the success of ABC, and an extra special thank you to the ABC team, board, North West and Yorkshire Asian Business Associations, and the APPG for BAME Business for all of their commitment and hard work to our shared ambitions.

*Thank you and God bless.*

**Ammar Mirza CBE**

Founder and Chairman



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ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

# Winners...

*Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault*

Winner of the Independent Award, Shweta Sharma with Colin Bell



Adam Brown with Lifetime Achievement Award winner, Raj Singh



Ammar Mirza CBE with Allan Curry, winner of the Chairman's Award



Gary Fawcett with Imran Khaliq, winner of the Business Award



Jamie Driscoll with Doc Anand, winner of the Mayor of North Tyne Combined Authority Award



Fatima Patel with IETUK, winner of the Public Sector Award



Chris Beevers with the winner of the 3rd Sector Award, Fareeha Usman



Fatima Patel with Dr Malasree Home, winner of the Public Sector Award



Sandeep Kapoor with Dr Shobha Shrivastava MBE, winner of Spice FM People's Choice Award

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ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

*Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault*



Jamie Driscoll with Veena Soni, winner of the Mayor of North Tyne Combined Authority Award



Winners of the Professional Award, Aman Sehgal and Ponchi Kantt-Neaz with Adrienne McFarland

## Finalists...

Shahi Foods.....Halal food business

Shab Mehdi .....Founder, MSV Sport

Raj Sehgal.....Director, Union  
Property Services

Aran &  
Arvan Handa.....Cairn Group

David Ladhar.....Managing Director,  
Crown Care

Kamran Ali.....Hijama practioner

Zarin Sharif .....Owner, iluv2print

Abu Shama &  
Kamal Hussain.....Avenue & Greene



Chris Beevers with the Road to Recovery Trust team, winners of the 3rd Sector Award

Tariq Mohammed.....Entrepreneur

Ranjeet Khanda.....Owner,  
Linthorpe Pharmacy

Sanjee Ratnatunga ....Founder, Director,  
Ideas for Change  
Consulting

Wajid Ayaz.....Director,  
Acumen Accounting

Andrew Misra .....Commercial Director,  
FUJIFILM Diosynth  
Biotechnologies

Vasant OSwal .....Fellow of  
The Royal  
College Surgeons

Councillor  
Mohammed Javed.....Mayor,  
Stockton-on-Tees  
Borough Council

Sahida Hassen .....NHS Business  
Services Authority

My Delhi .....Restaurant

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ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

## Special Guests...

*Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault*



“The richness of our society is dependent up the richness of the people within it. The greater diversity, the greater the richness. Being inclusive delivers.”

Ian Dormer, Managing Director  
of Rosh Engineering



“

The North East LEP is an organisation that wants to do the right thing, think bigger, make a difference and achieve amazing things together as a team and a partnership. For us - inclusion, diversity, equity and belonging are more than just words. They are guiding principles with meaning and intent and come with a set of tangible things that we do and behaviours we adopt to ensure we create an environment where everyone can belong and be themselves. We want to lead by example so working with organisations such as ABCConnexions, helps us do that.

North East LEP



“

As a business owner, I know first-hand the benefits of employing a diverse and inclusive workforce. “A diverse mix of voices leads to better discussions, decisions, and outcomes for everyone.” However, inclusion doesn’t just happen by chance. It is a conscious choice - a choice that we all have to make to build a better society, for ourselves and for our kids. I make this choice not only because I have a moral responsibility to, but also because it is business critical and the key to growth.

Surbhi Vedhara, Partner at Sweeney Miller Law



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ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

## Keynote speakers...

*Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault*



### FATIMA PATEL

The Asian Sunday newspaper was founded by Fatima in 2011 as the UK's first, free Sunday paper. With a focus on the news and lifestyles of South Asian communities in the UK, the Asian Sunday has become a leading voice for the South Asian community, literally delivering cross-community awareness to diverse, local communities.

The Asian Sunday and the Asian Standard were originally launched in Bradford in 2011 and has now expanded across the North East to Kirklees, Leeds and Newcastle, as well as in London, with plans to expand to a further six regions by 2025.

### FAROOQ HAKIM

Farooq is part of the Oracle Corporation strategic accounts leadership team which is working with our key global customers in supporting them throughout their digital transformation journey.

He has 30 plus years involvement in the delivery of complex business transformation programmes with executive roles as Chief Operations Officer, Vice President, Chief Information Officer and Chief Technology Officer.

Farooq has the privilege of being the High Sheriff of Tyne & Wear. This is a non political Royal appointment with aim to support the Crown and the judiciary. this will involve playing an active role in the community and promoting the interests of the criminal justice agencies and voluntary organisations



### SHAREEN QURESHI

Shareen Qureshi is the marketing director at Barclays Bank and has been successfully committed to the Banking profession for 20 years. Prior to joining Barclay's from 1997-2000, Shareen supported the 'Youth Centre – West End Youth Enquiry Service'. During this period, she helped students find purpose and direction, encouraging them to embark on a new journey.

Shareen has also supported international women's day events, as well as mentoring STEM (Science, technology engineering and mathematics) female students. In 2018 she raised £1m for charities including; Best beginnings, Nelson Mandela Foundation, Santa Maria Foundation, Asmir Begovic Foundation, Kanu Foundation, Marina Dalglish, Missing people, Macmillan and many more.

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ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

# Special Dr Nas Khan OBE Award: Ved Prakash Venayak

*Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault*



Dr Nas Khan OBE

**Just like previous years, this year's awards will also see a recipient of the very special Asian Business Connexions (ABC) Awards Dr Nas Khan OBE award.**

The Dr Nas Khan OBE award was created in memory of one of the region's leading entrepreneurs and philanthropists, which recognises the outstanding achievements of those who are dedicated to achieving community cohesion and equality in the North East.

Dr Khan arrived in Britain from Pakistan at the age of 14 unable to speak English but worked his way up through Jennings Motor Group before becoming its owner in 2005, overseeing its development into one of the region's most successful businesses.

As well as his business achievements, the successful entrepreneur was known for his commitment to charities and the North East community, and also established his own Emaan Foundation, which was dedicated to building a village in Pakistan for a community devastated by earthquakes in 1999 and floods in 2010.

Dr Nas Khan was awarded an OBE in 2017, in recognition of his business and community work. He sadly passed away in 2018, aged 58.

Here at Asian Business Connexions we wanted to keep the memory and the phenomenal work and achievements of Dr Nas Khan alive and so dedicated an award in his name, which acknowledges the outstanding efforts of those who are dedicated to supporting their own communities.

Ved Prekash Venayak was one of the founding members of the Tyne and Wear Racial Equality Council (TWREC) and one of the first members of the region's Indian community.

Ved died, in May this year aged 93, but leaves behind an incredible legacy.

The Gosforth man has been described by his peers as selfless, kind and generous person who would go out of his way to help people settle into a new community.

Being one of the first Indians to settle in the North East, he went out of his way to help new communities to settle in the region, offered them a hand of friendship and encouraged people settling in the area to establish good working relationships with local people.

Ved was instrumental in helping people from ethnic minority communities to play their part in supporting the local community, which has resulted in a positive contribution from South Asian communities, not just to the local economy but also to the social and cultural life of the region.

During Ved's leading role on the TWREC Executive Committee, he helped to develop a policy for race equality in the North East and establish partnerships with institutions in the region.

He developed relationships with leaders of other ethnic minority communities and promoted respect and harmony amongst diverse communities in the area.

Ved followed the Hindu faith and had immense respect for all other faiths and people of no faith.

As founder member of the Indian Association, he played a vital role in promoting Indian values amongst its members and encouraged participation in voluntary, charitable and worthy causes that improved the lives of people who were vulnerable and marginalised.

Ved worked closely with Northumbria Police to promote understanding between the police and the diverse communities.

As a senior member of Newcastle Rotary Club, Ved introduced projects to help others and supported numerous charitable causes, including end of life charity, Marie Curie.

Ved leaves behind an incredible body of work, which has impacted on industry and community and so there is no better recipient for this year's very special Dr Nas Khan OBE award.



Nisha Bhola collects the Dr Nas Khan OBE Award on behalf of the late Ved Venayak MBE



Ved Prekash Venayak

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ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

## ABC Membership

Helping to connect, support and promote you to realise your ambition



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Meet and meaningfully connect with members of the Asian and wider communities.  
Attend sell-out events that provide insights and inspiration from a range of industry and community leaders.  
Be part of something special that values individuality and ensures inclusion.

### SUPPORT:

Access a range of business and personal support programmes including Peer Networks, Accelerator and Scale.  
Recruitment support and advice through our Inclusion by Default campaign, to help organisations recruit ethnic minorities.  
Exclusive specialist roundtable events to address industry challenges.

### PROMOTE:

Meet Ministers, High Commissioners and other leaders to promote you and your organisation.  
Feature in our media and marketing that can get a unique message out to an audience of over 1million.  
Showcase your offer to the whole community.

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Or call 0844 24 777 05



ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

# Thank you to all our supporters!..

*Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault*



Thank you all of our supporters who helped to make this event such a success. It truly was wonderful to see so many people together in one room, having fun and celebrating together.

Asian Business Connexions goes beyond the awards ceremony. We would be delighted to have you as part of our special community and become more meaningfully engaged in our shared ambition of making the North East the most inclusive region in the UK by 2025.

**To get more involved, please visit: [www.abconnexions.org](http://www.abconnexions.org) or give us a call on 01661 823234**



**For more information, visit [www.abconnexions.org](http://www.abconnexions.org)**



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We employ 2,500 people who deliver digital solutions to make things easier and quicker for our customers. We have won a number of prestigious Industry awards this year that recognise the quality of services for clients – CIPP (Chartered Institute of Personnel and

Development) and CIPP (Chartered Institute of Payroll Professionals), as well as the UK National Contact Centre Association bronze award.

We have six Centre's of Excellence across the UK, including our Newcastle office.

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Most recently, SSCL supported the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) in recruiting 13,000 new Jobcentre Work Coaches as part of the DWP plan to get the UK back to work post pandemic.

SSCL has also signed up as a Kickstart employer. This is a £2 billion scheme to get young people into employment and we have welcomed a number of people into our Newcastle and York centres.

We are proud of what we do to make public services work better and our biggest advantage is our people. Their passion, knowledge and ambition ensure we never lose sight of our customers and their priorities.

**For more information visit: [www.sscl.com](http://www.sscl.com)**



# TAKEOVERS AND TRANSFORMATION FOR NEWCASTLE CITY CENTRE

The takeover of Newcastle United football club after two years of stop-start diplomacy has finally happened and the timing couldn't be better. The city is poised for a dramatic transformation both at the club and on the streets.

**Plans are afoot to make the whole of Newcastle city centre more appealing for people to live, work, and visit and now at its heart St James' Park will create an even greater attraction for football supporters nationally and internationally.**

Now that St James' Park has the funds and the wherewithal to transform the fortunes of the team and the club, the excitement and positivity is infectious. Plans to make the city more people-focused seem more relevant and timely in light of the club news. Creating new pedestrian-priority areas by changing bus routes, taxi ranks, deliveries and on street parking on some of the city's busiest and most notable streets will all make it easier for people to move around the city. All the changes are part of Newcastle City Council's City Centre Transformation Programme (CCTP). The overall aim of the programme is to create a cleaner, greener city centre which will benefit the people of Newcastle now and for years to come.

At the moment, the central streets of Newcastle are not as welcoming as they could be and space that could be used for people is dominated by traffic. The Council has outlined a vision for the city that would use space differently, introducing more greenery into the city, connecting adjacent streets with spaces to stop and socialise. The plans are designed to see more emphasis on biodiversity and greenery, with trees, planting and public spaces much more prominent.

The changes, like the NUFC takeover, have been a long time coming. NE1 is delighted that the council has been brave and visionary in its plans and we are proud that we have played our part in helping to shape the programme working with the city's businesses and the city council over the past ten years.

Collectively, we started looking at the issues affecting Newcastle and what was needed back in 2011. The key themes identified in this work form the foundation of the plans now being progressed in the City Centre Transformation Programme. We are now working hand in glove with the Council and with businesses to help formulate and implement the plans.

The changes have the potential to be transformational, especially as they are happening at the same time as the major, and long awaited redevelopment of East Pilgrim Street and the takeover of Newcastle United by new owners who have been clear in their aims to invest in the club and the city. Collectively this work and investment will be monumental, and it is not overstating the case to say that it could have the same impact on Newcastle as previous chapters in the city's history including the period of change championed by Richard Grainger in the 19th Century and T. Dan Smith in the 1960s. Now is a pivotal and exciting time for Newcastle.

The Pilgrim Street development alone has the capacity to create in the region of 10,000 jobs, which would result in a huge increase in footfall on surrounding streets. Northumberland Street which would be deluged by these new workers currently averages 40,000 footfall visits per day. With 10,000 extra people flowing in and out of Pilgrim Street it is essential that the retail core doesn't just cope but caters well for these people and what they want from the city. The

key is to build greater capacity for pedestrians in the heart of the city to create a safe and pleasant environment for people to work, shop and enjoy their leisure time including the tens of thousands of football supporters visiting St James' Park. Without these proposed changes, the city would be at risk of stagnating and falling behind our competitors.

Planning for the future is crucial, and the consultation for Blackett Street and the surrounding area proposes changes that give pedestrians priority in key areas of the city, creates new civic spaces and frees up existing ones. A new area, the Pilgrim Street Quarter, will be created on Northumberland Street as it intersects with Pilgrim Street, and Old Eldon Square will be reinvigorated. In addition, when vehicles are removed the pollution is too, improving the quality of the space and the experience for residents, workers and visitors alike. Creating new spaces will help us deliver a cosmopolitan city centre experience that customers both demand and expect, and to provide flexible spaces that can be used for a range of events and activities.

Over the past month we have been delighted to welcome back over 50,000 students into Newcastle, their presence is hugely important for the local economy and the vibrancy of the city. It is essential that we continue to evolve and change to reflect the changing wants and needs of the whole community including residents, businesses, students, and visitors.

The council has made a sterling effort in difficult times to secure funding to carry out the first phase of the £50m development plans. This investment is crucial for the city centre's redevelopment and long-term survival. And now, the £350 million takeover of St James' Park will be transformational for the club and the city with its impact resonating far beyond the confines of St James' Park. We have all seen the economic benefits delivered in other cities from similar takeovers and the dramatic uplifts in inward investment in the cities and wider region. We all stand to benefit from the major financial investment in Newcastle United, a club at the heart of our city.

Exciting times lie ahead for the football club and the city and we want to capitalise on this excitement to transform Newcastle. It is the responsibility of each generation to leave their part of the world in a better place for the next generation, this is our opportunity!

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





“

...We all stand to benefit from the major financial investment in Newcastle United, a club at the heart of our city...

”

Stephen Patterson, Chief Executive of NE1 Ltd

## QUESTION TIME WITH RE:GEN GROUP

John Longford, financial advisor at Northern Spire Limited, sits down with client and partnership director at RE:GEN Group, Brinsley Sheridan, to discuss how he went from playing football for Bradford City to establishing a leading North East social housing regeneration company.

**Northern Spire Limited, a senior partner practice of St James's Place Wealth Management, provides a wide range of services for clients, such as RE:GEN, that are looking to build, grow, protect or preserve wealth.**

**JL:** At Northern Spire, we want to really get to know our clients and develop relationships that provide them with long-term benefits. So, can you tell us something about you that might surprise us?

**BS:** I dreamt of becoming a professional footballer when I was younger and played for Sunderland Academy up to the age of 15. Then, I moved down to Bradford and signed to play for Bradford City, staying for four years, signing professional terms at 17. I was conscious it may not be a realistic long-term career and undertook work experience at Frank Haslam Milan Ltd prior to my move to Bradford. RE:GEN CEO, Lee Francis, was commercial manager at the time and he gave me £20 for my two weeks work and told me if football didn't work out, I should give him a call. I was released at Bradford City four years later, made the call, and two weeks later I started with the company and never looked back!

**JL:** RE:GEN is only in its second year and yet you have an impressive list of clients under your belt. Can you tell us about some of the work you are currently undertaking?

**BS:** We are currently working on a number of significant contracts. Most recently, we have been awarded a £4 million contract by Gentoo housing association, to carry out a series of external improvement works throughout its properties in the Sunderland area, over the course of a four-year framework. Works, entail a range of long-term cost saving improvements and long-life modernisation to homes, including the renewal of porches, canopies, paths and external boundaries. We also have a scheme with Karbon homes, a £3.5m external refurbishment project carrying out re-roofing, external brickwork repairs and fencing across numerous areas including Chester-le-Street and Morpeth.



Brinsley Sheridan

**JL:** The company has recently launched a training academy in line with growth and future expansion plans. Can you tell us why you decided to take this step now?

**BS:** As we continue to expand, we will not do so at the expense of quality. We have taken the proactive step of putting in place a training programme to ensure we continue to provide best-in-class solutions to social housing. Via the academy, which launched in August, candidates will be encouraged to look at a number of areas including quantity surveying, health and safety, sustainability, site and project management and customer experience. Once candidates decide which area they are most interested in, we will design a bespoke development programme for them, inclusive of any required training courses.

I also must add, we have an apprenticeship programme I am extremely passionate about. Both Lee Francis and I, earned our stripes via this route and I would encourage anyone looking for entry in to the blue-collar side of construction to look at our apprentice trade options which include joinery, bricklaying and plastering.

**JL:** You were recently nominated for a Generation4Change Future Leader award. It's an outstanding achievement, but do you view it as your biggest one to date?

**BS:** I am humbled to receive a nomination for such a highly-esteemed award. It stands for what we have achieved as a team and I thank everyone who has been part of my personal development journey to date. The future has to be a sustainable one if we are to reach Net-Zero 2050 and as a company we have set in place a plan to become carbon neutral by 2025. We're currently upgrading our own energy efficiency and installing solar panels, we work with local waste companies and will have an entirely green fleet by 2025. The academy exists, in part, to continue to develop



John Longford

our future sustainability leaders of tomorrow and is one of the company's proudest achievements to date.

**JL:** It's certainly an exciting time for RE:GEN and I look forward to watching the company go from strength-to-strength in coming years.

**BS:** We have big plans for the future and it is reassuring to know that as we grow, we have expert advice from Northern Spire. Growth, whilst exciting, also comes with risks. It is important that we have trusted support to keep these risks as low as possible, whilst also identifying the greatest opportunities. We have many exciting projects that we are soon to announce and through them, we look forward to playing our role in creating sustainable change.

[partnership.sjp.co.uk/northernspire/](https://partnership.sjp.co.uk/northernspire/)





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# IS IT TIME TO SAY GOODBYE?

Boredom, burnout, or time to move on? Bryony Gibson, managing director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, offers some tips to help you decide what to do next.

**Millions of people around the world are re-evaluating their working lives in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.**

Commonly known as the 'Great Resignation', this growing movement of reflection continues to drive record numbers of workers to voluntarily head for the door and join a job market brim-full of labour shortages and rising unemployment.

Should I stay or go?

Many different inspirations can trigger the search for a new job. When compiled by the pressures of a global epidemic, permanent changes to working environments, or even a new appreciation for the ephemeral nature of life, it is no surprise to see so many people reassessing their situation.

Like most things, jobs have ups and downs and, while it is easy to get swept along in a sea of change, here are some thoughts to help you to decide whether it's the right time to make a change, or not.

## 1. Know your purpose.

Whatever the catalyst for change, when working out the best way forward, the most important thing to do is to make sure you understand what it is that truly motivates you.

We spend more than half our waking life at work, so getting satisfaction should be the priority. If you aren't happy then maybe it is time to weigh up your options.

## 2. Be honest with yourself.

Start by asking yourself questions along the lines of: What are you good at? What are you passionate about? What do you like about your current job? What is important to you?

You need to work out what matters most in the long-term and, if you're lucky enough to match this with your strengths, it should become a lot easier to figure out the direction to your goals.

## 3. People grow out of even the best jobs.

Sometimes you need a change or a new challenge to reinvigorate yourself, but before you begin

to search, make sure you take time to think about your current role, your employer, and your prospects.

Does your company's ambition match your own? Do you get on with your colleagues? What does your boss think of you? What do you think of your boss?

There's a lot to be said for being appreciated and trusted in the workplace. If you feel empowered and have autonomy, you need to make sure that will remain if you decide to move on.

## 4. Work-life balance sometimes requires compromise.

Try to avoid making decisions based purely on money. While it always pays to be aware of your market value and the quality of your total package, sometimes you may have to compromise a little on some of the wider benefits like holiday entitlement, pension payments, or bonuses, if you want to positively affect your overall level of job satisfaction.

That's not always the case, but key questions to consider should be whether you have flexibility at

work? Are you supported when you need it? And what is your current work-life balance like?

## 5. Think long-term.

No job is completely perfect, so it's important to think about the bigger picture. Consider the experience you're gaining, the networks you're exposed to, and the kudos you get from working where you do. This should all help you understand what to do next.

## Is the grass always greener?

The grass is not always greener but if you're not happy, you need to make a change of some kind rather than live with regret.

The decision to move on comes down to knowing what you want and understanding what your employer can offer, so, don't forget to speak to them and give them the chance to change things.

It could simply be that you're stuck in a rut and it's not as bad as it seems once you adopt a more positive approach but, whatever you decide, be confident and don't be put off by the fear of change because the rewards from finding a job you love can be life-changing.



Bryony Gibson

For public practice advice and expertise, get in touch:  
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L-R: Chris Price, Tolent regional director, Ann Hayward, Newcastle City Council principal housing delivery officer, Michael Farr, Bernicia executive director of assets and growth and Councillor Linda Hobson, Newcastle City Council cabinet member for housing and regulatory services, all at the Newburn site.

## NEW £4M TYNESIDE SPECIALIST HOUSING DEVELOPMENT UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Work is underway to deliver a new £4m development in Newburn, specifically designed to support the independent living needs of people with learning disabilities.

**The scheme will provide a 15 apartment building and five bungalows – all available at affordable rents – together on a site at Park Road, Newburn.**

Bernicia won a competitive tendering process with Newcastle City Council to provide the homes, with the city council and Homes England both providing grant support for the scheme.

Gateshead-based construction specialist Tolent is building the properties, due to be completed next summer.

The scheme will feature:

- High standard accessible, adaptable, affordable and welcoming rental accommodation for people with learning disabilities.
- A safe and accessible environment to meet the care and support needs of all residents, including concierge service and specialist technology.
- Social space for tenants to meet.

Michael Farr, Bernicia Executive Director of Assets and Growth, said: "It's great to see work beginning on site with our partners at Newcastle City Council and Tolent to deliver this important scheme.

"It will provide high-quality, affordable homes with care and support for people with specialist needs – providing a house they will be proud to call home in a community they will enjoy living in."

Tolent Regional Director, Chris Price, added: "It's great to be working with both Bernicia and Newcastle City Council again, two valued clients who we know are creating some fantastic new communities across the region.

"We're passionate about creating high-quality homes, delivered to suit the needs of those who need them most and this development will be another example of this work."

Councillor Linda Hobson, Cabinet Member for Housing and Regulatory Services at Newcastle City Council, said: "The council is committed to working in partnership to deliver a range of housing options that meet the diverse needs of all our residents.

"This scheme will provide affordable, accessible housing for people with learning disabilities and I am looking forward to seeing these homes completed and meeting the residents when they move in."

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



# BERNICIA PLANS NEW £7M AFFORDABLE HOMES SCHEME FOR BERWICK

Proposals for a £7m scheme to build 61 affordable new homes in Berwick have been unveiled.

North East housing association, Bernicia, wants to build a mix of bungalows and family homes on the site of the former Seton Hall at Tweedmouth.

The houses for rent or shared ownership are aimed specifically at local people – for young people starting out on the housing ladder, couples, young families and older people looking to downsize their existing home.

Bernicia plans to build 19 bungalows as well as a mix of two, three and four-bedroom properties on the site of nearly two hectares of disused land, once the home of the now demolished Seton Hall.

The scheme will also create 55 construction jobs and support 65 posts in the supply chain during the two-year build.

Rents for the properties will all be affordable meaning that they will be at least 20% cheaper than market rents in the local area. The proposed shared ownership properties also allow people to part-buy and part-rent their new home, with the option of buying bigger shares when they can afford to.

The site will be landscaped, keeping the majority of trees while planting new native species to provide habitat for wildlife. All the properties will be highly energy efficient.

Northumberland County Council Leader, Councillor Glen Sanderson, said: "Improving the quantity and quality of affordable housing to help create more homes for rent in areas of need, remains one of the council's top priorities.

"Every single affordable home can change a family's life.

"Our housing teams have been working very closely with Bernicia to ensure that the housing options in the plans will meet the housing needs of the Berwick community, with homes for the young, elderly and larger families."

Michael Farr, Bernicia Executive Director of Assets and Growth, said: "Our



L-R: Northumberland County Council Leader Coun Glen Sanderson, Coun Georgina Hill, Coun Isabel Hunter and Michael Farr, Bernicia Executive Director of Assets and Growth.

aim is to build 61 high quality homes in an area where we know there is a strong demand for affordable housing.

"Bernicia has a proven track record of delivering quality new homes in North Northumberland for rent in our recent development at Seahouses.

"As a social housing provider, we will deliver a mix of affordable rented and shared ownership properties in a newly landscaped area people will be proud to call home."

Bernicia will submit a full planning application to Northumberland County Council next month.

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

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## RISE ELEVATOR LAUNCHES STATE OF THE ART SHOWROOM

Rise Elevator, one of the UK's leading elevator businesses is leading the way in lift services after developing strategic partnerships and setting up a new, state of the art showroom.

**The North East based business has successfully been delivering lift auditing, lift repairs and lift installation services across the UK for almost two years. Providing commercial and residential lifts nationwide, Rise Elevator's team of engineers carry out regular auditing and any necessary lift maintenance, with safety being its ultimate priority.**

The last 18 months has seen an unprecedented demand for reliable elevator services. The ongoing pandemic has resulted in health care facilities and domestic customers alike requiring safer and more reliable lifting services to ensure optimum access.

Rise Elevator MD, Kris McGough explained: "Trustworthy lifting is becoming more and more important. We know that lifts in care homes and health care facilities are used for a range of purposes, including enabling access for the elderly, transporting equipment between floors, and

maintaining a high level of security.

The increased pressure on our health care service providers throughout the pandemic has resulted in a greater demand for our support.

We understand that health care professionals, care home managers and building owners, can't afford to risk the security of their buildings nor the safety of residents. We've created an offering that takes the stress away and ensures optimum safety.

We've been privileged enough to work with facilities such as North Tyneside Hospital and Alnwick Infirmary and can even offer lift refurbishments where new lifts are not necessarily required. Our refurbishment on one of Alnwick Infirmary's lifts saw the space being transformed to a comforting area for vulnerable patients, NHS staff and visitors, with a large photograph of Alnwick Castle placed inside the cab.

We take pride in everything that we do and provide the utmost care to commercial and domestic clients. We even offer passenger release training and LOLER Inspections to help clients ensure ongoing compliance."

Kris' ambitions for Rise Elevator and its ability to deliver the best lifting support for domestic customers in the region led to strategic partnership with Terry Lifts.

Leading lift manufacturer Terry Lifts has over 50 years' experience in the lift industry and possesses unique capability in design, manufacturing, project management and after-care.

Safety is at the forefront of Terry Lifts' lift designs; going beyond rigorous design and testing standards to improve passenger safety on all lifts.

It was this partnership that encouraged Kris to open a showroom in Gateshead to display the sought-after Terry Harmony and Lifestyle home lifts. The showroom is the only one of its kind in the North East where customers can come to view and test the lifts before purchasing. The new showroom, managed by the team's Business Development Manager, Joe Routledge also displays the company's impressive car lifting services.

The showroom doors are now open to all domestic and commercial clients wanting to find out about our wide range of lifting services!

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



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# SWITCHED-ON: COUNTY DURHAM TECH START-UPS SET FOR SUCCESS

Business Durham has supported the launch and growth of three technology companies thanks to its six-month accelerator programme for start-ups.

**Networking platform NetKnoWho, taxi and private hire app taxigoat and messaging app ChatPro all took part in the Durham City Incubator (DCI), designed to nurture and support ambitious innovative entrepreneurs to help them build a scalable and investible business in County Durham.**

Set up in 2018 as a joint venture between Durham University, New College Durham and Business Durham, the business support service of Durham County Council, the DCI programme helps up-and-coming businesses, that have been trading for under 12 months, to accomplish their goals. It also supports local entrepreneurs launch start-ups with high growth potential.

So far, in the past five cohorts, the programme has supported 39 entrepreneurs across a wide range of sectors in not only launching their businesses but achieving national recognition and investment funding.

Each of those businesses benefitted from six months of intensive one-to-one support from the DCI programme – including mentoring sessions, workshops, seminars and networking events to enable them to grow and scale up.

NetKnoWho is a networking platform connecting the North East business community, ensuring clients are making the best use of their networking time in a post-lockdown world, meeting the right people and having the right conversations.

It was launched this year by Jeni Smith, who has over 15 years' experience in the networking industry and exists as a digital platform of her original networking ecosystem, which has seen huge success since the launch of her business in April 2020. She joined the most recent DCI cohort in January 2021, an experience she describes as invaluable to her.

Commenting on the programme Jeni said: "Being Part of the DCI programme was a huge help to me and the business. Those six months were intense, but packed full of useful content, training, and information. The support that DCI provides as a community, and the 1-2-1 advice you receive, really helps you maintain momentum and hold yourself accountable. I'm so glad I applied and was able to tap into the fantastic support they offer."

Another emerging platform receiving DCI support is taxigoat, a mobile app which connects customers to local licensed taxi and private hire firms – where customers choose their operator and always pay the advertised price, even during busy times.

The platform is described by taxigoat founder Ross Pottenger: "As someone who has lived rurally all my life, I have forever been frustrated by the experiences I've had when trying to book a taxi. After working in the city and being exposed to food delivery and taxi booking apps, I thought there must be a way I could fuse those two business propositions to work for the more rural market.

He added: "To provide the solution I developed taxigoat – an app where local providers can offer their services to passengers, and where passengers can pick which available provider they want to book. We've very excited to have recently launched our pilot in Durham.

"Durham City Incubator and Business Durham have been great for me being a first time entrepreneur - steering me in the right direction on various aspects of business, and importantly helping me to build connections with other businesses and investors."

Secure messaging app ChatPro also took part in the programme. A fast, secure messaging app for education, sport and social care organisations, it facilitates safe and effective communication across teams while enabling them to meet their safeguarding needs and data protection duties.

The platform was set up by teacher Harry Serle, who sought to create a version of WhatsApp that was safeguarding compliant and could be used in schools. It allows all members of an organisation to communicate on one safe, efficient platform, replacing complex multi-channel communication with simple instant messaging.

He said: "The DCI was crucial to enabling me to turn ChatPro from an idea into a reality. It opened doors to do vital market testing, and gave structure and support to start the process of developing the product and getting it to market. DCI is an essential part of the start-up ecosystem in Durham, enabling entrepreneurs to make the leap from vision to action."

Sarah Slaven, interim managing director at Business Durham, said: "I'm delighted to see the DCI programme support County Durham businesses in setting up with ambitious plans within the fast-growing technology sector.

"Through initiatives such as this, Business Durham and our partners at Durham University and New College Durham can support innovation and enterprise in the region, working closely with businesses every step of the way on their journey to develop and grow."

Cllr Elizabeth Scott, Cabinet member for Economy and Partnerships at Durham County Council: "It is vitally important that we support enterprising new businesses to grow within the county, in order to create jobs and boost the local economy.

"The technology industry is one of the fastest-growing sectors out there, with a rising demand for those specialist skills. Programmes like DCI can offer tech start-ups the experience, support and guidance needed to establish their companies and set them on a trajectory for business growth and longevity.

"It is great to see the incubator programme continuing to attract innovative businesses choosing to set up in Durham."

The Incubator was developed as part of a wider drive to grow the Durham City economy and to offer Durham University graduates and New College Durham students high quality facilities and business support to grow their ventures in Durham City.

Durham City Incubator is part of Durham Internships and Collaborative Enterprise (DICE), which is part funded by European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) as part of the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment Fund Programme.

**DCI runs in cohorts that each last six months. For more information on the Durham City Incubator and to apply for the next cohort, visit [dcincubator.co.uk](http://dcincubator.co.uk)**



Ross Pottenger, TaxiGoat





Harry Serle, ChatPro



L- R: Jeni Smith, founder of NetKnoWho, with Leon Howe, DCI Incubation Manager.





The continued adventures of...

# Ziggy!



## Hi everyone,

The dark mornings are here and soon our morning walks will get later and our evening walks earlier. Nearly time to get my posh coat on. After the excitement of Cally's birthday things have quietened down, although Dexter is still a regular visitor which is good for me because Cally plays with him and my ears get left unchewed. Daddy went away for a few days recently and Cally and I went to stay with Uncle Alexander. Cally got in trouble for chewing the floor but apart from that we got spoilt. See you next month

*Chris from Westmoor asks:*

**Q: Dear Ziggy, I'm not sure that this is a property question, but I feel it is connected.**

When we had a freestanding cooker and eyelevel grill with an extractor above, most fumes and heat were removed, but since we installed an electric double oven in the usual tall housing and a separate hob, only the hob has extraction over it. I often think this is wrong, as most heat, etc. is just dispersed into the kitchen. Often, when you open the top oven grill door, the kitchen is filled with fumes from grilling. Our unit is also built-in up to the ceiling which I'm sure doesn't help.

Has something been overlooked in the design, or should some sort of extraction have been installed, although I would think that would be impossible with the built-in nature of the equipment.

It's tempting to go back to a free-standing cooker for our next kitchen but it wouldn't have the looks!!

**A: When you talk about the "design" of your kitchen, I suggest you are being somewhat over-generous to the salesman who sold it to you.**

Modern kitchen units are "modular", meaning they come in standard widths (400mm or 600mm) and standard heights (600mm, 900mm and 1100mm). Built-in kitchen appliances are around 550mm to

560mm wide, so that they slide into the 600mm wide units.

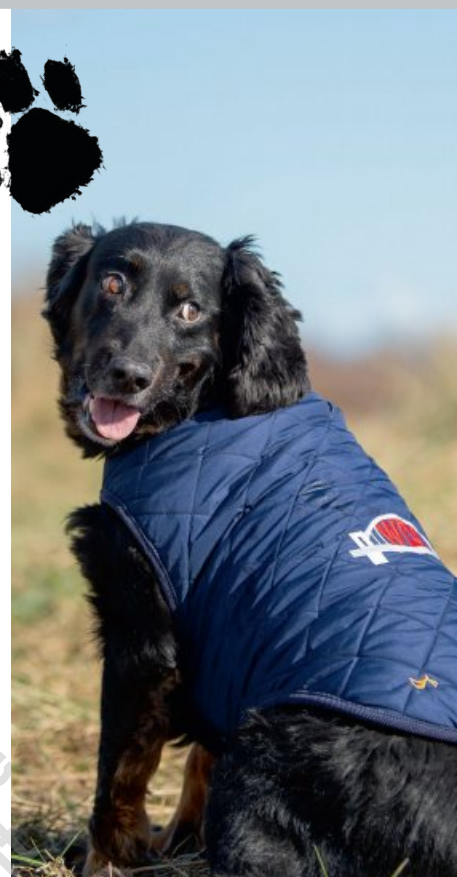
All the kitchen salesman does is measure up the available space, and juggle a number of units around to fit into it. This used to be done by drawing on squared paper (and sometimes still is), but is now more often done on a laptop computer, which produces fancy drawings and 3D images. If the length or width of the room won't allow for an exact number of 600mm and 400mm cupboard units, then you'll end up with a wine rack or sliding tea-towel rail to fill in the space.

Salesmen are also fond of talking about the "work triangle", which is the relative positions of the hob, sink and refrigerator. Exactly how you can position these three items in any configuration which is [ITALCS] not [italcs] a triangle is beyond me (even in a flat "galley" kitchen they will form a very obtuse triangle).

This juggling to fit things in – whilst avoiding existing doors and windows – can lead to some costly mistakes. The freezer right next to the oven is a classic – the freezer gets constantly defrosted and frozen again, and often pushes its own door open; it's like having your own pet glacier.

The salesman is most unlikely to consider the importance of mechanical extraction. It is now generally understood that a cooker hood above the hob is a good idea, but if the juggling has left the hob against an inside wall, the salesman is quite likely to dispense with ducting this across to an outside wall, and instead suggest "re-circulating" the fumes through a carbon filter. All he wants to do is make the sale, not make life difficult for himself.

So yes, there is a problem with the "design" of a kitchen where the oven is a long way from an extractor fan. However, the best position for the cooker hood is above the hob, especially if it is a gas hob. This is not just to extract cooking smells, and steam from boiling saucepans, but because the gas itself produces water vapour and carbon dioxide (and maybe a bit of carbon monoxide too) when it



burns. Every litre of natural gas produces two litres of water vapour (bottled gas produces at least twice as much as that), and this needs to be extracted to the outside – not allowed to percolate throughout the rest of the house, where it can cause condensation, mould growth, and mildew in the wardrobes.

Wherever the cooker hood is sited in relation to the built-in oven, it will still extract fumes and cooking smells, as long as the kitchen door is kept closed. There should be enough of a fresh-air inlet through the gap under the kitchen door. If you feel you need more mechanical extraction adjacent to the oven, and you have a conventional timber-and-plaster ceiling, then you might be able to fit a dedicated extractor fan in the ceiling, just in front of the oven door, with plastic ducting running between the joists to an outside wall.

*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*







# Eothen Care Homes

• *A Different Concept in Dementia Care* •



**At Eothen Homes we are committed to providing excellent care with Christian values. Our home in Wallsend is different to other residential homes offering dementia care.**

Space and room for residents to move around and enjoy life freely has played a central part of the building's design and daily life is not made up of routine and tasks but allows people to get up and eat and drink when and where they want. In other words it is just like home.

As well as our specialist dementia care facility, we have homes in Whitley Bay and Gosforth which offer 24 hour permanent residential care as well as short term respite and day care.

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**Gosforth** Elmfield Road, NE3 4BB 0191 213 0707 | **Head Office** 0191 281 9100

**[www.eothenhomes.org.uk](http://www.eothenhomes.org.uk)**



Donna Bulmer

## GOOD LEADS TO GREAT FOR HAINES WATTS

Having already been named among the UK's top 10 accountancy firms to work for this year, Haines Watts, which employs more than 80 individuals in the region, was keen to take the Good Work Pledge – an initiative by the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) recognising 'good work' which boosts the region's economy.

**The team at Haines Watts, which supports and advises business owners in the region, knows that to lead with purpose, it is essential to put its team's voice at the heart of decision-making, and this is key to valuing and rewarding the workforce, one of the five 'Pillars of Practice' the pledge is measured against.**

Regional Managing Partner, Donna Bulmer, explained: "We've always invested in supporting our team, their wellbeing and development, but this has stepped up a gear since the beginning of the pandemic, and bringing people together, while more challenging, has never been more important."

Initiatives that form part of Haines Watts' social value strategy include working with its nominated charity partner to support young people in our region with their employability skills.

Donna said: "We're currently working with a community interest organisation, Building Self Belief. We're welcoming young people into our offices to spend time with our team, and take part in mock interviews and CV skills workshops. This is a hugely beneficial process for young people and is equally rewarding for our team."

"There's a common misconception that you have to be good at maths to thrive in our profession. We're giving young people an insight into the many different skill sets needed within our various teams."

The four other 'Pillars of Practice' which businesses taking the pledge must provide evidence against are: promoting health and wellbeing, effective communications and representation, developing a balanced workforce, and social responsibility. Applicants demonstrate that they either meet or are actively progressing towards all of the key criteria in at least two of these pillars for a standard Good Work Pledge award, and five pillars for the advanced, as in the case of Haines Watts.

Donna added: "We're delighted to have been awarded the advanced level of the Good Work Pledge. Taking the pledge has been a great opportunity to gain recognition for the many initiatives we're already championing at Haines Watts."

"We're very much a people-focused firm, and know that for our team members, social value is about more than raising money for good causes alone, but making a real difference."

These principles underpin the Good Work Pledge, which was created in partnership with industry, community experts and businesses from the North of Tyne region and beyond, so that companies like Haines Watts can demonstrate their commitment to providing good jobs – jobs that provide security, development opportunities and a decent standard of living – all of which is good for the North East region.

**Apply to join the pledge and be part of the change for good at [northoftyne-ca.gov.uk/projects/good-work-pledge](http://northoftyne-ca.gov.uk/projects/good-work-pledge).**

**GOOD WORK  
PLEDGE** ✓  
~~~~~



# ENGINEERING GIANT, REECE GROUP, ANNOUNCES POSITIVE END OF YEAR RESULTS FOR CONSECUTIVE YEAR

New contract wins, sustained growth, strategic collaborations and the market repositioning of subsidiary companies have helped North East-based Reece Group to successfully navigate the global economic downturn and once again, post strong financial results for the second consecutive year.

**The Newcastle firm, headquartered at Armstrong Works, Scotswood Road, has announced group turnover of £62.9m for the year ending December 2020, with profit before tax up by 31% to over £13.2m.**

The Reece Group, which employs 389 staff, is a major worldwide player in the defence and engineering sectors, and the holding company for Pearson Engineering, Responsive Engineering and Velocity.

Pearson Engineering increased turnover to £46.7m, up nearly 14%, with profits rising to £15.7m from £10.5m. This was driven by repeat orders, strategic growth in new overseas markets and several long-term defence projects reaching final production stage.

The company, which currently employs 75 staff at the Armstrong Works HQ, continued to invest in its R&D programmes to the sum of £2.1m, ensuring that it remains at the forefront of innovation in its field.

Whilst Pearson had operational challenges to overcome during the 2020 lockdown, this did not result in any significant impact on its financial performance, and outlook remains very strong for the remainder of 2021 and beyond.

For Responsive Engineering, a deliberate and strategic shift in activities during 2019 resulted in positive results being posted at the start of 2020. However, a combination of delayed orders and reduced enquiries from the oil and gas sector during lockdown resulted in, like for many similar organisations, a loss of revenue.



John Reece MBE, Director of Reece Group which has announced positive end of year results for the 2020 trading period.

Turnover was down by £2.9m to £12.7m with a loss of £3.5m on the previous year despite targeted efforts to work through the economic downturn and support customers with continuous supply. The company also had the opportunity to support the Government's ventilator programmes in 2020.

Responsive Engineering, employing 241 staff, is now actively embarking on a return to profitability with short and long-term prospects for the defence sector looking strong.

The company continues to collaborate with its sister company, Pearson Engineering, to jointly bid for major defence manufacturing projects and support a number of active and planned UK defence programmes. The work is expected to secure employment and retention of key skills across the companies as well as their supply chains, whilst at the same time leveraging the inherent capability of the Armstrong Works facility.

Furthermore, in preparation for growth, Responsive continued to invest heavily during 2020 in new state-of-the-art equipment to enhance its end-to-end manufacturing capability.

Velocity, the Group's specialist road repair division, was hit by a sharp reduction in demand, albeit temporarily, due to the direct effects of the pandemic on such businesses. However, jobs were protected and whilst all of Velocity's services were affected, the decrease in enquiries was short-lived with operations in 2021 once again returning to pre-Covid levels.

Turnover for 2020 reached £9.8m with profits at £0.1m, and despite short-term challenges around national driver shortages, future prospects remain positive. The business is now looking to broaden its offering beyond repair into unique, road preservation services.

In contrast, Reece Group took the difficult decision to close its Reece Innovation division in July 2020 as part of strategic growth measures to allow for a more streamlined and efficient operational structure. This managed and reduced risk in order to encourage more long-term benefits across the organisation.

John Reece MBE, Director of Reece Group, commented, "The last 18 months have been one of the most unpredictable and challenging periods for any business to overcome, regardless of size or sector, yet we have seen Reece Group successfully weather that storm and come out stronger.

"These are very positive results for the Group given world events and some difficult decisions, and that is down to the sheer drive, commitment and determination of all our staff, individually, at every level and across all companies. We have some of the very best, highly-skilled people employed at our sites, carving out new opportunities, forging relationships and delivering advanced, groundbreaking products that are simply world-class. They have demonstrated just how important they are to the business. They're our greatest asset and it's fantastic to be part of it.

"Additionally, despite 2020 being a most difficult year, our suppliers, both locally and globally, and our customers have also played a key role in supporting the business, working closely with one another collaboratively in partnership to navigate a way through.

"Whilst the financial results are varied in part, there are many positives to take from them and we can continue looking forward with heightened optimism and confidence.

"Reece Group, as a whole, remains an important, major employer here in the North East, and the significant investments made in our R&D programmes and manufacturing plant, both in 2020 and before, have put us in a healthy position to drive the business forward with significant opportunities in the work pipeline ahead."

The company continues to donate to local community-led projects supporting regeneration in the west end of Newcastle. It has allocated £1m to good causes since its move to Armstrong Works, and through support of its Reece Foundation, the company's charitable trust, the Group has helped younger generations gain qualifications and entry into engineering and manufacturing careers via its STEM education programmes.

[reece-group.com](http://reece-group.com)



# IS IT POSSIBLE TO BE AUTHENTIC AT WORK?



Before becoming self-employed I spent much of my career trying to behave like a proper grown up professional. I tried to be like everyone else.

**Overthinking and second guessing just became a part of my job. I didn't always feel like I fitted in, like I belonged, like I was safe. I kept my ideas to myself, worried about seeming like I was a fool for asking questions and didn't enjoy the job. At all.**

Yet, in a couple of organisations I did feel like I was able to be my weird and wonderful self. I could take some risks, ask questions and make decisions based on my own judgement. This happened when I felt safe, when I had a manager who trusted me and a team where we were all working towards the same mission. I noticed the difference between the two scenarios. We all enjoyed working together, we had great ideas and got loads done.

This concept was coined by Organisational Scientist Amy Edmondson as "Team Psychological Safety". It is defined as "a shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking." That you wouldn't be ridiculed for asking questions, shot down when

putting forward ideas or suggesting improvements. Your manager and colleagues had your back.

The benefits of Psychological Safety are well researched - greater innovation, productivity, higher profit, less absence, happier and more engaged employees. So there is a real business case for creating teams that are psychologically safe. So... where's the disconnect?

Our standard hierarchical model for organisations is a "Power over" model where there is a manager and an employee. The manager is in control. They set the agenda, make the decisions, and ensure that the employee is productive and is behaving (or if not, they 'performance manage' them - AKA scare them into getting back on track). It's all about fear and dominance. This really isn't the best for the employee to feel safe.

When you have a manager who understands these dynamics and they're conscious about sharing power through collaboration and building trusted relationships, they recognise that if you empower someone to be able to shape their own world,

this is when the magic (as it were) happens. When you're treated like a grown-up, an equal, with valuable ideas and strengths and the freedom to take a risk, make decisions, and build solid relationships with your colleagues, it makes work so much better. You can spend less time worrying what others may think and be free to be your authentic self.

## About Work Pirates

The way we've always done things is no longer working. We created Work Pirates, to help you re-write the rules of work. We help leaders gain the confidence, courage and tools to do things differently. So they can better solve their problems, feel less stressed and have a happier, more innovative workplace with more empowered employees.

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



# IE HUB - THE FINANCIAL TOOLBOX



L-R: Mark McElvanney, IE Hub Sales Director and Gemma Cryan, IE Hub Marketing Director.

Photographed by Cal Cowie of Contemporary Content

It's fair to say that the last 18 months have been unlike any other time, both personally and in terms of business. And when you have uncertainty, the smallest of issues can have large repercussions. Especially when it comes to financing.

**Most of you reading this will be in business. You are likely to have customers. You are also likely to have had customers who can no longer afford your product or service. Some customers may even be falling behind on their payments.**

It's an unnerving time for you, bearing in mind that you also have bills to pay yourself. And, it's an extremely worrying time for your customer.

Thankfully, there is a way to help you AND your customers.

IE Hub provides customers with the tools necessary to manage their finances, and let's face it, anything which helps people control their financial situation can only be a good thing.

Income and Expenditure is a juggling act which, in an ideal situation, sees Income exceeding Expenditure. Sadly, that's not always the case. For example, recent research commissioned by Ofwat revealed that 41% of customers are worried about money.

The last thing responsible businesses want to do is push customers further into debt, however, firms need to know what a customer's financial situation is so that they can set payment arrangements. This

is where IE Hub comes in.

"IE Hub connects customers with creditors in just a few clicks," said Marketing Director Gemma Cryan. "The pandemic has taken a financial toll on people and families across the UK but accessing financial support isn't easy. Most customers have to fill out multiple Income and Expenditure assessments (I&Es) before a payment plan can be set up, while simultaneously, creditors struggle to validate the information from customers' various I&Es. On both sides, the current system is inefficient and costly." Wouldn't it be handy if all of the information was in one place which allowed the customer to contact all of their creditors in a digital format?

That is precisely what IE Hub does. Customers log onto the IE Hub website [www.iehub.co.uk](http://www.iehub.co.uk) and create their own completely free IE Hub account.

"We've ensured that the questions are carefully worded so that the customer only answers questions relevant to their circumstances," adds Gemma. "Once they've completed the form, all of the information is stored digitally which allows the customer to share their Income and Expenditure information with multiple companies. It's simple,

it's quick and it's free to the customer. It also means that the creditors can instantly see a customer's financial state and take the relevant action. If it's obvious that a customer simply cannot afford what you are asking it means both parties can come to some sort of agreement and devise a payment plan. It also encourages the customer not to bury their head in the sand because the problem is not going to go away....it needs to be managed."

Companies who would like to be part of the scheme pay a small fee per customer statement or take out a CRM licence with IE Hub.

In other words, the customer and the business are both working from the same, accurate set of figures. It gives the customer confidence that their difficult situation is being handled sympathetically, and it prevents the company from having to spend time and money on repeated phone calls and letters.

IE Hub...the financial toolbox that helps customers and companies work together.

**For further information contact Gemma Cryan on [gemma@iehub.org](mailto:gemma@iehub.org) or Mark McElvanney on [Mark@iehub.org](mailto:Mark@iehub.org)**





Dr. David Cliff



# ANOTHER MENTAL HEALTH DAY HAS COME AND GONE

Much of our current crisis in mental health is being attributed to Covid – it's just not that simple. When we treat mental health issues as disorders rather than a reflection of our living styles, we create a licence to treat the symptoms of a phenomena that is often caused by our modern lifestyles.

**Sure, there are the profound and enduring mental health states that have always been there, trauma and abuse is real for many, but for others, a mental health problem can reflect social position, hardship, powerlessness and the vicissitudes of the modern market which in combination provide subtly and pervasive impacts on mental well-being.**

For our young people there are a number of factors that impact on them particularly. Here are just a few:

## Debt

Many research studies have said that preoccupation with debt creates a form of constant anxiety that results in an inability to function optimally. Our young people have grown up with increasingly tacit assumptions that debt is a natural part of their lives and easily accessible, rather than something to minimise. Easy access to credit extends even further to education with loan systems that commit a significant part of one's adult life to repayment should one simply achieve average earnings. Debt has become the norm.

## Image

There's been an intensification of images of fashion, beauty, lifestyle and people living the good life, as shown through social media. As a consequence, fear of missing out (FOMO) is a well-known phenomenon. As creatures of comparison, constantly having the lifestyles of the apparently successful paraded in front of us can manifest itself in feelings of inadequacy.

## Fear

Although there are fewer wars and greater media exposure and challenge of extreme regimes than ever before around the world, people live in fear for their own safety. There is an understandable sense of insecurity amongst women for example, in the light of certain cases such as that of Sarah Everard recently, but the tragic reality is this is not new, it's just that we are now so much more aware of it. This awareness not only brings the opportunities for unprecedented social change and justice, but also an increasingly attendant sense of risk.

## Technology

Technology, unless one is intensely disciplined, can easily dominate our lives and control behaviours. It starts with simple stimulus response type behaviours where we are almost 'conditioned' and then converted by AI into data commodities by companies that play to our preferences to get us to engage with their systems of economic generation. In this sense, we suffer the two-edged sword of our lives being simultaneously facilitated and manipulated. We can experience powerlessness, whilst participating in this marketplace. We can be better connected with the world with literally thousands of contacts, but there is a shallowness of connection in so many cases that misrepresents the real dynamics of human relationships. The nomenclature normally used with close relationships such as "friend", is less honoured by actual contact and familiarity that builds trust and aids judgement, so much as by the click of a button.

Mobile phones, apps and emails can also intensify human interaction in ways that create misunderstandings and increasingly emotive exchanges. Disputes and dilemmas are carried home and instead of an overnight firebreak to cool off, can result in escalating exchanges into the early hours of the morning.

Finally, overload frequently occurs with the need to constantly sift huge amounts of data in order to function in an information-based society. This often washes out the detail and richness of living, reducing everything to 'top tips', 'Guru' opinions and a default to cognitive biases.

## Social burdens

We knew about the dangers of a diminishing support ratio (the number of people economically active to those dependent) in the 1970s, but successive governments did little about it. Young people see themselves increasingly having to take on the burdens of an older generation who they see as having reaped the economic benefits of post-war booms leaving younger generations to foot the bill. Whilst this perception could be debated, the real truth is speculation in the housing market and the lack of social housing makes it a real challenge for young people to be independent. Proportionate to real wages since the 1970s, house price increases have gone up fourfold without the tax or other reliefs previously given, resulting in the average age of getting on the housing ladder now being around thirty-seven.

Both the market and law enforcement technologies along with policies that turn what were once antisocial transgressions into de facto crimes have resulted in a surveillance culture in which young people are far more accountable than they ever were. Where previous generations transgressed unnoticed or it wasn't an issue, now you can be easily identified, held to account, then tried both in courts of law and social media in a way that previous generations never were.

## Climate

Humans inevitably rely on a positive view of the future: better; progressive; egalitarian and technologically supported. We now see globalisation wreaking havoc with the ecosystem sufficient that teenagers are motivated to go onto the world stage to challenge politicians, industrialists, the list goes on! Real risk to one's very own biosphere, creates a subtle range of stresses which simultaneously activate, agitate and depress.

## Being human

Finally young people possess the hopes, goals and aspirations of all generations. Existential anxiety is a common condition deriving from the need to live one's life in a meaningful, fulfilling way. Such meaning is often derived from being part of the community, learning to understand one's emotions and sharing by the giving and receiving of support, something often eroded by more distant, technologically based cultures.

I see this daily with many of the people who come to talk to me. Their strength is that they do come and talk and in that often rediscover themselves. We live in a world where realising our dreams of fame and fortune can often be at the price of losing sight of our common humanity. We all have a duty to be careful about the models and values we give to young people whilst we pursue our preferred lifestyles and profits.

[gedanken.co.uk](http://gedanken.co.uk)



## EXPERIENCED INDUSTRY SPECIALIST APPOINTED AS ENERGI COAST CLUSTER MANAGER

Energi Coast, North East England's offshore wind cluster, has announced Caroline Lofthouse as Cluster Manager.

Caroline is a highly experienced energy sector business development specialist and has worked with the cluster group since it was founded in 2011 through her roles at NOF, the business development organisation that developed and delivers Energi Coast activities.

Having spent more than 10 years in the energy sector, Caroline has progressed her career with business development, events management, marketing, and commercial experience. This has led her to becoming Head of Commercial and Partnerships at NOF, a position she will continue to hold alongside this new role with Energi Coast.

Caroline takes on the newly created position following Joanne Leng MBE stepping down as Deputy Chair of Energi Coast after being appointed the new Chief Executive of NOF, as of 1st January 2022.



## NEW RESIDENTIAL WORK FOR NEWCASTLE ENGINEERS DRIVES GROWTH

Newcastle engineers RWO has secured major new work to support the development of much needed homes on the site of a former North East hospital.

The move sees the firm providing its civil and structural engineering services and expertise to Story Homes, which is developing a mix of 35 three, four and five bedroomed houses, including affordable properties, on land at the former Dunston Hill Hospital in Whickham.

Planning, flood risk analysis, design expertise and local authority sewage adoption agreements have all been provided by RWO as part of a six-figure package of engineering support for a site that will include a dedicated habitat and pond created to encourage wildlife at the Highfields project.

The multi-million-pound scheme, which will see a second phase of 11 houses constructed later this year, is part of Story's range of homes that feature open plan living spaces and comes as RWO continues to grow its residential work across the region.



## WHYAYE BOLSTERS ITS OPERATIONAL RESILIENCE AND RISK CAPABILITY WITH THREE NEW APPOINTMENTS

Newcastle upon Tyne-based digital transformation specialist whyaye has strengthened its operational resilience team with three key appointments, after experiencing increased demand for its services as financial services firms look to manage risk more effectively and comply with key regulations, such as the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) and Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) operational resilience regulations.

The company has appointed Stuart Birnie, Mark Edwards and Frankie Love as operational resilience specialists to work alongside Jordan Stokoe. The whyaye operational resilience team provide clients with capabilities including operational resilience, operational risk, business continuity and reviewing, assuring or implementing Governance, Risk and Compliance (GRC) solutions.

Headquartered at Hoults Yard in Newcastle upon Tyne, whyaye provides a variety of digital transformation services. It is also a premier partner for the ServiceNow digital platform, which help companies manage digital workflows, and is the 2021 ServiceNow EMEA Premier Segment Partner of the Year.

## TMD CREATES NEW ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND SAFETY TEAM AS IT TARGETS CONTINUED GROWTH

Three new appointments have been made to form a new dedicated Environment, Health and Safety team at TMD Friction in Hartlepool.

The team is spearheaded by manager Shaun Wilson, who joins the global automotive manufacturer from Caterpillar in Peterlee.

Shaun was also given the opportunity to cherry pick his own support, which led to the appointments of Rob Nicholson, whom Shaun worked with at Caterpillar, and Leanne Jones, who brings with her a wealth

of industry experience and knowledge, having previously worked at KP Snacks.

The team will also support TMD Friction's sites across the UK.

Shaun said: "I was brought into the business because TMD Friction wanted its UK sites to go on a journey across the health and safety spectrum. They wanted to create a team dedicated to this area, that could engage the workforce and ultimately make the plants a safer place to work for everyone.



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# GLOBAL ENERGY CONSULTANCY BASED ON GATESHEAD QUAYS APPOINTS TWO SENIOR FEMALE LEADERS

Two senior female business leaders specialising in talent acquisition, learning and organisational development have joined Global Procurement Group to drive forward its continued growth as it further consolidates its position as the UK's leading B2B energy consultancy.

Global Procurement Group (GPG) is a global innovator in the energy services and technologies space, trading in the UK as Northern Gas and Power (NGP). Terri Lewis has joined as Global Talent Acquisition Director, while Megan Hofmann is the company's new Global Organisational Development Director. These appointments follow the successful appointment of Brendan Garvey, Chief People Officer in August 2021 and further strengthen the people capability across the group.

Both bring years of experience and expertise, accumulated in the region and across the UK, working for major, successful multi-national corporates.

These two inspiring female leaders join as the company recently moved into its new HQ on Gateshead Quays, and looks to grow to circa 1,000 heads by the end of 2021. Today it has offices across three continents in Gateshead (HQ), Newcastle, Leeds, France, Malta, Chennai (India) and Texas (US). The group supports 22,000 customers with their energy portfolios and assets, which currently stands at an impressive 30TWhs. The appointments closely follow National Inclusion Week which NGP partnered, providing the opportunity to emphasise its continued commitment to Inclusion and Diversity.

Terri is highly experienced in all areas of talent acquisition. She will be responsible for ensuring the business adopts evolving and cutting-edge, new talent strategies, embracing the ever-changing development of emerging technologies and analytics and ensuring that the process is streamlined and scales on a global level, but



L-R: Terri Lewis and Megan Hofmann

maintains a strong personal, human candidate experience.

Prior to joining GPG Terri supported Newcastle Building Society as a consultant within the Recruitment division and prior to that, she managed the national recruitment programme with EE (including when it was acquired by BT) accumulating 13 years' service in the process.

On joining Global Procurement Group, Terri said "It's exciting to have joined the business at the start of its transformational journey. I love a challenge and it's great that I will get to have a direct impact on the organisation during this period of change.

"I have been welcomed and immediately feel that I am part of the vision and mission of the company. I have a passion for creative working and am looking forward to implementing an innovative approach to recruitment through digitisation."

Megan Hofmann started her career with Orange in the Learning and Development function. She then spent 14 years at Barclays PLC, achieving several promotions to the role of Global Leadership Trainer, with her key focus being to support people learn, develop and reach their full potential.

Both within her working capacity but also outside work, Megan has a passion to support young people develop, having worked with several local authorities to reach young offenders and teenagers. She is also a qualified Neurolinguistic Programming practitioner.

Commenting on her new position, Megan said: "I have a passion for helping people reach their potential both professionally and personally.

"I'm excited to be able to join the business at a point in its journey where I can have a substantial impact on the Learning and Development function."

Brendan Garvey, GPG's Chief People Officer, said of the appointments, "These are exceptional leaders in their fields and we are delighted as a business to have more extremely talented professionals join us at such an important point in our journey. Terri and Megan have joined what is already a very talented, committed and passionate team who have successfully built solid foundations for the company.

"We have recruited two of the highest-calibre professionals who are not only extremely talented in their areas of specialism but also have great awareness of the importance of strengthening a strong culture of colleague engagement, wellbeing, inclusion and diversity. It is great to see our leadership team continue to grow, particularly with greater representation from female business leaders."

**GPG has very ambitious growth plans across the globe and have a number of very exciting opportunities across all parts of the company. Further information on these opportunities is available at [ngpcareers.com](https://ngpcareers.com)**



L-R: Patrick Melia, chief executive at Sunderland City Council, Paul Butler, chief executive, NEAA, Tony Laydon, director of Supply Chain, Britishvolt.

## RECORD NUMBERS AT NEAA EXPO

The North East Automotive Alliance's (NEAA) flagship Expo returned to the Beacon of Light with record numbers of delegates and exhibitors.

**With over 670 delegates, 124 exhibitors and 14 sponsors, the day provided an opportunity to network and gain industry insights on the key themes of electrification and industrial digitalisation. In addition, over 110 one-to-one meet the buyer appointments took place with ten of the region's automotive companies, including Nissan, Komatsu and their Tier 1 suppliers, helping to facilitate vital business connections for the supply chain.**

Paul Butler, CEO North East Automotive Alliance, said: "The team at the NEAA worked tirelessly to make sure that the day was as safe as possible, and we were very much aware that for some exhibitors and delegates this would be the biggest in-person event they had attended for nearly two years. There was a real sense of camaraderie and the feeling that exhibitors and delegates were supporting and encouraging each other after all the industry and the country had been through. On a personnel level, the fact we were providing people with an opportunity to connect with friends and valued contacts was very gratifying.

"From a supply chain perspective, the race to carbon neutral is now driving most agendas and for that reason we had a very strong focus on electrification and future technology.

"Moving forward, we are looking to deliver more

in-person events as we continue to return back to a pre-pandemic way of operating."

Cllr Tracey Dixon, Leader of South Tyneside Council, partner Expo sponsor, said: "This flagship event continues to highlight the importance of networking, collaboration and innovation across the automotive sector in our region.

"As a council one of our priorities is to create the conditions for recovery and investment and we cannot do this alone. By working hand in hand with the business community we will be able to generate confidence and growth in South Tyneside.

"The International Advanced Manufacturing Plant (IAMP) is testament to partnership working. The collaboration of Sunderland and South Tyneside Councils creating public and private sector opportunity. Seeing the approval of plans for Envision AESC's new Gigafactory is further proof, if needed, of the rewards of hard work and partnership working, bringing together the latest in electric vehicle production, battery manufacturing and renewables, and in turn will create thousands of jobs."

Andrew Woods, business development director, Advanced Electric Machines and an event sponsor, said: "The Expo offered a fantastic speaker line up and insights on key industry topics, whilst

providing an opportunity to catch up with existing contacts and develop new relationships."

The morning commenced with Tony Laydon, director of Supply Chain, Britishvolt as keynote speaker, followed by Ryan Maughan, chair of EV North, discussing North East Electrification Capability and the UK Eco System. Rachel Chambers, chief operating officer, DER-IC - North East shared insights on Driving the Electric Revolution Industrialisation Centres.

Afternoon speakers included, Paul Butler, CEO, NEAA, discussing industrial digitalisation and later providing an update on the 5G-Enabled CAL Project. Chris Courtney, challenge director, Manufacturing Made Smarter, UK Research and Innovation then took to the stage followed by Karl McCracken, North East Local Enterprise Partnership and Robert Russell, chief technology officer, Senseye, sharing insights into An Integrated Solution of Spare Parts Inventory Management and Predictive Maintenance.

The NEAA has set a date of 29 September 2022 for the next Expo and hopes to offer members and the wider supply chain an even greater opportunity to engage and promote their services.

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



# WHAT DOES THE NORTH EAST NEED FROM THE NEW SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION?



Michelle Rainbow

As the new Secretary of State for Education, Nadhim Zahawi, settles into his role, Michelle Rainbow, Skills Director at the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), lays out what she would like to see from the government to help raise the level of skills in the North East.

## **The North East LEP works to help people of all ages – from primary pupils to older members of the workforce – improve their skills and achieve their potential.**

As the government continues to push forward its Levelling Up agenda, skills must play a central role in building a stronger, more sustainable economy in our region, as we recover from the impact of the pandemic.

The North East LEP is in regular dialogue with government to make sure the region receives the support it needs. In particular, I want to highlight good quality careers guidance for all ages, technical education and apprenticeships, lifelong learning, and support for people facing digital exclusion, as areas of the utmost importance as we work to level up our region.

The effect that COVID-19 has had on the labour market, and changes brought by flexible contracts, the emerging green economy and the increasing need for digital skills, means that careers guidance is more vital than ever. It's key to social mobility, and it helps children and young people to broaden their horizons, achieve their ambitions, and see a clear pathway to their future careers.

In 2017, the government announced that the Good Careers Guidance Benchmarks, which were originally piloted in 16 schools and colleges here in the North East, would form the core of its Careers Strategy. The benchmarks emphasise the importance of young people having 'real life'

experience of the world of work – that is, contact with employers on an ongoing basis through things like work experience, careers fairs and project-based learning - and making sure that we take a whole-school approach, embedding careers guidance throughout the curriculum.

The work we've done with schools and colleges, including a current pilot project looking at how the benchmarks can be adapted for younger children, has shown that the impact of the benchmarks on outcomes for young people can be hugely positive.

Of course, careers guidance is not a short term thing, and I would urge government to give time for the approach to bed in, and allow us to capture the difference it's making to young people's lives.

We'd also like to see the statutory requirement for careers guidance extended to include children at primary level. There's evidence to show that children as young as five start to form perceptions about careers that will impact them later in life, so we need to make sure that each and every child is given the opportunity to learn about the options open to them from a young age.

While primary school outcomes in the North East are the joint highest of any region outside London, too few children make strong progress at secondary school. Our Opportunity North East programme aims to address this and, as with all our work, uses data and evidence to address the challenges we face.

This evidence-based approach complements the government's Careers Strategy and we'd like to see data made more readily available to those who could benefit from it the most, including people who are less digitally-aware.

We recognise the value of technical education in levelling up our region, and support the delivery of apprenticeships and T-Levels, promoting them as a high quality route to successful careers.

Additional incentive payments to businesses hiring apprentices ended at the end of September and we'd like to see these reintroduced, and the minimum wage for apprentices aligned with that for 16 to 18 year olds.

For people in their 40s, 50s and 60s, we welcomed the introduction of the Midlife MOT, which helps people plan for their futures and get the most from their careers, by taking stock of their skills, health and money using a simple online assessment.

We will continue to work with schools, employers and training providers to upskill the North East, and we will continue to champion our region on a national stage, to help people fulfil their potential and bring more and better jobs to our region.

***Find out more about the North East LEP's work with schools and employers at [northeastlep.co.uk](http://northeastlep.co.uk)***

# COUNT EVERY DROP – THE KEY TO SAVING WATER



Josh Gill and Clare Galland with some of the Everflow employees and pledges.

The environment is everyone's business. However, we can all be guilty of thinking that it's too big an issue to be solved by individual action.

**While the headlines are full of facts and figures about climate change and global warming, as individuals we can often feel that our small steps can have no real impact.**

But that's not true, argues Josh Gill, CEO of the Everflow Group; small steps all add up, and he's on a mission to prove it.

At Everflow, water is quite literally our business.

The group is comprised of ethical water retailer Everflow Water, which is committed to lowering customers' bills, and Everflow Tech, the company behind the tech that enables us to do just that.

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

## A personal approach

However, while we're all aware of the issues surrounding water efficiency on a wider scale, I was curious to find out how many members of the team were conscious of it on a more personal level.

That's why, during September's Great Big Green Week, I launched #100Pledges, to encourage each and every member of staff to commit to at least one small water-saving action.

Options included guaranteeing to turn the tap off when brushing their teeth, sticking to a five-minute shower and only watering the lawn or

outdoor plants in the evening – although this one was a moot point by the time it came around.

I want to highlight the power we all have, as individuals, to each play our part. On their own, each of these actions may seem insignificant, but taken together, they'll have a major impact.

To borrow a water analogy, I like to think of it as a dripping tap; while each drop may seem small, it's startling how quickly these individual drops, working together, can fill a bath.

And speaking of dripping taps...

Seemingly minor issues, such as leaking toilets, inefficient appliances and, yes, dripping taps are responsible for a phenomenal amount of water wastage. Just one drip per second can add up to more than 80 litres of water down the drain in just a day.

That's why the Everflow Water team are always looking out for any anomalies in our customers' water usage – and why smart meters are so valuable in the fight against wastage. Fixing a small leak can have a big impact on both bills and usage, and so should never be ignored.

## Working together

Even away from saving water, all businesses can work to make sure they are as sustainable as possible.

Measures such as taking fewer car journeys, turning lights and computers off, and recycling as much as you can are things every business should

be working into its daily operations.

If you own your own premises, there are grants available to make sure the building is as energy efficient as possible.

Appliances such as dual-flush toilets, push-button taps and water coolers can all reduce water usage among staff too.

## Spreading the word

Water efficiency is all about maximising the benefit from every unit of water used. By taking steps to reduce our water wastage, we can each play a part in using water more efficiently, and limit the water stress experienced across the globe, as well as saving money along the way.

Our #100Pledges are a great start.

But what would really make a huge difference is if everyone did it.

If more businesses encouraged their teams to play their part at home too (we're offering incentives for the pledges made), then the results could be astounding.

That's why I'm urging business leaders across the country to join with their own 100 pledges and make sure they count every drop.

We've launched the hashtag #100Pledges to encourage staff across our sites in Wynyard and Warwickshire to get involved and share their pledges, and we'd love to see it spread.

It's time for everyone to count every drop.

**Businesses can make their own #100Pledges with a free and easy-to-use toolkit available at [www.everflowwater.com/100-pledges](http://www.everflowwater.com/100-pledges)**



# QUICKER, MORE RELIABLE TRAVEL SYSTEM COMING AT TYNE TUNNELS



Phil Smith

Tyne Pass will arrive from November 8th, bringing faster more reliable journeys to drivers in the North East using the Tyne Tunnels - with less queuing, reduced CO2 emissions, as well as bringing over 80 new jobs to the region.

**"Imagine driving along the A19, beneath the £75m Silverlink underpass, through the Tyne Tunnel with no stopping, no hunting for change or getting stuck behind a driver, before driving over the new bridge at Testos," says Phil Smith, CEO of TT2 which operates Tyne Tunnels.**

"This is the vision that will come true shortly as we complete our 'Tyne Pass' project to implement open road tolling and in the process remove the toll plazas that have been a feature of the tunnels for over 50 years."

Shaun Simmons, Programme Manager at TT2, says: "We've spoken with about 150,000 customers over the last several years, and what came back to us time and again from our customers is that 'if we have to pay a toll then make it easy for us'."

Feedback from many pointed to Dartford Tunnel and Mersey Gateway as much easier travel routes than queuing at the Tyne Tunnel and so a three-year project began to change the system.

The new system will soon come into operation, and although it will be a few months until the

plazas are demolished, there will be no more guessing the quickest lane or jostling to get back into two lanes.

Traffic will move quicker, and journeys will be more reliable promises Customer Experience Manager Chris Ward. He says: "The A19, like all roads, just gets busier each year, and with the limitation on the number of toll lanes due to the width of the land available, all we could see was queues getting worse. Solutions like contactless would just make traffic even slower causing more delays. This will mean people just see dual carriageway all the way through making their journey easier and safer."

TT2 started by implementing automatic number plate technology in 2018, before implementing a series of stepping projects to full open road tolling.

There have been questions about removing cash payments, but Project Manager Rachel Fawcett explains: "While the number of people paying by cash has plummeted over the past three years – barely a fifth of customers pay that way now, we recognised at the outset that we would need to provide an alternative to online payment."

Alternative methods of payment include a 24x7 telephone system where people can pay by card, but also, they can pay by cash or card at any of the 28,000 Paypoint retailers UK-wide. For convenience they can pay for up to 10 journeys at a time, any time up to a year ahead. The nearest retailer is only 300m away from the tunnel.

Statistics on compliance have, for months, been published in a dashboard on the Tyne Tunnels website. Phil Smith explains: "They prove that the interim systems have done exactly what we



hoped which is to help customers understand the changes. It has persuaded many to take out pre-paid accounts which are free to open, free and convenient to use, and give 10% discount on every journey no matter how infrequently you travel.

"As a result, we've seen compliance steadily improve and we are already at similar levels of non-compliance to Mersey Gateway and far lower than Dart Charge which has been operating for many years."

When the Tyne Pass system goes live that dashboard will be expanded to include numbers of customers who fail to pay on time, what payment is received in enforcement and both numbers of and success in customers' appeals. TT2 will provide more information, quicker, than any other operator in the UK.

Changes at the Tunnels are being communicated through informative and distinctive signs to help customers understand the need to pay and how to make payment and by when.

**More details: [www.tt2.co.uk](http://www.tt2.co.uk)**

## FULL CIRCLE TURNS CORNER IN HEALTHY FOOD EDUCATION

The Chief Executive of an Ashington charity is urging people to use their gardens to eat more healthier, save money and educate future generations in the benefits of eating greener.

Sarah Robinson runs Full Circle Food which is based in the town's Hirst Park. The charity has a community garden where they show people how to grow vegetables to lead a healthier lifestyle. Currently the garden contains tomatoes, peas, maize, courgettes, and squash which are grown outdoors and in one of the charity's greenhouses or tunnel tents.

As well as managing the gardens, Sarah and her



team are now running cookery classes to show people how to make the best use of the vegetables that they grow, particularly for those on a tight budget.

Anyone wishing to volunteer their time or would like more information about the adult or young people's cookery courses can email [info.fullcirclefood@gmail.com](mailto:info.fullcirclefood@gmail.com)



## DANCE STUDIO COMES BOUNCING BACK WITH COVID-19 RECOVER GRANT

A much-loved North Tyneside dance and performance studio, is bouncing back following

the award of a £1,500 Covid recovery grant from Open North Foundation.

The not-for-profit, Move It Studios, based in the Memorial Hall, Wallsend, is at the heart of the community, providing an outlet for toddlers right through to those in their late teens.

During the lockdown the studio resorted to zoom and other technologies to keep some element of momentum and has slowly battled through to a position where it is now about 70% operational, with reduced class sizes

The Covid grant, which was awarded by fellow not-for-profit, Open North Foundation, will go towards the recruitment of a new member of staff who will provide additional resource to ensure the studio is Covid secure.

Principal, Helen Telford, said: "The £1,500 grant is so important to us and it is so nice to know that a body such as Open North Foundation wants us to survive and flourish."

## BATTERY GETS POSITIVE RECOGNITION FROM COUNCIL

One of Blyth's major historical assets has been given blue plaque status by its Town Council.

Blyth Battery is a World War One coastal artillery battery that was built in 1916 and served in both the First World War and World War 2. It is now run by volunteers as a museum and contains several features associated with a defended port battery.

Blyth Town Council have created a walking trail between each of the blue plaques and this one at Blyth Battery is the 20th to be erected on a site of historical importance in the town.

Blyth Town Council Mayor, Cllr Margaret Richardson was delighted to unveil the plaque.



"We are a very proud town, and we recognise the important work that the men and women who served in the battery did to protect our port from enemies on the sea and in the air. The new plaque

will remind everyone of this and I'm especially keen to help educate our young people so that our heritage can be preserved for generations to come."



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## MILITARY V CANCER EVENT AT SLELEY HALL RAISES £28,000 FOR UK CANCER CHARITIES

A group of service and ex-service men who forged a tight bond in the Royal Navy and lost a close colleague to cancer raised a staggering £28,000 for charity after organising a black tie event attended by 235 people at Sleafy Hall in Northumberland.

**The group called Military v Cancer gifted the money between Macmillan Cancer Support and Cancer Research UK with the stipulation that the money be ring fenced for cancer services here in the North East.**

It is the latest in a series of events organised by the group over the last few years and featured glamorous raffle prizes including a personally gifted limited-edition watch by rockstar and airline pilot Bruce Dickinson of Iron Maiden fame. The event also attracted people from Newcastle United FC and Sunderland Athletic FC.

Military v Cancer founding members are comprised of David and Shelley Bathgate from Nottingham who tragically lost five members from across both sides of their family to cancer, Andrew Gibney brother of deceased colleague Sean Gibney, Peter Moody now at the helm of Gateshead-based waste management company Gap Group (NE) Limited, and Matt Munday.

Peter Moody managing director at Gap Group (NE) Limited and former chief petty officer in the Royal Navy said: "It's been a real honour to be able to help in whatever way I can the Military v Cancer fundraising effort and I know from my discussions with the group that we are applying to become a charity in our own right, a really exciting development. In addition to this we are planning another event for next year at Sleafy Hall."

David Bathgate said: "We are a close group forged through shared service in the Royal Navy and it hit us all hard when Sean died. We wanted to do something for his wife and daughter, so we held an event which was a success and we all felt good about that and wanted to build some momentum."

"There is great camaraderie in the forces, we always have representatives from the British Army, Royal Air Force as well as the Royal Navy and we didn't want it to end there."

"More recently my wife, Shelley, and I went through



an awful period where between us we lost five members of our family to cancer in two years including my brother John, it was a truly terrible time.

"Sean and my brother and the other family members all died from bowel cancer which is why Shelley and I are so passionate about raising awareness and sending the message that it is so important that symptoms that are persistent and unusual are acted upon."

"My brother had been living in South Africa and had ignored what he was experiencing my father flew out and brought him back to the UK. Literally within 24 hours of him landing he went into a coma and never regained consciousness."

"It is critical that people present to their doctors if they experience any symptoms that are out of the ordinary, positive outcomes are so much more likely from early diagnosis."

Following the continued success of the Military v Cancer group they are going through the process of becoming a charity themselves.

Shelley Bathgate said: "We plan to continue to organise fundraising events harnessing the power of the military as a powerful fundraising tool. This will mean events taking place across the country and raising money for targeted cancer services that we identify we want to support."

"It can be a lasting legacy to the people we loved that we've lost. What is better than that?"

Jill Campbell Macmillan Cancer Support area fund raising manager for the North East said: "We are just absolutely delighted to receive this kind of donation and we are so grateful. It is no secret that Macmillan and the charity sector in general has seen fundraising revenues slashed in the challenging conditions we have all faced over the last 18 months. And that this has come at a time when our services are needed more than ever."

"Talking about cancer can be tough and our cancer information and support specialists offer a listening ear. If you would like to speak, the Macmillan Support Line is a free and confidential phone service for people living with and affected by cancer. Please call us on 0808 808 00 00 (Seven days a week, 8am - 8pm)."

Sam Moralee Cancer Research UK relationship manager for the North East & Cumbria said: "We are blown away by the support from Military v Cancer and really can't thank everyone enough for organising this amazing event, despite the ongoing challenges of the pandemic."

"Covid19 has slowed us down but the fight against cancer never stops and our scientists in Newcastle are working harder than ever to bring forward the day when all cancers are cured."

"We are delighted that the funds raised will be restricted to our local work and look forward to working with Military v Cancer as they go from strength to strength. One in two of us will develop cancer in our lifetime but thanks to research survival rates have doubled in the last 40 years. With support such as this our mission is to see three in four people surviving cancer by 2034. Together we will beat cancer."

[macmillan.org.uk](http://macmillan.org.uk).

# LEADING PLANNING SPECIALIST LICHFIELDS APPOINTS NEW OFFICE LEAD IN NEWCASTLE



Harvey Emms

Leading planning and development consultancy Lichfields has made some key changes at its flagship North East office in Newcastle.

**Senior director Harvey Emms has assumed the role of office leader in Newcastle; he succeeds senior director Jonathan Wallace who remains in the office but takes up a position on the firm's main board.**

Emms, who joined Lichfields in 2014 from Newcastle City Council, has a wealth of experience working with both public and private sectors, delivering development plans and large-scale infrastructure projects across the region and Scotland.

He leads the economics team in the Newcastle office and specialises in strategic planning and bringing forward complex urban regeneration schemes. He has also played a key role helping develop regional public transport policy and deliver regional transport projects.

Commenting on his new role and changes, he said: "While it's an honour to replace Jonathan and become head of office, it will remain business as usual. Jonathan and I will continue to be client facing and will continue to focus on our strategic projects.

"I will also be focussed on maintaining the steady

growth we've enjoyed in recent years while also ensuring we continue to deliver the highest quality service to remain market leaders in the North East."

Emms succeeds Jonathan Wallace as office lead, to coincide with the start of the company's new financial year. Wallace steps down after more than eight successful years in the role, and will continue to focus on commercial work including town centre regeneration and the 'levelling up' agenda.

Lichfields is the pre-eminent planning and development consultancy in the UK with more than 200 people working from a network of nine regional offices. The 41-strong Newcastle office is the largest outside of London.

Lichfields has maintained a resilient performance during the pandemic and sees a resurgent planning sector for the rest of this year and immediate future.

Founded in 1962, Lichfields offers a broad range of planning and development consultancy services including development management, consultation, economics, EIA, heritage, and urban design. Clients include developers, landowners and operators in

L-R: Harvey Emms  
and Jonathan Wallace,  
Lichfields, Newcastle

the housing, retail, leisure, commercial, waste and recycling and infrastructure sectors, as well as local authorities and government bodies.

Lichfields has been at the forefront of planning and development consultancy since it was founded.

The firm was the RTPI Planning Consultancy of the Year in 2012, 2013 and 2014, the only consultancy to be awarded this accolade on three occasions. It is one of the largest independent planning and development consultancies in the UK.

**More information at [www.lichfields.uk](http://www.lichfields.uk)**



# WALK INTO WORK WITH GOOD DOG WALKING

There's no time to let sleeping dogs lie as a successful pet care business in Morpeth extends its lead in the canine business world.

**Cheryl Bolton formed Good Dog Walking in 2012 after she was made redundant and decided to work with the love of her life – animals. She started the business from scratch after being encouraged to do so by her brother Christopher who knew how much she loved animals.**

Now nine years later, she runs a team of 10 dog walkers and animal carers and has a huge social media following and an ever-growing business reputation. As well as walking dogs, feeding them, and acting as a companion, Good Dog Walking also looks after other pet animals from goldfish to cats, rodents to reptiles and everything in-between.

Cheryl was introduced by a mutual friend to Linda Lowther from Advice4Business North East, a Morpeth based consultancy who has gone on to help the business thrive and grow.



Linda's two Cockapoos Indi and Bailey are regular users of Good Dog Walking and the way they are looked after together with Cheryl's ambition to grow the business prompted Linda to help Cheryl expand her reach outside of Morpeth.

Linda identified that there was a growing market for reputable and reliable dog walkers in other areas of the region and now the pair are offering animal lovers looking to start their own business the chance to be supported by Good Dog Walking. "Cheryl started the business from scratch and had to learn the hard way by making decisions on her own and her success came through a lot of hard work and trial and error," said Linda. "I suggested that her skills and experience could be used to mentor new dog walkers backed up by a package of benefits and business support."

As a result, Cheryl is now offering Good Dog Walking territories using her brand, tried and tested strategies and solid business advice from Linda.

"We have a number of key geographic areas to offer the right person," said Cheryl. "They would suit someone wanting to start their own business with the added advantages of flexible hours and the opportunity for plenty of exercise. Above all though, there is a safety net for those without a wealth of business experience as Linda's business advice and my practical help minimises any risk," said Cheryl.

"The biggest issue when someone starts their own business is that they are great at their craft but not always educated in how to run a business. Cheryl is offering a business in a box with all of the process and support in place a Good Dog Walker needs," added Linda.

New territory owners will be fully trained, mentored and chaperoned until they grow in confidence and will receive practical training including dog first aid. They will also receive marketing support, a managed website, business networking membership, uniform and vehicle signage.

"I'd never run a business before and with this level of support, this is a great opportunity for someone who loves pets, people and being outdoors," said Cheryl.

**Territories available include Alnwick, North Tyneside, Gosforth, Whitley Bay, Hexham and Newcastle. For more information [www.gooddogwalking.co.uk/territory-ownership](http://www.gooddogwalking.co.uk/territory-ownership)**

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# MANAGING MENTAL HEALTH - SIMPLE TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

With research showing 41% of employees have experienced poor mental health where work was a contributing factor last year (source – BITC and BUPA) and with October's focus around World Mental Health Day, this short article sets out some considerations for line managers when taking care of their staff.

## Never assume!

Individuals may find it difficult to disclose information relating to their mental health so try to make it easier for them by ignoring many of the stereotypes that exist around the subject. Remember not to second guess as to how an individual is feeling or what their symptoms may be - many people are able to manage their condition and perform their role to a high standard.

## Confidentiality is key!

People opening up about what is likely to be a private and sensitive subject can be understandably an anxious time so be prepared to put in place plans to ensure confidentiality is top priority. This could include creating policies to reassure anyone who discloses private information to their manager that this will not be discussed with their colleagues.

## Talking is invaluable!

It is so important to have an open dialogue with employees when discussing their mental health and wellbeing. Remember to focus on the person not the problem, asking open and honest questions about their condition, what the implications are and

most importantly asking what support somebody will need.

## Be flexible!

Mental health issues affect different people in different ways and at different times in their lives, so line managers need to be prepared to adapt how they support each individual to suit that person and their circumstances. Work with your colleague to develop an individual wellness action plan. It is vitally important you implement any reasonable adjustments, and remember these do not need to




be costly or complicated - it might be as simple as allowing flexible working/a temporary change in working hours, some quiet space to work or setting up a buddy scheme.

## Seek professional advice!

Most importantly it is highly unlikely you will be able to solve or fix the issues presented to you with professional support. Speak to your HR department, consider occupational health and employee assistance programme support or contact organisations such as Mind. Check out their website where they offer free resources/booklets, training and action plan templates.


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## COMMUNICATING, IS IT AN EASY TO DO OR AN EASY TO GET WRONG SKILL?

Why do you even need to pause and think about communications? You are a great communicator, certainly you're not a bad communicator, are you? Have you ever stopped to wonder if that's true?

**I ask these questions because so many people assume that they are great communicators without putting any thought as to why. When I ask, most people tell me that they have been communicating all of their lives and they don't often get negative feedback on their communication skills.**

Does this make them (or you) good or great communicators? The answer is probably not. Communication is a learned skill and like so many skills it needs purposeful practice, a reminder of the basics and learning new skills and techniques.

When done well, communications (even in its simplest form) can motivate, encourage, enthuse and engage your team, your suppliers, your customers even your other half! I have seen people who are able, with a few simple words spoken at the right time and in the right tone motivate someone who was previously a huge sack of apathy. I regularly see people speak at events most

of them brighten the room (only a small handful brighten the room when they shut up and leave). Where is it then, that people go so wrong when communicating. For me it falls into these key areas:

- They assume rather than ask, clarify or seek to really understand.
- They communicate for themselves rather than others.
- They focus more on sending rather than receiving information.

How then, do we all go about avoiding these common traps:

For assumptions the starting point is to be aware that we all have and use assumptions regularly and usefully. We assume we know how to use a chair or a door (most of the time we get this right) and that is a useful assumption to carry around. We need to raise our attentiveness to when assumptions creep into our communications.

Even before we communicate, what assumptions are we making about a person when we first see them. Have you ever done this at a networking event? I know I have assumed so and so would be boring or unhappy and it's always exciting when this isn't true. It's great when your assumptions get challenged as this makes you think very much more about how you interact with others. Before any type of communications (especially the really important meetings, presentations or discussions) how about pausing to identify the assumptions you are making. This way you can seek to check if they are just your assumptions or if they are true. You do this by asking simple questions, before we begin, can I just check...

Communicating for yourself rather than others falls into a number of categories. One is in the language you use. Words that mean something significant to you might mean something completely different to a supplier or a client. If you aren't sure about this try naming and describing a shade of green or blue to your other half, a member of your family or a close friend. Don't blame me for the argument about teal or aquamarine! When you pause to think about what information the other person might like and how they might like to receive this information then you start to spot opportunities. These opportunities could be to send information first, share written information before, during or after a meeting or use a method of communication that works best for them and not you. When you make others more comfortable in communications you get so much more from them.

Focusing on sending rather than receiving information is a common trait we see in lots of forms of communications. Let me be clear if I have asked you to do a 10 minute presentation that would involve you sending most (if not all) of the information. If, on the other hand, you are meeting me as a potential client for your products or services I expect you to be very much in receiving mode so you can fully understand what is important to me. We recently chose a new supplier at New Results based on the strength of how well someone listened to our specific needs and played them back to us. You would think this would be an easy ask but you would be surprised by how many potential suppliers simply focused on throwing information at us. The simple approach here is become more curious. I know some of you are already very curious (certainly the readers I have met!). I mean develop your professional curiosity about others around you. Ask better questions, really listen to answers, and then dig to make sure you really understand and appreciate what others are telling you. Simple questions work best here - tell me more about that, explain what that means to you, or describe the outcome in lots of detail to me.

Communication should be easy. It's not. The great news is by applying these simple techniques you can make a huge difference between being average (or below average) in communication to becoming a communications superstar. When you are a communications superstar people want to talk to you, they want to share more information and want to spend more time with you. All of those things help you grow strong, deep, long lasting relationships.

Drop me a line if you want to know more on this one, I am always more than happy to sit down and have a listen to you.

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



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Laura Middleton

## SUNDERLAND COMPANY ROCKS MORE THAN £33 MILLION IN RETAILER REVENUE

Sunderland based content marketers, The Office Rocks are on to a winning formula after seeing phenomenal growth and demand for their hub of online communities, with shining star Bump, Baby & You taking centre stage.

**With the founder and Managing Director, Laura Middleton at the helm, The Office Rocks, the parent company behind the recent sale of e-commerce business WHAT ABOUT THIS (WAT) has created and grown substantially over the last six years by leveraging their expertise in community building and digital marketing.**

With clients on the books including Tesco, Mamas & Papas, Nike, Boohoo, Paperchase and Sainsbury's to name but a few, The Office Rocks has successfully created and grown a host of online communities across their portfolio, with a weekly reach of 8m+ and driving over £33m to clients in the process.

Laura Middleton, Managing Director, The Office Rocks said: "Over the years we have developed a number of online communities across a range of genres, these platforms have seen exceptional growth and since the sale of WAT earlier in the year we've had the enhanced capacity and investment to refocus our strategy to grow our communities even further. The stats speak

volumes, and our communities are on a strong upward trajectory, it's a really exciting time for us."

The Office Rocks creates and delivers successful and highly targeted marketing campaigns to ensure a brand's maximum exposure, traffic and sales. The company has recently unveiled their newly revamped Bump, Baby & You website - [www.bumpbabyandyou.co.uk](http://www.bumpbabyandyou.co.uk) - and app as the community tops a seven million reach. Established in 2015 to support new mums from pregnancy through to parenthood, The Office Rocks have cultivated the Bump, Baby & You brand, which has quickly become a major player nationally and one of the largest digital communities in the mother and baby arena in the UK.

Laura Middleton, Managing Director, The Office Rocks said: "Bump, Baby & You is such a success story, with over 560k followers on Facebook, 72k members in our tailored Facebook Support group, and a monthly reach of over 7 million through this highly engaged and targeted platform, the community delivers amazing results for our clients.

Alongside the revamped website we are also delighted to be relaunching the official Bump, Baby & You app - it's something we have been wanting to do for a number of years now and the pandemic prompted us to go for it. Pregnancy and parenthood can be a scary journey and with the added stress that covid brought, we wanted to create a safe space where our community can come together."

Laura added, The app, along with our social platforms are key growth areas for the community. I'm also really excited with the boom of TikTok and to see Mums hanging out on there. We've delivered some really creative partnerships with key brands who want to reach Mums on TikTok and the results have been fantastic, so this is also an area we'll be investing in more in the coming months."

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# YOUR EYE ON THE REGION

## STEPHANIE MARSHALL

Director of Cost Management,  
Turner & Townsend

### Did you grow up in the North East or did you decide to locate here in later life?

I grew up in the North East – I was born in Washington and then moved to Chester-le-Street when I was nine. Since then I have lived in Newcastle, Whickham and Durham – now living in Ashbrooke, Sunderland.

### What do you think it means to be a business person in the North East of England?

Being a business person in the North East is all about relationships; building them and nurturing them. Having been at Turner & Townsend for 10 years I have built up a solid support network. I still work with colleagues and consultants I first met over a decade ago and we have grown together in our careers.

We are a very social bunch and there is plenty to get involved with – whether it's university engagement, professional boards and networks, CPD or social events, there is always something going on and chance to catch up and network.

### What is your favourite aspect of life in the North East?

The variety. We have the cities, countryside and seaside all on our doorstep – there is always somewhere to explore – my favourite place being Newton by the Sea. The people also can't be matched.

### Where do you like to eat out?

My favourite restaurant is Peace & Loaf in Jesmond for a special occasion. The quality of the food is amazing and I also really like Riley's Fish Shack, in Tynemouth, fresh food from the region.

### Are the people really friendlier?

I love the North East and its people – they are very authentic with a great sense of humour. We are never short of conversation!



Stephanie Marshall

### Do you think living and working in the North East offers the same opportunities as elsewhere?

Absolutely. The North East can certainly act as a launch pad for career expansion. Over the space of 10 years working at Turner & Townsend, I've been promoted three times going from Cost Manager through to Director. I am a sector lead for student accommodation, so have had the opportunity to work in various cities as well as spending two years in Manchester with Turner & Townsend. I have always enjoyed the variety of projects and locations that Turner & Townsend has presented me with.

Additionally, I'm also on the Cost Management Board and leading our Digital Transformation in UK Cost Management. I have never felt that my geographical location has held me back.

Many members of our team hail from the North East, work across the region, the country and even the world – which is one of the advantages to

being in a global organisation.

I think the key to anywhere that you work, no matter the location, is being visible in the business: be keen, volunteer, be the change maker and disruptor in a positive way. Take the helm and show leadership qualities that your business is looking for. No matter who you are or where you are based, any business will want to encourage and reward this drive and passion.

### Have you had any experience of working elsewhere and how did it compare?

Yes – I lived and worked in Manchester for two years and really enjoyed my time there. I was working on a brilliant project with a great team in a bustling city – the team and local office could not have been more welcoming. Ultimately though, the North East is where I will always call home.

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# IN CONVERSATION WITH...

## PHILIP MADDISON

Owner of East Durham Funeral Service

This month, East Durham Funeral Services are celebrating a milestone birthday in business. Philip tells us about the company, where it all started and how they've dealt with the challenges of running a successful business for 50 years.

"The first branch of East Durham Funeral Service was opened in 1971 in Horden, County Durham by Barrie Lee, my father-in-law. Mr. Lee was one of the first independent funeral directors in the area and quickly built up a wide-spreading reputation which saw families from throughout the region selecting our company, when faced with the loss of a loved one, to take care of their funerals. In 1982, I joined the company and following Mr Lee's retirement, I went on to expand the reach of the business across East Durham by opening a further four branches. Peterlee, Easington, Trimdon and Wingate, with Peterlee later becoming our head office.

"In more recent years, I was delighted in 2005 to be joined by our son Tom and then in 2013, our daughter Ellen completed the family business."

Now, as third generation funeral directors, the family have spent the last 50 years building the local knowledge and unparalleled expertise necessary to guide their clients through the decisions ahead.

The ethos underpinning the company is that every life is unique and therefore each funeral should reflect the character of the individual. This is achieved by developing close relationships with the families in the care of the company in order to capture the uniqueness of the person.

### What are your career ambitions?

"I've been with East Durham Funeral Service now for 40 years, so feel very much part of the furniture! I joined at the tender age of just 19, which, at that age, was certainly a different career path to a lot of my friends at the time!

"I started as assistant funeral director, but as the business grew, my father-in-law asked me if I'd like to join as a partner, instead of employee. I jumped at the chance and then, in 2003 when he retired, I took over completely. We then opened four further branches, and, as they say, the rest is history."



L-R: Tom, Philip and Ellen Maddison

### Current role within East Durham Funeral Services?

"I am the current owner and a funeral director within the business and my role within the company is paramount to making sure that our clients' loved ones final goodbye is unique to them and a personal tribute to the person they have lost."

### Your proudest achievement?

"I am going to mention two here, as I am proud of both. Our Children, Tom and Ellen have always excelled themselves and to say I am a proud father would be an understatement. Tom successfully played amateur golf at Castle Eden Golf Club for the county and for England. He actually broke the course record at Castle Eden aged just 14. He was one of the best players in Europe at the time and later attended Oklahoma State University, the number one golf college in America, before returning home to play professionally. Ellen graduated from Teesside University with a first in psychology and counselling, also winning an award for her research. She worked extremely hard to achieve this and it's always a proud moment when you see your children succeed and put so much effort in to following their dreams. I am now so proud that both of them

work in the family business, but not before they had more than proved themselves capable of achieving their personal goals.

### How has the industry changed?

"I suppose the thing we have noticed most over the years, is the increase in the amount of non-religious ceremonies that now take place. Obviously, this is a personal choice, so as forward-thinking funeral directors, we are always on hand to make suggestions to help our clients come to the right decision about their loved ones, religious or not. The other side of the changes in the industry is the increase in social media announcements. At one time, you took out an obituary out in the local press to announce the funeral and passing of a loved one, however now, it is completely acceptable to put this on social media channels. Fewer people use the press for their announcements now. Also, not everyone wants a traditional funeral service anymore, so we are always happy to offer the alternatives to our clients."

### What's happening in EDFS that our readers would be interested in?

"Well, we're all very proud to be celebrating 50 years in business, but it really is a joint effort.



# EST 1971 East Durham Funeral Service

★★★★★



“  
...generations of families have  
trusted us to deliver their loved  
ones final farewells...  
”

That of our team and that of our clients, who from generation to generation trust us to deliver their final farewells to their loved ones. We've also invested heavily in silver Jaguar limousines to convey our clients around in style as well as just completing an extensive refurbishment to our head office Peterlee branch. Part of the refurbishment has been to add a state-of-the-art mortuary, which proves that our endeavours to lead the way in forward-thinking funeral services, is on course."

#### Tell us about the team you work with?

"We work with many local companies in the area to supply the services our clients require in order to give their loved ones the funeral they deserve. As our in-house team is mainly family, it's being able to offer that extra-special personal service that our clients really appreciate, especially when they are going through such a terribly sad, emotional time."

#### What has been your biggest challenge?

"Actually, my biggest challenge was to pass my yachting exam. We used to hire a yacht when we went on holiday to Greece, and then the laws changed, so it meant that I had to pass an exam in order to continue to enjoy sailing. Not coming from a yachting family, it's not really in my blood, but I

managed to pass it and received my International Certificate of Competence for Sailing, which was a great thrill. I received this in 2018 and have been sailing ever since. I also, in my spare time, like to build and race motorbikes. I like to tinker and also like to challenge myself. Work-wise, Covid was a real challenge. As you can imagine, during this time, when mortality rates were at an all-time high, funeral directors couldn't exactly go on furlough, like much of the rest of the country's workforce. Our staff had to put the families of the loved ones that sadly lost their lives first. If this meant going into hospitals, homes, nursing homes etc. to put the plan in place to organise their final goodbyes, then that's what we had to do. We are extremely proud of the fact that our clients were so very grateful for us carrying out their funerals during this time and we received many thank you cards praising our team for their utmost professionalism. Knowing that it's your staff vocation is something to be very proud of indeed."

#### Who are your heroes inside and outside of your business?

"Tony McCoy, an absolute champion jockey. Nick Faldo – the English golfer. Both of these for the same reasons really. They are both determined,

cool-headed and have a never-give-in attitude, which I try to adopt and follow. They are both extremely reliable too, which I always try and be. I hate to let anyone down."

#### How do you unwind outside of business?

"We love family time and do a lot of activities together. Marianne and I like to keep fit and train five days a week, which counteracts the nice restaurants and hotels we like to visit! We also like to go fell walking, are frequent horse riders and I also play the guitar. Variety is the spice of life is my motto!"

#### What area do you cover at EDFs and are there any plans for expansion?

"We are constantly looking at other areas of improvement, different from the ones we've already completed, but sometimes, it's nice to just take stock and be thankful for what we have. Although we're always incredibly forward-thinking, for now, we have no plans to change at the moment."

**East Durham Funeral Service, 0191 586 4322**  
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## SYNERGI'S NEW PRACTICE DRIVES GROWTH OF MICROSOFT BUSINESS

North East technology specialist Synergi has launched a newly branded practice as it continues to expand its Microsoft cloud business management solutions for SMEs.

Under the new 'Unifi' brand, their experienced team of consultants and accountants will work with customers to help them to centralise business applications and integrate with Microsoft Dynamics 365 tools to help transform business performance, analysis and process productivity.

It also comes as the firm looks to hire an additional three specialists to join under the Unifi brand to meet the 'surge' in demand for cloud accounting solutions, which is coming from industrial, manufacturing, financial services, logistics, distribution businesses and public sector organisations across the UK.

Lee Mills, Dynamics 365 practice director at Unifi, who will lead the new practice, said: "Customers will have access to a whole host of the very latest cloud-based Microsoft Dynamics services and tools under a strong brand identity, which will be supported by highly skilled business performance specialists with specific accountancy skill sets.



## GLOBAL DIRECTOR JOINS SAGGEZZA AS TECH FIRMS GOES FOR GROWTH

Technology consultancy Saggezza UK has announced the appointment of former EY and Cisco director Peter Hughes as Programme Director.

Hughes, who boasts over 20 years' experience working in senior tech roles across the globe, joined the company following its acquisition by Silicon Valley tech giant Infostretch earlier this year.

The acquisition will see Saggezza significantly ramp up its recruitment efforts over the next 12 months, with the creation of scores of jobs across its operations in Sunderland, Edinburgh, London and Birmingham.

Hughes was born and raised in the North East before going on to travel the globe during the course of his career and will join the company in a hybrid capacity, splitting his time between his home office and the company's Sunderland HQ.

Saggezza is currently recruiting for software developers, salesforce consultants and test engineers, with more roles to be advertised over the coming months.



## EXOLUM AND EVOLUTION RISK PARTNERSHIP EXTENSION - AUGMENTED REALITY FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Evolution Risk Assurance (ERA), a global emergency response consultancy company, is making its mark on the UK by extending an ongoing partnership with international bulk liquid storage and transportation company Exolum.

Exolum, which transports and stores a wide range of bulk liquids in eight countries, has recently taken over a site at Seal Sands and across the UK is working with ERA to deliver bespoke training courses to its employees.

ERA, with offices in Hartlepool and London, has tailored highly interactive courses to allow Exolum to test response procedures and staff competence through its Evolution XR immersive platform.

As a part of Exolum's commitment to innovation; they are also utilising Evolution Response App to provide a Virtual Emergency Control Centre that key responders can join, gain situational awareness and assist in the management of incidents from any geographic location. This will help with Exolum's continual improvement to the safety of its employees.

## ASPIRE TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS SET TO CREATE JOBS WITH TEESSIDE EXPANSION

North East tech giant Aspire Technology Solutions have opened a new office at Fusion Hive, Teesside. The Fusion Hive business and innovation centre, located on Stockton's Northshore has been built specifically as a hub for growing digital and technology companies.

Aspire's expansion into Teesside follows hot on the heels of the company's plans to open a new HQ at the Pipewell Quay development, located on the site of the former Baja Beach Club on Gateshead Quays. The new offices will enable the company to expand within the North East and increase their workforce in the process. The company have plans to create over 150 new local jobs as part of their growth projections.

Aspire, who are one of the fastest-growing business communications and Cloud services providers in the UK, were named as North East Company of the Year at the North East Business Awards, 2020.



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# 79% OF COMPANIES HAVE BEEN HURT BY THEIR LACK OF CYBER SECURITY PLANNING. ARE YOU READY?

Mimecast's state of email security report 'Securing the Enterprise in the COVID world' found that 79% of companies were hurt by their lack of cyber preparedness, with email threats rising by 64% from 2019 to 2020, and 70% of companies considering it likely that an email-borne attack will damage their business in 2021. These statistics point to an alarming trend, where businesses are aware of increasing risks but are not taking appropriate action, leaving themselves vulnerable to cyber threats. These companies are risking positioning themselves as sitting ducks and an attack could mean serious damage. Mimecast reported an average downtime of six days following a ransomware attack (and a 52% payment rate for ransoms) and data breaches may lead to non-compliance security fines as well. So, it's time to act fast.

Taking action is important, but it needn't be scary, complicated, nor expensive. The first crucial step is to evaluate your current tools and processes. Security leaders, Sophos, recommend a pro-active response plan, urging businesses not to "build a blueprint in a vacuum", but instead develop an incident response plan prior to an attack. This means if an attack does occur, individuals can calmly follow a clear, thought-through action plan, rather than improvising their defence. To build such a plan requires clear



Paul Burns

visibility into the tools and processes that span your organisation and strong consideration of the security risks these may pose. This information takes time to compile and consider and therefore often isn't fully understood or available in an ad-hoc defence during an attack.

Another consideration is that of cyber liability insurance. It is not enough just to have insurance; you need to understand what your insurance entails: what it offers and what it requires

from you. Failure to align with the policies and regulations required by your insurance provider may lead to rejection of any claim. Adherence to regulation and meeting policy requirements requires a deep understanding of your organisation. Ask yourself, are appropriate security controls deployed across your entire environment? If so, are these tools and controls integrated? Have you identified where your sensitive data resides? Have you identified potential gaps in your emergency response plans?

Now, this may all seem overwhelming, understandably so. But that's where a managed services provider (MSP) comes in. An MSP knows the questions to ask, the risks to look out for, and the leading tools on the market. Synergi's managed services team work with you, undertaking a deep dive learning of your processes that can shape an individualised solution that fits your needs and budget. With so many companies at risk due to a lack of cyber preparedness there is a real impetus to act, but this shouldn't come with fear. As your partner, Synergi is here to support, guide, and protect your organisation.

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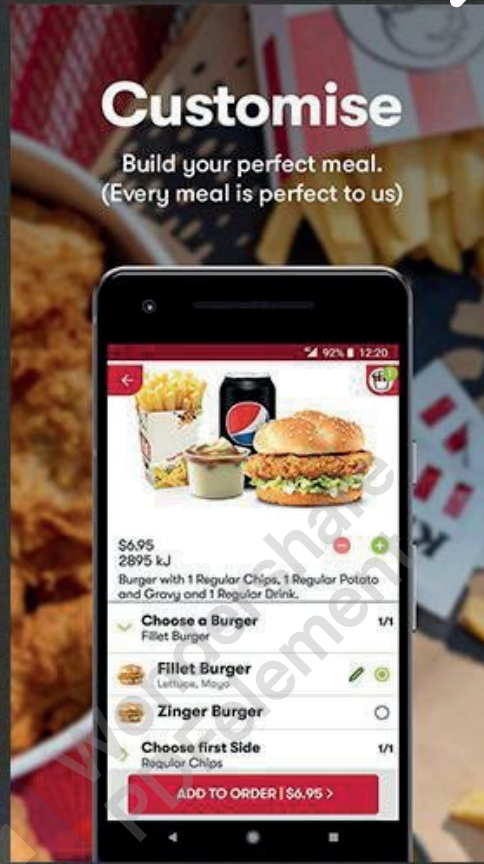
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## PROACTIVITY KEY TO EFFECTIVE CYBERSECURITY

The North East's professional services firms and other SMEs are prime targets for cybercrime but they can fight back if they are prepared, says Stephen O'Connell, sales and marketing director of Advantex.

**It wouldn't be stretching the truth too far to say that almost every business has been a victim of a cyber crime at some time. From phishing to ransomware, most of us will have experienced the disruption and heartache of attacks on IT systems that cause damage, misery and financial loss. Indeed, data collated by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau, reports individuals and organisations in the UK described losses of £1.3bn to fraud and cybercrime in the first seven months of 2021 alone.**

Chief among those in the crosshairs of the digital weapons cyber criminals wield are the region's professional services companies. But what makes accounting, legal, insurance, creative and other client-focused organisations such appealing targets? One reason is that they hold highly confidential information, which is extremely desirable for people who inhabit a dark deadly digital world and look to profit from illegal cyber activity and the misfortune of businesses. This includes financial details, tax records, ID documents, investments, corporate strategies and

intellectual property among a wealth of sensitive data, which if it is leaked or falls into the wrong hands, could see you facing not only devastating financial loss but also irreparable reputational damage.

Professional services alongside other SMEs often struggle to assign the financial resources and manpower needed to thwart ever more clever criminals plotting either random or coordinated cyber attacks. Recent research indicates 75% of SME leaders would not have sufficient capacity or expertise to deal with an attack - disturbing news, particularly at a time when the region's economy continues to remain fragile in a post-pandemic world.

Fraudulent emails asking people to share passwords and banking information (phishing) and virus-riddled software designed to prise open unauthorised access to a computer and cause damage (malware), are among the most common types of attack. But organisations must be alert to malicious attacks from staff, or perhaps disgruntled ex-employees, who have access to

systems or an axe to grind, or events that can trigger the shut down of a company's systems so that it is unable to operate (denial-of-service strikes).

It has to be seen as timely that against a backdrop of heightened threats and increasingly sophisticated attacks, it's important for you to review current cybersecurity - thoroughly test your security protocols and identify potential vulnerabilities. A good start point to ensure that a robust defence is in place is to examine the data you currently hold and assess the critical risks if there is a breach. Once you identify these, the next step is to protect the data with appropriate security procedures and processes that are realistic and sustainable. It would also be helpful to undertake regular vulnerability assessments to ensure there are no gaping security holes criminals can target.

Testing your environment is also important if your firm recently implemented new technology or cloud-based tools that could have unknowingly opened a back door. Keep abreast of security threats and make sure you don't become complacent. Other simple yet effective procedures to protect your business include adding software updates as soon as they become available and backing up your data - if you are a cybercrime victim, this will help provide business continuity at a difficult time. Businesses that are alert to the threats, and deploy effective measures, will feel the benefit of assuring their customers that they take security seriously and that they are dealing with bonafide people and not criminals or hackers.

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## CONSTRUCTION CONSULTANTS SECURE MULTIDISCIPLINARY ROLE ON KEY NET ZERO PROJECT

Award-winning construction and property consultancy, Summers-Inman, has secured a multidisciplinary role to project manage and provide quantity surveying services on a research and innovation facility which will support the region's ongoing drive for clean energy and sustainability.

The firm's appointment follows on from plans unveiled earlier this year by Teesside University and the Tees Valley Mayor and the Tees Valley Combined Authority to develop a new £13.5m industry-led Net Zero Industry Innovation Centre (NZIIC) to support the ongoing drive for clean energy and sustainability.

Appointed by Teesside University following a competitive tender submission via the NEUPC consultants' framework (North East Universities Purchasing Consortium), this latest appointment sees Summers-Inman returning to steer the Net Zero Industry Innovation Centre (NZIIC) to completion, having begun its work on the project earlier in the year when it successfully managed the project up to RIBA Stage 3.

The next primary task, from RIBA Stage 4 onwards, will be to successfully select and appoint a suitable main contractor to build the scheme and once this is done, Summers-Inman will be responsible from a cost, quality and time perspective when the scheme reaches site.

Commenting on their latest role, Summers-Inman's associate director, Andrew Rapmund, said: "This is an incredibly exciting project for us to work on and we are delighted to be working closely with and representing the university's interests once again on such a major project – one that not only places the region at the forefront of the clean energy agenda, but also has the potential to act as a catalyst for further massive investment and create thousands of jobs in the process, so it is a highly significant project for the region, too."



## ALASDAIR RITCHIE JOINS NORTH EAST OFFICE OF PROPERTY REGENERATION CONSULTANTS ASPINALLVERDI

Property regeneration consultants AspinallVerdi have boosted their presence in the North East of England with a second key appointment to their Newcastle office.

Alasdair Ritchie joins as a consultant having worked as a graduate development surveyor for Advance Northumberland and prior to that role, housebuilder Taylor Wimpey. He completed his undergraduate degree in Planning and Development Surveying at Northumbria University.

Operating from the AspinallVerdi office at The Core, Bath Lane, Newcastle Helix, Alasdair will work with director Brett Devenish to support existing work in the North East for Homes England, Northumberland County Council, and Tees Valley Combined Authority and attract new clients.

Brett launched the Newcastle office of AspinallVerdi in the summer of 2021 having worked in the private and public sectors in the North East for the past 14 years. He has extensive experience in development viability, regeneration, valuation, disposals and property management.

Brett said: "Alasdair's appointment and securing our new office at The Core is a sign of our commitment to further establishing AspinallVerdi in Newcastle and the wider North East. Alasdair brings unique perspectives and experience, and I'm looking forward to working with him to continue our growth".



## PLANS SUBMITTED FOR NEW £8M AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN COUNTY DURHAM

Plans for a new £8 million affordable housing development in a County Durham town have been submitted for approval.

The move will see proposals for 59 new two, three and four bedroomed homes and bungalows in Peterlee considered by Durham County Council planning department in the coming weeks.

If the plans get the green light in November, the development by United Living Group at Stephenson Road in Peterlee could create dozens of local construction jobs as well as those in the local supply chain.

The move is seen as a much-needed boost for regional housing stock, including the availability of more affordable properties, and would plug a gap in the local market for more energy efficient homes of a size that meets the newly adopted Nationally Described Space Standards.

The development could also herald a spending boom on local leisure facilities and services worth tens of thousands of pounds per year as people start to move into their new homes.

Designed by Newcastle-based architecture practice Ergo Projects, onsite work is expected to start in 2022 with the first release of the new homes due to be completed by Christmas 2022.

Adrian Reay, managing director, said: "Our plans will see a development that will meet the needs of the local community and deliver high quality new homes for the area with good access to local services. As well as a good variety of house types, the wider proposals for the site are equally impressive and we will be excited to see the finished product."







## WEST GRANGE ESTATE, SCOTS GAP, MORPETH



## PRICE GUIDE £2.2 MILLION

West Grange Estate provides a magnificent, period Country House set in over 20 acres of formal gardens and paddocks with superb equestrian facilities including a 20 stall livery yard and an arena. The house itself dates from the late 1800s and has been lovingly restored and sympathetically refurbished over the last three years, retaining a wealth of character including fabulous high ceilings, large open fireplaces, an impressive mahogany staircase, oak floors and working shutters to the windows. This stunning ten bedroomed property is predominantly south facing with beautiful open views over the grounds and mature woodland. There is also a three bedroom cottage, a two bedroom annexe apartment as well as a stone barn offering the potential to develop it into a residential dwelling with private gardens, subject to normal planning consents.

Contact rare! From Sanderson Young on 0191 223 3500 [ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk](mailto:ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk) [www.sandersonyoung.co.uk](http://www.sandersonyoung.co.uk)





If you would like to discuss a sale or purchase please contact Ashleigh Sundin at Sanderson Young's rare! Office on 0191 223 3500 or email [ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk](mailto:ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk)  
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Offers over £975,000

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Darras Hall, Ponteland



Offers over £1.5 Million

Tinklers Bank Foot,  
Corbridge



Guide Price: £1.1 Million

Acorn Lodge, Gubeon Wood,  
Tranwell Woods, Morpeth



Guide Price: £1.8 Million

Oakwood Drive, Great Park,  
Gosforth



Guide Price £1.1 Million

The Old Barn,  
Near Ponteland



Guide Price: £1.25 Million

Kingsway Lodge, Runnymede  
Road, Darras Hall, Ponteland



Guide Price: £1.695 Million

Dibcott House, Foxton,  
Alnmouth



Guide Price: £1.35 Million

# AN EXCEPTIONAL YEAR IN THE HOUSING MARKET

**A**s witnessed by the sold properties featured in our pages in this magazine, Sanderson Young have had a tremendously busy period of sales over the last 12 to 18 months.

Some buyers have registered because of the increased flexibility of working from home and this is particularly true for those relocating from London, where small flats without gardens have been very difficult to live in during the pandemic; working from home has also increased demand for country houses. The fact that the pandemic restricted a number of sales in the prime selling period of Spring 2020 led to a surge in demand over the summer and autumn of last year, which has continued through to the current time.

Confidence is particularly high at the top end of the market, where the sale of properties priced at over £1 Million has been exceptional.

It is interesting to reflect that over 20% of our top end sales do not hit the open market and this is because we are constantly putting very quiet and confidential transactions together from our mailing list. We currently have around 30 buyers registered with us who can proceed immediately with property priced between £1 Million to £7 Million, an exceptional level rarely experienced in my career in estate agency.

Sometimes we have been in the fortunate position where we have had two or more buyers for the same house, resulting in selling prices far exceeding our expectations.

The housing market looks set to continue to be busy over the coming 6 to 12 months and whilst inflation may eventually slow confidence levels, there are still far too many buyers for the number of houses coming onto the market. Our stock levels are historically low, and we are very keen to speak to anybody who wants to carry out a discreet and quiet sale of their home, yet still be confident that they have achieved the maximum price.

We look forward to discussing any of your housing requirements, please do not hesitate to contact me at [duncan.young@sandersonyoung.co.uk](mailto:duncan.young@sandersonyoung.co.uk)

Duncan G. Young, Chairman

Runnymede Road, Darras Hall,  
Ponteland



Price on Application

Adderstone Crescent,  
Jesmond



Price on Application

Ravenstone,  
Corbridge



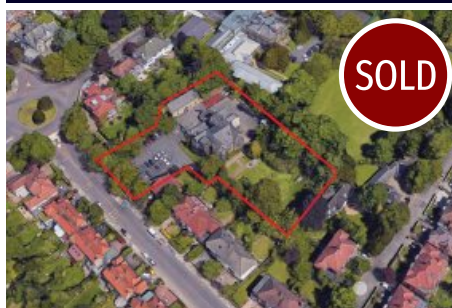
Price on Application

Glanton Pyke, Glanton,  
Alnwick



Price on Application

Ashfield Towers, Kenton Road,  
Gosforth



Guide Price: £3.5 Million

The Red House,  
Stocksfield



Price on Application



If you would like to discuss a sale or purchase please contact Ashleigh Sundin at Sanderson Young's rare! Office on 0191 223 3500 or email [ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk](mailto:ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk)  
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From Sanderson Young

Spoutwell Lane,  
Corbridge



Price on Application

The Woll, Runnymede Road,  
Darras Hall, Ponteland



Guide Price: £1.65 Million

Uplands, Newcastle Road,  
Corbridge



Guide Price: £2.995 Million

Blackhouse Farm, Lanchester,  
County Durham



Guide Price: £1.2 Million

Orchard Vale,  
Corbridge



Guide Price: £1.995 Million

Darras Road, Darras Hall,  
Ponteland



Guide Price: £2.2 Million

Amersidelaw Farmhouse,  
Chatton, Alnwick



Guide Price £1.75 Million

Flinton Hill Farmhouse,  
Chester Road, Sunderland



Guide Price: £1.2 Million

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Elmfield Road  
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**SOLD: £2 Million**



Graham Park Road  
Gosforth

**SOLD: £1.9 Million**



North Avenue  
Gosforth

**SOLD: £1.8 Million**



Carlton Terrace  
Jesmond

**SOLD: £975,000**



Riding Mill

**SOLD: £825,000**



Wilson Gardens  
Gosforth

**SOLD: £735,000**



Jesmond

**SOLD: £725,000**

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From Sanderson Young



UK Land Estates' 8th Avenue development designed by Faulkner Browns Architects

# STATE OF THE NORTH EAST LOGISTICS AND INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY MARKET

Partner at Knight Frank, Mark Proudlock, gives us an update:

## What's happening in the market?

The high level of demand for space that started during the early days of the Covid crisis is showing little sign of slowing. I can't remember the last time we experienced this level of enquiries and the subsequent lack of stock makes it difficult to identify properties to meet occupiers' requirements. This is the case across all property sizes and emphasises the pressing need for warehouse development across our region.

## The year so far

Occupier take-up of units over 50,000 sq. ft. across the first three quarters of 2021 was over 3.1 million sq. ft. which is well ahead of the average annual take up of 2.3 million sq ft recorded over the previous half decade.

Much of the increase has been driven by the uptick in online retail with internet sales as a percentage of total sales at around 25.5% Whilst lower than its lock-down peak of 37%, this remains a marked increase from pre-Covid levels (19.1%). This suggests that for many consumers changes in purchasing behaviour may be lasting.

We have also experienced take-up from manufacturing companies such as Strabag who Knight Frank advised on the acquisition of their 135,000 sq ft facility at Hartlepool Docks for the construction of tunnel segments for HS2, as well as a variety of companies seeking to manufacture on shore or hold additional stock to protect them from supply chain issues.

Stock levels are up by around 200,000 sq. ft. compared with the same period last year but any

well-located quality units returning to the market are being snapped up.

## Are new units being built?

The development pipeline can be slow to react but we are seeing speculative construction starting or about to start on a handful of sites across Tyne & Wear.

UK Land Estates are first on site developing a 45,000 sq. ft. high bay unit on Eighth Avenue, Team Valley in Gateshead with construction of a second unit of 36,000 sq ft on the adjacent site due to follow. There is already strong interest in both units showing the pent-up demand for quality new builds.

In Washington, planning has been approved on schemes for Turbine Business Park and the Legal & General-backed Hillthorn Business Park.

North of the Tyne, UK Land Estates are about to start construction of a 48,000 sq. ft. high bay unit at Intersect 19 on their Tyne Tunnel Estate in North Tyneside. The unit will be ready in Q2 next year.

## Is there land available for industrial developments?

There are a number of sites across the region allocated for industrial or logistics use at varying levels of readiness, in terms of planning or site preparation.

Teesside boasts a significant supply of development land with Teesworks, marketed as Europe's largest brownfield site and the UK's largest Freeport, contributing 4,500 acres. GE

Renewable Energy has committed to an 800,000 sq. ft. manufacturing facility at Teesworks to build wind turbine blades.

Land for manufacturing is available at the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP) to the north of Sunderland. However, it has seen a high level of take-up - most significantly with Envision AESC's recent announcement that construction will start on its electric battery Gigafactory next year.

On Tyneside, Port of Tyne has a number of development sites suitable for the delivery of build-to-suit units, ranging from four to 35 acres for units up to 750,000 sq. ft. while on the 235-acre former Blyth Power Station at Cambois, Northumberland, enabling works have started on the first phase of Britishvolt's electric car battery gigafactory. When complete in 2027 it is understood the factory will be over four million sq. ft. and according to Britishvolt, the largest single industrial investment in the North East since the arrival of Nissan.

## What's the answer to balancing out the supply and demand issue?

Viability and duration of the development process remain key barriers. Funding initiatives such as those managed by the North East LEP have successfully enabled development which otherwise wouldn't have happened. These interventions continue to play an important role in increasing stock.

In areas where rents have reached levels to make speculative development viable, a handful of schemes are either starting on site or are imminent. It is yet to be seen if the extent of development will satisfy demand but the factors driving the need for space seem unlikely to change and with a limited number of developments in the pipeline, developers should feel increasingly confident about committing to new schemes.

**Mark Proudlock is an industrial and logistics property agent at Knight Frank in Newcastle. Contact him on 0191 221 2211 or [mark.proudlock@knightfrank.com](mailto:mark.proudlock@knightfrank.com)**





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Damiano Rea, Director, Heaton Property

## THE MYSTIC WILL SEE YOU NOW

Welcome to the tent of Mystic Damiano, foreteller of the future. Well, so far as the local property market is concerned. If your interest lies in a tall handsome man/woman/as yet undecided, I believe there are apps out there!

**Fourteen years ago in 2007, bankers decided they were not making enough millions so, devised a plan to sell sub-prime mortgages to people in the USA. If these people ever had a job, it involved a lurid uniform with a name badge. When they defaulted on their repayments, the bankers threw the global economy under the bus.**

As a result, bankers had to order a slightly smaller yacht for next season and the rest of us were forlorn. At Heaton Property we were inundated with home buyers who had bought at the top of the market but were now on a slippery slope into negative equity.

Our advice was based upon an understanding of the property market and, in particular, of Heaton which was starting to pull its socks up and become the go-to hipster location we know today. Our advice was "Hunker down, hang on,

wait out. Interest rates are low. The market will bounce back".

It has taken fourteen years since the hubris of bankers dropped us all down the pan, and here we are. Mystic Damiano was right and the market is rather more sensible today.

The market today is looking rather sunnier than it did back in 2008, but has it returned to normal? Not really. There is still massive churn and a dire shortage of affordable new build properties. Rents have gone up, partly as the result of over regulation. This has attracted big, corporate investors who now see a residential lettings portfolio as an attractive long-term investment.

They are led by Lloyds Bank who intend to become the UK's largest private rental company within a decade. You do not need a crystal ball to determine this is probably a better plan

than investing in US sub-prime mortgages, so hopefully we will all be spared doom and penury this time round.

The downside of these newcomers entering the market is, they are snapping up affordable homes, often off-plan. So, the housing stock available for first time buyers is severely diminished. And it is not only first-time buyers who are being squeezed.

Homeowners stuck in negative equity for a decade are delighted to be cashing their chips to move up the housing ladder. Only to find the ladder is full as they cannot find a property in their price range and location. We have seen several chains collapse for this reason.

So, the new normal? Big corporate beasts with deep pockets stalk the land. The shortage of affordable housing continues to be an issue and gazumping has become the rule rather than the exception. Would I care to make a prediction for the next ten years? I will be delighted to. "You will meet a tall, handsome stranger".

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# WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR/DECADE MAKES... AT URBAN BASE

Following an incredible two years for the property market during what has been an unprecedented time for the world, our business has gone from strength to strength offering expert advice to our many clients and developers across the region.

Price rises hit highest level in nearly a decade



Source: DataLoft, ONS

Here's just a little insight in to a year at Urban BASE;

## January...foundations for the year

We quite literally got off to a very muddy start to the new year on our new sites under construction at Langdale Grange by Centaurea Homes and Hartley Gardens by Chapter Homes. Both of these new homes sites got off to a flying start in 2021 with strong demand from the discerning buyers looking for good quality homes offering excellent value for money. There was also a fabulous delivery of pink roses and champagne from a delighted Mrs Ireland who both sold and bought from our Durham team. We also relocated our headquarters back to the vibrant Quayside.

## February...love is in the air

The most amazing creative video work was created with Tiff Box Creative for a new development site and also a special Meet the Boss video for a Clive Owen Accountants event, with Take That providing the music 'Never Forget Where You Come From'. We just love David's attention to creativity in our property videos.

## March...it's Showtime

Along with the rest of the country we continued to clap for the NHS and share in celebrating their great work.

We also managed to sneak in a Covid-safe

appointment-only launch near South Shields at the fabulous Langdale Grange by Centaurea Homes with interiors by Inside Contracts. A stunning coastal themed show home was created as the main attraction in the village of Primrose. There was also a very special "Welcome Home" for the very first residents on to the stunning village development for Homes by Carlton in Thorpe Paddocks, who strictly speaking may have helped our own Sara Davies a little!

## April...spring clean

Kitchen Warning: If ever you think you love your home and already have a fabulous kitchen then don't visit the trade depot of Life Kitchens for Living in Aycliffe! Their show area is outstanding and makes you want to rip out every drawer and start again, and again, and again. So much choice – who knew there were so many different quartz work tops with so many door handles. Loved this place. We also had another muddy site visit with Believe Homes on their inaugural development site near Durham City, another exciting development ahead.... watch this space.

## May...light nights, and long days

With property rising in price at its fastest rate in fourteen years, with the north east reporting 13.7% in previous 12 months, a crazy time to take a deserved break and beautiful Beadnell was calling so working from the Beach House

was just what was needed. We also sponsored Chester Le Street United ladies team.

## June...Boris stamps it out

The end of Boris Johnson's stamp duty holiday for the majority was in sight... could not come soon enough for us agents and solicitors. A beautiful stone built farmhouse in Bingfield near Corbridge got caught up in the SDLT deadline and I am delighted to say the legal team at EMG got it over the line. The market was already strong towards the end of 2019 and by the time we entered 2021 it felt like the whole country was wanting to move. A further highlight of the month was the Provenance development team inviting us to assist with the final sales at the award winning Byzantine House in Jesmond, one of the finest residential schemes providing and exemplary conversion of sheer luxury homes.

## July...summer nights

This was a month of celebration; Following the success of Fulforth Gardens in Durham for Forric Developments we decided to hold a champagne garden party for all of the new residents who have created their very own special community and new life-long friendships have been made. We also celebrated the Euros Final frenzy and to keep the sporting theme I was given my first ever golf lesson at Ramside Hall which followed by my first ever set of golf clubs – yes I'm addicted!



### August...thank goodness it has 31 days

What a busy month; Being part of the Helix bid for the west end of Newcastle in partnership with Newcastle City and igloo Regeneration is a career highlight working with an exceptional team of professionals aiming to ensure to create a very special place to call home. Following an exciting week's experience at Ward Hadaway in Newcastle in 2019, and then the summer of '21 at our quayside office, our very own Alex Dale left us and went on to study Law at Leeds University – he knows the Urban doors are open should he chose to return.

### September...Cathedrals and Castles

Showtime again, this time the launch of Hartley Gardens by Chapter Homes in Gilesgate, Durham City, our third partnership development showcasing the stylish new four bedroom Bailey house type. Keeping the Durham theme, the Durham Business Group opened up their social engagement and welcomed the members to Beamish Museum for fish and chips and Raby Castle for a rather deliciously divine lunch by head chef Tom and team. Insider Property Awards announced Byzantine House as the best renovation and our client and friend Dave Meldrum celebrated 20 fabulous Years in business. We also had a very special staff wedding with our Homes By Carlton account Sales Manager, Cara, marrying Mr Morgan... wedding bells were ringing for Cara and Sam!

### October...let's ooze about the Ouseburn

We welcomed Rowan to the Newcastle Office as a University graduate for the next two years, learning the property ropes with speed and passion, enjoying the final stages of Steenberg's Yard in the cool area of Ouseburn, helping Gavin and the development team welcome the very first homeowners to their amazing new duplex homes – with the Tyne Bar and Brinkburn as their neighbours. And of course Deborah and the Quayside office helped celebrate the new owners of NUFC with an abundance of black and white joy.

### November...Fireworks and Brilliant Lumiere

Is it really almost the end of another incredible year at Urban BASE. It is hard to believe we are preparing to close another door on another year ...or two doors, or hundreds in our case. As we end the year this Queen of property has to thank her family at home and work for their outstanding support, sharing in the success to help take us in to 2022. And as we await the Chancellor's Autumn Statement and forthcoming Bank of England policy announcements there may be changes ahead to the UK property market. If you would like to discuss your property, please get in touch with the experts at Urban BASE.



# Urban BASE

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Jan Dale, Urban BASE  
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## WHERE HAVE WE GONE TO?

I had thought that by this time I would be writing about a post coronavirus world, but as I actually write this (on 20th October) we are threatened with the possibility of another lockdown which will in my view have a profound effect on people's mental health as well as the state of business.

**I know it is a very difficult balancing act and I know that some people are very fearful, and I know having had coronavirus back in August how rough it can be, but I am still dubious about too many restrictions.**

Anyway, I thought I would try and spread some more upbeat news about the world of property. Obviously there have been changes in the way we operate in each part of society since coronavirus has struck and some of these will be permanent. Not just because of any infection but just because people have discovered some "better ways of doing things". So I would like to look at three sectors in particular where I have a professional interest.

### Retail

Regular readers of Northern Insight and also my weekly spoutings on LinkedIn will know that I have been a champion of the High Street since restrictions from 2020 started to be lifted this year. I've been told by various people that the High Street is dead and that people don't want shops anymore and everything is moving online, but actually this isn't as true as people might make out. You may recall if you look at my column from August 2020 ("Where do we go from here?") that I commented that online sales grew between January and May 2020 from 19.1% of total sales to 33.4% of total sales. By January 2021 that had risen to 35.2% but by August 2021 it dropped back somewhat to 27.7%. It is clear that people do still like to buy from people and shopping is an experience for many.

### Offices

Another thing that people have said is that "people won't return to offices." Whereas in the public sector this does seem to be quite apparent – trying to get hold of a council officer from a local authority seems akin to finding Wally in a children's Where's Wally cartoon, but the private sector still seem to have an appetite for working back in offices, albeit in a different manner. Some people are working hybrid (see my June 2021 column) and some are working in offices but more spaced out. However I can report that there is a good take-up of quality offices nationally. What has become apparent is that like in the leisure sector (see below) people are increasingly falling into one of two camps of "cheap and cheerful" or

"quality and high ticket." On that basis September 2021 was the strongest month for national office take up in nearly three years and it seems that the trend is going to continue to the end of this year. What has been noted that the demand for offices has been high quality space that is well ventilated rather than the somewhat older stock where ventilation of them by air-conditioning may be limited (is air-conditioning a contributing factor to the spread of coronavirus as well as other illnesses and diseases?)

### Leisure

I spoke with a couple of my leisure clients and their views were interesting. One of my restaurant clients has been complaining for some time about the inability to attract good quality staff. It seems that it isn't just the money, there is still an idea that hospitality is a stopgap job for people rather than a career choice. As I said in a recent LinkedIn post, we may have to accept we will have to pay more for meals to pay hospitality staff more money so the career becomes a more attractive proposition?

I also spoke to a chain pub operator and their view was that one of the big issues has been knee jerk reactions by government, making forward planning difficult. Residential neighbours of pubs have been

used to the quiet, and in some cases are now complaining about the resurgence of pubs. I have to say in contra to this that Jesmond does seem a lot busier now than pre Covid, and I know that for residents this is proving to be an issue.

### So...

There you have it. Almost in the words of Mr. Spock to Captain James T Kirk, (although apparently never in the series) – "It's life Jim, but not as we knew it."

***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***

### Personal footnote

***In June last year I celebrated 40 years in the property profession. In August this year I celebrated 30 years of BIV BOWES' existence. Now, by the time you read this, I will have celebrated 60 years on the planet. I can't believe I'm that old!***





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# AN INTERVIEW WITH...

## CASSIE MOYSE

Head of marketing for Bradley Hall Chartered Surveyors and Estate Agents & Commercial Editor for Portfolio North.

### Did you always envisage your career in the marketing industry?

Actually, when I was really young, I wanted to be an actress. As I started to grow up, I took an interest in PR and completed a placement when I was 15. Following that, I completed my A Levels in Law, English Language, English Literature and went on to do a PR degree - followed by five years in a PR agency. When I started at Bradley Hall Chartered Surveyors and Estate Agents, I was given the opportunity to progress and develop the role into areas which would best support the business, so now I oversee all PR and media matters, outdoor and digital marketing opportunities, our website and our luxury property, business and lifestyle publication, Portfolio North.

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

My career in PR began in an in-house PR role, working for clients across education, healthcare, trade and technical, hospitality and more. Having a range of clients prepared me to understand how important research and asking the right questions was. We had to be efficient I went from writing press releases to running and creating a magazine and managing ours and our clients' reputations, and overseeing all of our digital strategy. We move with the market, and the environment is fast-paced and reactive.

### What has been your proudest achievement?

Hands down Portfolio North. When I took the publication on it was a brochure for Bradley Hall and was 60 pages long with a limited print run. It served a purpose and was great for what was needed at the time, but since then I've increased readership to 35,000, launched its own social media channels, and launched a website. I have



also worked with The Social Co. in creating some amazing video adverts to promote the magazine which were then shown on the big screens at STACK Newcastle and Seaburn, and in Blueline Taxi in-car media screens, which were seen by 320,000 people in one month. We've now partnered with Smart Outdoor, the UK's leading Out-Of-Home advertising screens which have 4.3m views per week across the North.

### What are the best aspects of your job?

I have the opportunity to meet so many truly inspirational people and professionals who are shaping the built environment which surrounds us. It also sounds a bit cliché, but I really do get to work with my best friends - we have a great group at Bradley Hall and it's an incredibly supportive environment to be in.

### What advice would you give someone starting in the marketing industry?

Ensure you are dedicated to always learning and developing your knowledge of your craft. Being a marketer isn't just about knowing about marketing, it's about having an in-depth understanding of the business you work in and of your clients.

### What are your future professional plans?

Portfolio North is also growing rapidly, and, with the launch of Bradley Hall's Leeds and Manchester offices, I am hoping to repeat this success in those areas.

I am looking to grow the team and to welcome new members who will support us with our PR, content, digital marketing including SEO, PPC, UX, website development and more - as well as advertising executives for Portfolio North.

### What do you do in your spare time?

I do enjoy going out and socialising - I am in my element with a glass of wine or prosecco in my hand.

I also love going to the gym, I've been going on an evening for years but have just started going before work at 6:30am. Getting it out of the way in the morning sets you up for the day, it also frees up your evenings which can often be busy when you work in marketing - there's plenty of events to attend.

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



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# HOW TO HEAT OUR HOUSES WITHOUT HARMING THE ENVIRONMENT

By Neil Turner, Howarth Litchfield



Back in July, I wrote in Northern Insight about a more environmental future. The recent issues with fuel shortages once again demonstrate the fragility of our dependency on carbon fuel sources. Central government figures regularly tell us about the need for a greener future but offer little practical guidance on how this is to be achieved.

**Most of us have central heating, which has increased from just 33% in 1970 to over 95% today.**

The majority of homes have gas fired systems, which produce carbon dioxide. This greenhouse gas is contributing to the problem of burning of fossil fuels and it is estimated that a quarter of the UK greenhouse emissions come from our homes.

We are told gas boilers will be outlawed in 2025, but this is only for new builds, so what about the vast majority of existing homes? There is only vague talk of a mid-2030s date and the need to swap for heat pumps or replacing them with hydrogen boilers. Currently, heat pumps are more expensive – a ground source heat pump system will cost around £10-15k while an air source heat pump is costing £5-8k for a typical British family house. If you contrast this to a gas boiler at only £2k, then the average family simply can't afford to swap, even if they want to do so.

We need to see real incentives and grants to encourage the switch away from gas-fired heating to electric heating systems. There have been various grants in recent years, but most are currently being phased out or have gone already such as FIT (Feed-in Tariff), RHI (Renewable Heat Incentive), green deals. So, where are the new plans?

We have an energy group at HL where we review

the latest information, technology, and legislation to enable us to advise clients. In one of the groups, is a young architect who is starting a family in his newly purchased 1960 home - refurbishing with improvements to insulation and decoration. He wants to change his boiler but simply can't afford to do so. Surely, we must be encouraging people when renovating homes to swap and not be penalised?

So, what about hydrogen? Well, there is research, and it would be wise to swap over the existing gas network, but that is a decade away and the costs will be even higher than the current gas network.

More pressing is the current increase in prices, which brings with it further issues - financial, political and social problems. People will struggle to pay the increases. Yet if we are to switch people from gas to electric heating then the current cost of electricity needs to come down and gas to go up. However, this will affect the poorest sectors of our society: so, the difficult problem exists of how to impose green surcharges.

Bizarrely the current surcharges are on electric bills with a 25% charge while gas only attracts a 6% surcharge. Surely this needs to be swapped around, but again, it will have an effect on society.

The recent tax increases on NI contributions and increasing fuel costs have political implications and I can see this slowing down the changes needed to domestic properties.



Neil Turner

I would advocate a series of incentives, ranging from grants like the RHI being extended past March 2022 and the dates for gas boilers need to be brought forward for replacement, creating cheaper heat pumps or at least grants to help install.

I would go further with low council tax bills for greener houses or even stamp duty variations on those with lower EPC ratings, all to encourage the investment that needs to be made. The analogy to cars is similar with different tax rates on cleaner electric cars over diesel cars.

The recent months have shown that green energy is a problem for today and not one we can ignore.

**Neil Turner, director, Howarth Litchfield can be contacted on 0191 384 9470 or email: [n.turner@hlpuk.com](mailto:n.turner@hlpuk.com) [www.howarthlitchfield.com](http://www.howarthlitchfield.com)**





L-R: (sitting) Terri Naylor, Peter Hodgson and Deborah Hodgson of DAKOTA with (standing) Philippa Clothier and Danielle Brown of Clothier Lacey & Co.

## INTERNATIONAL INTERIORS SPECIALIST SET TO BOOST ITS SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE WITH CLOTHIER LACEY

Newcastle-based DAKOTA House of Design, an international award-winning interior design specialist, has appointed marketing and PR consultancy, Clothier Lacey & Co (CLC) to devise and implement a marketing and PR strategy which includes social media brand building.

**With its extensive knowledge of leisure, hospitality and residential interiors, DAKOTA is renowned for its talented and highly experienced team which works at locations throughout the UK and Europe for established brands such as Malmaison, Genting, Aspers, Marco Pierre White and café chain, Baker & Spice in London.**

The team has also recently undertaken several high-end residential interiors projects in central London, and closer to home, was appointed to design the interior of Newcastle's latest 'super club', The Lofts in Newgate Street, which opened at the end of August.

Danielle Brown, CLC's head of digital, will be responsible for managing DAKOTA's social media presence.

She said: "After meeting the DAKOTA team, it was clear they have a great deal to shout about and some superb interior design flair to share. They recognised the need for a bolt-on marketing team to support them in doing this – a team, which operates with similar values, will work in partnership

with them and importantly, can hit the ground running. We are delighted they decided to work with us."

Commenting on the appointment of CLC, Terri Naylor, director at DAKOTA, said: "We have been incredibly busy recently and have completed some great projects which we are very proud of, but simply too busy to publicise ourselves. We recognised that we needed some professional help to capitalise on our current success, both here and in Europe. After speaking to a few other companies, we felt that CLC really understood our business and were able to respond to our brief quickly and effectively – and there is a great personality fit too, which is very important to us."

Established in 1999, CLC is one of the region's longest established PR and marketing companies. Its areas of specialist expertise span B2B, land and new homes and the education sector.

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

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





## SOCIAL MEDIA BOOST FOR DURHAM CITY CENTRE BUSINESSES

**Wearside based Riverside Marketing Solutions have been appointed by Durham BID to increase their social media presence and that of the city's businesses.**

The Business Improvement District (BID) gives local organisations the power to raise funds locally, to be spent locally, with the aim of improving their own business environment.

As part of the BID's assistance, they actively look to promote Durham's city centre businesses via their social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter.

They approached Riverside Marketing Solutions to provide a consistent and active approach to their social media presence and raise awareness of the fantastic businesses located in Durham's city centre.

Riverside Marketing Solutions, based in Washington, provide social media management, email campaigns, marketing strategies and business development support to sole traders and small businesses throughout the north east area and were delighted to be asked to assist.

Having launched the business in April 2020, Riverside Marketing's owner, Nicola Halse, commented, 'Social media has such an important role to play in any business, it brings greater exposure and awareness and for high street stores it can also bring a sense of personality and is a great way to reach a wide audience. Having worked for many small businesses in my career and now being able to support them via my own company, I know that it can bring massive benefits if a consistent approach is used.'

## NEW ACCOUNT FOR PEACHY DIGITAL

**Vale of Mowbray, the UK's number one pork pie brand, has awarded its PR and content marketing contract to Northallerton-based marketing and PR agency, Peachy Digital.**

Established in 1795 as the Vale of Mowbray brewery, Vale of Mowbray now bakes over 1.5 million pies per week. This vast operation will now be represented by Peachy Digital, whose expertise in food and beverages (spearheaded by Managing Director Lizzie Selby) is evidenced in the addition of the pie maker to their extensive portfolio.

The company also works with Lancashire-based Singleton & Co cheesemakers, rapidly growing managed IT service provider razorblue, and the UK's only distributor of Pal hygiene workwear, Caswells.

Vale of Mowbray's Marketing Manager, Jason Crowe, said: "We are delighted to work with Peachy Digital, considering the company's extensive knowledge of our industry. The content that the team is creating for us documents an exciting time for Vale of Mowbray, as we transition to a four-day working week in support of our 200-strong staff."

In response to the growing list of clients that Vale of Mowbray joins, Peachy Digital also welcomes two new employees, Account Executive Lindsay Fletcher, and Content Marketing Executive Chloe Turner.

Lizzie Selby, managing director at Peachy Digital said: "It is incredibly rewarding to watch the business grow, especially in response to our reputation as specialists in food and drink PR. Vale of Mowbray has been a household brand for me my entire life, so to be part of helping the company's continued success is a real honour."



## LEADING AGENCY TO OVERSEE METRO BANK'S DIGITAL PERFORMANCE STRATEGY



**Future-facing marketing agency Mediaworks has been appointed by Metro Bank to lead its digital media transformation, supporting the bank to achieve its growth targets.**

London-headquartered Metro Bank, which launched in 2010, is the first high street bank to open in the UK in over 100 years.

Mediaworks has been selected as the bank's digital partner to oversee its digital marketing transformation, further improving its online presence and establishing digital marketing as a key driver for revenue growth. The agency will play a key role in mapping out the new customer attribution model, and delivering digital personalisation across Metro Bank's consumer and business accounts, insurance and loans.

Danielle Lee, head of growth and digital marketing at Metro Bank, said: "We are thrilled to be working with Mediaworks to improve our new account acquisition plans and hit 2022 targets. Their expertise and knowledge stood out and most importantly, they have a clear understanding of our company's aims and goals."



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# IN CONVERSATION WITH...

## MITCHELL HARRISON

Managing Director, Wriggle Marketing

Sat in the new offices of Wriggle Marketing, a converted property in the heart of Newcastle's Gosforth, Mitchell Harrison takes time out of his busy day to talk to us about how the digital space has changed in the last five years, and why every MD doesn't have to start the day at 4:30am to be successful.



Mitchell Harrison

A local North-East lad, his interest in technology and 'how things work', inspired Mitchell to pursue a degree in computing at the University of Sunderland. "Digital marketing is constantly developing and changing. The way it works, the algorithms for SEO and social media platforms change almost daily making the sector fast-paced and exciting to be a part of," Mitchell explains.

Starting with Wriggle Marketing in 2017, Mitchell worked his way up and has recently been promoted to MD. He notes seeing the business grow and working with clients from a wide range of backgrounds as some of the highlights of his time at Wriggle so far. Unlike the common perception of a hard-working MD, Mitchell

doesn't start the day at 4:30am with a cold shower and bowl of rabbit food. "I am not an early riser at all, more of a night owl so you will not see me in the office before 9:30am, but the nature of a digital agency means that this fits well for the clients we work with and we can be more flexible."

The digital landscape has changed for everyone in the last five years, with social media applications expanding and businesses moving to an 'always on' approach to marketing. From an industry perspective, Mitchell says; "The SEO side of marketing has changed massively. Previously you had a lot of people out there claiming they could get you listed on the first page of a Google search with limited experience hiding behind irrelevant metrics. However, now people are more onboard with digital marketing and understand the craftsmanship that goes into getting an ROI."

"In the past 18 months, we have seen a surge in companies of all sizes wanting to become more digitally active. We have seen different generations using social media in different ways and brands utilising digital channels that they have never explored before, but now know they should."

And for those looking to get into a career in digital marketing, Mitchell has some tips; "Hands-on experience is key. Whether you are on a digital apprenticeship or a university course, it will prove invaluable if you can support a small local business with its digital marketing. You will be able to learn in the real world and build your portfolio. Alongside this, make sure you understand the digital marketplace by signing up to industry newsletters and blogs. The key to success in digital marketing is staying abreast of any new launches, changes, and updates, it is what makes the industry so exciting."

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





L-R Mitchell Harrison, MD Wriggle Marketing and Nick Gianfreda, CEO Wriggle Marketing







# MARKETING AND MEDIA MATTERS

In the latest of our popular series of features we talk to...

## GREG MILES

Founder & MD, BUMBL

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

When I was very little I wanted to be a professional footballer, but when that dream quickly evaporated I did spend a lot of time on the home computer when it was still novel, and creative writing was a strong suit, so combining technology and communications has felt natural.

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

I launched Bumbl within a year of graduating university, so I guess I was straight into the deep end building from the ground up. I didn't have anything to invest other than my time, so the first few years were all about learning and developing my knowledge. I was learning business fundamentals, finance, hiring, sales, as well as honing my creative and marketing skills, building my own website... I had to do it all but that gave me a breadth of knowledge that has helped me build a team of people better than me in each area, with confidence.

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

Building the initial momentum and remaining persistent when it felt like the tide was against me was tough. And of course the last 18 months or so have been a whirlwind, but we've learnt a lot and other challenges will now feel smaller in comparison, so there's that at least!

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

There are many, but the founding team at Social Chain have been an inspiration. Steven Bartlett, Dom McGregor and co have done things their own way and achieved amazing things in such a short space of time, at such a young age. While their business is a real unicorn, that kind of success story always broadens my perspective of what's possible.

### **How did you adapt your business during the coronavirus crisis and support clients?**

We had to adapt the type of businesses we worked with to some extent, helping some digitise their brands so they could operate exclusively online. The switch from office-based work to remote was also interesting, and like many businesses we've learnt how to do remote work effectively. We've adopted some of those ideas permanently with a hybrid model that involves both office and remote work, as we believe both have their benefits in our industry.

### **What is your greatest strength?**

Being calm under pressure is a big one that has served me well, but I'd probably say my discipline is my biggest strength. Everything else follows on from that.

### **What is your biggest weakness?**

I sometimes struggle to switch off which can lead to burnout if I'm not conscious about separating my work from my personal life. Sometimes someone will be talking to me and I'll realise I've not been listening properly because I'm thinking about some work challenge or problem. I'm actively working on it and getting better at it, but haven't fully cracked it yet.

### **What has been your proudest achievement?**

I think just the fact Bumbl started out with such humble beginnings but has now been trusted by some amazing brands like Tommee Tippee, Lookers, Namco and even Nike, who we collaborated with on a project for Footy.com. Making a real difference to smaller, independent businesses never gets old either.

### **What are your remaining career aspirations?**

One of my biggest goals, which admittedly is hard to quantify, is to do my part to help 'the North' rival London in terms of being a great place to work. There's still a perception that for young people to find the very best jobs they have to move to London, but that is starting to change and there's some amazing companies emerging in Newcastle and other northern cities. Being a part of that shift is exciting.

### **How do you see your industry evolving in the next 10 years?**

The metaverse has piqued my interest and could be the next big thing that businesses leverage to reach consumers. It all sounds very sci-fi but the blurring of real-world and digital experiences is already happening, such as in the video game Fortnite where players can buy Balenciaga clothing for their in-game characters, and likewise can buy Fortnite themed clothing in the real-world at Balenciaga stores. But truthfully it's hard to predict how things will look in two years, nevermind 10!

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

“

...Making a real difference to smaller, independent businesses never gets old...

”

# 2022 MARKETING STRATEGY: ONE TACTIC YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO IGNORE

Refine and shine. Purpose takes center stage.

It's true, the COVID-19 pandemic brought with it some unexpected consumer behaviour. Some of which, we're glad to see the back of (who knew loo roll would one day become such a precious commodity) but there are some consumer behaviours and expectations, which are here to stay.

According to a recent Kantar 'Global Business Compass' survey of nearly 4,500 business leaders across the world, 90% expect consumer behaviour established during the pandemic to persist post-crisis.

This includes the increasing resonance of consumers with ethical, sustainable and purpose-driven brands. As part of a Kantar COVID-19 Barometer, people were asked how the pandemic has affected how they think and behave. 21% said the pandemic had led them to more environmentally friendly habits; 16% said they focus more on environmental initiatives, and 12% said they are now less selfish. 14% said they attribute more value to honest brands, whilst 20% of people aged 18 to 34 feel that brands should 'guide the change' (play an active role in making the world a better place).

This all sounds rosy, but where does this leave you as a business owner or leader, with increasing commercial demands and 2022 strategic pressures?

The answer is, adopt a purpose-led marketing strategy and keep bringing your 'why' back to this.

Your purpose should be centered around your audience, what challenge are you solving? What are their values? Why do they have these values?



Jennifer Anderson

How will your product or service help them in addressing the challenge and in meeting their values?

It all sounds very simple, but often the simplest of concepts can be overlooked during times of commercial strain, with temptation leading to a product or price-led message. Don't give in to this temptation. According to Accenture, "reimagined consumers will abandon brands that don't support their new values—and pay more to those that do." To achieve long-term brand loyalty, slashed prices and flash sales are no longer enough, on their own, to guarantee consumer buy-in.

Accenture has identified the 'Rising Five,' - the new motivations driving consumers' choice rationale;

Service and personal care (14%), health and safety (12%), trust and reputation (12%), ease and convenience (11%) and product origin (10%). Of course, quality (21%) and price (19%) still play an influential role, but the 'rising five' cannot be excluded and in-fact should form the basis of the purpose-led marketing strategy.

**Health and safety;** Consumers are asking: Are you keeping me and my neighbors safe? What about your employees?

**Service and personal care;** Do you remember me? Are you making my experience with your brand as personal as it can be? Are you there for me when I need you?

**Ease and convenience;** Are you meeting me where I am, in the digital world, the physical world, and through a blend of the two? And are you able to deliver what I need, when I need it, across all channels?

**Product origin;** What about the environment, and societal and corporate responsibility? Can you help me make sustainable choices? Can you help me support my local community?

**Trust and reputation;** Can I trust you to do the right thing for me and not just for your business? Can I trust you to be who you say you are and stand for the things you say you stand for?

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The logo for 'jam prints and marketing' features the word 'jam' in red with a red paw print above the 'j', 'prints' in white with a white paw print above the 'i', and 'and marketing' in smaller white text below 'prints'.



L-R: Elisa Edmondson, Paul Richards, Adam Dawson, Ben Chick, Rachael Blackburn, Dylan Knights, Jason Knights

Photo Credit: The Bigger Picture Agency

## NEW STAFF HAVE DESIGNS ON NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Brand creative agency celebrates 15 years by recruiting new staff for the future.

**A North East brand creative agency that works with some of the world's largest character licensing brands has expanded due to an exponential increase in workload and a desire to futureproof the company by investing in young up and coming talent.**

Blue Kangaroo have taken on five new graduates to help manage the acquisition of major new contract wins from existing clients in the toy, entertainment, and licensing sectors. The Gateshead based company have expanded its teams in the digital and retail sectors due to an unprecedented demand for its services.

Jason Knights, Managing Director of Blue Kangaroo is also a Northern Powerhouse Export Champion for the Department of Industry and Trade, and he has seen his business export around 80% of their services to EMEA, LATAM, APAC as well as NAD. Despite his extensive links with the rest of the world, Jason still retains a passion for the area that adopted him after he left the army almost thirty years ago.

"I'm fiercely proud of the North East and the incredible skills we have here which is why we have invested heavily in employing locally based people to help take Blue Kangaroo onto the next stage of our journey," he said.

Indeed, the journey so far has been far from uneventful. Now celebrating their fifteenth birthday, the company specialises in brand strategy, design, digital and retail. They have generated growth particularly in the United States where they work with brands including Lucas Film, The Walt Disney Company, NBC Universal Studios, Mattel, Tomy, Warner Bros as well as many others. Expansion into Europe has also recently occurred and new opportunities are constantly being developed by the firm.

The five new members of the team are junior designers Rachael Blackburn, Adam Dawson, and Elisa Edmondson while Dylan Knights and Ben Chick take on the roles of creative coordinators.

"Our recruitment process was very thorough, and

I'm satisfied that we have the very best young people with the right skills, mindset and drive to take us to where we need to be.

In our business we must deliver excellence every time as there are no second chances when you are managing a client base like ours," added Jason.

Junior designer/Illustrator Elisa Edmondson (24) had freshly graduated from Newcastle College and was actively looking for a job in the design industry when she applied to Blue Kangaroo. Originally from Paris, Elisa is looking forward to making her mark in the design industry.

"Blue Kangaroo took a chance on me and offered me a job despite being a young graduate. Not only do I get to work on exciting projects but with their help I am also learning more about the industry and becoming a better designer. I'm now working with brands that are recognisable everywhere on the planet and that fact is one of the reasons why I applied for the role."

Jason is placing a lot of faith in his new team and is already looking further ahead to expand the company even further.

"We've grown incredibly in the last fifteen years and a lot of that is to do with the skills that the team have and the way that we work with our partner clients. I'm confident that our new team members will carry on the great tradition we have of delivering excellence and that for the next fifteen years and beyond our clients will continue to use the Gateshead based brand creative agency with a world-wide customer footprint," he said.







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# ...THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE TELLY BUSINESS...

November 21st is International Television Day - Highlights PR's Keith Newman asked some of his RADAR members to tell us if their business was a TV programme, what would it be and why?



Our autumn programmes are in full swing with our outdoor and youth leadership programmes in a number of schools across the region. Eating bugs and cooking up bushcraft feasts is all in a day's work for us at present! So it would have to be I'm a celebrity get me out of here!

We have also just relaunched our trading arm "Off The Grid - Tree Services" on Google and Yell. If you need trees cut back tree or removed, give us a call for a competitive quote with all profits going back into the business to support vulnerable local young people.

**Paul Kirkpatrick**  
[www.offthegrid-adventures.co.uk](http://www.offthegrid-adventures.co.uk)



"An obvious one for what I do would be "Shrink Rap" which Pamela Stephenson hosted. She had conversations with celebrities or the radio programme "In the Psychiatrists Chair." I hasten to add I'm not a psychiatrist - though I am a trained hypnotherapist, relationship counsellor and coach.

**Anne Morrison, Therapist and Coach**  
[www.annemorrison.co.uk](http://www.annemorrison.co.uk)



My business is all about getting the very best from teams as well as developing self confidence amongst individuals. So, if my business was a TV show it would have to be SAS Who Dares Wins Survival. However, my methods are a lot more friendly than those shown on TV and don't involve jumping head first off cliffs.

**Lorna Watkinson**  
[www.vibrant-thinking.com](http://www.vibrant-thinking.com)



My choice for the Mint Business Club would be USA police drama SWAT.

It's an elite task force charged with putting the worst wrongs to right.

There's intrigue, personal challenges, a need to believe in your own strengths and judgement and in the end, the good guys win!

Just like the self-employed community, eh?

**Nicola Jayne Little Mint Business Club**  
[www.mintbusinessclub.co.uk](http://www.mintbusinessclub.co.uk)



If my business was a TV show it would need to be a bit of a hybrid of a history documentary and a great food/drink show (concentrating on the drinks side of course).

We have so much heritage behind our House of Ruhr brand both personally and distillery wise and I never get bored of telling the tales.

The distillery has provable history dating back to the mid 1700s and even has a wiki page. (Distillery Eicker & Callen)

**Bryn Jones**  
[www.houseofruhr.co.uk](http://www.houseofruhr.co.uk)



"If my book was a TV show, it would be The Man in the High Castle...

It starts off as normal, and everything is fine and enjoyable. Then, something happens, and you realise that things just aren't quite right, but you can't put your finger on the problem. As time passes, life gets more threatening and stranger. And one day you wake up and realise that this isn't high drama, but you're living in a very frightening world, that you are trapped in.

**Rie Pearson Author -**  
[bekind.noexcuses@gmail.com](mailto:bekind.noexcuses@gmail.com)





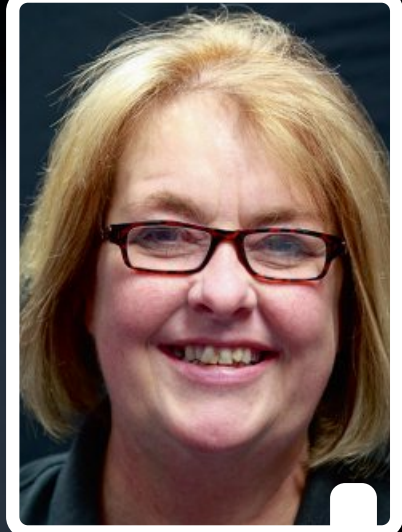
My photography business would be 'This is your life' a big book full of photos that track your amazing family's journey as you grow together. Those who are new, big events and milestones, generations, and of course the hilarious out takes. Because in times of illness or loss the photos are precious memories and become so important and treasured.

*Tina Stobbs Captured Forever*  
[www.capturedforeverbyts.co.uk](http://www.capturedforeverbyts.co.uk)



"I would say that we are most like "The Office" (the US version) as we can have a laugh, get ourselves into some amazing and comical situations but always end up delivering our services and products to a high level at the end of the day whilst being positive and approachable."

*Daniel Wilkinson*  
[www.thedwmedia.co.uk](http://www.thedwmedia.co.uk)



As Leading Link likes to push the boundaries of what is achievable, we have decided we couldn't possibly be just one programme, we would have to be a channel something along the lines of the Discovery Channel. This offers the viewers a range of opportunities, insights, and interactive and memorable experiences in a range of settings where there is something on offer for all. A bit like what we offer to our young people.

*Lyn Horton CEO Leading Link.*  
[www.leadinglink.co.uk](http://www.leadinglink.co.uk)

**Last month our RADAR members appeared on BBC TV, BBC Radio, Local TV and many magazines and newspapers.**  
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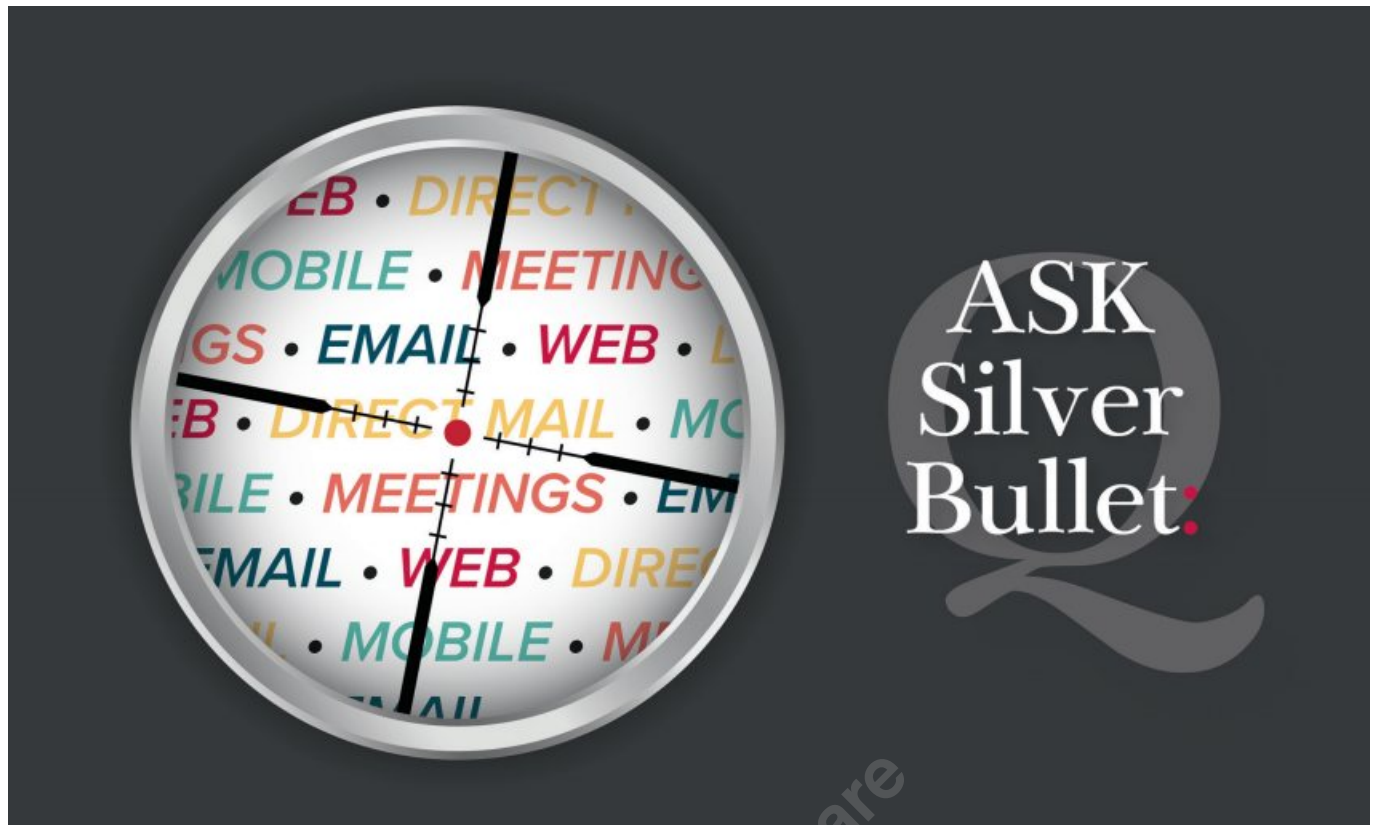




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## WHAT IS ACCOUNT BASED MARKETING?

Well, for once, it's not the latest fad in marketing despite what some young marketers, and especially digital marketers, might claim - it's simply new terminology for something that many have practiced for years.

**In essence, Account Based Marketing (ABM) is an alternative to mass, generic B2B marketing and a collaboration between sales and marketing departments to identify a list of key accounts and personalise marketing messages to the decision-makers within these organisations via specific channels with the results being more easily quantified to establish the ROI or Return on Investment.**

Let's say, for example, your company has 100 or so accounts or customers, but you can identify the 10 highest value of these - different companies use different criteria here but all will include an indicator of profit or potential profit. Other factors may include revenue, speed of remittance, likelihood of repeat purchase, power as an influencer or simply how much you enjoy, or don't, working with them.

Having identified these 10 key accounts, which may be actual or potential, you research how the accounts are structured, who and how decisions are made and what influences these people. You then address the business challenges they face with personalised and targeted content in a channel you know they are receptive to and regularly use - this may be direct mail, web, mobile, personal meetings or email but the message, whilst generic in nature about your own company, is highly specific to address the needs and challenges of your target - these may include cost, quality, lead time, reliability or other factors you have pre-identified.

Having initiated the campaign, you then carefully analyse and quantify the results, tweaking future campaigns to address the weaknesses and move on to the next set of clients or potential clients.

We have used this approach for many years as a part of, and it's important to emphasise 'part of', our own marketing, targeting and acquiring specialised engineering clients, particularly in the offshore and Hazardous Area sectors where we have unique experience. By attending trade shows (obviously not over the last two years...) and being well known within the main trade media, we have grown our reputation in this niche market, but not to the detriment of other clients within different trade sectors, whether this be the built environment, education, health or professional services.

So what's the downside? I would suggest that ABM can be very effective but should be used only as part of an organisation's overall marketing, rather than relying solely on it. Not all accounts will return a better performance from relatively expensive 'hand-crafted' campaigns whilst many will also share common challenges which can be addressed generically and far more cost-effectively. Developing 10 different messages for your 10 key accounts will probably take far longer and cost more than two or three messages for the 100 accounts?

Similarly, it may be just as effective to target ALL customers and most B2B brands grow by targeting mass clients rather than concentrating on

individual targets. Whilst we all like 'heavy hitters', they're rare beasts and sometimes a higher number of light buyers are just as profitable? OK, it's a B2C example, but the giant Coca-Cola organisation, for example, reports that half of their UK customers only buy one or two cans per year...

Like most marketing, I'd suggest there is no right or wrong solution or strategy to individual organisations' challenges. People often ask where the name Silver Bullet came from and whilst the main influence (apart from Bob Seger obviously...) was the idea of winning, unbeatable strategies, it was also based on our idea of having a very specific 'sniper's' approach to marketing. The norm back in the 1990's, when we began trading, was far more of a 'shotgun' or one-size creative fitting all accounts in all sectors which we rejected for individualised approaches.

With ABM you therefore have the option of a sniper's rifle but that doesn't mean you should abandon the shotgun, to continue the bellicose analogy - they work best, and kill more vampires, when used together.

***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***

## CALLING ALL LEADERS

Astute.Work's managing director, management and PR consultant Sarah Waddington CBE, has just been appointed by the IoD to lead its North East (North) branch. Here she chats about the role of the business membership organisation and issues a rallying cry to prospective members.

**When you think about business membership organisations, the Institute of Directors (IoD), is certainly one of the first to come to mind.**

Founded in 1903, the IoD obtained a Royal Charter in 1906 and its role is to provide an effective voice and represent the interests of its members to key opinion-formers at the highest levels.

It has a certified qualification for directors – Chartered Director – and its membership includes directors from across the business spectrum – from media, manufacturing and professional services to the public and voluntary sectors. Members include CEOs of large corporations as well as entrepreneurial directors of start-up companies.

Which is why it's such a privilege to take up the role of branch chair for the IoD in the North East (North).

I'm taking the reins from outgoing chair Ammar Mirza CBE, whose focus on inclusivity and professionalism remains an important one. I know my fellow members will join me in thanking him and vice-chair Natalia Blagburn as they step down to concentrate on other things. Natalia's Woman On Board events offered a timely and popular addition to the calendar.

The work of the IoD and my own business are well aligned. At my management and PR company Astute.Work, much of our efforts relate to helping organisations build social capital by articulating their purpose and working with their stakeholders and communities to solve joint challenges. I'm a firm believer that businesses, individuals and networks can collaborate to solve some of society's biggest issues. This fits nicely with the IoD's agenda that Better Directors Build A Better World.

And this will be our guiding mantra as we look ahead to the coming year and plan activities that help directors be the best they can be and appeal to the widest demographic.



Sarah Waddington CBE

Diversity and inclusion is critical for every successful organisation and is one area in which I am keen to make a real difference for the IoD.

Looking at the members in this area, less than 17% are female and fewer still are black, Asian and ethnic minority colleagues. I don't have the data to say whether we have any LGBTQ+ colleagues but I'm keen for it to be known that our branch is a place where everyone is welcome. Together we can build on this and grow the fold so no one feels like the odd one out.

My fellow branch colleagues and I are also very open to new ideas - thoughts about any different types of events and content you'd like to see will be gratefully received.

So, my call to action is this: if you're a member, please look at your network and introduce anyone you think might benefit from being part of a group of dynamic and friendly directors all interested in making connections, professional development and influencing at the highest levels. If you're a director who hasn't yet got involved

but would like to know more (with no strings attached), please reach out and drop me a line or give me a call.

And finally, if you'd like to volunteer alongside me and a lovely group of people, our branch is looking for ambassadors. We would particularly welcome someone from the world of education and skills to help us engage with academia and learners, a representative from the digital and creative industries and a director with expertise in climate change and sustainability.

I'm looking forward to getting started and to working with my counterpart Karl Pemberton down in the south to make IoD membership as meaningful as it can be here in the region.

**To find out more and to find our latest events programme, please check out [www.iod.com/events-community/regions/yorkshire-north-east](http://www.iod.com/events-community/regions/yorkshire-north-east).**

**To get in touch directly with me, please visit [www.astute.work](http://www.astute.work)**





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# FUTURE-PROOFING THE PLANET WITH RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP, EDUCATION, AND ACTION

Veronica Swindale, MD of nesma, meets up this month with Dr Helen Goworek, Associate Professor in Marketing and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead for Durham University Business School.



Dr Helen Goworek

**Helen is involved in the United Nations' Principles of Responsible Management Education team. She has been working on a programme of Carbon Literacy training which companies in the region can benefit from to learn how to shore up our resources for the longer future of our planet.**

Thank you for joining me today, Helen! Every time you and I speak, we get more animated about what is happening around us and what we can do to spread the word. Those in the know would think that sustainability is about what keeps my business going, but the current context has much more significance.

## Would you like to explain?

There are three main aspects of sustainability: social, environmental, and financial, referred to as 'People, Planet, Profit'. John Elkington called this the Triple Bottom Line, stressing that all three are essential to business. I still think people often jump to the conclusion that sustainability only means financial turnover. However, companies won't be financially sustainable unless society and the planet are sustainable, so we must consider these aspects too.

## So, what can we do as individuals and as companies to take meaningful steps in making our planet more sustainable?

Individuals and companies need to work together towards improving environmental sustainability. It's an iterative process, with activists or informed consumers requesting new products or eliminating unsustainable products or processes and companies responding to their requests whilst they actively look for more sustainable products to sell. In the past, I've heard retailers question whether there's any certain demand for more sustainable products, but sometimes they must take a risk in offering those products to create demand.

We tend to focus more on where products originate and how far they've travelled from the manufacturer. Although this is an important issue, the type of materials and how we look after and maintain them as consumers and then dispose of them can also negatively impact the planet.

Services can also become more sustainable by regularly reviewing the processes involved. You can quickly assess whether you can save energy and other resources instead of automatically sticking to the traditional way the service has been delivered. This review can potentially lead to cost savings which will help compensate for the fact that other aspects of behaving more sustainably will unavoidably incur extra expense.

The additional costs associated with being more sustainable for businesses and consumers can be tricky at a time of crisis, of course. Still, if we operate more sustainably voluntarily now, we may avoid having sustainable behaviour imposed on us by legislation further down the line. Many businesses are already taking the

lead, reviewing, and revising their sustainability impacts in connection with their Corporate Social Responsibility aims.

## I know you have done a lot of research into fashion marketing. Where does sustainability come into play here?

Sustainability comes into play in virtually every element of the fashion market, as it does in most other sectors. Some of the key aspects of sustainability to be considered are producing garments that use fewer resources, made from recycled, recyclable, or repurposed materials, which last longer and are disposed of responsibly. Clothing is a major industry and, therefore, a significant polluter, with vast room for improvement in environmental and social aspects.

## Which other industries have a similar 'use it once' culture?

Disposability is rife, with many items, such as electronic devices, becoming much more like fashion products in recent years, in that they're examples of conspicuous consumption, and they can become almost obsolete well before they stop functioning. Many items go to landfills, using up finite space and contributing further to greenhouse gases.

Services can also aim to be more sustainable by assessing and reducing their energy consumption. Certain companies have led the way in showing us that a high level of sustainability is viable in business. For example, People Tree sells clothes online (both Fair Trade and organic) and shares information about their suppliers openly and Fairphone produces mobiles made of recycled materials and with replaceable parts.





**We are used to seeing quality standards demanded through the supply chain – is it likely that the larger companies will expect demonstrated Carbon Literacy to be a requirement of their suppliers?**

Businesses must be aware of Carbon Literacy to give them a fuller understanding of the impact of their actions on climate change. One way we can do this is to teach Carbon Literacy Training (CLT) courses, which I've contributed to in a group led by Professor Petra Molthan-Hill from Nottingham Trent University. Over the last year, we've taught CLT to Universities and businesses around the world via Zoom at minimal cost. The people we train can then become trainers themselves if they take a brief assessment to cascade the information within organisations and their suppliers, large or small. We're offering this at Durham University soon, and you will get an invite to participate, Veronica.

**What are the consequences and timescales if we don't do anything soon?**

We're experiencing climate change around us already, having just lived through the hottest decade on record. We have had the highest average temperatures in history on a global scale in the last seven years according to NASA. We regularly see extreme weather events around the world, such as wildfires and flooding. We can expect this situation to accelerate if we don't work collaboratively without waiting for the enforcement of this action.

I realise that businesses will already be aware that this is the case. Understandably they are worried about the financial consequences of being more sustainable, especially after the complex two years we have just had. I believe we need strong government policies to offer financial support, incentives, and practical advice to encourage organisations to improve their sustainability in practice.

All businesses will have the opportunity to get involved in dedicated Carbon Literacy training which can qualify them to train their staff. These sessions will be announced very soon.

*For more information take a look at [carbonliteracy.com](https://carbonliteracy.com) and [unprmeclimate.org/carbon-literacy](https://unprmeclimate.org/carbon-literacy)*

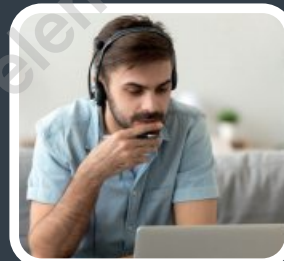
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# NORTHUMBERLAND MENTAL HEALTH CHARITY HELPS TO RAISE FOREST SCHOOL FROM THE ASHES



Headteacher at NCEA Warkworth Primary School, Laura Ritson, with Kevin Alexander and service users from Blyth Star Enterprises' woodwork department.

A mental health charity has risen to the challenge of bringing a new forest school to life for a group of pupils in Northumberland.

**Staff and service users from Blyth Star Enterprises have worked tirelessly to transform part of the playing field at NCEA Warkworth Primary School into a woodland wonderland after a mindless act of vandalism left them without one for the start of the school year.**

Having used a forest school site located around a mile from the school for a number of years to teach children about the natural world in an environment which also benefits their mental health and wellbeing, staff at Warkworth Primary were devastated to find that it had been destroyed

by vandals during the coronavirus lockdown.

Following an appeal on social media, the community rallied to support the school, which is how Blyth Star Enterprises came to be involved.

Kevin Alexander, Supervisor at Blyth Star Enterprises' woodwork department, explained:

"We were deeply saddened by what had occurred at Warkworth Primary's forest school site and we wanted to do something to help put things right for the children.

"This past 18 months has been really tough on our young people, going in and out of lockdown and being unable to see their friends and family and just be normal kids. Playing outside, building dens and things is all part of that, so we were delighted to be able to support with the construction of the new forest school within the school grounds."

Laura Ritson, Headteacher at NCEA Warkworth

Primary School, commented: "We have been absolutely blown away by the enthusiasm, creativity and determination shown by Blyth Star Enterprises toward our forest school project. Every time Kevin and the team came to site, they had a new idea about how we could make the forest school even more magical for the children.

"Promoting positive mental health and wellbeing is central to everything that we do at Warkworth Primary which made working with Blyth Star Enterprises all the more special, knowing that our project was helping to provide real work experience for people living with lifelong mental health conditions and learning disabilities. We really can't thank them enough for all of their hard work."

**For more information about Blyth Star Enterprises, visit [www.blythstar.org.uk](http://www.blythstar.org.uk)**

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## NEW TEAM AT LEADING LINK

Bedlington based charity Leading Link have strengthened their team with the appointment of two new members of staff.

The charity which works with schools and the community across Northumberland has helped thousands of young people by supporting them to identify and achieve their aspirations. They have recently organised the Blyth Carnival and Blyth and Bedlington Summer Camp during the school holidays.

Leading Link are an established youth provider in the community and together with like-minded pioneering partners they have extensive experience of delivering high quality interventions where they are needed especially targeted at youth loneliness.

Over the past years the charity has established sustainable relationships across the public, private and voluntary sector creating the potential for every young person, irrespective of why they walk through the doors to progress on their chosen pathway.

To help them to carry on their pioneering work, new members of staff were needed to join the exiting team of Lyn Horton and Chris Johnson through



their partners Northumberland Communities Together, North East Child Poverty Trust and RISE.

The successful candidates were Matthew Cooper and Lyndsey Smyth. Lyn Horton, CEO of Leading Link said: "We are delighted at the two new appointments. Both Matty and Lyndsey have the right skills, knowledge and attitude to help many more young people achieve their goals and desires."



## TRAINEE WELDERS HEAD TO CATERPILLAR

On-site recruitment agency Randstad's effective partnership with Hartlepool College of Further Education is aiming to deliver more high-quality welders to Caterpillar UK.

The joined-up thinking of the three organisations is helping to close the skills gaps, with another ten trainees joining an existing batch of 20 already on the programme this month.

Learners, recruited by Randstad, are on a ten-week course at Hartlepool College where welding bays have been specifically tailored to meet

Caterpillar's exceptional standards.

After those initial ten weeks, learners will be on Caterpillar's Peterlee site as a trainee for one year until they become fully qualified. Provided they reach the standards expected during that time, it is expected they will stay at Caterpillar beyond that.

Andrew Thursfield, Randstad's regional director, said: "We are responsible for supporting and managing the trainees to help them towards a potential career for life.

"The success of this course has resulted in over 70% of our previous trainees still working with Caterpillar today. Many have progressed into more senior roles such as team leaders and section managers. We are so excited to work with Caterpillar to start the welding programme up again after Covid put a temporary stop on it.

"We're working with Hartlepool College who have exceptional training and facilities for people who don't have any experience in welding.

"There is a massive shortage of welders in the region and this programme will have a big impact on reducing the skills gap whilst giving jobs to local people.

"The College has made the facility ready to meet Caterpillar standards and qualities."

## WOMEN BUSINESS LEADERS LEAVE STUDENTS BEAMING

Women from some of Sunderland's leading employers joined forces last month, to inspire the next generation of talent to consider careers in business.

Staff from Knight Frank, Ocado, Penshaw View and Sunderland City Council hosted a Q&A session with a class of female students from Thornhill Academy, giving them an insight into their roles and the challenges they've faced when climbing the career ladder.

The event was hosted by The Girls' Network, a not-for-profit organisation which aims to inspire and empower girls aged 14 to 19 by connecting them to a mentor and a network of professional female role models.

Each of the students participate in the initiative inside and outside of school and college hours and receive their own mentor, providing them with one-to-one support and advice as they plan for their future careers and smash through any glass ceilings above them.

Stacey Wagstaff, Senior Network Manager at The Girls' Network, said: "The



network empowers and inspires young girls in the region by providing them with professional female role models who they can relate to and talk to about their future, especially post-covid.

"Our message is very much that the future isn't cancelled, and our mentors help drive home that message by helping them focus on their futures and help give them the confidence to embrace the opportunities that come their way."

She added: "To have the women from Ocado, Knight Frank, Penshaw View and Sunderland City Council join us for the event at The Beam was fantastic and the girls absolutely loved it."



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# CHOOSING A SCHOOL THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOUR CHILD

By Tony Jackson, Headmaster at 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 at the very heart of our young people. All these attributes are delivered most effectively through



Tony Jackson

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.

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# AN EDUCATION FOR ALL

By Kieran McLaughlin,  
Headteacher, Durham School.

One of the Labour party's more familiar zombie policies of recent years has been their various statements on independent education, and so it was no surprise when, at the Labour Party conference, Sir Keir Starmer resurrected Jeremy Corbyn's manifesto promise to put VAT on private school fees and remove the business rates relief which applies to many schools.

Aside from the fact that those at the top of the Labour Party are often more against independent education when it applies to other people's children rather than their own – Dianne Abbott and Shami Chakrabarti spring to mind – or indeed that many of them, including both of the leaders above are products of private schools, the policy itself was roundly rejected by voters at the last election and regular surveys show that over half of parents would send their children to a private school if they could afford to do so.

However, it's not hard to see why the policy keeps coming back. On the face of it, it is a simple Robin Hood tactic: taxing the immensely rich schools, or the equally rich parents who use them, will generate billions of pounds for the treasury which can be used to invest in underfunded state education. At the stroke of a pen, the problems of social inequality will be removed and the engine rooms of privilege and exclusion will be destroyed. Even if you felt the above outcome was desirable, the economic reality of the policy simply doesn't stack up. The simple fact is that most independent schools, local day schools that are small and without significant endowments or assets, would struggle to cope VAT was imposed on their fees and would have to pass that cost onto parents. Parents at such schools are not overwhelmingly rich and many would drop out of the independent sector if fees went up by 20%; a reasonable estimate is that around a quarter of these parents would remove their children. So, the suggested



Kieran McLaughlin

£1.7bn which would be raised through VAT is likely to be way above the real figure. Furthermore, that 25% of departing children would of course return to the state sector which, based on current per pupil funding, would cost the state an extra £2.5bn to school them. So, the policy would lead a net cost to the state of over a billion pounds.

Of course, that level of financial analysis isn't something that the Labour Party have spent too much time thinking about. The emotional pull of the policy is far more powerful than the reality of its implementation. For many of them, the current and previous Prime Ministers embody all that is wrong with private schools and the perception is that an Eton education will catapult relative mediocrities into positions they would never reach if private schools were outlawed.

Again, that notion somewhat ignores the reality of most independent schools and their customers. Over recent years, the level of bursary funding has exceeded fee rises and schools are increasingly committed to widening participation from all sectors. Transformational bursary programmes

are enabling more and more pupils to access an education that they would not otherwise be able to afford; this is not done out of lip service to charitable status but as a result of a deeply felt commitment to being part of the solution to social mobility problems. The vast majority of parents at independent schools are not super-rich but make sacrifices to enable their children to attend our schools. And that, for me, is where the Labour Party's policy is most misguided. All parents want the best education for their children. What the Labour Party could do most to enable this is to allow independent schools to continue to do their excellent partnership work with state schools and other groups to make outcomes better for all. Attacking private schools may satisfy an atavistic urge, but it will not do anything to improve the standard of education for all across the country.

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# TREAT PEOPLE WITH KINDNESS

By Simone Niblock, Headteacher,  
Durham High School.

I must admit that I never thought I would be looking to an ex-member of One Direction for stimulus for this month's article: I take my inspiration from the Take That! playbook if I ever need to find a non-literary reference.

However, I should like to acknowledge that I am very partial to Harry Styles' *'Treat People with Kindness'*, and that this title is highly appropriate for the Zeitgeist.

I am not sure that the lyrics of this recent hit would necessarily win the winsome Harry an Ivor Novello Award- unlike my beloved Barlow, who has won many during his long career. However, there is something about the harmony and the relentlessly-upbeat nature of this song that cheers me every time I hear it, and the banality of some of the words does not dampen the essential message at its core. In the increasingly angry, keyboard warrior, fractious world in which we live at the moment, treating people with kindness is something to which we should all sign up to doing, as many times as can. In the immediate aftermath of the tragic suicide of Caroline Flack in 2020, just before COVID hit our collective consciousness with a bang, the hashtag **#bekind** was all the rage on social media. Moreover, it was being trotted out all over the country in school assemblies up and down the land, including from the mouth of yours truly. However, in certain areas of society, this is certainly not a message that has permeated enough throughout the different strata. The news IRL is saturated with evidence of acts of evil on an endless loop, whilst social media continues to be hijacked as spaces where the anonymous can be as heinous as they like, with seemingly little sense of retribution or consequence for their actions. Celebrities- usually, but not exclusively, young women- are constantly



Simone Niblock

vilified for their appearance and love lives, and are then pilloried all over again if they dare to speak out against their attackers. I am no Generation Zer, but even I am privy to the digital diatribes levelled against Jesy Nelson, Emily Atack and Demi Lovato, to name but three. Even ten years ago, such a widespread level of abuse would have been rare, but now it seems that this sort of bile is somehow acceptable as collateral damage for being a media personality.

So, what is it about being online that can make people act in such an appalling manner? Does a red mist descend for some trolls once their fingers engage with their keyboard, to the extent that they have an irresistible urge to denigrate and destroy someone else's reputation, or at least, upset their equilibrium? What sort of disconnect takes place as inadequate specimens spew out their venom? Unless they are *bona fide* psychopaths, they must realise that, despite what mothers have attested throughout the ages,

names do hurt you alongside sticks and stones. What will successive generations to come make of our bitter and twisted approach to online communication?

Saturday 12 November is World Kindness Day, so I would urge us all, even if we have never sent a nasty tweet in our lives, or have never 'liked' a negative comment about Tom Cruise's Dorian Gray appearance, to observe this day with respect and think about doing a random act of kindness to someone that could make, not mar, their day. Henry James, a much-underrated genius, anticipated the much-lauded Harry when he said: **Three things in human life are important. The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. And the third is to be kind.**

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David Gallagher, Chief Executive of NCFE, with T Level learners Alice Kennedy and Chloe Perrin from Gateshead College.

## NORTH EAST BASED EDUCATIONAL CHARITY, NCFE, HOST SUCCESSFUL REGIONAL EVENT ON 'LEVELLING UP AND FURTHERING EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY'

The 'Levelling up and furthering equality of opportunity' event hosted by north-eastern educational charity NCFE on Friday 8th October successfully brought together key stakeholders from across the region to find workable solutions to levelling up and closing the disadvantage gap.

Among those speaking were Alex Miles, Director at the Northern Skills Network and Managing Director at West Yorkshire Learning Provider Network, and Chris Nicholls, the Area Director of Association of Colleges. The speakers focused on the importance of providing people of all ages, and from all walks of life with a world-class education and training, and in particular focused on the importance of providing an excellent offer, no matter the locality.

Also speaking at the event, NCFE welcomed T Level learners from local colleges, including Gateshead College and New College Durham, who talked about their journey with technical and vocational education so far and their ambitions for their own future – and the region.

Local businesses and education providers came together in attendance to discuss the importance of vocational and technical learning in providing the opportunity, means and motivation for all individuals to fulfil their potential, both in work and life.

The event also celebrated a momentous occasion in NCFE's 170-year history as they relaunched and rebranded to better reflect their role in providing an end-to-end offering for learners, educators, and institutions across a lifetime of learning.

NCFE was born in the North-East but now operates as both a national and international learning organisation providing qualifications, content, and innovative assessments that help thousands of learners to progress their skills and to personally develop throughout their lives. With ambitions to become the country's leading provider of transformational and technical learning solutions, they operate on the belief that no learner should be left behind.

David Gallagher, Chief Executive of NCFE, said: "Everything we do at NCFE is with the aim of ensuring individuals from all backgrounds are able to access transformational learning experiences and maximise their opportunities throughout life. This event facilitated important discussions about technical and vocational education (in the region and nationally), and how we can work together to empower people to make the best possible ongoing choices about their futures."

Alex Miles, Director at Northern Skills Network and Managing Director at West Yorkshire Learning Provider Network, said: "It's never been so important to provide young people and adults from all walks of life with world-class education and training in their locality, but especially the North. A baby born in Gateshead in 2019 will potentially die 15 years earlier than a baby born in

Guildford. The link between education and health is vital, and we have the opportunity to address this, giving individuals from all backgrounds the best opportunities."

Chris Nicholls, Area Director of Association of Colleges, said: "Everything we do should be about the learner. These past 18-months has highlighted clear skills gaps and skills shortage; it's important that we address learning loss and work to create a fairer education system. We must work to close these gaps by helping the unemployed to retrain and by building a stronger technical education system in order to level up and provide the best opportunities to all."

Chloe Perrin, T Level learner from Gateshead College said: "Our T Level course has been crucial to our learning; it has given us 1 on 1 experience with employers and settings, and we've had incredible support from our placements and classroom learning. We're really excited to give back to the sector and to our region. There are notable barriers to employment in the North, and we would love to see more opportunities so we can reach our full potential."

[ncte.org.uk](https://ncte.org.uk)





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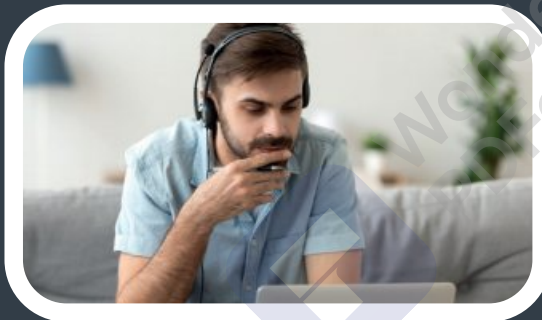
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## SIR ROD RETURNS TO NEWCASTLE

In support of the release of his 31st studio album **THE TEARS OF HERCULES** Sir Rod Stewart will once again hit the road in 2022 with a massive U.K. Tour including the Utilita Arena Newcastle. He'll be continuing his iconic reign performing a string of headline shows, before concluding the tour on 17th December 2022 here in Newcastle.

Following the success of his previous sold-out tours, Rod's 2022 shows promise to be filled with show-stopping classics and new hits in his unmissable captivating style. Rod Stewart is one of the best-selling artists in the history of recorded music, with an estimated 250 million records and singles sold worldwide, his performance will include fan favourites from across his impressive career, as well as, being the first to hear live performances of tracks from his soon to be released new album 'THE TEARS OF HERCULES'



## NORTH EAST MUSICIANS PUT GLAM INTO YORKSHIRE'S CHRISTMAS

To many people, the best Christmas songs were written and performed in the 1970's. Who could forget festive rock and roll classics from Mud, Wizzard and of course the classic Merry Christmas Everybody from Slade?

Well, this Christmas, the sensational sounds of the '70's are being faithfully and festively recreated at Ilkley Kings Hall and Winter Gardens on December 3rd and at Masham Hall on December 18th by North East based – The Ultimate 70's Show.

With classic tracks by Queen, Bowie,

Slade, T.Rex, The Sweet, Suzi Quatro, Alice Cooper and Mott the Hoople to name a few, the show is the perfect excuse to grab the platform heels, lurex trousers and star jumpers and travel back in time to the land of space hoppers, Charlie's Angels and the TV test card.

Martin Metcalf, a former guitarist with legendary group Geordie, is one of the six 70s rockers and session musicians who make up Ultimate 70s, whose brand of entertainment has been a huge hit with festival goers in Britain and Europe

"We've found that our show is a great place to hold the office Christmas party as we supply the music and the fun, and the audience just need to turn up and let their hair down," said Martin.

Tickets for the Ilkley Kings Hall and Winter Gardens on December 3rd and at Masham Hall on December 18th are available from the venues or from [www.ultimate70sshow.com](http://www.ultimate70sshow.com)

## SLEEPING BEAUTY - AWAKENED IN TIME FOR SANTA'S 2021 VISIT

The launch of the Tyne Theatre 2021 pantomime was welcomed by fans of the festive celebration this week, when the cast took to the streets and various venues in the city to mark the occasion.

After being postponed in 2020 because of Covid, the scores of panto fans were pleased to see the cast, as their respective characters, visit the theatre, as well as make an appearance at their sponsors' venues; Specsavers, Maldron Hotel and the picturesque Jesmond Dene House.

The launch of this year's performance of Sleeping Beauty created a fantastic buzz at the



Tyne Theatre & Opera House, with the full cast in attendance - including Britain's Got Talent Winner and singing sensation – Collabro's Matt Pagan, who is playing 'Prince', and North East's own home-grown talent – Laura Baxter, from Sunderland as 'Sleeping Beauty'. Both were in full

voice as they took to the stage to perform some powerful songs in front the local media that had gathered at the Westgate Road venue.

Hilarious Geordie comics Charlie Richmond as 'Jester' and Lewis Denny as 'Dame' were also on hand to offer their very own style of comedy to the proceedings.

Director Guy Pascall told us: "To be back inside the theatre performing again with our fantastic cast has been a dream come true for us all. We're absolutely delighted to be back treading the boards and if the welcome we received on the streets of Newcastle is anything to go by, then we're going to be looking at our busiest panto run ever – it's clear the general public have missed panto as much as we have!"

Enchanted Entertainment will be bringing 54 performances of Sleeping Beauty to the Tyne Theatre and Opera House from 3rd December 2021 – 3rd January 2022.

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# ESCAPE TO 'AGIOS' - DESTINATION BEACH AND WATERSIDE CHIC

By Caroline Preston



2021, and despite some return to normality our travel industry is still in disarray. Likened to a flight in turbulence, weary, we desperately need a return to smoother skies. As the clouds begin to clear, our restrictive belts ease, and mobility is again restored and as autumn rapidly approaches, like a migratory bird, I seek sun and warmer climes.

**Travel is still slightly more complicated, and research is needed, but being double-jabbed means access is easier, Greece easier still. With entry requiring just one form, another on return and a day 2 test, it's not rocket science.**

One thing Greece doesn't struggle for is sunshine and wanting plenty of it I head to the most southerly of its islands, large and luscious Crete. Located in the Mediterranean Sea, south of the Aegean Sea, Crete has no shortage of stunning views. My destination is Agios Nikolaos known as 'Agios' to locals or 'Ag Nik' to visitors. This large town and capital of the region Lassithi (East Crete) is the perfect place for a beach-loving, culture craving foodie like me.

Our hotel is the Miramare Resort and Spa in Gargadoros, a mere 1.5km from Agios town ([miramarecrete.gr](http://miramarecrete.gr)). This hotel has one major advantage, the view, more akin to a cruise ship balcony it overlooks the stunning Mirabello Bay, a bay so beautiful I'd often find myself in a trance-like state gazing at the vivid and varying shades of the blue sea available at every turn.

On this trip there would be plenty of time to chill, soak up some culture and eat like kings, so after settling in and spending a day topping up with

some much-needed vitamin D, we head out for a beach day. There are several beaches within a short distance here including pebbly Gargadoros just opposite, great for swimming in turquoise blue bliss. We decide to head to top recommendation, Voulisma Beach. Around 15km's away it's a 20 Euro taxi ride but so worth it, gorgeous white sand, beach bar, and lively surf we spend our day being floored by big rollers and recovering with sunbed service cocktails. We round off our day at nearby Taverna Panorama devouring delicious Greek salad, sweet baklava pastries and ice-cold Mythos beer, perfection.

Evenings here were spent either hotel-based or taking the short hop to Agios town, lived-in year-round by locals it has a cosmopolitan vibe like a small Greek city, and unlike the more touristy resorts, there's no rowdiness here. What you'll find instead is a smart busy town with a weekly market and quality shops, boutiques, and some of the better tourist offerings.

Agios is a popular day trip from Crete's other resorts and people flock here for the marina, the harbour, and the ancient lake. Lake Voulismeni is in the centre of Agios and according to local legend, the goddess Athena regularly bathed here, it's not

hard to see why, who wouldn't want to bathe in such grand surroundings? You can't bathe here now but you can enjoy the stunning view from a wide choice of eateries.

In the days that followed we explored the Lassithi region further, a boat trip to the island of the former leper colony Spinalonga (tours widely available). From 1913 this former Venetian medieval stronghold was used to house ousted and disowned leprosy sufferers who endured extreme poverty and hardship for decades, the story and history of Spinalonga makes for a fascinating day.

A trip to gorgeous rural Kritsa was another treat. Showcasing picture-perfect Greece this tiny hillside hamlet offers a museum of flora and fauna, a selection of little boutiques, cafes and a taverna where you can refresh and soak up the surroundings. I recommend wandering around Kritsa's quaint ancient streets that showcase its colourful doorways adorned with flowering plants, so beautiful.

It's our last day and time to fit in just one more visit, jumping in our hire car we take the easy drive from Agios along the stunning coast to Elounda, with its pretty harbour and seaside tavernas it's a perfect stop for a seafood lunch.

As the trip time comes to an end, our final evening is spent enjoying drinks on hotel's glass-encased terrace, within view is Agios, its lights twinkling like a jewel-encrusted brooch, the perfect accessory for chic sun filled autumn break.

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





THE INN COLLECTION  
GROUP

# Christmas 2021

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## CULTURE CLUB

LEWIS  
MATTHEWS

Artistic Director

The Northumberland Theatre Company (NTC) based in Amble's Dovecote Centre are a self-funding professional small-scale touring theatre company

**Who is your favourite author and why?**

Genuinely my favourite author has to be Roald Dahl. I've loved his stuff ever since I was a kid and I still read his books today. In my opinion "The Twits" is one of the greatest books ever written. I love that his stories were full of weird and wonderful characters and were incredibly creepy at times but still had a tremendous amount of heart to them.

**What would be your three Desert Island Discs?**

*Rumours* - Fleetwood Mac.

*We shall overcome: The Seeger Sessions* - Bruce Springsteen.

*American Idiot* - Green Day.

Three perfect albums that I could listen to repeatedly and not get sick of.

**Who is your favourite film star and why?**

Michael Sheen. He is absolutely tremendous in everything he's in. He's a wonderful chameleon of an actor that just seems to transform himself and inhabit a role in a way that I have never really seen before. His performance as Brian Clough in *The Damned United* was absolutely stunning.

**What are your top three films?**

*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor being amazing for two hours. I first watched it as research for my A Level Theatre Studies class and thought it was absolutely fantastic and I've loved the movie ever since.

*City Slickers*. This one is less about the movie and more about the circumstances behind it. It's my dad's favourite film of all time and although I

have to confess it technically isn't mine, I do get a real kick out of seeing how much my dad loves it whenever we get a chance to put it on.

*Hook*. This film is an absolute masterpiece. I've always loved the story of Peter Pan and as a continuation of the story, this film is just brilliant. Robin Williams is incredible as always, but for me the film belongs to Dustin Hoffman in his remarkable turn as Captain Hook. Also Bob Hoskins plays Smee and Maggie Smith is an older Wendy, what an amazing cast!

**Which poem left a lasting impression on you?**

*Do not stand at my grave and weep* by Mary Elizabeth Frye.

I read this poem at my grandads funeral and it's stayed with me ever since. He'd had a long struggle with Dementia and Parkinson's, but before that he was one of the most energetic pensioners I'd ever met and we used to go to Middlesbrough games together every Saturday, and his decline had quite an impact on me. So getting to read this at his funeral was a big moment for me.

**What box sets have you enjoyed?**

Over lockdown I rewatched all of *Game of Thrones* and then I rewatched *Modern Family*. It's always good to balance out explicit violence and

gore with something a bit more wholesome.

**Who is your favourite artist or performer?**

Tim Minchin. The man is nothing short of a genius, and a humble one at that. I've been a fan of his for years and I'd love to meet him one day (Tim, if you're free over Christmas at any point, come and see NTC's panto at The Dovecote Centre in Amble!)

**What is your favourite venue?**

Bristol Old Vic. I was fortunate enough to get to play there a few years back and it was a dream come true. The thought of all the other performers who's tread the boards there before me was quite the experience. That saying, The Dovecote Centre is a great venue for theatre, cinema and other community activities. We are very lucky as a theatre company to have it.

**Which musical instrument do you particularly enjoy?**

I'm pretty good on the kazoo...Honestly I admire anyone who can play any instrument well but there's something about the violin that I find incredibly soothing.

**From the world of Arts and Culture who would be your ideal dinner party guests?**

Stephen Fry, Ian McKellen, Lady Gaga, Bette Midler, Tim Minchin, and Robert Downey Jr!



Lewis Matthews

*Alice in Wonderland*, touring November 27th - January 16th 2022.

*The Amble Panto - Cinderella!* Performances at The Dovecote Centre from the 16th of December until the 31st.

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

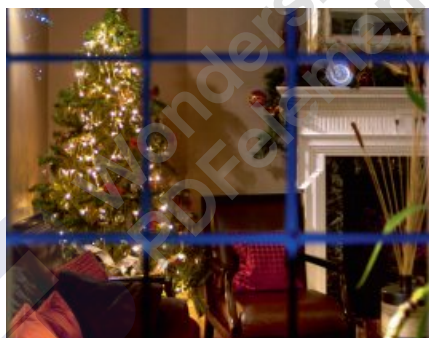




# JESMOND DENE HOUSE

NEWCASTLE – UPON – TYNE

This year, more than ever, we can't help but feel even more excitement towards the festive season after so many cancelled plans last year. In true Jesmond Dene House style we will be planning a Christmas to remember from cosy getaways in our boutique bedrooms, to Festive Afternoon Tea's in the Great Hall in front of the log fireplace, or a 7 course NYE Tasting Menu.



## EAT, MEET, DRINK & CELEBRATE AT FERN WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS OR COLLEAGUES OVER THE FESTIVE PERIOD.

Fern Dining Room & Bar will be open seven days a week serving afternoon tea and dinner throughout December including serving our famous traditional roasts on Boxing Day & New Year's Day. We also have private dining rooms available for those looking to make the celebrations a little more special with lunch and dinner packages including festive cocktails on arrival, Christmas crackers, coffee & mince pies.

### FESTIVE EVENTS

#### Jesmond Dene House Christmas Market

Join us in The Great Hall on Sunday 5th December for our very own Christmas shopping market with stalls ranging from food and drink to local craft companies and boutique stores. Tickets are £4 per person to include a glass of mulled wine.

#### Festive Afternoon Tea

In The Great Hall on Sunday 12th & 19th December. Tickets are £38 per person to include a glass of fizz and live festive music.

### New Year

Beat the crowds of the city centre and celebrate the arrival of the New Year at our house with a relaxed 7 course Tasting Menu in Fern Dining Room & Bar. £75 per person with Champagne & Canapes on arrival.

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W: [www.jesmonddenehouse.co.uk](http://www.jesmonddenehouse.co.uk)



## THE IMPECCABLE PIG NAMED AA INN OF THE YEAR 2021

One of County Durham's most unique venues is celebrating more than just its birthday, after scooping a top hospitality honour.

The Impeccable Pig, at Sedgefield, which recently marked three years since it first opened – is known for its eclectic décor and luxury accommodation, with rooms featuring hot tubs and an outdoor sauna.

And the site's efforts have not gone unnoticed by leading hospitality standards agency, AA – which

celebrates the very best in guest accommodation – with the venue taking home the title of AA Inn of the Year 2021 at this year's AA Bed and Breakfast Awards.

This is the first time a venue in the North East has received the accolade and Pierre Bertolotti, general manager at The Impeccable Pig, is delighted to have been recognised with the prestigious award.

"It's fantastic to be named AA Inn of the Year 2021, especially at a time which has been such a challenge for all those in the industry," he said.

"Everyone at the venue prides themselves on going above and beyond to provide the best possible guest experience, so it's brilliant to have our efforts validated by such an esteemed organisation."

## ZEERA INDIAN CUISINE WINS BEST TEAM OF THE YEAR AT 10TH ENGLISH CURRY AWARDS 2021

The 10th English Curry Awards 2021 welcomed 350 guests at the Holiday Inn Birmingham Airport-NEC on Monday October 18, in a celebration of the English curry industry.

The English Curry Awards 2021 are a celebration of local businesses, where winners are a true reflection of quality and customer service, as they are chosen by members of the general public.

The awards recognised the hard work, determination, impeccable service and efforts of the best English curry establishment and professionals that create and serve delicious dishes at an excellent standard.

Several of the awards were split into local regions to ensure that smaller businesses from across England are also recognised.

The English Curry Awards 2021 embodied the strength of the nation's hospitality industry. It is a vast group of men and women from the



restaurant and takeaway industry who specialise in creating England's favourite dish.

Zeera Indian Cuisine, South Shields was in attendance at the award ceremony where it was announced to their delight, they had won first prize in the Best Team of the Year category.

Shah Choudhury, Director of Zeera Indian Cuisine, along with his brothers, who are head chef and 2nd chef at the establishment said: "This was a whole team effort and all of the blood, sweat and tears has made it worth it. All the effort we went to, helping those less-fortunate and health care essential staff during the pandemic, make this award all the more worth-while."



## SEAHAM HALL STRENGTHENS LEADERSHIP TEAM WITH NEW GENERAL MANAGER APPOINTMENT

Luxury five-star coastal hotel & spa, Seaham Hall is delighted to announce the appointment of Carlo Iulianella as its General Manager.

As the new leader at the helm of the award-winning Grade II Listed property on Durham's Heritage Coast, Carlo will work with 170 employees and oversee all areas of the business, from its 21 guest suites, two restaurants and Serenity Spa, to its wide array of event operations, which include private hire, small celebrations and corporate gatherings.

Bringing almost 20 years of hospitality experience to the role, Carlo has joined Seaham Hall following six years at Oddfellows Hotels, a pair of design-led boutique hotels, where he most recently held the position of Hotel Manager in their Greater Manchester property.

Prior to this, Carlo enjoyed seven years at The Chester Grosvenor Hotel, where he was appointed as Food & Beverage Director in 2012.

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# HE PLAYS LARGE.





# THE COMMON ROOM: A BUSTLING HUB FOR BUSINESS INNOVATION

Located in the heart of Newcastle, The Common Room is steeped in a rich and intriguing history, offering a unique and inspirational setting for any meeting or event. We spoke to Nicky Sherman, The Common Room Sales and Marketing Manager, to find out more.

## What is your background and what attracted you to the role of Sales and Marketing Manager at The Common Room?

I have worked in hospitality for more than 30 years, most recently at Jesmond Dene House where I was Director of Sales and Marketing for 13 years. I took a career break for three years before taking on the role of Sales and Marketing Manager at The Common Room, covering maternity leave.

The thing that excited me about The Common Room was the opportunity to play a founding role in a unique project with such a rich heritage. I love older buildings and enjoy being part of the team that undertakes the transformation and the opening stage having done this at Jesmond Dene House and The Vermont Hotel. The Common Room has unexpectedly allowed me to have one further opportunity which has also given me a background insight into a non-hotel venue which has been very interesting and exciting.

## What does The Common Room bring to the North East events sector?

The Common Room has taken the enormous potential of this beautiful Grade II listed building and reimagined it as one of Newcastle's most exciting meeting and events venues.

We have a number of superb spaces available for events and conferences and our location means we are perfectly placed with a range of accommodation, amenities and transport connections on our doorstep. The Common Room really is the jewel in the crown of the city.

We want businesses to become a part of our story so we are offering some great corporate sponsorship opportunities, including the chance to buy a brick on our fabulous LEGO® brick model of The Common Room.

## The Common Room has undergone a huge transformation. What is your favourite space and why?

The Wood Hall is our largest space with a capacity of up to 150. It's an amazing Victorian space with



Nicky Sherman

a vaulted ceiling and stained glass windows where you can breathe in the history and heritage. If you hold your business event in The Wood Hall, you will most definitely feel inspired.

We also have our Edwardian Lecture Theatre for up to 100 people. Originally built as a place for lectures on engineering in the early 20th century, the Lecture Theatre has kept that unique charm while offering modern, comfortable facilities. My most favourite space though is to stand in the main foyer outside the entrance to our new café bar 5|Quarter which used to be two offices – it totally intertwines the past with the present.

## What type of catering does The Common Room offer?

The Common Room caters for all types of meetings and events for numbers of up to about 150 depending on event. We are incredibly flexible with our food and beverage offerings and are more than happy to work with clients and our catering team to create bespoke menus if required.

We're also really proud of 5|Quarter, our new café bar which is open to the public offering a locally-sourced food menu. 5|Quarter is named after a coal seam that ran through the Great Northern Coalfield, celebrating The Common Room's industrial heritage.

## The Common Room has been open for several months now, what has the reaction been from visitors so far?

I think a lot of people didn't know The Common Room was here so when they come in and see it, they're amazed that this wonderful hidden gem is open to them.

There has been a real buzz since we opened. It's been bustling with people from all walks of life, from weddings, to business meetings, to former miners or engineers enjoying the history and innovation. That's the great thing about The Common Room – it's a place for everyone.

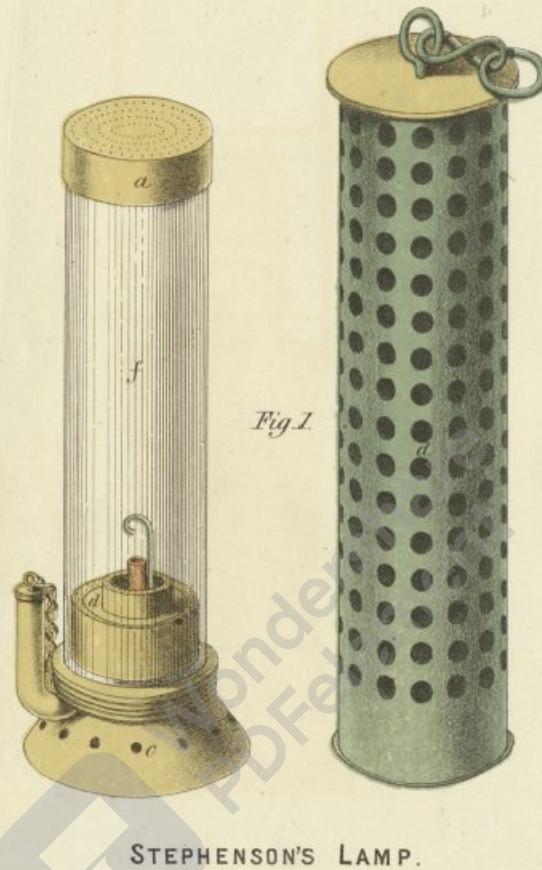
The Common Room of the Great North was established to manage the redevelopment of the former Mining Institute building following an award from The National Lottery Heritage Fund of £4.1m towards the initial project costs of £7.1m. Further funding to reflect the project costs due to the pandemic have 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.**  
[www.thecommonroom.org.uk](http://www.thecommonroom.org.uk)



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# OUT AND ABOUT - GAINSBOROUGH & RETFORD



I was looking forward to my visit to Gainsborough on 30th September, staying overnight. I was arriving from London on an LNER Azuma into Lincoln, and changed on to a new Northern two carriage train which was going through to Sheffield. Gainsborough has two railway stations, one is Gainsborough Central, close to the town centre (but Newcastle Central it ain't), and it sees few trains and has zero facilities. The other, which I arrived at, is Gainsborough Lea Road which is better served, but likewise has zero facilities, not even a ticket machine and is a good mile and a half south of the town centre.

There's a ramp for buggies and wheelchairs with three flat refuges which were puddled over an inch deep and I had no alternative but to jump through them, getting one foot wet in the process and keeping the other foot dry. It was a good half hour walk into town and I found the very central Gainsborough Hotel under renovation. Breakfast at a cafe up the road was quite good. Not finding any restaurants for an evening meal, and eschewing the many takeaways, I settled for a meal in McDonalds. I returned to my room to find the key card did not work, and no staff about. I entered my room only by pumping the handle up and down and belting the keycard on the door's reader simultaneously until it eventually gave way.

Breakfast in said cafe was quite good and I explored Marshall's Yard, a former tractor and roller manufactory which is now a successful retail park close to the centre. And then Gainsborough's glory, the old Hall on the north edge of town, a Tudor and Jacobean edifice of palatial size with a timber Great Hall and Kitchen, and excellent views from the roof. The house was built in the late 15th century by Sir Thomas Burgh, with later Elizabethan additions. It is one of the best preserved medieval manor houses in England. It's now in the care of English Heritage, and it is really worth a visit, but the rest of the town is something of a let-down.

With four hours before my train home and the famous Gainsborough model railway which was started in the late 1940s now a COVID-19 casualty, I really had nothing to do for the rest of the day. A walk on the banks of the River Trent was thwarted by the lack of bridges. So I resolved to get the local train straight away to Retford which proved a much better choice: the Market Place was buzzing, the Chesterfield Canal and King's Park made a pleasant walk between station and town, and the Bassetlaw Museum was welcoming and informative about the town's history, especially the sections about rural agriculture and the Mayflower Pilgrims. Indeed, as the picture shows, representatives of the Wampanoag community in the USA had recently visited Retford to build a traditional Wetu in the grounds of the Bassetlaw Museum. The museum is quite extensive and when leaving I found I had

missed out an entire wing, but I needed to make my way back to the railway station. The compact town centre was fascinating to explore, and overall I found Retford a good deal more interesting and resumed my trip north on another LNER Azuma with a ten minute same platform change at Doncaster for Durham which I reached bang on time at 18:26.

alexnelson@dunelm.org.uk www.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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# Christmas

## 2021

**Disco Party Night** 2 course meal and entertainment from our resident DJ til late. **£27.<sup>95</sup>**

FRI 26 NOV  
SAT 27 NOV

The hotel would welcome any exclusive private event enquiries. The large room can hold up to 280 guests and the smaller room can hold up to 90 guests.

**White Night** including a 3 course meal, bacon / vegetarian rolls and entertainment from our resident DJ til late.

FRI 03 DEC  
£30.<sup>95</sup>

FRI 10 DEC  
FRI 17 DEC  
£32.<sup>95</sup>

SAT 04 DEC  
SAT 11 DEC  
SAT 18 DEC  
£34.<sup>95</sup>

**Disco Party Night** in the smaller suite to include a 2 course meal, bacon / vegetarian rolls and disco. **£27.<sup>95</sup>**

SAT 04 DEC

FRI 10 DEC

SAT 11 DEC

FRI 17 DEC

SAT 18 DEC

**White Night** to include the Aaron Bayley band and a 2 course meal. **£25.<sup>95</sup>**  
Night to finish at midnight.

SUN 12 DEC

THU 16 DEC

**White Night** to include a live singer and a 2 course meal. **£25.<sup>95</sup>**  
Night to finish at midnight.

THU 09 DEC

**Emergency service party:**  
To include a main course and entertainment from our resident DJ. **£15.<sup>95</sup>**  
Night to finish at midnight.

SUN 19 DEC

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# IT'S THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR



From the arrival of a new festive menu to the return of a popular outdoor addition – Christmas at Ponteland pub, the Blackbird, is sure to be something special this year.

**With a cosy interior, roaring fires and heated outdoor seating, the Blackbird is certainly a venue which lends itself to festive dining.**

Pair this with a team of expert chefs and the result is a Christmas menu that ticks all the boxes, mixing traditional favourites with modern flavours.

Dishes such as chicken liver parfait, treacle-cured salmon, seasonal roast turkey and caramelised onion and thyme tarte tatin means there's sure to be something for everyone – and that's without even looking at desserts.

Festive treats this year include a traditional Christmas pudding and gingerbread panna cotta, or diners can choose between rich, dark chocolate mousse or white chocolate and cherry parfait.

Of course, if a private party is on the menu, then the venue's talented chefs can even pull together a bespoke selection for guests to enjoy.

Groups of up to 30 can dine in the pub's upstairs Minstrel Gallery, home to a Tudor fireplace, exposed brick walls and quirky portraiture.

And with the return of the festive tipi this year, there's even more choice for those looking to host a special celebration.

Decorated for Christmas and with outdoor heaters, the tipi is a fantastic location for larger parties – with a new street food kitchen for diners to make the most of.

Christmas isn't the only thing to look forward to at the pub, however, with big plans in place to ring in the New Year in style.

Diners can enjoy a whole host of specials on the menu from midday, while those who stay into the evening can get into the party spirit with a DJ, a saxophone player and, of course, fireworks.

And the Blackbird is wasting no time in making plans for 2022, with the return of the annual Ponteland Wheelbarrow Race on 1 January.

Cheer on racers as they embark on the mile-long route and, with teams starting and finishing at the Blackbird, why not continue the celebration past the finish line?

The street food kitchen will be open all day serving pizzas and barbecue, along with tipples and a selection of hot drinks available at the tipi bar.

Stuart Young of the Northumberland Pub Company, which operates the Blackbird, believes the festive programme will be a huge hit.

"Christmas is always a really special time at the Blackbird and the entire team gets in the spirit of the season," he said.

"Our festive menu is always very popular and our chefs have outdone themselves this year, with a huge selection on offer.

"We are delighted to have the tipi returning after it was so popular in the summer months and it will now be a permanent fixture at the pub, so our customers can enjoy it year-round."

**For more information, or to book, visit [www.theblackbirdponteland.co.uk](http://www.theblackbirdponteland.co.uk)**







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## MIND THE POVERTY GAP

It is a big aspiration! Kind Currency will help close the disadvantaged gap and help reduce the poverty rate.

**"Poverty is not a social problem and therefore there is no demand or need to try and resolve poverty," was a statement recently put to me.**

Initially this upset me. I'm an empath and I've faced hardship and I also support and know people, families and children who are living in poverty. I know the affect poverty has on the lives of our fellow humans. I appreciate poverty is a universal term and our understanding of poverty is value based and how we measure it is questionable. I understand poverty in the UK looks completely different to disadvantaged communities the world over. But fundamentally poverty is an unkind life and I believe as a community we can level up society to help others live a kinder life.

So, what drives this big aspiration to help reduce UK poverty and why I feel socially responsible to create an opportunity for change?

Poverty is when your resources are below your basic minimum needs. Basic needs are housing, heating, water, food, clothing, hygiene, and health.

Pre-pandemic there were 14.4 million people classed as living in poverty in the UK, the post-Covid figure is estimated to be 15 million, that equates to one in every four people. 31% of all children are living in poverty in the UK.

What may surprise you, is that 75% of those children live in working households. Poverty does not equal uneconomical. Herein lies the problem in the UK, we have working people in the UK living in poverty.

\*So, to those with the mindset, that 'they' need to help themselves. They are. For instance, my local foodbank is managed by a lady who works in the care system; she's giving to society on both counts but we are leaving her to live a life of poverty.

Working people in poverty are in jobs that are low paid. Low paid to an extent that people are unable

Michelle Jones

to meet their basic needs and not just theirs, their child's needs too. As the pandemic taught us, many of these low paid jobs provide us ALL with our essential basic needs!

Low paid jobs are one of the creators of poverty, insecure jobs are another, as well as unemployment. Low level skills and education, health problems, a life-event, single-parent households, ethnic minorities, and discrimination are all contributors to poverty. These drivers are the same barriers to preventing poverty and are also a consequence of poverty. It's a cycle of poverty. Those living in poverty tend to suffer more health issues especially chronic illness and find education, quality employment and opportunities inaccessible.

But we can stop the cycle, we can deliver a change. But need to want to. And I do. Why wouldn't I?

We can create opportunities to help people remove their barriers and attain a better quality of life. It's the simple equation of one human helping another because they can.

Kind Currency will create a fund which will support and reward individuals who are classed as disadvantaged, those individuals that we absolutely depend on as a society, the volunteers, the charity, essential and care workers; those that

provide us with our basic needs, those delivering kindness every day through their actions, our community champions. They deserve that kindness paid forward in gratitude.

We will provide access to services and opportunities, resources and equipment covering health and wellbeing, education and training, personal and business development and employment.

In delivering opportunity for change we'll also be challenging for bigger change; challenging the government decision on the living wage; making it possible for businesses to pay the living wage; improving access to services and investing in disadvantaged children.

It is a big aspiration but coming together as a community through Kind Currency makes it achievable. Help us help others. You can get involved in the community as a business and/or as a consumer, coming together to make kinder lifestyle choices to close the disadvantaged gap and reduce poverty.

**Michelle Jones, Founder of Kind Currency,**  
[www.kindcurrency.co.uk](http://www.kindcurrency.co.uk)  
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## YOLO PONTELAND – MORE THAN JUST A COCKTAIL BAR

As the evenings draw in and the weather turns colder, there's nothing better than getting together with family, friends or whoever you please for breakfast, lunch, or an evening meal along Ponteland's front street.

**And this is exactly where you'll find local favourite - the relaxed and stylish YOLO Ponteland - nestled amongst the boutique stores and cosy cafés.**

Well known for their 2+4+1 cocktails on a Friday night and weekend vibes, the bar/eatery has so much more to offer with a classic and great value food offering that is available every day.

Serving up a main menu of gastro-pub delights, YOLO Ponteland offers up a fantastic range of dishes to tempt even the fussiest of diners. Work your way through the moreish list of small plates priced at three for £15\* - tuck into succulent Panko breaded King Prawns before devouring a combo of Thai infused Sticky Popcorn Chicken and deep-fried Halloumi bites.



Or perhaps you're looking to make a meal of your visit, in this case YOLO Ponteland offer the chance to pair a small plate and main dish, or main dish and dessert\*\* at a reduced and generous price. How could you resist when the Tandoori Marinated Chicken Kebab and Chargrilled 8oz Rump Steak call out brazenly from the mix of main menu eats.

Visiting on a Sunday? Get ready to be met by YOLO's hearty Sunday Roasts served with all the trimmings. Customers can choose from a selection of quality meats or vegetarian option, before garnishing their meal with home-baked Yorkshire puddings, golden roast potatoes, seasonal vegetables, and boatloads of gravy. All dinners are priced at £10.95 and available to order between 12noon to 5pm, really hitting that 'Sunday Scran' spot.

Of course, a select few main menu items are also present to order on a Sunday, with classics such as Fish and Triple Cooked Chips or Katsu Chicken Loaded Fries, to keep everyone's hunger at bay. And if ever there was a day to treat yourself - finish off your lunch with Sticky Toffee Pudding served with lashings of custard or go for the all-time classic warm Chocolate Fudge Cake – a good Sunday lunch would not be complete without dessert.

For visitors who prefer an earlier offer, YOLO Ponteland also caters to the brunch club bunch.\*\*\* Whether it's the full works with a 'Full English Breakfast' or an Eggs Benedict smothered in Hollandaise sauce, there'll always be a dish worth getting out of bed for. But if you find that you do need a little persuading, all breakfast items come with unlimited filter coffee or tea to really put a spring in your step.

**For further information or to glance over YOLO Ponteland's full menus, please visit: [www.yolo.uk.com](http://www.yolo.uk.com) Instagram - @yolo\_ponteland Facebook - @yoloponteland**



**\*3 for £15 small plate offer.** Available Monday to Saturday, 12noon - 7pm.

**\*\*Small plate & main meal/main meal & dessert offer £12.95.** Available Monday to Saturday, 12noon – 7pm.

**\*\*\*Breakfast served Monday to Saturday, 11am – 2pm and Sunday between 11am – 12noon.**



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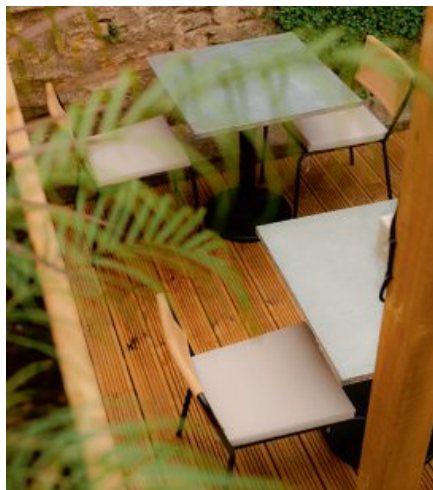
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# CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS WITH ADAM & EVE



"It feels like we should celebrate Christmas early this year;" say the culinary team behind Adam and Eve. And frankly here at Northern Insight we're inclined to agree.

"The Christmas menu has been written by our Head Chef and we're all set to open on Christmas Day too ~ our website [www.adamandvealnwick.co.uk](http://www.adamandvealnwick.co.uk) has all the details, including opening times and menus.

Expect to pay £85pp on Christmas Day (children's price on enquiry) with a glass of Moët & Chandon Imperial Brut Champagne and Canapés on arrival and £28pp for the Christmas set menu.

For a closer look at Adam and Eve and especially to see their seasonal menu/Christmas set menu, head to the website. Dishes include Coconut Truffles with Sorbet, Pan Seared Seabass, Smoked Chicken and Ham Hock Terrine, Traditional Christmas Dinner with all the trimmings, Bavette Steak with Hand-cut Chips, Pan Roasted Chicken with Pancetta and an exceptional selection of well thought through vegetarian dishes such as Fig, Apple and Hazelnut Salad.

One to put on the "must visit" list.



**Opening times: Tuesday from 5pm • Wednesday to Sunday 12noon - 11pm • Closed Mondays**

**3 Clayport Street, Alnwick, Northumberland, NE66 1LA. [adamandvealnwick.co.uk](http://adamandvealnwick.co.uk) • @adamandvealnwick • Adam & Eve Alnwick**





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### Starters

Hearty Daal and spinach spicy soup with a sprinkle of coriander and served with a mini nan bread

Allergies - Gluten

Turkey Twizzlers

Pieces of turkey marinated in punjabi spices and coated in spiced breadcrumbs

Allergies - Gluten & dairy

Gunpowder Chicken

Pieces of chicken marinated in spices and coated in a gram flour batter and served with our gunpowder sauce

Allergies - Dairy

Channa Goshat Tikka

Spring lamb, chick peas and potatoes lightly spiced and coated in spiced breadcrumbs and served with curried mayonnaise

Allergies - Dairy & Gluten

Masala Prawns

King prawns marinated in masala and cooked in the heart of the tandoor

Allergies - Dairy



### Main Course

Boxing Day Turkey Tari Wala

Turkey cooked in an authentic medium spiced family favourite punjabi sauce

Allergies - None

Lamb Chop Rogan Josh

Lamb chop's cooked with tomatoes, cream, punjabi spices and chilli oil

Allergies - Dairy

Chicken Malabar

Pieces of chicken cooked in South Indian spices with fresh curry leaves, mustard seeds, chilli flakes and coconut milk

Allergies - mustard seeds

Angel of the North

King prawns marinated in punjabi spices and cooked in a tomato based sauce with fresh spinach, coriander and ginger

Allergies - Dairy

Malai Kofta

Vegetable koftas cooked with gram flour and served in a tomato and onion based sauce with a touch of cream

Allergies - Dairy

### Deserts

Brandy fruit cake, served with ice cream or vanilla and star anise custard

Allergies Dairy

Gulab Jaman, served with lightly spiced ice cream

Allergies - Gluten & Dairy

Mango Sorbet

A refreshing sorbet made with mango purée

Allergies - None

Main courses served with rice and mini nan

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## NUFFIELD HEALTH NEWCASTLE HOSPITAL ANNOUNCED AS THE OFFICIAL HEALTHCARE PARTNER OF NEWCASTLE RUGBY



Nuffield Health Newcastle Hospital is set to be the official healthcare partner for Newcastle Falcons and Newcastle Thunder for the 2021/22 season.

As part of the partnership, Nuffield Health will support both teams with medical treatment at its hospital in Jesmond, Newcastle.

In addition, the healthcare charity will also support a Foundation Winter Touch Rugby series which aims to improve health and fitness in men and women across the region.

Mick Hogan, executive director at Newcastle Falcons and chairman of Newcastle Thunder

said: "It's fantastic to be able to announce the continuation of our long-standing partnership with Nuffield Health Newcastle and it's exciting to see that support extend to Newcastle Thunder as we prepare for our first season as a full-time club.

"We're looking forward to introducing the Nuffield Health team to our supporters and other partners this year and continuing to have them as a regular fixture on-site. We're delighted to have them on board and hope our cooperation can continue for many years to come."



## MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO LOCAL SERVICES

Volunteers play a vital role in helping people have their say on health and social care. Volunteering with Healthwatch can help develop skills, gain experience and make a positive difference to our local community. Many volunteers assist in carrying out surveys or attend information events in a support role.

One such volunteer is Raj Nair from Heaton. He's a teacher with a passion for healthcare and has chosen to help people learn about the dangers of stroke and the warning signs and symptoms.

Raj previously had experience working for the NHS and is interested in health and sharing his knowledge about it. He has a particular interest in strokes and, after taking a speech language course, has acted as an advocate helping people who have had a stroke deal with their social justice rights.

"I'm really interested in health and improving matters for people in the North East and being a Healthwatch volunteer allows me to do this. I particularly enjoy giving talks about stroke awareness to other community groups and hope that perhaps one day my advice will help save a life".

The main stroke symptoms can be remembered with the word FAST:

Face – the face may have dropped on one side, the person may not be able to smile, or their mouth or eye may have drooped.

Arms – the person may not be able to lift both arms and keep them there because of weakness or numbness in one arm.

Speech – their speech may be slurred or garbled, or the person may not be able to talk at all despite appearing to be awake; they may also have problems understanding what you're saying to them.

Time – it's time to dial 999 immediately if you notice any of these signs or symptoms. (source NHS)

Healthwatch Newcastle and Healthwatch Gateshead Chief Executive, Siobhan O'Neil, said: "Volunteers like Raj do a wonderful job helping us to serve our community as they listen to local people to find out if services are working for them. They support us in many ways and our volunteers play an important role at Healthwatch."

Find out more about volunteering with Healthwatch Newcastle or Healthwatch Gateshead: Freephone 0808 178 9282 or email [info@healthwatchnewcastle.org.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchnewcastle.org.uk)



## NEWCASTLE AESTHETICS CLINIC SEES TEAM DOUBLE IN THE LAST FOUR MONTHS

One of Newcastle's leading medical aesthetics clinics, Paragon Aesthetics has expanded its team with three new practitioners in just four months following ambitious growth plans.

Since April, Paragon Aesthetics has seen the addition of qualified dentists Dr Chloe Aucott,

Dr Aran Maxwell-Cox and qualified skincare aesthetician Lucy Richardson to broaden their vast treatment offering.

Prior to the new appointments, the clinic was solely led by Aesthetics Awards 'Rising Star of the Year' shortlisted businesswoman and qualified dentist Dr Eleanor Reid who started the company five years ago. Shortly after inception, the clinic then gained help from a treatment coordinator and another medical injector to work alongside Dr Reid.

The latest additions to the team have enabled Paragon Aesthetics to strengthen their offering to include exclusive treatments such as SkinPen Precision microneedling and Platelet Rich Plasma (PRP) therapy.

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# DARLINGTON MOWDEN PARK RFC CONFIRM NUFFIELD HEALTH PARTNERSHIP

Darlington Mowden Park (DMP) is thrilled to announce that Nuffield Health Tees Hospital have become the club's official healthcare partner for the upcoming season.

The new partnership will help the DMP squad to access Nuffield's specialist services, which includes x-rays, scans, treatments and surgeries.

The agreement will see Nuffield Health Tees Hospital's distinctive branding displayed on the Men's 1st XV warm up shirts and subs jackets, as well as around the club's base at the Darlington Arena.

The hospital, based in Norton, celebrates its 40th Anniversary this year and has established itself as one of the leading providers of private healthcare in the North East, serving patients from Stockton-on-Tees, Darlington, Middlesbrough, Durham and the surrounding area.

In 2017 it became the only hospital north of Leeds to receive an 'outstanding' rating from the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Darlington Mowden Park chairman Mick Birch commented: "We are delighted to have agreed this new partnership with Nuffield Health. It's a privilege for us to work with such a well-established healthcare provider and we're hugely grateful for their support. This new arrangement will help us to provide the best possible environment for our players and we look forward to growing the partnership in future seasons."



L-R: DMP First Team players Tom Broadhead, Shaun McCartney and Talite Vaiioleti at Darlington Arena.

A not-for-profit healthcare organisation, Nuffield Health runs a network of award-winning hospitals, fitness and wellbeing clubs, together with a host of other healthcare and diagnostic services across the country.

Laura Hanson, sales and services manager at Nuffield Health Tees Hospital, added: "We're absolutely delighted to become the club's official healthcare partner for the upcoming season. Local clubs and sports activities are quite often the backbone of their local communities and benefit

people of all ages.

"We share this ethos at Nuffield Health Tees Hospital as we continue our work to support local sporting organisations that are helping to make people in our area fitter, healthier, happier and stronger."

**For more information on Nuffield Health Tees Hospital and the range of specialist services they offer, please visit [www.nuffieldhealth.com/hospitals/tees](http://www.nuffieldhealth.com/hospitals/tees)**

## THE PERFECT MAN TO MOTIVATE YOUR TEAM

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# df

David Fairlamb Fitness

## NO QUICK FIX

We are a nation who seem to be obsessed with trying to find quick fix ways of losing weight, spending endless amounts of money on diets that promise the earth, yet in reality only work in the short term. For the majority, sustaining any changes becomes a major issue.

**I'm sure you have heard many people blame their metabolism rate or essentially the rate in which we burn off food for their weight gain, which incidentally does slow down usually post 40.**

Our BMR Basal metabolism rate is the amount of energy used daily at rest. So how can we boost our BMR allowing us to consistently burn more calories, leading to weight loss:

- Short, sharp, quick bouts of exercise will help supercharge your metabolism. The intensity is relative to each individual. For some who rarely exercise - a regular quick walk will help, for others a very intense interval session will quicken your calorie burn for hours after finishing your workout.
- Increase your muscle mass by using resistance such as weights. Muscle needs energy therefore will quicken your metabolism, whereas fat is just storage.
- Target big muscle groups such as legs and glutes, plus try exercises that work more than one muscle group such as squats and lunges.
- Drink more water. Even if you are mildly dehydrated your metabolism may slow down. Unsweetened water is the best, look to drink around two litres a day.
- Add more spices to your food, they contain natural chemicals that can kick start your metabolism.
- Your body burns more calories digesting protein than carbohydrates and fats. Look to replace some carbohydrates with lean



David Fairlamb

- protein such as meats, eggs, fish and nuts.
  - Green tea has also shown to help burn calories 2-3 cups a day can work wonders.
- Just as the above helps boost your calorie burning there are certain things which can slow it down, here are just a few:
- **Dieting**, as I said earlier, is usually ineffective

and can have a negative effect on your metabolism, by slowing chemical processes down because the body recognises when you are in starving mode.

- **Age**, which is why it's even more important to exercise as you get older.
- **Alcohol**, as your body fills with toxins it can slow your metabolism down.

## DAVID'S SUMMING UP

*In a nutshell, to boost the number of calories burned add some quick exercise with resistance, keep yourself hydrated, add more protein to your diet, forget dieting, drink green tea, stay positive, keep yourself young and stay happy as laughing also burns more calories!*





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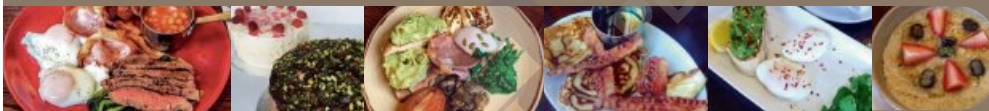
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## THE LAST WORD FROM BARRY SPEKER...



Barry Speker

## PLAN B OR NOT PLAN B?

That is the question - although it may soon be 'Why not Plan C?' In the face of vaccine sceptics, doom-laden prophesies about inflation and the economy and predictions of toy shortages at Christmas, the Government is again facing a dilemma.

**Restrictions and further lockdown, if implemented, will no doubt be attacked as negligent delay fuelled by scepticism and lack of preparedness. Inevitably another public enquiry is due. In the meantime, panic buying of masks, checking the numbers of Deliveroo and Just Eat and coming up with ideas about repaying the £trillions.**

The archives of National Treasure Frankie Howard have been acquired by the University of York. As well as the script for an unseen American version of *Up Pompeii* and annotated versions of various Carry On films, there is a contract revealing his delight to receive the equivalent of £12,000 from the Beatles, despite his 10 minute appearance in their film *Help* being cut.

That was a pittance compared with what was paid to Bob Hoskins for not having appeared in

*The Untouchables*. He had been asked to play Al Capone if Robert de Niro dropped out, but the American actor became available. As a thank you the director sent a cheque for £200,000 to Hoskins, who phoned to say: 'Brian, if you have any more films you don't want me in, just give me a call'. Nice work if you can get it.

Having contracted Covid, from whom I know not, and having tested PCR positive, I had fortunately only mild symptoms and completed my isolation in time to get to St James Park for the Spurs 3-1 defeat.

The controversial takeover of Newcastle United by the Saudi-Arabian PIF-led conglomerate, promises much but will require great patience on the part of the Geordie faithful. They should not begrudge Steve Bruce his £8m as he looks back on his 13th and 12th league finishes with pride.

The Lawrence of Arabia scenes in and out of the stadium have produced a request from the club that supporters 'kindly refrain from wearing traditional Arab clothing or Middle-East inspired head coverings at matches, if they would not ordinarily wear such attire'.

It was said that the new owners, including the Reuben Brothers, were not offended but were concerned that the tea-towels mimicking Keffiyehs were culturally inappropriate and could cause offence.

More obvious offence came from a Newcastle supporter photographed making a Nazi salute towards Tottenham's 3000 visiting fans. No good humour or football celebration in that gesture!

The statistics from the Office of National Statistics show that for the current year the most popular baby names to top the charts are again Olivia and Oliver. Nigel has dropped out of the rankings, its earlier popularity due to Mansell is less so with Lawson or Farage. Worrying that there were 19 babies registered with the name Lucifer.

As for the name Barry, popular in the 1930s and 1940s, it was in the top 100 in the 1970s but by 2018 it had fallen to 2,079th, although still popular in Australia. Varied recollections of Cryer, Took, Gibbs, Humphries, Richards, Manilow and White but not a name for today?

Into the top 10 for the first time is Archie at 9th just below Harry at 8th and Muhammad at 5th. No Lilibet in the girls' names although Lily is in at seven.

A happy return to some activities cancelled by lockdown for nearly two years has been British Citizenship ceremonies. I attended recently as Deputy Lieutenant at Newcastle Civic Centre when 50 new citizens and families were able to

celebrate their new status and swear or affirm their allegiance. A splendid occasion even if 11am seemed a little early for scones and cream.

All credit to Her Majesty the Queen who despite being 95 declined the offer of the annual award of 'Oldie of the Year' from the magazine. Previous winners include the Duke of Edinburgh and Dame Edna Everidge. Her reply was read out: 'Her Majesty believes you are as old as you feel, as such the Queen does not believe she meets the relevant criteria to be able to accept'.

We can all agree with that.

Even if reluctantly having to accept the need to use a walking stick, the Queen's undiminished devotion to her duty and the nation is an inspiration to all. She continues to define the nature of our constitutional monarchy, and still shows her delight at a day at the races.

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