

NORTHERN

# INSIGHT

MAY 2022

ISSUE 79

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miller  LAW



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CELEBRATES 20 YEARS OF ACHIEVEMENT**

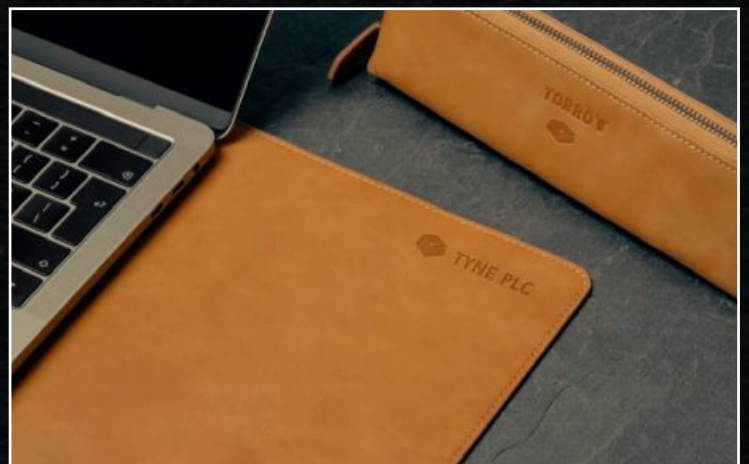
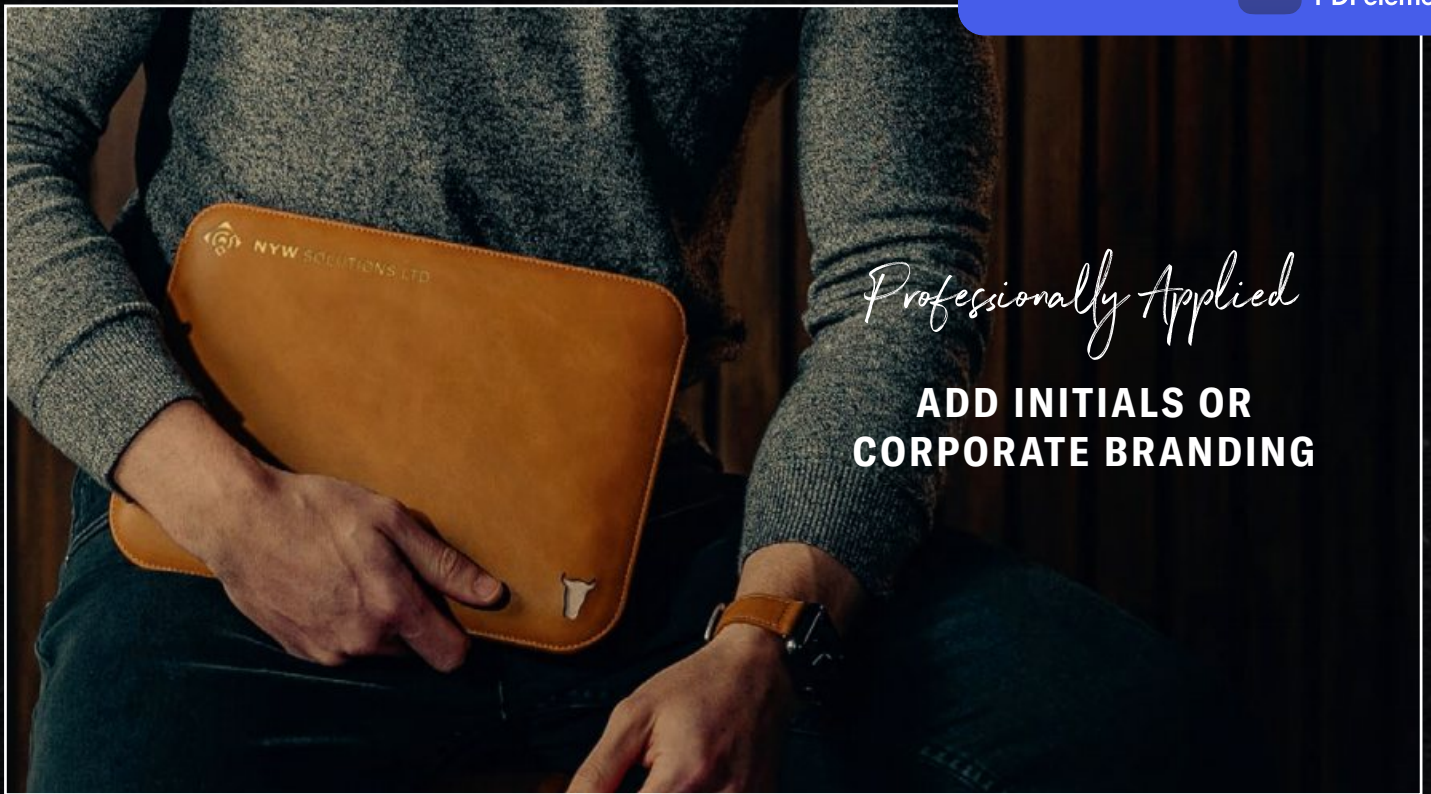
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<b>FRI</b> JUN 10	<b>vs LANCASHIRE LIGHTNING</b>	<b>18:30</b>
<b>FRI</b> JUN 17	<b>vs YORKSHIRE VIKINGS</b>	<b>18:30</b>
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# FOREWORD

Welcome to the May edition of Northern Insight.

Our cover star this month is Sweeney Miller Law who reflect on the growth of the firm due to a dedicated team and a lot of hard work.

Look out also for our first Wedding venue guide which gives a great overview of some of the best places in the region to host your big day celebrations.

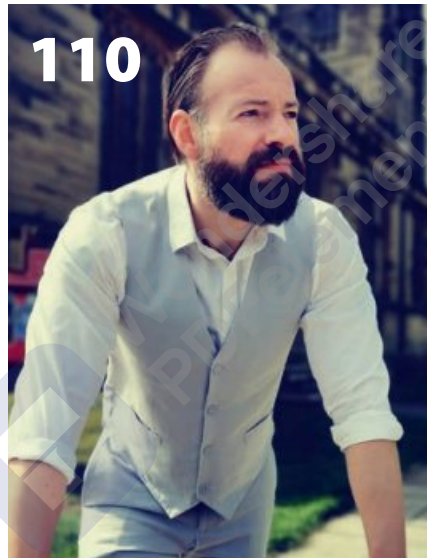
Elsewhere we sample Sunday Lunch at Heaton's wonderful Punto Restaurant and enjoy the delights of a traditional Afternoon Tea at Hotel Indigo.

Travel also returns with a visit to Marseille, France's oldest and second largest city.

Another expansive, buoyant edition to take us into early Summer.

We hope you enjoy. Until next month...

*M.J. Grahamslaw*  
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## TYNE TUNNELS OPERATOR UNVEILS MURAL

**A Northumberland school girl beat hundreds of children in a regional competition to see her artwork turned into a real-life mural, seen by thousands of motorists every day at the Tyne Tunnels.**

Emily Clapham, 12, from Cramlington, won a public vote with her design that shows a 1970s campervan - which was the first vehicle to travel through the Tyne Tunnels when it switched to open-road-tolling - and the bees that live at the tunnels.

Tunnels operator, TT2, launched a competition to find a design that celebrates the tunnels becoming more environmentally friendly, with faster journeys and reduced congestion, since the river crossing became barrierless in November.

Children from across the North East submitted their entries, which were whittled down to four finalists, where a public vote on social media saw Emily's design declared the winner.

Emily and her dad helped local artist Mark Shields paint the mural onto a wall at the Tyne Tunnels North site, in Wallsend.

Emily said: "Winning the competition has been an amazing experience. I am so proud of the design and how the artist recreated it for the mural. I never expected to be so huge!

"Mark has really inspired me and he even let me help with the painting. I got to visit the Tyne Tunnels for a tour and even got to see the control room. I am so grateful for the opportunity and will never forget it! Thank you to the TT2 team and everyone involved."

TT2 chief executive Philip Smith said: "Emily's design looks fantastic. We see it as a fitting tribute to the significant benefit to generations of children who live near the tunnels that CO2 emissions have been cut so drastically thanks to open road tolling."

CO2 emissions that were caused by the plazas have reduced by around 90% since the Tyne Tunnels moved to open road tolling in November 2021. The equivalent of 2,600 passenger return flights to New York were saved in February alone.

## EAGLES AND THE FOODBANK

**Tyneside communities grappling with the demands of the cost-of-living crisis will benefit from a growing partnership highlighting the work of a ground-breaking foodbank.**

As near neighbours with a common goal, Newcastle Eagles and Newcastle West End Foodbank already boast a strong relationship.

And to support the Foodbanks network in Newcastle their name will take its place on the vests of the Eagles' BBL team when they return to the action at the Vertu Motors Arena tonight.

Paul Blake, Managing Director of Newcastle Eagles, added: "We have an opportunity to highlight the invaluable work of Newcastle's Foodbanks between now and the end of the season.

"We are always looking at ways to help our local community and this is a chance to showcase a vital service that makes a difference to so many families.

"We are proud to be based in the West End of Newcastle and community is at the heart of everything we do."

The Eagles parted company with former club sponsor GiveToLocal earlier this week and moved to donate space on the club's official kit and within the Vertu Motors Arena following talks with Newcastle West End Foodbank.

John McCorry, Chief Executive of the Newcastle West End Foodbank, said: "We



are delighted to strengthen our ties with Newcastle Eagles.

"We have the shared aims of supporting communities throughout the city."

The cost-of-living crisis has seen a significant increase in demand for the foodbank's services and club bosses hope that, by underpinning a longstanding and positive relationship, they can shine a light on a team of committed volunteers helping families in need.

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## RAZORBLUE SUPPORTS THE GREAT NORTH AIR AMBULANCE THROUGH FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

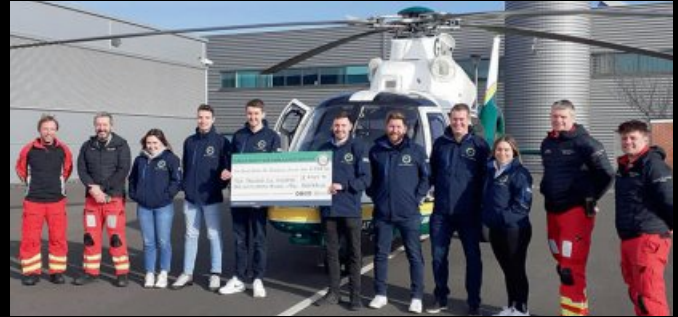
Multi award-winning IT Managed Service Provider, razorblue has grown exponentially over the last few years and has supported the Great North Air Ambulance (GNAA) through various challenges and fundraising activities.

Over the last three years, the company has raised over £4,500 with clothing collections, supporting the Air Angel's Ball, golf days, the Hamsterley Beast Cycling event and the Great North Run, as well as making payroll donations accessible to all staff, and is set to take on another challenge imminently.

Dan Kitchen, CEO at razorblue said: "As a business, we are committed to supporting multiple charities across the region and are frequently involved with fundraising events and campaigns. We are proud of our long-term support for the GNAA, especially after what has been a difficult period during and after the pandemic.

"The Great North Air Ambulance Service rescues hundreds of people every year, which is only possible because of donations. Our team recognises how vital their support is and is committed to continue raising money for this amazing cause."

As part of this long-term relationship with GNAA, razorblue was tasked with fitting out three meeting rooms with Microsoft Teams Rooms equipment earlier this year, which has revolutionized the charity's internal and external



meeting space, improved communications and facilitated remote working.

Clive James, head of IT at Great North Air Ambulance said: "Microsoft Teams Rooms have transformed the way in which we conduct meetings, both internally – bringing together teams across different locations, and externally for nurturing new and existing partnerships.

"The whole team benefits from this easy-to-use system, which provides high quality video and audio capabilities. Thanks to the team at razorblue for the seamless installation and additional support and training provided."

For their latest fundraising campaign, the razorblue team will take on the national Three Peaks challenge on May 14th with the aim of raising £3,000 to support the critical work that the charity does, 365 days a year. The company was grateful to receive generous jacket sponsorship from MI Supplies, a Teesside based clothing provider, and Regatta to wear both during their training walks and the challenge itself.



## SUNDERLAND PROVES A POPULAR LAUNCHPAD FOR ENTREPRENEURS

**Over 1,500 new businesses were formed across Sunderland last year, according to new research.**

Data released by Companies House and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) – analysed by Inform Direct – has revealed that a total of 1,587 new businesses started trading in the city in 2021.

John Korchak, operations director at Inform Direct, said: "It is excellent news to see so many new businesses being started in Tyne and Wear.

"Tyne and Wear boasts an active economy, demonstrated by this latest increase in the number of businesses based in the county.

"Entrepreneurs are clearly motivated to invest in new businesses which meet current and emerging demands for goods or services."

Ellen Thinnesen, chair of Sunderland Business Partnership, a collective of businesses across the city helping to promote Sunderland as a city to do business, has also welcomed the findings.

"Sunderland is a city undergoing huge transformation," she said.

"From Grade A office spaces to world-leading industrial parks and the UK's largest 5G private cell network, the city has established a business ecosystem that encourages and celebrates entrepreneurship, and this research evidences that.

"From major private sector employers such as Ocado, Just Eat and Envision to start-up businesses just starting out on their journey, it's fantastic to see so many people continuing to invest in Sunderland post-pandemic as the city continues to reinvent itself and focus on the future."

Another trend revealed by the data was a rise in the number of Community Interest Companies (CICs) set up during the pandemic.

The North East Business & Innovation Centre (BIC), is one of the region's longest established business support organisations and has helped hundreds of social entrepreneurs set up community interest companies over the past 27 years.

Speaking about the research, Paul McEldon, chief executive of the North East BIC, said: "We've witnessed a real increase in the number of people seeking advice on setting up social enterprises over the past few years, especially during the pandemic.

"With high streets and shopping centres closed, the number of local businesses stepping up to the plate to provide vital delivery services and food parcels for vulnerable people really drove home the importance of shopping local and supporting businesses with ethics at their core.

"From co-operative stores to community bakeries, florists and cafes, there are so many businesses that can be turned into community interest companies that not only generate a profit, but also generate social impact, and we're delighted to see the number of people exploring the idea of setting up social enterprises continuing to rise."

Patrick Melia, chief executive of Sunderland City Council, said: "We are delighted that entrepreneurs are continuing to see Sunderland as a place to do business.

"Through developments such as Riverside Sunderland and our existing incubator hubs at Sunderland Software Centre, Evolve and Washington Business Centre, we've worked tirelessly to attract small businesses to the city and the research from Inform Direct shows all of that work is evidently paying off.

"Add to that our ambitious 5G roll-out with BAI, which will see us become the UK's most advanced Smart City and a number of planned leisure and cultural developments, and I'm sure this is a trend we'll see continue to see grow over the coming years."





## PROFESSIONAL SALES DEVELOPMENT

A simple search will highlight pages and pages of sales training tools, videos, tips, webinars and videos. So, in an unregulated industry with no entry criteria, how can you validate the quality and expertise? The adage of 'you get what you pay for' is still true today and is free ever truly free?

**Professionalising the sales industry remains our key business philosophy over at our sister company Just Williams as does it at The Just Williams Sales Academy. To do this, we believe in setting an industry standard for entry into the profession of Sales. Creating a minimum standard, a base level of expertise, knowledge, ethical standing, and certification to suit.**

For decades the sales profession has struggled to gain authority due to the negative connotations so many still perceive. Only this week I was providing training in-house to a range of business owners looking to scale, who when asked still felt uncomfortable using the word sales, all whilst acknowledging how vital a function it was. We have been championing this cause for almost a decade ourselves now and professionalising an industry essential to us all. For as I say time and time again, you can have the best product or service but if you can't sell it, well it will remain exactly as it started – an idea.

As I launched Just Williams, I was keen to create a base line and industry standard for myself and so commenced an Executive MBA at Teesside University Business School, with my thesis specialising in the Psychology of Sales. During the extensive research into the subject, I came across the now-named Institute of Sales Professionals [www.members.the-isp.org](http://www.members.the-isp.org) the national body for Sales. We subsequently, as a business, launched the Northeast network for sales professionals and



Jessica Williams

were unsurprisingly overwhelmed by the positive response. A number of iterations later, the ISP based in central London is the official national body for Sales and like Just Williams - their ethos is centered around Professionalising the Sales Industry. To join the organisation, individuals are required to pass an ethics exam and agree to a code of conduct to ensure a consistent and applied approach. With thousands of members nationally, we are proud at The Just Williams Sales Academy to be an endorsed training provider through the ISP with all our online modules achieving this important standard.

Sales, like any other profession requires continuous development in both the individual and organisation, to provide a consistent approach, an ethical standard and a base line skill set. Once a base line is achieved, individual professional development utilising a range of resources, both free and paid is essential to ensure knowledge, skill and techniques remain relevant and up to date.

The last year has seen sales professionals stretched and challenged well outside of their comfort zones with new skill sets picked up and self-taught. Now as I hope we all start to acknowledge the importance of the sales function; we can start to change to culture and perception of it for our

own salespeople and indeed for our businesses reputation. We can all do this by ensuring our sales teams operate at a national standard (I am yet to hear anyone that doesn't want this!) and invest in their development. Joining the ISP as a member, attending the numerous webinars, seminars and ensuring your training is accredited and endorsed; connect with a network of likeminded sales professionals and share best practices – these are all great ways of growing, developing and helping professionalise what we do.

On 7th September we will be partnering with Teesside University Business School and the ISP to bring together Sales Professionals from across the North to share, learn, challenge and inspire growth – personal and professional. We will be revealing more information on this very soon but if you want to get involved or if you'd like to find out more about our online and inhouse training in all the areas discussed, contact [JWSA@justwilliamsales.academy](mailto:JWSA@justwilliamsales.academy)

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## COVER STORY



“

**...With solid foundations in place, from the firm's leadership team to maintaining a strong pipeline of exceptional talent, it is exciting to see what we can achieve in the next four years...**

*L-R: Jess Fenwick, Michael Story, Irenna Pietruszka, Damien Todd and Surbhi Vedhara.*

# IT'S ALL IN THE PLANNING

When Sweeney Miller Law's leadership team made the strategic decision to grow the firm in 2018, little did they realise what planning, a dedicated team and a lot of hard work could achieve.

**The firm was established in 2002 by Founder and Managing Partner, Paul Miller in Sunderland. Surbhi Vedhara joined the firm in 2007 and became a partner in 2013. Following increasing demand for their services supporting both businesses and individuals with conveyancing, commercial property, company and commercial, family law, dispute resolution, private client and landlord and tenant, the firm opened a second office in Newcastle in 2014.**

## The planning phase

In 2018 and in response to the successful Newcastle move, Paul and Surbhi made a commitment to grow the firm by appointing additional new partners, deploying a strategic approach to succession planning and as part of that process undergoing a rebrand, website refresh and focus on marketing and business development.

## Change from the top down

The next stage, interrupted but not blown off course by the pandemic, was to reconfigure and future proof the senior leadership team and build solid foundations for growth. This led to Jess Fenwick and Damien Todd joining Surbhi Vedhara as Equity Partners, whilst founder Paul Miller stepped into a training and consultancy role.

Jess and Damien's promotion in 2021 demonstrated the firm's commitment to the career progression of its team with no 'glass ceilings'. 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.

## A new home with room for growth

The most recent development for the ambitious firm was the relocation of its Newcastle branch to 4400 square feet office space over two floors at Bulman House in Gosforth. This was in addition to nearly 9000 square feet office premises in Ashbrooke, Sunderland. As well as providing space for the firm's continued expansion, with improved transport links and car parking, the new offices are more accessible to its clients and staff.

## The team is everything

Understanding that its team are its greatest asset, the firm has developed its own bespoke inhouse training programme with dedicated facilities in the new Gosforth office. This provides 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'.

Again, investing in future talent, the firm has collaborated with Newcastle University and Sunderland University, establishing an annual 'Sweeney Miller Scholarship Grant', providing scholarships for students interested in a career in the law.

The firm is always looking at innovative ways to develop lawyers of the future, including through the solicitor apprenticeship, licensed conveyancer and CILEX routes.

Understanding the pressures of working in a law firm for all members of staff, the firm is committed to the wellbeing of its team. This was particularly important during the pandemic. Eight members of the firm, all senior lawyers or partners, have been trained as Mental Health first aiders, and can identify and deal with early signs of any staff in difficulty.

## Executing the plan and delivering results

Since making the strategic decision to grow the firm in 2018 and taking each of the practical steps to make that happen, the firm's turnover will have increased by 65% at its financial year end in May 2022. In turn, the firm's headcount continues to grow and is now approaching 80.

As well as the positive numbers, the firm is working with much larger corporate clients and increasingly receives instructions from across the UK, including London and is benefitting from the rapidly developing opportunities of "North-shoring", where both business and private clients from the South, instruct more affordable professional service providers in the North.

An endorsement of the firm's achievements has been the recent news that Sweeney Miller are finalists in the 2022 Northern Law Awards Law Firm of the Year (1- 5 Partners) category, as well as for the Team of the Year - Commercial Property and Team of the Year - Residential Property categories. The Awards are a reflection of the exceptional legal talent in the region and celebrate the successes across the North East's legal community.

## Maintaining momentum and looking ahead

Reflecting on the firm's growth, Surbhi said, "I am so proud of what every member of the Sweeney Miller team has achieved in the last four years, from ensuring that excellent service standards were maintained throughout the pandemic, attracting fantastic new clients from across the UK, to dealing with the upheaval of moving to Bulman House. With solid foundations in place, from the firm's leadership team to maintaining a strong pipeline of exceptional talent, it is exciting to see what we can achieve in the next four years. The icing on the cake has been confirmation of becoming finalists at this year's Northern Law Awards, it should be a great evening – we wish the best of luck to each of the other finalists."

**To find out more, visit [www.sweeneymiller.co.uk](http://www.sweeneymiller.co.uk) or call 0345 900 5401.**





# WANT TO RAISE YOUR PROFILE? YOU NEED TO FIND YOUR MOJA

*"There is only one thing in life worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about". Oscar Wilde*

**It often seems incredibly self-centred but invariably the best thing about your business is you. You may have founded the business...you may be the person who turned it around... you may be the driving force who everyone looks up to.**

In other words, the best way to promote your business is to promote you. Think of how YOU do business. You probably buy from people you know or people who've been recommended to you. They're also likely to be people who've built a relationship with. Raising your profile will help build your connections, make you more recognisable, get you featured in the press and increase your online visibility. This will then get you and your business in front of more people who are potential clients or customers, which will lead to more sales and the growth of your business.

That is where Newcastle based Moja come in.

They're a profile building agency whose aim is to get your name out there and let everyone in your industry know who you are.

Put it this way, when you walk into a networking meeting or a conference, do any of the other delegates know your name and who you are? No? Well Moja will change that.

"Our clients are busy business people," says Moja founder and CEO Sophie Milliken, "but growing a thriving professional profile is important. It can lead to new connections, more opportunities, more business and exciting experiences. Who doesn't want that?"

We know that no two clients are the same, which is why the service we offer is bespoke. We find out where the client's profile is already performing and only provide help in the areas where they need to grow. While we do that, our client can get on with running their business."

Moja is a PR company, media agency, training academy, networking co-ordinator, social media expert, website builder and awards writer all under one roof. Too often you will find that a company you turn to for help only does one of those. The truth is these areas interact with each other, frequently blending together and varying in importance depending on the situation. Moja utilises all of those features to get your voice heard, get you known, and grow your business.

Moja clients complete a profile quiz where they're scored on topics such as awards and recognitions they'd realistically qualify for, how much authority they have, how strong their online visibility is, and what sort of power and influence they exert. Moja ascertains things like whether they're the sort of client who'd enjoy public speaking (or not) and how

likely they are to get their name mentioned in the media. It's important stuff to measure and allows Moja to tailor a programme to suit a client's exact needs, strengths, and personality.

"We put together a plan of action which touches on as many areas as possible where we expect a client and their business to get known. Results will show an increase in online visibility and you can expect to see stories linked to you in the media. Your network connections will increase and you will find that you are invited to join organisations as an advisor. All of this raises your profile.

And as your profile goes up, the chances of your business growing and becoming more profitable will also increase."

Expect to see a lot of Moja. Following their recent launch in Newcastle, Moja will launch in Manchester (around mid-September) followed early next year by a launch event in London. If you know of anyone in those areas who would benefit from raising their profile, get them to contact Moja or complete the free profile quiz.

The best idea is to speak to Sophie and her team to find out what they can do for you. In the meantime, is there anything you can start working on to raise your profile?

"One of the quickest and most cost-effective ways is to either take part in or create your own podcast," adds Sophie. "It gives you a position of authority and improves your credibility. Load it onto YouTube and, as long as you talk about or demonstrate something which is topical, you will find that people will want to watch."

Working with Moja could be the smartest business move you ever make.

**Interested? You should be. You can contact Sophie and her team via their website - [www.thisismoja.com](http://www.thisismoja.com) or drop them an email - [hello@thisismoja.com](mailto:hello@thisismoja.com)**

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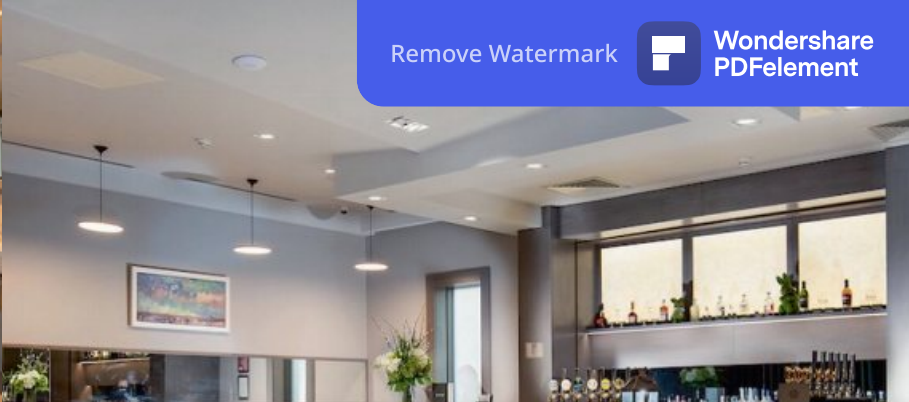
**...new connections,  
more opportunities,  
more business and  
exciting experiences.  
Who doesn't want that?...**

# The Big Interview



Sophie Milliken







# THE MALDRON MAGIC

By Michael Grahamslaw

Since opening for business in 2018, Newcastle's Maldron hotel has been making all the right noises offering deluxe accommodation to the discerning business and leisure traveller.

**The four star hotel sits at the heart of the city's Newgate Street and is within merely minutes' walk of the city's parade of shops, restaurants, bars and popular tourist attractions.**

Uniquely, the hotel was the first of its kind to open in mainland UK, as part of Ireland's largest hotel group, Dalata, and unsurprisingly has spawned a number of sister venues. One such hotel is the Manchester Maldron which I have booked into for the hotly anticipated Queen & Adam Lambert concert later this month so was keen to road test the chain's Newcastle outpost in expectation.

My wife Lisa and I were certainly not disappointed.

The hotel comprises 265 rooms including double, twin, triple, family and executive rooms. These are stylish spaces punctuated by the trademark Maldron yellow and very well equipped with flat screen TVs, tea & coffee facilities and en-suite bathrooms with rainfall showers. In a nod to the area's heritage, many of the hotel's showpiece rooms are named after Tyneside legends including industrial designer Sir William Armstrong, railway pioneer Robert Stephenson, architect John Dobson and property developer Richard Grainger. Suffice to say, the Bruno Guimarães suite could be next on the agenda.

Our overnight stay wasn't just a pre holiday recon mission meanwhile and was also our basecamp before and after viewing the acclaimed Beautiful – The Carole King Musical at Newcastle's Theatre Royal. The hotel's Grain & Grill restaurant proved the perfect spot for a pre-dinner bite with an extensive evening menu in full swing.

The concept here is simple. The grill at the heart of the restaurant seals in the flavour of a selection of prime meats and fish, locking in the juices of deliciously healthy, full flavoured dishes crafted by chefs with locally-sourced, seasonal ingredients.

The 'grain' meanwhile refers to a number of complementary beers and spirits from popular favourites to local brews. Alas, Fans of 'The Grape' are also well looked after with a stunning selection of wines available.

To give you a flavour, I enjoyed the homemade soup of the day (tomato and red pepper) with a fat hunk of stodgy sourdough before following up with the signature chicken 'hanging' skewers with chorizo, sweet peppers and smoky BBQ dip.

Mrs G elected for the bruschetta with garlic bread and French dressing followed by the smoked salmon with sundried tomatoes, courgette and red onion Hollandaise sauce.

It is also worth mentioning the restaurant's precocious 17 year old waiter Clinton who looked after us superbly for the duration of our meal and was an absolute credit to the hotel.

After a showstopping performance of the award-winning west end show Beautiful – we collapsed into bed for a full eight hours sleep and couldn't believe how peaceful it felt for downtown Newcastle.

The following morning, we enjoyed a superb cooked breakfast whilst also noting an outdoor courtyard area for al fresco drinking and dining which also appeared to be a hit with the city's business folk for meetings and laptop working. It hasn't taken long then for the hotel to endear itself to its swanky intra-city clientele. Yellow are its colours but the Maldron team have struck gold!

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





# INNER GROWTH MOVES THE FALCONS FORWARD



Newcastle Falcons' commitment to growing from within has been emphasised by the promotion of two senior academy players into the first team squad.

**Back-rower Freddie Lockwood and winger Iwan Stephens are the two players stepping up into the senior ranks, having both signed first-team contracts for the next two seasons.**

Their ascension backs up the club's publicly stated mantra of nurturing their own talent, with Lockwood and Stephens having both enjoyed breakthrough seasons.

"I really enjoy it here at the Falcons, I've had a decent amount of game time lately and I want to push on and play a bit more for the first team over the next couple of years," said Lockwood, the 21-year-old North Yorkshire native who came through with Barnard Castle School.

Making his Premiership debut away to champions Harlequins in March, Lockwood has put together a string of starts in recent weeks, helping create tries for his team-mates with his direct running style.

He added: "It's great to be doing it at a time when a lot of the academy boys are pushing through together and starting to get a few more senior appearances. The club have been pretty open about choosing to go down that path, and as someone who's been involved in the system there's definitely a lot of talent within the local area.

"I've loved the involvements I've had with the first team over the last month or two, and the support

from the crowd. I play a pretty direct game, which I think they like, and it's just a case of keeping on learning and improving."

Joining Lockwood in the senior ranks for next season is Stephens, the electric winger who is in only his second season of rugby union after switching from Leeds Rhinos rugby league club.

Academy manager and first team skills coach Mark Laycock said: "Iwan came up to us in the September of 2020, and I remember in his first week half our squad were off due to Covid, so Iwan had to play fly-half in a Premiership squad's training session despite having never played rugby union for three years.

"That was a baptism of fire, but we signed him because he was a finisher. He's definitely got that quality about him, he's also a good goal-kicker, is very strong aurally and his work ethic is top class. It was a calculated punt on our part to get him in, but he's done really well."

Stephens scored tries in his first three games for the Falcons, dotting down against Harlequins, Bath and Wasps, with the current season seeing him also learning his trade at Blaydon as well as spending four months out with a knee injury.

He said: "We've got an exciting group of predominantly English lads, a lot coming through the Falcons' own system, and I think the future's looking good for the club. There's a lot of



Iwan Stephens



Freddie Lockwood

competition for places on the wing and in the back three, but everyone's really supportive and we look to learn from each other.

"I'm improving my understanding of the game with the help of the coaches and other players here, and it's a good environment to be in."

**Season ticket memberships for 2022-23 are on sale now from [www.newcastlefalcons.co.uk](http://www.newcastlefalcons.co.uk)**





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## MY WEEKEND



Sarah Wharrier



We find out what

## SARAH WHARRIER

Regional Sales Director, CMYK

*gets up to on a typical weekend.*

### Do you ever have to work weekends?

Sometimes I do yes, if I have work to do that is time sensitive or a big workload that can't be finished through the week. On the whole though, I try to keep my weekends free as I do believe it's important to have the right work/life balance. I think it's important to be able to return to work on a Monday morning feel refreshed and with a clear mind, ready for the week ahead.

### Are most weekends the same?

Well I'm not really one for routine so my weekends can range from chilling at home or spending time with my horses, to enjoying a weekend in London with friends/family, or going to the Lake District with my dog Pip... I love making plans and having adventures to look forward to on weekends.

### Do you find it hard to switch off?

I must admit that I do at times, it can be hard to switch off from work when it's important to you and you live and breathe what you do. I find exercise always helps to be able to clear your head, whether that be a nice long walk with the dog, a ride on my horse or sweating it out at Crossfit!

### What do you do at a weekend which you can't fit in through the week?

Catching up with friends over a long lunch, or binge watching a box set as I never seem to get time to watch tv through the week.

### Morning exercise or a recovery lie in?

Usually I am up early every morning, whether that be through the week or at weekends. I always feel like I have wasted the best part of the day if I don't get up early...although on the odd occasion a recovery lie in is definitely required after a night out with the girls and a few too many proseccos!

### Big night out or a night in the house?

Both! I love a big night out as much as I love a quiet night in. But in reality I would say it's probably a quiet night in more than often these days. Is that a sign I'm getting old?

### Do you watch or play sport at a weekend?

Yes, I'm a keen equestrian and I've had my own horses from a very young age. I am an amateur showjumper, so I spend a lot of time at weekends training or at competitions. There is also a lot of preparation involved for competitions so that keeps me busy (and also means early mornings!)

### Where do you like to eat out at a weekend?

I'm a big foodie and love to eat out, whether that's at the local pub/Italian restaurant or trying somewhere new in town. I'm always happy when I'm eating and although I love to cook, I think it's good to have a treat at the weekends and eat out, plus it means there is no washing up to do!

### How important is the weekend to you?

Very important! I think we all deserve some downtime to enjoy ourselves when our work lives are so busy and we spend so many hours at work.

### What's the best thing about weekends?

Just being able to enjoy myself and have time to relax, unwind and cherish all of the things that I work hard for through the week, whether that be chilling at home, with my horses, spending time with friends and family or a weekend away.

### Of a weekend, you'll usually find me...

At the stables, spending time with my horses.

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## NEWCASTLE BASED SALES DIRECTOR HELD ON THE UKRAINIAN BORDER, DURING HUMANITARIAN MISSION

Ian Forster, a 51-year-old Sales Director & Newcastle Conservative Association Treasurer, got more than he bargained for after spontaneously deciding to raise funds and gather urgently needed supplies to drive the 1500 miles in his trusty Land Rover Defender to the Refugee centre in Przemysl; on the Polish/Ukrainian border.

**During the epic 3,000-mile, one week mission which he set off for on 27/4/22 & travelled through Holland, Germany down to South-eastern Poland, he encountered some significant challenges. Ian was held & searched on the Ukrainian border for over three hours during a late-night mercy mission carrying urgent medical supplies into Ukraine; and was also approached by three U.K. ex-military civilians in Przemysl; who he agreed to drop near the border crossing so they could go & fight in Ukraine, as part of the International Legion.**

Ian witnessed some heart-breaking scenes during his time working at the refugee centre, which has significantly touched him. People trafficking is rife, conditions are poor, and it is a human tragedy he witnessed in the raw. After arriving back in the U.K. on Monday 4th April, he is even more determined to keep on fundraising; to raise additional funds to support a vehicle being used to transport fleeing refugees, transporting aid into Ukraine and to also shuttle refugees to the U.K. Visa Processing centre in a nearby town.

Ian teamed up with a Newcastle based charity called Make a Difference (MAD) who were working as part of Operation SafeDrop; which was an initiative 'Working to provide support & transportation to get women and children safely from the Ukrainian border to their desired destination.' After discussing the appeal with John



Lawler at MAD, he committed to raising enough funds to cover his costs to get himself and the urgent supplies out to Poland, so he wasn't a drain on the charity's scarce resources. He was subsequently joined on the mission by a fellow Land Rover Defender owner, Tim Cieslik from Lincolnshire. Tim joined Ian's mission after an appeal he did for donations to the various worldwide Land Rover Defender groups.

After initially setting a target of raising £1,000, which he then increased to £2,500, then £4,500 & he has currently raised £10,560, with more to follow. He's hustled everyone he knows and featured as the lead news item on BBC Look North. He has constantly updated everyone of his progress on his Facebook page and the various groups he is a member of. With donations being made from as far away as Louisville, Kentucky to Japan from fellow Defender owners, both Tim & Ian have been overwhelmed with people's generosity. As Ian said: "As Georgies, we never fail to answer a call for help & I have been overwhelmed with people's generosity supplying a significant amount of urgently needed items such as Toothbrushes, toothpaste, woman's sanitary products, nappies, children's toys along with new socks and underwear. It is truly humbling, and we were thrilled with our international donations." After delivering the aid (which went straight over to Lviv), Ian and Tim worked at the Refugee centre in Przemysl, assisting MAD shuttling women and children to their onward destinations and to the U.K. Visa processing centre in Rzeszow; along with medical supply runs and replenishing stocks of products at refugee centres.

There was a constant flow of refugees arriving daily on buses from the Ukrainian side and Ian recalls one vivid image of two women and three small children with only the clothes on their backs and a couple of small bags of belonging, in temperatures of -2°, looking dazed, lost and haunted as he waited to cross into Ukraine. The whole experience within the refugee centre was harrowing. "A sensory overload"; as Ian calls it.

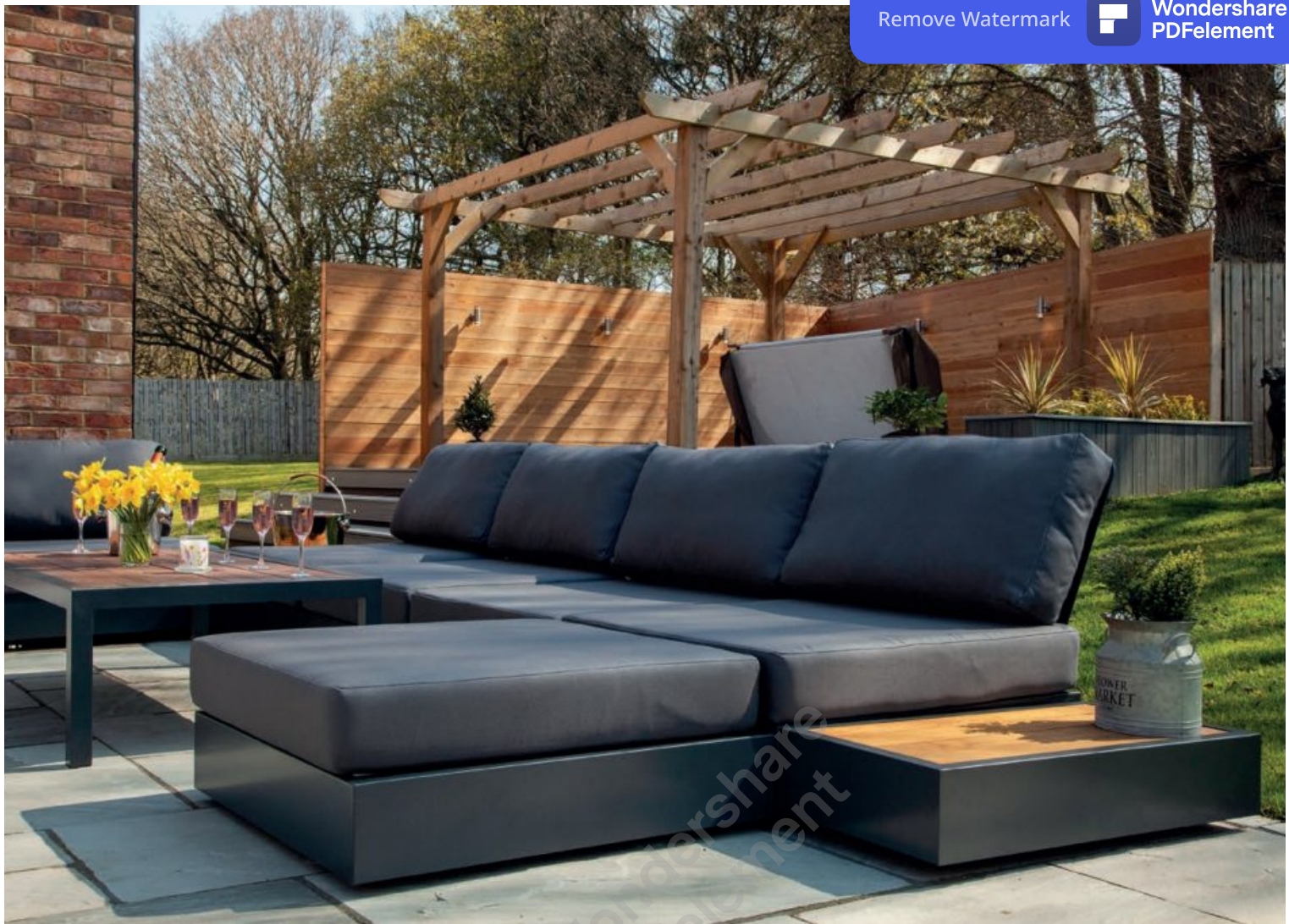
The scenes he has witnessed are heart breaking. There are groups of volunteers trying their best & Ian has worked with people from as far away as Colorado & San Francisco. The threat of people trafficking and the pilfering of aid (all packs of items must be broken down into single items to avoid theft on arrival at the refugee centres); only add to the misery the poor Ukrainian refugees face.

However, Ian witnessed help pouring in from all corners of the globe and was heartened that so many people had either donated; or physically heard the call and gone to the border to help.

**Current fundraising total now stands at £10,770. Ian's is still raising funds here... [www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/ian-forster-2?utm\\_term=KdkDnqD38](http://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/ian-forster-2?utm_term=KdkDnqD38) or scan the QR code opposite.**







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# HOLDING A MIRROR UP TO YOUR BUSINESS

Geoff Maclauchlan of Kingsmere Finance Directors is an experienced outsourced Finance Director providing strategic financial and operational planning and management guidance to businesses aiming to increase financial stability, efficiency, and profitability.

Here, Geoff examines the importance of having current financial information to gauge a business's health.

## Finance Director v External Accountant

The roles of an outsourced FD and a business's external accountant are very different. The latter focus mainly on a business's history, producing a set of year-end numbers relating to several months earlier. They also focus on tax. However, what many cannot do is inform the business where they are at present, nor where they are headed. When looking at a new client, it often becomes apparent that they don't have accurate and up-to-date records, often because year-end adjustments have not been posted into the accounts. These can be significant changes, correcting errors made during the year, or reflecting tax and other provisions. Inability to interrogate all financial information is of real concern in the current volatile economic climate.

## Does the move to digital provide an accurate snapshot of a business?

Digital platforms such as Sage and Xero provide a snapshot of current trading – sales, purchases and overheads. However, if opening balances are incorrect, the balance sheet may well differ from the reality, and can possibly be so distorted as to be either meaningless, or more worryingly, lull the Directors into a false sense of security. Even with invaluable and ever-evolving digital tools, the failure to monitor bookkeeping basics can create a worrying picture.

## Why this matters to businesses

Without accurate financial information and working cash flow, those running businesses will not know when the money is going to run out, and are unlikely to be prepared for unexpected challenges, of which there are plenty at the moment – war in Eastern Europe, National Insurance hike, raw materials and utility price increases. Businesses need robust financial information to decide if inflationary pressures can be passed on



Geoff Maclauchlan

to customers or if they will have to be absorbed, reducing their own margins. Many businesses are also facing the repayment of Covid loans and the ending of Covid protections meaning that landlords can now take legal action against tenants.

Using the analogy of people developing medical problems, they don't consult a doctor because they are worried about what the diagnosis may be. If they sought medical help early, the problem could possibly be resolved quickly with minor treatment. The longer it is left, it can become too serious to cure. The same applies with business finance – there are solutions to problems which businesses often aren't aware of, which Insolvency Practitioners for example can deploy, including acting on behalf of the business to negotiate with creditors or to work out a restructure. However, if businesses approach these professionals too late, then they will have missed the opportunity to benefit from their help and expertise in exploring alternative exits or other solutions.

## What practical steps should businesses take if they are unclear on their financial situation?

To repeat – it is vital that businesses are aware of their current position, not simply looking at the year-end accounts for much can have happened in the months since then. This information needn't be hugely comprehensive or expensive, but it must be accurate. As highlighted in previous articles it is important to have a cashflow forecast to cover the next twelve months. Thirteen weeks used to be a common recommendation, but it is no longer adequate given the imponderables which now exist. To meet the challenges ahead, business owners and managers should have an open dialogue with their external accountants, lawyers and finance professionals, exploring options well in advance, rather than waiting for the 'axe to fall'.

Given the challenges business faces at present,

financial management based on accurate and timely information has never been more important. This may not necessitate a full-time Finance Director, just a resource which assists on a regular weekly, monthly or even quarterly basis, ensuring that this essential information is available, showing how the business is doing and where problems may be developing.

## A few further tips

Against this background of uncertainty, it is important to remind business owners of the value of credit insurance, ensuring some protection against the failure of larger customers.

They should also consider with their broker or insurer the reinstatement value on premises. As construction costs have increased massively, there is a real risk that if a building was destroyed by fire, existing policy levels may not cover the loss.

Currency protection is another issue that exporting and/or importing companies should be considering given current global volatility. Certainty over cost or sales value can create reassuring peace of mind.

Cybersecurity was already a major issue, but Covid has led to increased frequency and extent of cyber-attacks. Businesses must ensure they have robust protection, backup systems and contingency plans in place against ransomware, (which is now the most common form of attack) or other intrusion. It is also important to test these precautions, not just relying on a written plan. Many businesses don't restore from their backups to make certain that they work. In addition, every business should have cyber and commercial crime insurance. It's not expensive, but is an essential protection given the potentially catastrophic impact of a successful cyber-attack.

For further details visit [www.kfdl.co.uk](http://www.kfdl.co.uk) or contact Geoff at [gm@kfdl.co.uk](mailto:gm@kfdl.co.uk)

# IN CONVERSATION WITH...

## LIZ FERRY

Investor and Community Relations,  
GB Bank

### What were your career ambitions growing up?

In my younger years I always wanted to go into teaching, however my time at senior school soon put me off that as a career as I saw first-hand how tough it could be. I was reminded again during lockdown when the schools closed that it wouldn't have been for me as my own children quickly turned me right off it. Teachers are awesome.

### Tell us about your current role?

I've been with GB Bank from the early days when I first joined as Executive Assistant and Office Manager, and I've had the privilege to be part of the project from vision to licence (received in late 2021), which has given me a lot of exposure in many different areas.

My current role allows me to be much more focused in specific project delivery, but I still get to work with all the GB Bank team and not lose touch with my favourite stakeholders. Building communities is what we strive to do, and I try to do that with everyone I work with. It feels amazing to be part of a team that purposely goes all out to make a difference.

### What is your proudest business achievement?

It sounds cheesy but it's as simple as achieving what we set out to do. I've been super lucky to have done that many times and even the simple wins feel as special as the big ones.

### How has your industry changed in the last decade?

I've worked in different industries over the last decade, and I think they've all changed so much mainly with regards to technology/connectivity.

The biggest change I have seen from the world of work (and I joined it at 15 years old) is that the professional stiffness has nearly gone - and that is such a good thing. The diversity of the workforce with gender/age and cultures is wonderfully refreshing. So much good comes from truly genuine conversations now and I love it.



Liz Ferry

### What are you currently working on?

I'm working on a few things that feed into the future strategies for the bank alongside community and communication projects. Launching a bank keeps everyone busy in a really positive way.

### What is the best piece of business advice you have been given?

Always write an email like it will be read out loud to an audience (or in court - yikes!).

### What has been your biggest challenge?

It's a mixture between regret and challenge. I regret not furthering my education at university and consequently my biggest challenge has always been to prove my value by feeling like I must work harder than everyone else. It can be a positive quality but also exhausting.

### Who are your heroes inside and outside of business?

Jacinda Ardern, the Prime Minister for New Zealand, is a remarkable female leader. She's incredibly natural and authentic.

### How do you unwind outside of work?

I relax predominately through holidays or just being outside in fresh air (preferably in warm weather) - but I'll take any kind of outside therapy that I can.

### Favourite Book and Boxset?

I loved *Grey's Anatomy*, *Suits* and *Mad Men*. I have lots of favourite books but *The Color Purple* and *The Book Thief* are up in the top 10.

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





Richard Humphreys

## GET READY FOR NEXT PHASE OF 'MAKING TAX DIGITAL'

By Richard Humphreys, director at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors

For anyone working in professional services, the Making Tax Digital scheme probably feels like it's been around for decades.

**The implementation of the government's flagship tax initiative, which was designed to allow the taxation process to be conducted in real time by making better use of information through a single financial account, has experienced its fair share of delays since it came in law in 2017, but has now finally come into full effect for VAT payments.**

From April this year, all VAT-registered businesses have to keep VAT records digitally and send returns using Making Tax Digital (MTD) compatible software, regardless of their turnover, and must keep digital records of invoices, receipts and other documentation.

With this objective achieved, HMRC's attention is now turning to the next stage of the initiative, which covers what's being called MTD Income Tax Self Assessment (ITSA) – and as with previous phases of the programme, it will require those that need to comply with these new rules to plan carefully and well in advance for how they do so.

From April 2024, MTD will apply to taxpayers and sole traders who file income tax Self Assessment returns for gross business or property income of more than £10,000 a year.

Quarterly accounts will need to be submitted, and while there is expected to be a bedding in period to enable everyone to get used to the new arrangements, the usual spectre of HMRC penalties will underpin the regulations.

Two years may seem a long way away, but in reality, preparations for dealing with MTD ITSA will need to start well in advance on this date, with the most pressing question being whether you're going to be impacted by the changes.

We're already working with clients to examine their individual situations and how their incomes might be streamlined to best fit with the new rules, and it's already obvious that there's not going to be any kind of 'one size fits all' solution.

There's also the question of how individuals' entry into and exit from the system will be managed if, for example, they draw an income from property rental for a certain period of time before taking their property out of the rental market.

Each individual case will be different, and there will be a much greater imperative for people to be organised in getting their financial documentation ready to specific deadlines.

This will be of particular note to people using agents to let out their property – will the agents provide the necessary information, and will they charge for doing so, or will the owner need to collate it for themselves?

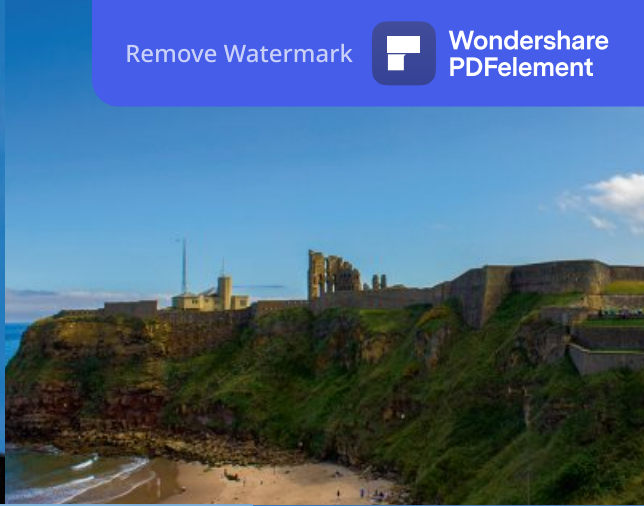
HMRC has yet to provide any free software to help people comply with their evolving responsibilities, as was the case with the initial introduction of Making Tax Digital, and part of our present work is looking at whether individuals would benefit from having some sort of cloud-based accounting software package available into which they could upload all the required information.

HMRC will doubtless publish more information about the practicalities of the new regulations sooner or later, and I'll doubtless be returning to this subject in the future too, especially as, from April 2025, MTD will apply to general partnerships with a turnover of more over £10,000, excluding Limited Liability Partnerships and partnerships with a corporate partner.

In the meantime, experience of the introduction of MTD for VAT very much suggests that the sooner you begin to look at how the new rules are going to impact on your current financial arrangements, and the more you can be preparing early for mitigating this impact, the easier the new rules will be to manage when the time comes.

**For further information on all aspects of Making Tax Digital, contact Richard Humphreys on 0191 256 9500 or visit [www.r-m-t.co.uk](http://www.r-m-t.co.uk)**





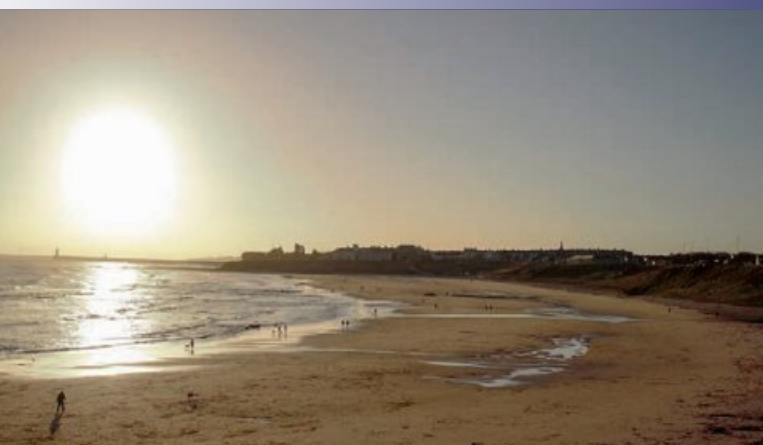
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## FABRIC ACADEMY LOOKS TO BROADEN GLOBAL REACH

A North East marketing training academy is aiming to expand its global reach with the help of a five-figure investment from the North East Small Loan Fund Supported by The European Regional Development Fund.

Fabric Academy creates and delivers webinars and courses for marketers at all stages of their careers which offer a hands-on, real-world approach that identifies and enhances the skills required to develop successful marketing campaigns.

Set up at the beginning of the pandemic, the Newcastle-based firm has seen more than 600 people complete its courses over the last 15 months, with candidates signing up from all over the UK and Europe, and from as far afield as the US, the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand.

The Fabric Academy management team worked with regional fund management firm NEL Fund Managers to bring in the £45,000 Small Loan Fund investment, which will help to enhance its website and digital marketing activities, as well as to bring in the skilled staff needed to underpin its growth plans.

These plans include building mutually beneficial partnerships with other firms, with the first of these, which involves a London-based internship programme provider, set to be revealed in the near future.

Two new jobs are expected to be created in the coming months, with more to follow as the business expands.

Fabric Academy is part of the Scale Up North East programme, which is aimed at supporting North East-based businesses that can demonstrate both the hunger and the potential to achieve high levels of growth, and was referred to NEL by Scaleup North East partner Angelina Bell.

RTC North is delivering the Scale Up North East programme, which is part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), in conjunction with the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

## NORTH EAST INVESTMENT FUND ACHIEVES RECORD LOAN LEVELS

TOC Property Backed Lending Trust PLC (PBLT) managed by Newcastle upon Tyne-based wealth management and property lending specialist, Tier One Capital Ltd (Tier One), has achieved record levels of new loan facilities in support of property developments in the North East and Scotland.

Announcing its full trading update for the financial year ending 30 November 2021, the London Stock Exchange listed company has reported annual new loan facilities of £13.9 million, the highest since it was founded in 2017.

These new loans have been deployed across five developments in the residential and commercial property sectors.

As of November 2021, 17 projects are benefiting from PBLT loans, split between 12 residential projects and five projects with a commercial focus.

In its latest financial year, PBLT achieved profits of £929,000, an increase from £856,000 in the previous 12 months, despite annual net income slipping slightly to £1.697m in 2021 from £1.894m in 2020.

The company generated an earnings per share of 3.45p, an increase from the previous year figure of 3.18p and returned a dividend of 4p per share, an increase from 3p per share in 2020. It also saw its Net Asset value total return increase from 3.9



percent in 2020 to 4.8 percent in 2021.

Ian McElroy, Chief Executive of Tier One, the investment adviser to PBLT said: "The quality of our loan portfolio reflects the growing standing of PBLT as a credible alternative lending resource for developers and the strong activity in the property market.

"We have used this year to protect shareholder value and maintain our strategy of managing a balanced portfolio across residential and commercial schemes.

"We have also continued our focus on liquidity within the fund as there remains elements of volatility in the market from the pandemic, Brexit and the conflict in Ukraine.

"As a result, we have created fund headroom of £11m at the end of the year, which is contributing to our ongoing ambitions to support developments, predominately in the North East, but also in Scotland, with a strong pipeline of potential schemes at varied stages of progress."



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David Foster and Charlotte Enright

## NEW APPOINTMENT PUTS INCREASED FOCUS ON SUSTAINABLE INVESTING

Rapidly expanding, Anglo Scottish Asset Finance, has announced yet another addition to the team, as it looks to be at the forefront of sustainable investing.

**Anglo Scottish Asset Finance has announced the appointment of Charlotte Enright as business development manager and sustainability lead.**

Charlotte, who has previously worked at a

top North East energy company supporting businesses looking to achieve a carbon-neutral status, has been brought in as Anglo Scottish looks to be at the forefront of a new standard for sustainable investing.

As part of her role, Charlotte is looking to build a portfolio of clients keen to switch to more efficient ways of operating, including investment in electric vehicles and energy efficient machinery.

Anglo Scottish, which last year merged with Birmingham-based, Capex Asset Finance, uniting both companies under the Anglo Scottish banner, is an independent finance broker. It provides a range of financial services across the UK including asset finance, business loans, vendor and dealer finance, as well as personal vehicle solutions and vehicle sourcing.

Charlotte Enright, said: "Sustainability is, arguably, the biggest challenge UK business faces, providing huge opportunity for those that address operational inefficiencies face-on.

"We are still at the beginnings of the move to making business sustainable and those that act ahead of their competitors will benefit hugely. This is especially true for those that regularly go to tender to win contracts. A key component of the scoring criteria is social value and businesses

that are able to highlight how progressive they are in terms of sustainability, will be viewed as ones that care about wider society and not just profit. This will help them stand out. On the other hand, those that are slow to act, viewing sustainability as a nice to do, will stand out for the wrong reasons. As ever, first mover advantage will separate the forward thinkers from the hesitant.

"I would encourage all that are looking to address inefficiencies, to reach out for an initial obligation-free chat.

David Foster, managing director, Anglo Scottish Asset Finance, said: "Charlotte's appointment comes at a time when UK businesses are aware they need to take stock of their energy expenditure. It is our aim at Anglo Scottish to be at the forefront of the move to make the UK a sustainable place to do business.

"For many businesses looking to become more sustainable, initial investment will be essential if, for example, they have inefficient machinery but the long-term benefits of addressing these issues as early as possible means the outcome of short-term spend will be evident in their bottom line, going forward."

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



## JANE AND MIKE EARN INVESTMENT TEAM PROMOTIONS WITH NEL FUND MANAGERS

**Two key members of the investment team at the North East's longest-standing business investor have earned promotions on the back of the impact of their work with growing companies across the region.**

Jane Siddle and Mike Guellard have been made senior investment executives at NEL Fund Managers after helping dozens of North East firms successfully secure growth capital investments that enable them to bring in new equipment, launch new products and services and create new jobs.

A qualified chartered accountant with a specialism in corporate finance, Jane joined NEL in 2007 after working in practice in the North East and also undertaking various fund management roles in South Yorkshire.

Mike returned to the region to join NEL in 2016 after working in the banking and finance sector in both the North East and London for organisations including HSBC, Entrust, business microloan provider Fair Finance and investment portal Funding Xchange.

NEL is currently responsible for managing two elements of the £120m North East Fund Supported By The European Regional Development Fund - the £9m North East Small Loan Fund and the £18m North East Growth Capital Fund.

Despite having to predominantly work separately and remotely through most



of 2021, NEL reported its busiest ever investment year last year, completing 61 separate investments worth a total of more than £5.5m in businesses across Tyne & Wear, Northumberland and County Durham.

Dr Yvonne Gale, chief executive at NEL Fund Managers, says: "Jane and Mike have been cornerstones of our investment team for many years and thoroughly deserve the promotions that they've earned."

## GLOBAL ESG FOCUS DRIVES FURTHER GROWTH FOR NORTH EAST BUSINESS

**After securing significant funds with the support of MHA Tait Walker's corporate finance team, Gateshead company ART Health Solutions, has grown its business to accelerate traction across global markets and bolster ESG and CSR policies on behalf of its customers.**

Following several successful capital raises alongside the MHA Tait Walker Corporate Finance team led by Lee Humble, ART has further enhanced their mobile app delivered services: One Wellbeing.

One Wellbeing has been praised for helping businesses deliver on ESG and CSR initiatives, something that has increased in importance in many businesses.

As prospective employees and investors look to work with companies who have environmental and social ethics at the top of their properties, MHA Tait Walker's corporate finance team emphasise that fundraising can be key to accelerating these policy areas.

Dr Phill Bell, Chief Operations Officer of ART Health Solutions said: "Even prior to the pandemic, there was growing recognition that employee health and wellbeing is not only something organisations should provide, but also one that, if delivered correctly, is pivotal to the bottom-line performance of all businesses. Since the pandemic, this feeling has gained further momentum with CEO's routinely stating that the health and wellbeing of employees is their number one priority."

The success of the corporate finance team's work with ART proved that the global boom in corporate ESG and CSR initiatives are relevant to SMEs across the UK. MHA Tait Walker continues to advocate for investment in these areas.

Phil said: "Our product and service aligns directly with ESG and CSR related initiatives across multiple sustainability issues. For example, one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals is Good Health & Wellbeing, an issue that our service directly points towards in improving employee health and wellbeing. Furthermore, our data, reporting and insights allow organisations to provide better working conditions and experiences for their teams across the world, supporting Decent Work and Economic Growth. There are multiple other routes to aligning our service with organisation specific ESG and CSR goals."

Phil continued: "Working with the team at MHA Tait Walker throughout this raise was both a great experience and an integral part to getting the deal done. The team's knowledge of the investment landscape, energy and drive to see us succeed combined with expert accountancy and modelling support, enabled us to present our proposition in the compelling manner that it deserved."



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Steve Plaskitt

## THE COST OF INFLATION

Steve Plaskitt, Partner at MHA Tait Walker gives his expertise to shareholders in the seeking of vertical integration as protection to inflation and supply shortages.

**The current position in Ukraine is horrifying for those suffering and fleeing war and the knock-on effects will be seen for many years to come within Europe.**

The ripples and waves are already starting to be felt within the UK, creating inflation and uncertainty, on top of the existing inflationary pressures, which in turn is a massive force for change for Northeast businesses.

For some businesses this change will be too much. Profits will be forced down this year – and some businesses will undoubtedly sink.

But many will survive and continue to thrive if they can react and increase their own sales prices and maintain/grow volumes in the face of the supply inflation surges.

**There are so many reasons why prices are rising:**

- rising inflation on incoming supplies (ranging from steel, shipping containers to computer chips).
- rising energy costs.
- lack of labour supply for many skilled and unskilled positions which has led to greater competition for retention and recruitment of staff which in turn drives up staff costs and churn and creates further inflation.
- labour and supply shortages also force delays or reductions in output and so customers are willing to pay more to secure key supplies.
- rising fuel costs have created increased travel and shipping costs;

- interest rates are now rising; and
- all of the above feed higher prices as the cycle of inflation forces others to increase their prices throughout the supply chain.

Inflation and global uncertainty are creating the perception of a tsunami of further supply shortages and transport disruption, especially for goods coming from Asia or Eastern Europe. Where some scaremongers may talk of stagflation and create fear, the reality is that change is natural and part of evolution.

**So how do businesses seek to find niches and adapt their business models?**

Some will identify which customers can pay the most and seek to direct their limited energies to those areas to maximise profits, others will seek more efficient ways of working and some will look at vertical integration.

We have started to see evidence of some larger UK company owners start to address these problems by looking at their supply chain with a critical eye and seeing if they can vertically integrate – by acquiring a local key supplier they can take a greater share of those critical items in shortest supply, take back control of their core supplies and seek to make synergy savings to counteract inflation.

**So, what six simple steps should you start to consider when you are looking at vertical integration:**

- identify the most critical parts which could be at

risk of continued disruption or inflation.

- review your supply chain and analyse the spend across those suppliers.
- perform a SWOT analysis of those suppliers.
- assess their lead time, responsiveness, competitive buying positions, capacity for growth and quality.
- consider their management team, commercial approach, and key employees - who and how they could fit with your culture; and
- identify your alternatives.

Having completed these steps, you should speak with your corporate finance adviser and approach the shareholders of a target company to see if they would be interested in discussions. It is important in those talks to understand what they value as shareholders and assess the fit between the two companies.

Only then can you truly start to build a business plan, financial model and see how the two companies could fit together – identifying potential synergies, savings and any sales at risk of being lost. At that stage you can properly assess the valuation and proceed further with the acquisition process.

Finally, don't forget that interest rates are also starting to rise and so the cost of financing any acquisition must be considered. Inflation will not go away quickly - yet businesses that adapt quickly and change give themselves more chances to succeed during this period of political and economic change.

**Steve Plaskitt is Head of Corporate Finance at MHA Tait Walker and has helped numerous businesses with company acquisitions. He has twenty-five years of experience in the Northeast market. For more information please call 0191 285 0321 or email [steve.plaskitt@taitwalker.co.uk](mailto:steve.plaskitt@taitwalker.co.uk)**



## MAVEN INVESTS £600,000 IN APPLIED MONITORING

Finance Durham invested in sensor technology that can scan skin to detect the presence and quantity of alcohol and drugs in a person's bloodstream.

**A £600,000 investment has been made in MedTech specialist Applied Monitoring Ltd ("Applied Monitoring"). This was co-led by The Finance Durham Fund, managed by Maven Capital Partners ("Maven") established by Durham County Council and overseen by Business Durham, and The North East Venture Fund, managed by Mercia Asset Management ("Mercia") and supported by the European Regional Development Fund.**

Applied Monitoring has developed an advanced innovative sensor system that identifies the presence and concentration of alcohol, cocaine and cannabis in a person's bloodstream by scanning their skin. The funding announced today will enable the business to embark on a programme of growth to commercialise its product. The transaction also includes a £100,000 investment from the Centre of Processing Innovation to support further research and development of its technology.

Based at the North East Technology Park (NETPark) in Sedgefield, County Durham, Applied Monitoring's device generates electromagnetic waves at a range of different frequencies that pass through the skin and interacts with chemicals in the blood that are reflected back, analysed and recorded. This technology and application method is non-invasive, quicker and cheaper than common onsite workplace screening tests currently in use. The business is in the process of developing final form desk-based arm scanning equipment, using readily available electronic components similar to those used in mobile phones.

Current onsite test kit technology for drug testing requires bodily fluid samples to be collected and either sent to a lab for subsequent testing or use dipstick test strips that confirm if drugs are present but do not confirm the amount of substance in the person's blood stream. Applied Monitoring's sensor technology software can analyse chemicals in the blood in a matter of seconds, to confirm if a specific chemical is in a person's blood and if so, at what levels.



L-R: Jon Dixon, CEO, Thea Tebble of Mercia, Michael Dickens, Maven's Investment Manager and Rob Connell, CTO.

The global alcohol and drug testing market is projected to be \$10.0bn by 2025, and the UK alcohol and drug testing market alone was estimated to be worth £250m in 2020 and the global on-site testing market is expected to grow from \$485m in 2020 to \$950m in 2025.

Led by a highly experienced management team, CEO Jon Dixon, has over 25 years' experience in sales, product and business development and prior to joining Applied Monitoring was a divisional leader at Sainsbury's and Argos. He is supported by a commercial CTO, Rob Connell who has over 30 years' experience designing, developing, and implementing numerous IT applications including within the UK health sector and previously developed and launched a medical records platform currently used in hospitals.

Michael Dickens, Investment Manager at Maven, said: "Applied Monitoring has developed remarkable technology to enable qualitative and quantitative onsite workplace test results in seconds. Jon and his team all have significant experience developing and launching new software products and operating large sales teams as well as diagnostic sector knowledge. We're delighted the Fund can support the business as it embarks on its exciting next phase of development."

Jon Dixon, CEO of Applied Monitoring, said: "We are confident that Applied Monitoring has truly innovative and transformational technology offering the business strong competitive advantage versus the current market offerings. As a validation

of our technology and business plan it is wonderful to have Maven and Mercia on-board and it has been a pleasure working with Michael Dickens and Thea Tebble of Mercia over the past few months. The financial support provided by Maven and Mercia, alongside the guidance of our highly experienced advisory Executive team ensures the business is best placed for an exciting future.

Thea Tebble, Investment Associate at Mercia, said: "Mercia are delighted to support Applied Monitoring in the continued development of their market disrupting technology, which will significantly increase the speed and ease of alcohol and drugs of abuse testing. Mercia look forward to collaborating with Jon and Rob on the exciting growth journey that lies ahead."

Cllr James Rowlandson, Portfolio holder for resources, investment and assets at Durham County Council, said: "Applied Monitoring are an excellent example of the innovative companies at NETPark, its fantastic to be able to provide finance through Finance Durham to enable the company to solve real world problems with novel applications of technology.

"Last year we announced plans to expand NETPark, we will be investing circa £50m to finance the expansion providing new laboratory, office, production and storage space to help companies, like Applied Monitoring, grow at NETPark, creating more and better jobs in County Durham."

[mavencp.com](http://mavencp.com)

# Finance Durham Fund

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# DIVERSITY, ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION

Andrew Marsh, chair of Vistage for the North East and Northumberland, NED for numerous businesses and charities; and successful entrepreneur, spends his days helping business leaders achieve goals and find opportunity.

**Over the next three articles Andrew is going to look at the importance of a robust policy and approach for each of Diversity, Engagement and Inclusion as they are of true importance to get right, rather than being viewed as just a box ticking exercise.**

"In the DEI conversation each are as important as each other, and intricately bound together but for the purpose of this article we are going to start by looking at Diversity.

"What exactly is diversity, why does it matter, and how as an organisation, do you ensure that diversity garners a positive edge for competitive advantage?

"There is a potential for many companies to just tick boxes when it comes to diversity, but the importance of getting your approach to diversity right could bring in more profit, create greater perspectives of opportunity and improve communication on many levels. A recent study from McKinsey & Company shows that diversity can be profitable, for example, on average, companies that practice gender diversity in executive teams outperform peers by over 20%.

"But what is diversity when alongside engagement and inclusion? It is a deep reference and can be applied to many things including social class, gender, race, religion, disability, culture, age, stature and the most recent, pronoun reference (He/Him. She/Her, They/Them). According to Alison Reynolds of Reynolds HR and OD Limited, the law is changing at such a fast pace in the diversity world, it will soon no longer be about making a choice, but about following legislation to recruit and promote in the workplace.

"As a leader it's about ensuring you are including and engaging with a quality mix of perspectives. To get it right provides an organisation with a rich tapestry of perspectives, knowledge, culture and opportunity. To get it wrong can leave a company in an "institutional" same think state, lacking vision, with invisible barriers that show or hinder progress in today's markets.

"This however can bring a challenge in itself for many, especially when seeking board diversity – to get true diversity you may find yourself having to find a lot of people to achieve diversity. But that is a bit of a myth. It is important that your approach to diversity is relevant and will achieve quality of perspective with anyone appointed being the best individual for the role. What is fundamental in diversity is ensuring you are appealing and engaging to as many wide-ranging audiences as possible, in other words make your language on job adverts as open for diverse applications as possible. Take time to reflect are we unconsciously bias with our words?

"If you are serious about diversity there are lots of groups that can help you get your engagement right including the Asian Federation of Small Business, City Ladies, Diversity in Entrepreneurship, Chamber of Commerce, HR Dept and of course, Vistage.

"There is the law element to take into consideration obviously, on gender pay reporting and opportunity, but internally it is more important to work out how to make it relevant by measuring and reviewing your diversity policy and employee mix regularly. As a board you should also have on your risk register any natural objections that are frequently raised, such as having token representatives, unconscious bias and of course, considering more hidden diversities.

"Vistage runs some interesting session for its members on Diversity, with key speakers, and includes focuses on unconscious bias, anti-harassment and discrimination, diversity audits and analysis, talent management and inclusive cultures.

"It is well known that of the boards in the UK only 30% have female representatives, and according to Affirmity companies are struggling to maintain and deliver effective DEI, with only 22% happy with what they are achieving. They also share that only 40% of companies have on offer DEI-related learning and development opportunities to all employees and just 45% say that their workforce reflects the demographics of today's marketplace. All in all, pretty poor stats that shows there is still much work to be done.

"I have recently organised for Alison Reynolds of Reynolds HR and OD Limited to present to some of my peer groups and their learnings for their companies and board settings has been invaluable. It was agreed unanimously that the only way true diversity could ever be achieved is through the total removal of personal assessments, bias and thoughts...which is pretty much impossible.

"This is a fascinating thought, so much so, that Dr Joanna Berry and myself are preparing a diversity paper together, looking at it in an event June, with details to be released soon.

"One thing we can do is to make a commitment to learn from the world's best, including Suzanne Doyle Morris, Prof Martyna Sliwa, and Prof Jamie Callaghan, all of whom can be found online with their thoughts and guidance. And to audit our efforts and actions regularly. Speak to as many diverse audiences and potential employees as possible, share best practice and approach diversity with an open mind."

**If you need help infiltrating diversity throughout your company or your board, then do get in touch with Andrew on [andrew@marshbusinesstransformation.co.uk](mailto:andrew@marshbusinesstransformation.co.uk)**





“

**...the only way true  
diversity could ever be  
achieved is through the  
total removal of personal  
assessments...**





L-R: Tax Consultant Trevor Smith, Healthcare Junior Jack Boke, Head of Business Support Katy Hill and Senior Client Manager Sam Oliver are Robson Laidler's latest new recruits.

## KATY JOINS ROBSON LAIDLER TO HEAD UP BUSINESS SUPPORT

Accountancy and business advisory firm Robson Laidler has made a raft of new appointments and promotions at various levels to support its ambitious growth plans.

**The firm, which has offices in Jesmond and Chester le Street has already seen steady growth over the past 12-months with an increase in new fees worth £400,000 and has brought its total headcount to 96 across both offices.**

The team, which is setting its sights on 15% growth in its next financial year, will be further strengthened with the appointment of Katy Hill, 32, from County Durham, who joins as head of business support.

Katy's role will see her underpin the firm's growth strategy bringing with her a wealth of experience in managing both admin and board level teams and as well as coaching the staff she has worked with. She will be responsible for practice operations across both offices, including the Client Relationship HR and finance functions of the business.

The firm, which became the region's first B Corp in the Autumn of 2021 has a clear mission to be a purpose-led business and has made major investment in local recruitment and nurturing home-grown talent over the past 12-months.

Robson Laidler director of people and culture Amy Park said: "It has been brilliant to expand our accounting, business support and business advisory teams, acquiring excellent new talent and utilising existing strengths.

"With such a sustainable market the investments in our team will help facilitate this demand, aiding our clients to reach their ambitious long-term growth plans."

Katy Hill said: "I am excited to be joining Robson Laidler during such a time of exponential growth and to part of a business that looks towards the future and puts its people first."

Further new talent includes Trevor Smith who joins the tax advisory team as a tax consultant straight from his role as tax inspector at HMRC, making him well positioned to ensure clients are paying the correct amount of tax.

Jack Boke also joins the healthcare team as healthcare junior to strengthen the client delivery to the department's client bank of GPs, dentists and practice managers across the North East.

Sam Oliver has been promoted to manager in the Business Innovation team, where he supports a portfolio of over 700 clients with their day-to-day accounting, giving guidance on how to grow their business.

Robson Laidler are currently still recruiting for other various level positions including a healthcare manager, a business advisor and trainee accountants.

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

# DEALMAKER HAILS EXCEPTIONAL 12 MONTHS & ENTERS THE NEXT YEAR WITH OPTIMISM

By Carl Swansbury, Partner, and Head of Corporate Finance at RGCF

**In the North East there are a number of sectors that place the region on the national and international map, including technology, manufacturing/engineering and professional services.**

Within these sectors are several particularly significant regional businesses that are best in class, and which help to shine a light on the North East and make it an area of interest for UK and international investors.

This has been highly evident in our latest financial year, which ended on 31 March 2022, during which RGCF was very active, advising on a record-breaking 42 M&A transactions. This momentum has continued into the start of the new financial year.

During the year we saw a great deal of M&A activity involving businesses in these sectors as a result of the levels of liquidity in the debt markets and Private Equity investors starting to deploy their 'dry powder', which had accumulated as investors and acquirers bided their time during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

RGCF helped a number of businesses secure important funding to scale both organically and through acquisition. This included: the equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) consultancy business, eQS, which acquired four businesses during 2021 as part of its buy-and-build strategy; Premier Roof Systems' acquisition of fellow North East company Classic Windows; and Jarrow-headquartered

Wescott Industrial Services' purchase of Hull-based scaffolding services provider SGS Ltd.

The liquidity in the market also drove an increase in Management Buy Outs (MBOs). The key to a successful MBO is a good business with a quality management team that can access finance, either through equity or debt. MBOs were especially prevalent in 2021, with several large corporates looking to divest non-core areas of their businesses, which created opportunities for management teams.

Among these transactions were high-profile MBOs at Komatsu Mining and Enshore Subsea.

A trend that has very much been driven by RGCF, when identifying potential acquirers, is protecting the legacy of a business. Alongside achieving maximum value for the selling shareholders, we want our clients' businesses to scale once acquired and benefit from further investment.

This investment is often secured by attracting overseas trade buyers that are looking for a UK presence and a business that can grow with their support.

This was evidenced by Netherlands-based MegaGroup's acquisition of thermoplastic pipe systems company epco and Swedish investment group Lifco's purchase of Newcastle-based Specialist Alarm Services, which are both cross border transactions that RGCF led and advised on.

Already within the first few weeks of this new



Carl Swansbury

financial year these trends have continued, with RGCF advising on several out-of-region transactions, including the sale of Oxford-based proptech business VTUK to LDC backed iamproperty, the sale of Bristol-based Market Dojo to French listed Esker and Gi Group's acquisition of The Leadership Factory.

All of this activity has helped us grow the RGCF team, which now stands at 23, making us the largest CF boutique in the region, with further growth anticipated with the addition of more highly experienced and talented people over the coming months to provide expert, common sense CF advice to our clients to help them grow and realise the full value and potential of their businesses.

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# THE FUTURE OF WORK

Julia Fox, director at Deloitte, tells us about her involvement creating the firm's new office in Newcastle, which has been designed for the future of work.



Julia Fox

We've had a very exciting time at Deloitte in Newcastle as we opened the doors to the firm's first UK office specifically designed for our recently announced hybrid working approach. Our new 11,150 sq ft office in Newcastle will accommodate the 285 Deloitte people based in the region, and is located in Trinity Gardens at the heart of the Quayside, Newcastle.

## People

The Newcastle office has been designed in response to a Deloitte people survey which revealed that 81% of respondents anticipate working from a Deloitte office for up to two days a week. The research also showed that 96% of Deloitte's people want to have the freedom to choose how flexibly they will work. In addition, 86% of respondents ranked 'collaborating with team colleagues' and 'interacting with others' within their top three ways they envisage using the office - all of which formed the main design principles.

In order for people to connect and plan in-person collaboration we've purposely removed traditional desks to accommodate more informal collaboration and networking spaces, as well as adding more flexible touch-down working areas.

## Future of work

Last June our chief executive, Richard Houston, announced the firm's hybrid working model that allows Deloitte people to choose where they need to be to do their best work, in balance with their professional and personal responsibilities.

For me and the rest of the team involved with the design of the office it's been really exciting to completely rethink our office space based on this model - how, when and where we all want to work. We ran sessions with our people in Newcastle to better understand their preferences to the new ways of working. This has paved the way for a working environment that is inclusive, hybrid, inspiring, and a space for now and the future.

## Technology

The new office is equipped with technology such as high-quality audio and video, including 360-degree cameras to create an inclusive meeting experience for all, regardless of location. The design makes it easier for people and clients to co-work, either in person or virtually, and provides better opportunities for networking and building relationships. In addition, the flexible office space can be easily adapted depending on the work need, with meeting rooms opened up to create room for large events when required.

This is an office space that has been designed in line with the way we envisage working in our physical spaces, offering opportunities for better collaboration and connection. This is the first office to be designed in this way and other Deloitte offices across the UK will follow our lead and learn from our pioneering approach in Newcastle.

## Sustainable design

Creating sustainable offices that balance the firm's WorldClimate commitments is a core part of designing and fitting out our 'future of work' offices. The firm is committed to our net zero targets and we have used this opportunity to create an office space which is a sustainable and inspiring place to work.



In designing the Newcastle office, the firm's in-house design team has ensured that the furnishings are made from recycled material where possible.

This office is fitted out with carpets and rugs made from recycled yarn that can be re-used over and over again to make new products. The yarn is made from old carpets that have reached their end of life, discarded fishing nets collected from oceans as well as domestic products, such as old clothing. The furniture has also been sourced from suppliers who use recycled materials, including recycled paint.

Deloitte is committed to the North East, with offices in Leeds and Newcastle and employs over 880 people in the region. The new office in Newcastle is the latest indication of continued investment in the regions and follows our recent announcement of new jobs in the Tees Valley.

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





## WHERE TO INVEST IN TIMES OF INFLATION?

With inflation at over 6% and forecast to rise to 8% this year, many of us will be wondering what we can do to keep our savings ahead of the game and maintain buying power. Further, unless you lived through the 70s and 80s, this sort of level of inflation will be a totally new experience. Back then, the rate broke into the 20%’s per annum.

**If we consider the main liquid assets available, cash, fixed income securities and shares, then there are definitive winners and losers.**

Considering cash first, we all need to keep a reserve for planned capital expenditure and to cover contingencies. However, as an investment it never keeps up with inflation. At the time of writing, the best instant access account is offering a rate of 1.5%, with the best three-year fixed rate 2.21%. (Source Moneysavingexpert.com)

So, even with the higher rate, the “pound in your pocket” will be worth around 95p by the end of a year. The next question is “what will it be worth when the fixed term ends?” Its buying power could easily be in the mid 80p range.

If we look at fixed income, in the longer term they have given a real return over and above inflation. However, there are periods when this does not happen. There are also many alternatives in this arena including index linked gilts offered by the Government, which fund our debt. The basic premise is that they offer a return over and above inflation on both the capital and income it pays, known as the coupon. However, it is not that simple as they are traded and how profitable they may be is dependent upon many factors.

Equities, or in other words, shares in stock market companies, have a very good record of providing a return over inflation, even when it was very high. The chart opposite, which is for the US market, but shows similar



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

results can be expected for developed markets, shows this to be true over nearly 75 years.

Remember, the figures are monthly so need to be multiplied by 12 to give an annual return. Clearly, higher inflation is more challenging even for equities than at lower levels.

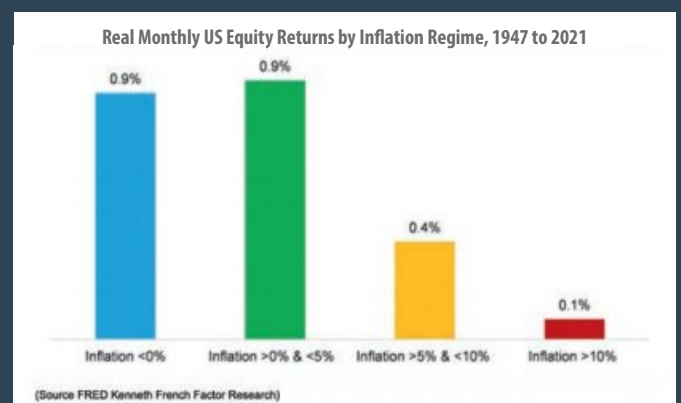
Other alternatives such as property may offer some protection but are not liquid. You cannot pull six bricks out of a buy to let and sell them to provide yourself with some cash. Further, a property without a tenant is a liability rather than an investment. On top of that, the Government is taxing the landlord rather than these days.

### Conclusion

There is no easy solution to beating inflation, but you cannot afford to ignore it. Cash deposits are guaranteed to destroy your wealth. Equities are your best bet provided you can give them time to grow and can handle the daily changing prices. If you can, even for a relatively small proportion of your money, you will most likely be well rewarded.

### Action

**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**

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**[www.rutherfordhughes.com](http://www.rutherfordhughes.com)**

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## UNW FURTHER EXPANDS ITS SPECIALIST TAX OFFERING WITH SENIOR APPOINTMENT

Newcastle-based chartered accountancy and business advisory firm UNW has announced another specialist addition to its Employment Taxes team with the appointment of David Paul as Senior Manager.

**In recent years, the Newcastle-based firm has continued to invest in its Employment Tax offering, which operates alongside a number of other specialisms within UNW.**

Led by Lee Muter, the only employment taxes partner based in the region, and aided by Paul Tucker, who joined the firm in 2020 and is Vice Chair of the Chartered Institute of Taxation (CIOT), the team provides clients with advice and support on all aspects of employment tax from both a compliance and advisory perspective.

David brings a wealth of experience to UNW, having started his career in HM Revenue & Customs before working in Big 4 practice for more than twenty years, leaving EY as an Associate Partner in December 2021. David is originally from the North East, but has spent most of his career working in the Midlands.

He provides support and advice to employers across all sectors covering areas such as managing task risk and implementing tax efficient arrangements. He also covers a range of employment tax and associated areas including expenses and benefits, salary sacrifice, tax disclosures and mitigating the risk of HMRC reviews and advises on the intricacies of The Construction Industry Scheme.

On his decision to join UNW, David said: "What appealed to me most about the firm is the strength of its relationships with clients. UNW has a unique brand and a very experienced team that puts client service at the forefront of whatever it does, which is evidenced by some very powerful client testimonials. The team is already strong but has ambitions to continue to grow whilst maintaining this commitment to excellent client service.

"The chance to work alongside Lee and Paul also encouraged me to join the firm, as they are both well-respected experts in their fields. We have already discussed some great ideas to move us forward, and there is a real opportunity here to build a leading service that is highly regarded not only in the North East, but nationally too."

Lee Muter, Employment Taxes Partner at UNW, added: "David is a nationally renowned employment tax advisor and we are incredibly excited to have him on board. His arrival will only strengthen our already established offering and enhance our ability to help our clients navigate the complexities surrounding employment taxes."

**If you would like more information about UNW's employment tax offering, please contact:**

**Lee Muter, Employment Taxes Partner**  
**E: [leemuter@unw.co.uk](mailto:leemuter@unw.co.uk)**

**Paul Tucker, Employment Taxes Senior Manager**  
**E: [paultucker@unw.co.uk](mailto:paultucker@unw.co.uk)**

**David Paul, Employment Taxes Senior Manager**  
**E: [davidpaul@unw.co.uk](mailto:davidpaul@unw.co.uk)**

“

**...What appealed to me most about the firm is the strength of its relationships with clients...**







## NEW FINANCE DIRECTOR FOR INSIGHT FD

**Insight FD, provider of part-time FD services to start-ups & SMEs, has bolstered its senior team with the appointment of a new Finance Director.**

Bob Evans joins the business following senior FD roles in Industry & accountancy practices.

Bob said: "I am delighted to join the Insight FD team supporting business owners throughout the

North East and beyond".

"Part-time FD services are the perfect solution for smaller businesses as it makes available next level advice and support at an affordable cost".

Insight's Marianne Harrison added "Bob's financial expertise combined with a commercial outlook makes him the perfect sounding board for owner managers".

Insight FD puts clients, colleagues and the community at the forefront of its growth, supporting the UN Sustainable Development Goals & is in the process of applying for BCorp status.



## WBD BOLSTERS RESTRUCTURING AND INSOLVENCY OFFERING WITH NEW PARTNER

**Womble Bond Dickinson has grown its restructuring and insolvency team with the appointment of Kelly Jordan.**

Joining the firm's Newcastle office, Kelly brings with her 20 years of legal experience, with particular expertise in restructuring and insolvency.

Prior to her new role, Kelly was a partner at Muckle LLP, where she gave advice in all aspects of restructuring and insolvency matters, specialising in non-contentious advisory and transactional work to insolvency professionals, directors of distressed businesses, trustees of charities, landlords and other creditors.

Kelly is also national council member and North East Deputy Chair of R3, the industry body of restructuring and insolvency professionals.

Kelly commented: "I am delighted to join the team at Womble Bond Dickinson. I look forward to drawing on my experience across insolvency and restructuring to support the firm's client base."

Kelly's new role will see her work closely with Newcastle partners Julian Gill, Sally Dallow and Peter Maxwell in the firm's Restructuring and Insolvency team. Commenting on Kelly's appointment, Julian said: "I am delighted to welcome Kelly to Womble Bond Dickinson."

"Her appointment complements the firm's existing insolvency and restructuring proposition, and her longstanding expertise make her a valuable asset to the team."



## NEWCASTLE LAWYERS DIG IN TO LAUNCH NEW CITY PARKS TREE- PLANTING PROJECT

**A team of Newcastle lawyers has been digging deep to help launch a new tree-planting project around its home city.**

As part of its 75th anniversary celebrations last year, Hay & Kilner Law Firm set up a new partnership with environmental charity Urban Green Newcastle which will see 750 trees planted in parks and green spaces around the city over the next five years.

Trees will be planted in initial locations including

Exhibition Park, Brandling Park and the City Stadium, with Leazes Park being chosen as the location for the first 150 trees due to its proximity to Hay & Kilner's city centre headquarters.

Ten of the firm's staff assisted members of Urban Green Newcastle's parks & allotments team with planting the Leazes Park saplings, with beech trees being chosen for this first site to complement the landscape and the varieties that are already in place.

Urban Green Newcastle's corporate partnership with Hay & Kilner is the first of its type and the charity is hoping that more city businesses will follow the firm's example in supporting the improvement of the city's green open spaces.

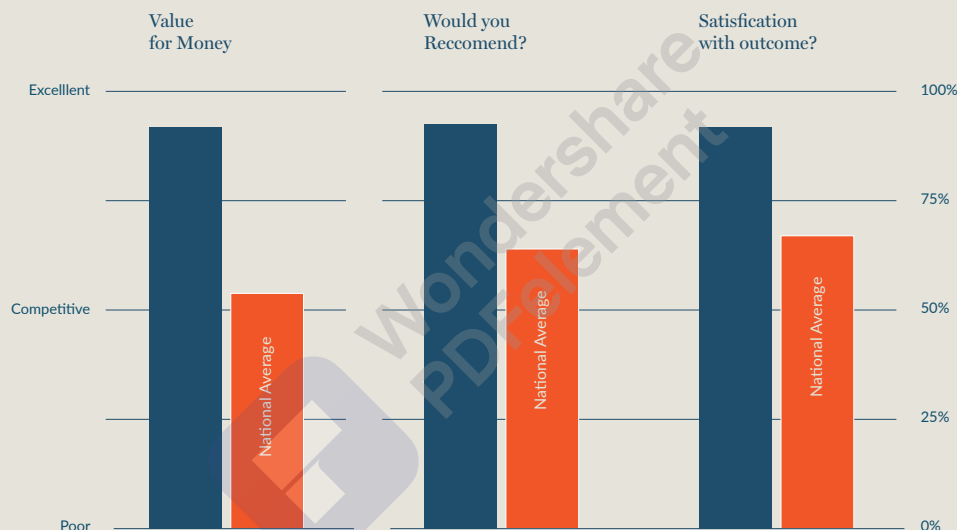
Hay & Kilner is one of North East England's leading independent law firms and provides comprehensive legal advice across every aspect of the law, with a growing presence in the corporate and commercial sector and a particularly strong reputation for its private client work.

Jonathan Waters, managing partner at Hay & Kilner Law Firm, who took part in the Leazes Park planting, adds: "We wanted to mark our anniversary by creating a positive legacy for the city that will last for the next 75 years and beyond, and what better way than contributing to the well-being of Newcastle's invaluable green spaces."



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Clare Thompson

# STAYING POWER

*Longevity in business is something to be admired. In a new series of features, we are celebrating some of the most accomplished professionals from across the North East business community. Aimed at major players with 20+ years' experience in their respective sectors, we provide a fascinating insight into what makes them tick and what we can learn from them.*

*This month we speak to...*

## CLARE THOMPSON

Partner, and head of the clinical negligence department at Hay & Kilner Law Firm in Newcastle

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

I enjoy problem solving and a challenge, and thought that law might be something that I'd enjoy and could be good at, so I took it as an option at GCSE. I found it really interesting and so went on to study it at University. More than 30 years on, I have no regrets about my decision!

### What is your favourite aspect of the job?

There is a lot of satisfaction in achieving a good settlement for a client and knowing that the award of compensation will make their future more comfortable and secure. There is also an increasing focus on improving patient safety and clients are often happy with an apology, an explanation as to what went wrong and to feel that, in raising their concerns, similar mistakes will be avoided in the future. The recent Ockenden enquiry into maternity services at Shrewsbury Trust brought this into sharp focus.

### What has been your career defining moment?

Judgment being handed down in favour of a client with a severe brain injury in what was a very difficult case and following a fully contested trial, and seeing them then awarded a life-changing sum of money.

Being appointed as head of Hay & Kilner's clinical negligence team was also a major milestone. I've dedicated over 25 years of my career to claimant clinical negligence work, with the majority of that time spent very happily at Hay & Kilner. Having my experience and commitment recognised with the head of team appointment was a career-defining moment for me.

### How do you measure success?

In my career, success is all about achieving the best outcomes for clients, improving patient safety and being part of a happy and committed team. Outside of work, success is all about enjoying good times with my lovely family and friends.

### What have been the biggest changes in the industry since you started?

Advances in technology is the obvious one - I can remember life without emails!

As a trainee, I can recall the secretaries producing forms on a typewriter and we used the fax machine to send urgent documents. Everything of course took a bit longer, but there was also much less stress and we enjoyed the occasional long lunch with a glass of wine!

I do think the pandemic forced us to change the way in which we worked, mostly for the better. In contrast to my trainee days, Hay & Kilner is now working paper-free and we are about to move to modern new offices without filing cabinets. The move to hybrid working is another positive change which should result in a better work-life balance, reduced stress and better mental health for many in the industry.

I also think that the role of the solicitor, and the qualities needed to fulfil it, have changed. There is a much greater emphasis on business development skills, networking and building trusted relationships with clients.

### How has your skillset developed accordingly?

My IT skills have improved significantly, especially over the last couple of years. In terms of business development and networking skills, I'm a sociable person and really like meeting new people, so enhancing that side of my role is something I've really enjoyed.

For a number of years, I've chaired the regional Women Lawyers' Division, which supports practising and aspiring women solicitors, and that has been a lovely way to meet and network with other female lawyers.

### Are you a risk taker by nature or more conservative?

I'm definitely a cautious person by nature. I've not ever really been called upon to take any great risks in my career, which is probably just as well!

### To what would you attribute your success?

I'm lucky to have always been well supported by family and colleagues throughout my career. I work hard and am very focussed on what I need to achieve, but I've also been inspired by the many amazing solicitors I have worked with over the years. Success is almost always due to a team effort, as opposed to any one individual's.

### What's your biggest weakness and how have you managed this?

I'm a perfectionist and always want to achieve the very best that I can, so I can be disappointed if the results fall short of my (often ambitious) goals. I suspect this is a character trait I'm stuck with!

### How do you remain motivated?

I have been a trainee supervisor for years and really enjoy engaging with the younger members of the team. Whilst there are a lot of experienced solicitors within the Hay & Kilner team, I am committed to supporting and developing the trainees and newly qualified solicitors, who will be the future of the firm.

### Would you prefer to be liked or respected?

Within my team, I would prefer to be liked. In respect of my job as a litigator, the aim isn't necessarily to be liked, but I would like to think that I am well respected.

### I'll retire when...

I feel like I've achieved everything I set out to do in my career - and I'm not quite there yet!

**Hay & Kilner is one of North East England's leading independent law firms and provides comprehensive legal advice across every aspect of the law to businesses and individuals from both within and outside the region.**

**For further information, please visit [www.hay-kilner.co.uk](http://www.hay-kilner.co.uk) or call 0191 232 8345**





Claire Simmons

## FINALISING FACTS ABOUT FIXTURES AND FITTINGS IN HOME-BUYING PROCESS

By Claire Simmons, Partner in the residential property department at Hay & Kilner Law Firm in Newcastle

When viewing a house, potential buyers are likely to have their eyes drawn to different fixtures and fittings that they'd either love to keep in place and/or wouldn't dream of even thinking about having in their home.

**As the sale progresses, both buyers and sellers need to take proper account of these items – or chattels, to give them their legal name – and how they are to be managed, as failing to do so risks problems arising further down the line.**

Depending on their individual circumstances, homebuyers will have different views about whether they want to keep things like furniture, carpets, curtains, white goods, fitted kitchen units and even potted trees and shrubs in the garden.

For first-time buyers who might not have that much furniture yet, these items can be very useful, while a seller who has, for example, inherited the property from a deceased relative may be pleased to help a first-time buyer or a family by agreeing to leave some items, rather than having to do all the work required to remove them.

As part of the sale process, a seller needs to complete a TA10 form, which is otherwise known

as a Fixtures and Contents Form.

This is a mandatory, 'tick box' document which clearly identifies what is and what is not included in the sale of a property, so that there can be no dispute between buyer and seller about any items left or taken after the sale has been completed.

If a seller is looking to sell any chattels, a price can be noted on the form against each item that is to be left, if they are not to be included in the overall purchase price.

The purchase price for any chattels being sold must be 'fair and reasonable' and must reflect their true value as they will be excluded from the Stamp Duty Land Tax calculation.

With HMRC being entitled to investigate all property transactions for nine months after the sale, any attempt to deceive by purposefully reducing the purchase price could have serious consequences.

The TA10 form also provides the basis for legal action should either party not live up to what it requires of them.

For example, a seller will be in breach of contract if they take items that were listed as being included on the form or fail to remove items that should have been taken, such as a loft or garage full of rubbish.

It is, of course, possible that overzealous removal men could have mistakenly take items that should have been left behind, so it's always best to check with the seller first if something is missing, just to make sure that it's not an innocent mistake.

However, with around one in ten property transactions resulting in some sort of dispute about fixtures and fittings, it's essential that you have everything in order before the sale completes.

As a sidenote, it's essential that you don't exchange money for fixtures and fittings separately directly with your seller or buyer and not include the payment in the contract as this takes away any recourse for breach of contract action should issues subsequently arise.

Whether you're buying or selling, make sure to ask lots of detailed questions to the other party about everything to do with a property's fixtures and fittings, and ensure that you get qualified expert advice if you any doubts or questions about any aspect of the process.

**To find out how we can help, or for any advice on all aspects of residential property and conveyancing law, please do not hesitate to get in touch - [claire.simmons@hay-kilner.co.uk](mailto:claire.simmons@hay-kilner.co.uk)/0191 227 6662**



"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.

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# SOLICITOR OF THE MONTH

*This month we talk to...*

## AMY SERGISON

Specialist in employment and business immigration law, Muckle LLP

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

No. When I was younger, I was dead set on being an archaeologist. I had a notion that I'd unearth secret treasures and ancient artefacts on a daily basis but then my parents took me to an archaeological dig, and I remember being horrified by the mud and dirt I'd have to sift through, and so I gave up on that ideal!

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

I did a history degree at the University of Sheffield and then returned to the North East to undertake my CPE and LPC at the University of Northumbria. I joined Muckle as a trainee in 2007, and I've been here ever since! As a trainee, I spent time in our banking, dispute resolution, real estate and employment teams, and I qualified into the employment team in 2009. I absolutely love the variety of my role as an employment and business immigration lawyer.

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

As with many of us, my biggest challenge in recent years was juggling lockdown, work and homeschooling my little ones. During the first lockdown, my children were six, four and two. Thankfully, they had a brilliant time at home and we don't appear to have done any lasting damage to them! On a positive note, the whole experience has made our family appreciate what matters most to us. My whole family are teachers and it made me realise that I made the right choice not going into the 'family business'!

Instead, I get to flex my teaching muscles working with lots of organisations within the education sector, delivering training on employment and business immigration law.

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

Lady Hale of Richmond. I had the pleasure of attending an event about inspirational women in law a number of years ago and Lady Hale was one of the speakers. I was so inspired by her humility, determination, commitment to equality and diversity and ultimately, what she achieved as the first female Justice of the Supreme Court, among her many other achievements.

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

Ally McBeal or Elle Woods.

### What is your greatest strength?

I am an eternal optimist and very sociable, so I love working with people. I hope this makes me a nice colleague and a good business adviser/ lawyer for our clients. I also really enjoy juggling lots of different projects and activities. The flexibility of working at Muckle has enabled me to do this, as we are strongly encouraged to use our skills in our community. As well as my principal roles of being a lawyer and Mammy, I am also a trustee at Seven Stories, the National Centre for Children's Books, and a school governor at a local primary school.

### What is your biggest weakness?

Shoes! I love shoes. I have over 100 pairs and an uncontrollable urge to buy more. My daughter can't wait until her feet are the same size as mine so she can share them with me. I'm not sure she realises that this will work both ways!

### What are your future career aspirations?

I was promoted Partner in early April and I'm so excited at the prospect of being part of, and shaping the firm's development in the future. I have a particular interest in working with and supporting the development of our people, so I can see my role developing to take on more responsibility for people management, mentoring and coaching our team, as well as supporting the business' growth.

### How do you see your industry evolving in the next 10 years?

Lots of organisations are really starting to see the "bite" of staffing shortages following the end of the free movement of workers. We're already seeing that demand to become a licensed sponsor of skilled workers has increased hugely over the past 18 months. I believe this will continue as organisations continue to emerge from the pandemic and look to their future recruitment need. Business immigration law is likely to be pushed up the agenda for many employers.

I predict that there will be a push from sectors that employ those roles not considered "suitably skilled" enough to attract sponsorship. Many organisations in the hospitality and warehouse/operations sectors, for example, are struggling to fill vacancies they have. The Government's "brightest and best" policy means the situation appears to be escalating to the extent that it is becoming difficult for some sectors to continue to operate in the way they have/would like to.

I also think that hybrid working is here to stay. Employees will continue to be more demanding of what their employer can offer them in terms of flexibility, remuneration and benefits.

### How do you like to unwind?

I love spending time with my family and going on adventures with them. We love any kind of trip which involves a stay in a Premier Inn!

I also really enjoy running, exploring the outdoors, keeping fit and catching up with friends and family.

**Contact details for Amy Sergison – 0191 211 7995, 07834 733 902, amy.sergison@muckle-llp.com**









## MAKING SURE YOUR WILL IS WATERTIGHT

Making a will is often something people put off, and even when they do get round to making one, they may fall foul of several pitfalls.

**As Dale Smith, founder and director at Grey-Smith Legal, which has recently started offering wills and probate services, explains, there are a number of things to be aware of when making your final plans.**

The only certainties in life are death and taxes.

So said Mark Twain, but, despite this, the former still tends not to be talked about, meaning all too often, we're unprepared.

Nowhere is this more obvious than in the case of wills; figures vary, but it is estimated that around 60 to 70 per cent of Britons have not made one.

But even among those who have, there are a number of errors that can put your whole plan in jeopardy – which is why we'd always urge caution when it comes to using online sites that offer do-it-yourself wills.

Working with an official will provider makes sure the Is are dotted and the Ts are crossed, although it is still the holder's responsibility to make sure the document is regularly updated to remain relevant.

These are some of the most common errors we see when it comes to writing a will.

### Order of death

The most common assumption we see, particularly among married couples, is the will writer assuming they'll die first and therefore leaving everything to their spouse.

This goes for all the material things, such as savings and property, but also responsibilities. While it's a difficult subject to think and talk about, if you have young children, don't assume your spouse will still be around to look after them.

When it comes to making a will, consider every single possibility and make sure it is accounted for.

### Having it witnessed and appointing an executor

To be binding, your will must be signed in the presence of two independent adult witnesses – over 18s who do not stand to benefit in any way in the event of your death.

The process is also incredibly specific, and each aspect must be adhered to, otherwise the document will be invalid. Firstly, after you've signed the document, you must also watch the witnesses sign it. Your witnesses also need to be physically present when you sign, so even stepping out of the room at the wrong moment could invalidate the process.

You may also want to appoint an executor to deal with the administration of your will after your death. While it's not essential in terms of making sure your will is carried out, if you don't name one, the state will appoint someone, who may not have been who you wished.

### Not keeping up to date

Once you've written a will, the temptation is to tick it off your to-do list with a sense of satisfaction. But,

as your circumstances change, so should your will.

Maybe you've had (more) children? Got married or divorced? Lost touch with the people you previously named as guardians of your children?

All of these could have a major impact on your last requests, so whenever you make a major life change, add it to your will.

However, also be aware that you can't make amendments to your will once it has been signed and witnessed – simply adding a note won't count.

Instead, you need to make an official alteration known as a codicil, which must be signed and witnessed in the same way as the original will.

### Forgetting things

When it comes to writing a will, houses and cars are top of the list when it comes to bequests.

However, don't forget all the smaller, more personal items – the intangibles, if you like – that may have less monetary value but still be incredibly valuable.

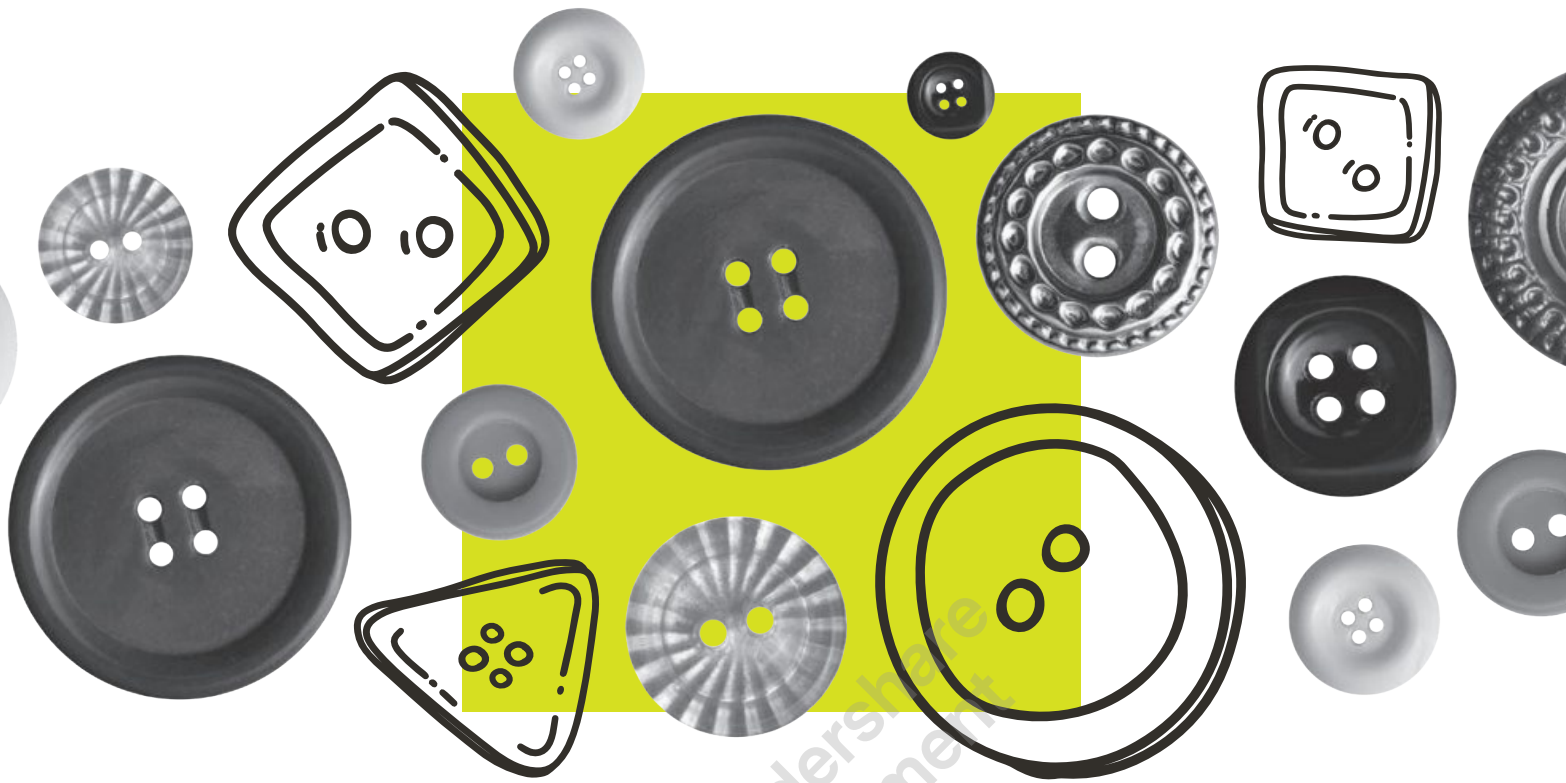
This includes things like savings accounts, premium bonds or investments, or even loyalty points if you've built up a large enough stash.

Sentimental items, too, can cause issues if they're not fully accounted for, so make sure to specify who you want to receive that family heirloom.

In this day and age, it's also worth mentioning what you want doing with any social media accounts, and who you nominate to deal with that.

A will is probably one of the most important documents you'll ever create, allowing your loved ones to mourn you without the added stress of wrangling over who gets or does what.

**If you'd like to make sure you're prepared, get in touch with the Grey-Smith Legal team on [info@grey-smithlegal.com](mailto:info@grey-smithlegal.com) or by calling 01287 653990.**



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# NEW LAW LEAVES COMMERCIAL LANDLORDS STILL FACING CHALLENGES IN OBTAINING RENT ARREARS

Commercial landlords who've been left with rent arrears as a result of tenants not being able to trade properly during the pandemic still have hurdles to overcome before they can look to recover monies owed.

**That's the view of solicitor Julie Adams of Hay & Kilner Law Firm after a new law came into force which is designed to give businesses that aren't yet in a position to pay back all their pandemic rent arrears more opportunity to do so.**

The Commercial Rent (Coronavirus) Act, which has just received Royal Assent, makes 'provisions enabling relief from payment of certain rent debts under business tenancies adversely affected by coronavirus to be available through arbitration.'

Landlords and tenants are encouraged to negotiate agreements about how and when rental debts are settled using the Act's Code of Practice, with a new binding arbitration system in place as a last resort for eligible businesses if they can't agree.

The remaining government rules brought in two years ago to protect companies in pandemic-related financial distress from creditor action, which included preventing landlords from presenting winding up petitions relating to rent arrears, are to be phased out by 1 April.

This means that landlords can once again take action to recover rent-related debts, although some restrictions still apply as to the sums that can be recovered.

The new law divides such debts into 'protected' and 'unprotected' sums, with the former having been accrued when tenant businesses were operating under any Covid-related restrictions, such as having to close earlier than usual, limiting the number of customers they would have in their premises or shutting their doors altogether.

Commercial landlords can at this time only take action to recover unprotected debts, with provisions in place to allocate payments made by the tenant to clear unprotected debts first.

Claims in respect of 'protected sums' must either be referred to arbitration, otherwise action is again stayed for at least six months.

Julie Adams, who is a senior associate in Hay & Kilner's dispute resolution team, is expecting the full implications of the new law to become clearer as it is applied in practice, and she is urging landlords and tenants to continue to take the collaborative approach that has been widely in evidence through the pandemic.

She says: "Despite often lacking their usual income, landlords have still had their own responsibilities to meet over the last two years, including mortgages, insurances, maintenance costs and utility bills, and they will be understandably keen to recover the money they're owed."

"However, from the government's point of view, it makes little sense to have supported businesses for two long years only to leave them on their own at a point where many are still not able to generate the same revenues that they did before the pandemic."

"Many firms adapted their operations during the pandemic to enable them to keep going, but even if they never actually stop trading, any rental debts accrued while they had to close earlier than usual or had to operate below full capacity still counts as 'protected' debt and can not be included by landlords in any debt recovery actions they look to bring."

"The government is trying to strike a difficult balance through this new law between landlords' solvency and tenant businesses' viability, with the arbitration service designed to impose a way forward that takes both parties' situations into account."

"The clear hope is that agreements can be reached before things reach this stage, especially as it's likely to take some considerable time before cases even come before an arbitrator, and a continuing focus on collaboration makes sense from both sides."

"Landlords may find it difficult to replace a tenant in the present economic circumstances, while it makes sense for them to agree to receive what they're owed over a longer time as their tenant gets back to full speed, rather than pushing too hard to recover their money too quickly and losing out altogether."

"More clarity on the practical impacts of this new law will follow as the first cases are brought and it makes sense for both landlords and tenants to seek expert advice if they're unsure about the impact of the new rules on their respective situations."

**Hay & Kilner is one of North East England's leading independent law firms and provides comprehensive legal advice across every aspect of the law to businesses and individuals from both within and outside the region.**

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Julie Adams





L-R: Julie Garbutt, Tom Justice, Beth Thompson, Amy Sergison, Olivia Colbeck, Richard Nixon, Kate Rickett and Sara Worsick

## MULTIPLE PROMOTIONS FOR MUCKLE LLP

Muckle LLP has strengthened its award-winning team with nine new promotions, including three new Partners.

**Richard Nixon, Julie Garbutt and Amy Sergison have been made promoted to Partner and five other solicitors have been promoted to Associate.**

Richard Nixon joined the firm's Real Estate team in 2010 as a solicitor and specialises in drafting and negotiation real estate documents such as agreements, transfers, leases and licenses. Richard also has a wide range of experience acting for clients in the public, private and educational sectors.

Julie Garbutt is an expert in all aspects of personal estate planning for businesses clients and their families. As part of the growing Private Client team, Julie provides specialist advice on wills, family trusts, inheritance planning, business succession, asset protection and Court of Protection work.

Also promoted to Partner is Amy Sergison, who is part of Muckle's Employment and Business

Immigration team and uses her skills to advise employers on all aspects of contentious and non-contentious employment law, from recruitment through to dismissal. She also leads the team on providing business immigration advice and provides bespoke training on employment law issues to organisations in the private, education and charitable sectors.

Sara Worsick (Corporate), Tom Justice (Commercial), Olivia Colbeck (Private Client), Kate Rickett (Real Estate), Beth Thompson (Real Estate) and Zoe Ditch (Banking) have all been promoted to Associate.

Jason Wainwright, Managing Partner at Muckle LLP, said: "It's fantastic to see Richard, Julie and Amy promoted to Partner in recognition of their expertise, dedication and major contributions they've made to our firm.

"I'm also delighted to see Sara, Tom, Olivia, Kate, Beth and Zoe receive their well-deserved



Jason Wainwright

promotions. These new promotions reflect the hard work, expertise and enthusiasm that they have all demonstrated. It's wonderful to see that some of them joined Muckle through our vacation scheme, and most went on to become trainees at the firm before their most recent promotion to Associate.

"At Muckle, we pride ourselves on nurturing talent from within, and we're pleased to help develop and reward our home-grown talent.

"Recognising our best people is really important to us and Muckle continues to go from strength to strength and we look forward to seeing our firm grow alongside the talented individuals within it."

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## PIER TO PIER RACE

Sponsored by PGS Law LLP

What started out as the Redhouse Fun Run in 1983, the Pier to Pier Race has grown substantially over the years and now is a firm favourite on the calendar for runners in the region.



**In the North East, only the Great North Run and the Blaydon Race supersede the Pier to Pier Race in its popularity. When the run first started, it struggled to gather just 500 runners, but all that changed and now it is oversubscribed as soon as the entries are open. The number of runners has grown, with 1500 participating each year, a real credit to the organisers: The Sunderland Strollers.**

This is one of the most scenic runs in the North East along the coastline from South Shields to Sunderland following the coastal paths and taking in landmarks like Souter Lighthouse.

PGS Law LLP are a leading firm of solicitors based in South Shields, and they have, once again, sponsored the race, which takes place this year on Sunday the 15th of May at 10am.

Bill Dryden, the Managing Partner at PGS Law LLP, told us why they had decided to sponsor the event again this year:

"For a few years now, we have sponsored the Pier to Pier Race that has brought together friends and families across the region who enjoy taking part in running events and, in a number of cases, do so to raise money for a variety of wonderful charities. It is a chance for runners to get to see some of the most breathtaking views in the North East while supporting others.

"At PGS Law, we do all we can to support our clients through difficult times in their lives and, when many people are suffering hardship both here and abroad, it is good to sponsor an event that brings people together and where they can help others.

"The Sunderland strollers are once again putting on a great event, and we wish them and all the runners the very best for the day."

Sponsors gift the surprise contents of the goody bags, given to all runners at the end of the race.

Harry Harrison, Club Chairman at Sunderland Strollers said: "We're delighted that once again PGS Law are sponsoring the event, which because of the pandemic, was unfortunately cancelled for two years. PGS Law have always been extremely supportive of the event, both financially and by taking part. Many of the PGS Law team participate in the run and actively promote the event, which is hugely appreciated."

The seven-mile run, which takes the runners from South Shields Pier along the coastal route to Sunderland Pier, attracts people from all over the country, and has an impressive 94% finish rate, which is unheard of in the running community.

Harry Harrison concluded: "We're all so looking forward to this race again. We've certainly missed it over the last two years. We just need to pray for good weather now!"

**For further information on the Pier to Pier run – log onto [sunderlandstrollers.co.uk/2019/03/05/pier-to-pier-2018](http://sunderlandstrollers.co.uk/2019/03/05/pier-to-pier-2018)**

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## LIVING WITH COVID: QUICK Q&A FOR EMPLOYERS

Paul McGowan is Principal Solicitor at specialist employment law firm, Collingwood Legal. Paul considers a number of key questions on employers' minds regarding the ongoing management of COVID-19 in the workplace now the Government imposed restrictions have ended.



Paul McGowan

**With restrictions and all specific obligations relating to the management of COVID-19 now eased, it is now for employers to determine how they will manage this ongoing virus and the disruptions it causes going forward. There are no doubt numerous questions on employers' mind on how to manage this in the workplace, some of which we have highlighted below. If you feel you would benefit from a more in-depth discussion on any of these topics, please do not hesitate to get in touch with one of the Collingwood Legal team, contact details of which are at the bottom of this article.**

### **What health & safety requirements do we need to consider?**

Employers have a statutory duty to ensure the health and safety of all workers, this includes ensuring the workplace is a COVID-19 (COVID)-secure environment and a risk-free place for individuals to attend. With the COVID restrictions now completely eased across England and the legal requirement to self-isolate where you test positive removed, it will be a matter for each organisation to assess the health risks COVID still presents to their workforce and their business and to take reasonable, appropriate and necessary steps to safeguard the health of its workers, especially the clinically vulnerable.

As a matter of general practice, employers need to conduct regular and thorough health and safety risk assessments. The Government has provided sector specific guidance and advice on what practices to adopt to try to mitigate these risks including, social distancing between workers, frequent cleaning of workspaces, greater ventilation and air conditioning, provision of any necessary PPE and providing lateral flow tests (LFD tests). Employers must now make their own judgements on how best to manage COVID risks in order to determine what arrangements are needed for their business and their workforce to ensure a safe working environment, in whatever individual circumstances applicable, on a case-by-case basis.

### **Should we require our workforce to carry out lateral flow tests where they are symptomatic?**

It is a matter for employers to consider whether they will continue to ask their workforce to inform them when they test positive for COVID and/or whether they are required to take a LFD test where they present symptoms of COVID before attending work.

Free testing for the general public ended on the 1st of April, and individuals are now required to pay for LFD tests. Deciding whether you will require employees to take LFD tests will be an organisational decision and should be considered

in light of your health and safety obligations and organisation's sickness absence procedures and pay. One important consideration to bear in mind is the demographics of your workforce and how many clinically vulnerable individuals you employ as this could have a significant bearing on what you do or do not decide to do. It is important that whilst there are economic considerations to address here (not least that an employer who mandates testing is likely to have to bear the costs of supplying tests), this should not diminish the level of health and safety protection you offer to your workforce.

### **Do we need a Policy?**

Employers may want to consider drafting a policy which deals with the matters noted above and specifies whether pay is due to employees during self-isolation, who is covered (e.g. close contacts) and the duration of any self-isolation. This is something we can advise further on.

***Collingwood Legal is a specialist employment law firm and we provide bespoke training and advice to organisations on all areas of employment law, including managing the risks of COVID-19, employers legal obligations, sick pay and drafting various bespoke policies.***  
**[www.collingwoodlegal.com](http://www.collingwoodlegal.com)**

**0191 282 2880**

# HARGREAVES ELSWORTH

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*Patent Attorneys*

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For practical advice in relation to:

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Please contact

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Ammar Mirza CBE

## MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU

Return of the Jedi is an incredible movie. It was also one of my earliest claims to fame. My younger brother, who was close friends at the time with Anthony McPartlin – one half of Ant & Dec - had been invited to his birthday party and to watch the movie. As my brother was only eight, my mother insisted I chaperone him. Which was great fun for me. Probably not so much for my brother.

Ever since I can remember I have been a *Star Wars* fan, from watching the very first movie back in the late 1970's to the more recent spin offs. Each one showcasing and illustrating the power of hope, faith and love. The story of good vs evil. A force that connects each and every one of us. Something akin to religion.

In April over four billion of the world's population celebrated a significant religious occasion. From the Christian Easter, Sikh Vaisakhi, Jewish Passover to the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. Over 50% of people living on earth celebrated their blind faith.

Personally, I recognise, respect and rejoice all religions. For me they offer a moral compass. A code of conduct. A sense of common purpose. Interpreted correctly, I believe religion

encourages everyone to love and support one another. There is a place and space for anyone within religion, you just need to have hope and faith. It doesn't matter what colour, gender, or how able or less-abled you are, you can practice a religion. **In parallel, I fully respect and appreciate all of us who don't want to subscribe to a religious belief.**

Choosing and following a religion should be a choice. **Equally being part of the Dark side or Light side of the Force is a choice - which interestingly a number of people done so in 2001 by recording their religion as Jediism on the National Census.** There are even examples of Darth Vader being both, flitting between, but ultimately coming back to the Light side.

The point is that we can learn much from both

religion and *Star Wars* and apply this learning to our business or daily lives:

**Hope is my Vision** – Knowing there is something great out there and setting a Big Hairy Audacious Goal.

**Faith is my Mission** - Believing in myself and the ability to achieve my goal.

**Love is my Value(s)** – Ensuring care and compassion for everyone on my journey, regardless of the trials and tribulations.

Over Easter I managed to celebrate all of the major religious events, especially where food was concerned. Being invited to open a fast at a close friend's house, enjoying fish and chips with the in-laws on Good Friday, devouring Easter Eggs with the kids on Easter Sunday, enjoying a traditional Sikh meal and celebrating the end of Passover with some Jewish friends.

If we were to simply look past all of the negative aspects, sadly associated with the religion and people's beliefs, we have far more in common and to celebrate, than what drives us apart. **So, let's all share some hope, faith and love as we celebrate the story of *Star Wars* on May the 4th. And May the Force be with You.**

**Ammar Mirza CBE is Chair & Founder of Asian Business Connexions, Chair of the NELEP Business Growth Board, Honorary Colonel of 101 Regiment RA and holds various positions across the public and private sectors.**





# Did you know?

Since 2020 the number of people registering their business from home has increased dramatically.

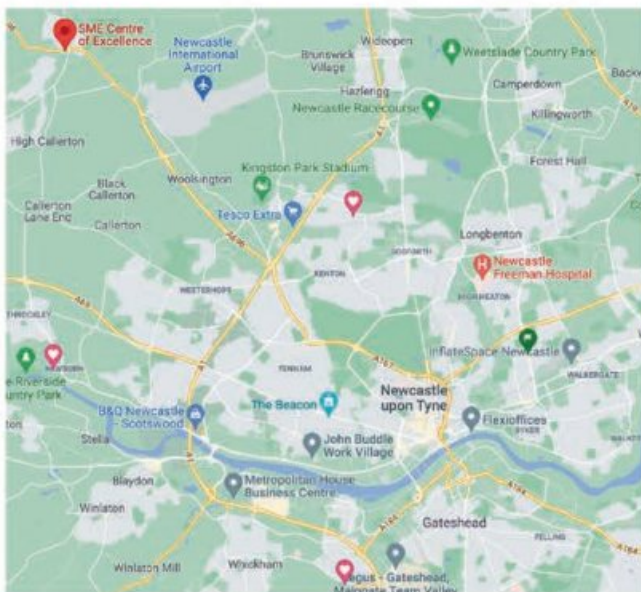


## The challenge:

- You could be losing home privacy
- No professional business presence
- You're pushing customers away

## The solution:

Virtual and registered offices provide you with a professional business address for a fraction of the cost of physical office space.



## Explore our virtual and registered office services

Visit [www.smecofe.com](http://www.smecofe.com) to find out how our virtual and registered offices can help you achieve a professional presence in the North East from only £15.00 per month.



# ONYX HEALTH JOINS FORCES WITH RARE DISEASE SPECIALISTS ACTIGEN



Louise Flintoft, Associate Director at Onyx Health

Healthcare marketing communications specialists, Onyx Health, have teamed up with Cambridge-based biotech company, Actigen, to promote their pioneering work in the field of rare diseases.

**Actigen's work focuses on identifying and developing biological medicines for rare diseases with unmet medical needs. The current focus of Actigen's work is on the development of a drug for a potential breakthrough treatment for the life-limiting rare disease known as MPS II or Hunter Syndrome.**

MPS II is a serious, rare disease that has a major impact on the physical and neurological health of those affected. If left untreated, it can cause progressive deterioration of patients' internal organs and cognitive behavioural issues.

Like many rare diseases, MPS II lacks adequate treatment options, as the current therapies merely improve the functioning of patients' internal organs without addressing the neurological issues.

Actigen's forthcoming clinical trial work on GNR-

055 presents an opportunity to find a superior treatment option for MPS II, which is designed to address the cognitive function and behaviour disruption, significantly enhancing patient's quality of life.

Actigen's Managing Director, Michael Braunagel, said, "MPS II is just one of the hundreds of rare diseases where modern medicine can lead to a massive improvement of the treatment options. At Actigen, our mission is to improve the lives of individuals with rare diseases, and we hope that GNR-055 will be the start of many more trials for orphan diseases".

"Onyx Health's communication support and specialist sector knowledge will help us receive greater recognition for our expertise in rare diseases. GNR-055 is the first therapeutic in our innovative development pipeline, and we hope to be seen and heard for the great work we do, with

the help of Onyx Health".

Onyx Health was approached by Actigen when they were looking for a communications agency with scientific knowledge and expertise in pharmaceuticals and life sciences. The Newcastle-based agency is providing Actigen with a variety of creative branding and communications work to showcase their expertise and establish a strong reputation in the biotech market.

Onyx Health's Associate Director, Louise Flintoft, said, "Clinical trials for rare diseases are a vitally important aspect of clinical research, though often neglected. There are 6,000 rare diseases affecting approximately 300 million people worldwide; however, 95% of rare diseases have no effective treatment options".

"We are looking forward to working with Actigen to highlight this serious issue and the need for greater clinical research into rare diseases. While the importance of research into rare diseases is becoming increasingly recognised with the recent publication of the Government's Rare Disease Action plan, more needs to be done".

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

# TRANSFORMING DIGITAL HEALTH IN THE NORTH EAST WITH BEETROOT®

Founder, Chris Wright delivers insight into the roots of beetroot® and how they are impacting Digital Health in the North East.

## Can you tell us firstly about what it is you do, and what your business does?

Many years ago I started a company in my garden shed and wrote a computer programme that automated the collection and checking of blood test results. Now that's grown into what's called a digital health software company. But names aren't important. Basically we produce software that helps clinicians help their patients who live with some pretty horrible disease.

## How did the idea for your business come about?

My children were friendly with a rheumatology consultant's children and in conversation he explained a problem he had in having to manually check blood results for his patients. He thought there could/should be a technical solution to make his life easier and his patients safer, and encouraged me to think of one. I did, and somehow the solution became a business opportunity.

## How did you come up with the name for your company?

Unfortunately over the years we'd adopted some dreadful techy names for our software which were difficult to say, totally unmemorable, and a marketing person's worst nightmare. I remember years ago joking about this with a customer, now chief executive of a global pharmaceutical company. I dismissively suggested something like 'what's in a brand name anyway?' and quick as a flash he retorted 'ask BMW or Pepsi'. Mindful of this many years later I was pacing up and down my kitchen one day, railing about our brand names and how no one ever spelt them correctly, and noticed some beetroot on the table. I also remembered working as a student on a farm in Wiltshire where one of the villagers was an 'entrepreneur' (in those days it wasn't a word that came up in everyday conversation). The joke in the local pub was that this guy had been to America and had come back with a computer (big laughs), called an Apple (even bigger laughs with a touch of derision). Well, I thought, in my kitchen many years later, it turned out pretty well for Apple, so why not beetroot?

## When did you start working with North East trusts and what is it that you have been working on?

Unbelievably we started working with rheumatologists at Queen Elizabeth Hospital Gateshead nearly 25 years ago, and they've been loyal customers ever since.

## Who has been your greatest inspiration?

Can I have a hybrid? Steve Jobs as the archetypal entrepreneur and Nelson Mandela for pure perseverance.



Chris Wright

## If you had a magic stick, which are the three things you would change in the world?

**Abolish billionaires.** This may sound a bit odd for someone of an entrepreneurial spirit, but the accumulation of huge wealth by the very very few at the expense of the vast majority seems, to put it mildly, a little perverse.

**Ration the consumption of meat.** Not ban it, just limit the amount of meat eaten. Raising animals to eat them is incredibly resource intensive and fundamentally unnecessary. BTW I'm not a vegetarian and certainly not a vegan.

**Introduce a four day week.** Just so everybody has the opportunity to get a better balance between life and work.

## Can you tell us a little more about what's next for beetroot in the North East and your own personal ambitions?

The introduction of the Integrated Care Systems in regions like the North East and North Cumbria present a great opportunity to streamline care over a wide population - in the North East over 3 million. Getting beetroot embedded in a big region like this would lead to greater efficiencies and better patient experience. And you'd all get beetroot stress balls, but I don't recommend eating them.

Personally I can't imagine ever retiring. I'd like to step back a little from beetroot and get some younger people to take it forward. But I will always get a kick out of thinking of new ways of helping people living with health issues.

We are also excited to confirm that the AHSN has invited us to share a stand at the NHS ConfedExpo which is one of the most significant national conferences in 2022. The event will be taking place on 15th & 16th June 2022 in Liverpool.

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

beetroot®





*Express Engineering has invested in new precision welding equipment and capabilities as it expands its sector operations to support customers*

## NEW INVESTMENT EXPANDS EXPRESS ENGINEERING'S WELDING CAPABILITIES

UK-based oil and gas subsea equipment specialist Express Engineering has announced a six-figure investment in new precision welding equipment and capabilities as it expands its sector operations to support customers.

**The move comes as the company completes its relocation to its new 48,000 sq. ft. assembly and test centre in Gateshead. It also sees the relocation of the welding department to a newly refurbished facility with the addition of a new carbon steel specific welding area with an additional buttering/cladding station for larger parts up to five tonnes, automatic butt-welding and manual fabrication.**

AMI (Arc Machines Inc.) narrow gap equipment butt-welding has also been added to improve the capability to deposit lower weld volumes on downhole tooling for the offshore sector, increasing productivity and reducing distortion on heavy wall thickness butt-welds.

New 20 tonne capacity Fronius endless torch rotation (ETR) cladding equipment has also boosted capabilities. This will allow complex geometry welding of racetracks and cross or intersecting bores to be completed in one single operation, providing additional precision

engineering cost and time savings.

Alongside investment in extra equipment, two new welders have joined to provide increased both cladding and butt-welding capacity while Express Engineering's trainee welding engineer has qualified as a CSWIP 3.1 welding inspector as part of continued professional development.

Additional investment equips Express Engineering with a comprehensive range of welding capabilities, enhancing its ability to undertake straight forward cladding projects to complex cladding requiring ETR, regular pipe butt-welding and specialist narrow gap welding. Fronius cladding stations, TipTig automated butt-welding systems, an AMI orbital pipe welding system and several manual GTAW (Gas Tungsten Arc Welding), MIG (Metal Inert Gas) and MAG (Metal Active Gas) systems are all available.

Gary Thirlwell, Express managing director, said investment in additional precision welding capabilities will provide advantages over other

conventional systems as well as applications.

He said: "We now offer a full range of specialist welding services, ranging from simple corrosion resistant overlay (cladding) all the way to precision pipe welding and fabrication in exotic alloys. We are developing products for all areas of oil and gas exploration and production, from the inter-surface arena to below-the-mud line operations.

"Our extended capabilities will see us not only able to improve the support current oil and gas customers enjoy, but also expand our precision welding services into a wider range of industrial applications such as the nuclear and defence sectors."

The investment also comes as the company continues to expand the scope of turnkey solutions provided to the global energy sector, particularly as it moves further into the development of new below-the-mudline products.

A range of precision-engineered 'Measurement While Drilling' (MWD) and 'Logging While Drilling' (LWD) tools have also recently been produced as part of new product development projects for international energy technology companies.

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

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

# HOW DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY HELPS BUSINESSES ACHIEVE NET ZERO



The UK government committed to and unveiled several decarbonisation and energy reduction policies in 2021 to help the nation meet its ambitious net zero goals. Some of these included the UK Net Zero Strategy, launching the green reporting scheme, setting requirements for businesses to reveal their own net zero goals, and more. The country also hosted COP26 in November 2021, one of the most anticipated climate conferences since the Paris Accords were signed.

**Whilst saving money is an important outcome of good energy stewardship, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and pursuing net zero targets through good energy consumption monitoring boosts corporate reputation as well.**

Businesses have been called upon to help deliver net zero targets – and digital technology is the vehicle with which businesses can achieve their net zero goals. Advancing and emerging technologies have a significant role in decarbonising our economies and making our power consumption more efficient.

“Businesses have set up ambitious goals in line with global commitments towards decarbonisation and achieving net zero. Only a systematic change and approach can help them reach their targets. This includes strategically adopting cloud technologies, big data and IoT,” said Loganathan G. Bose, Head of Products at ClearVUE Systems.

Digital and IoT technologies have the ability to help organisation's drastically improve their energy efficiency and carbon reduction goals without sacrificing economic productivity. Research presented by Vodafone titled “Connecting for Net Zero: Addressing the climate crisis through digital technology” suggests that widespread adoption of 5G and IoT in the key areas of manufacturing, transport, and agriculture would cut the UK's overall emissions by as much as 4% per year.

Energy savings are more apparent than one may imagine. As much as 13% of average energy consumption can be saved through optimisation and reduction strategies. Digital technology



synthesises energy data through different methods that can then be used to enact changes in our energy consumption behaviours.

One tried and tested method is to use comparative analysis. Comparing your energy use against other proven commodities will create a benchmark for your performance. From here, you can identify how energy can best be distributed and consumed throughout different operating hours and production requirements.

Energy management systems today benefit from the best of digital technology to help businesses target energy waste and develop energy efficiency strategies through data-driven analysis.

For example, energy management solutions like ClearVUE allow users to monitor their energy consumption patterns monthly, weekly, daily,

and even hourly. Through data server and smart energy grid connectivity, tools such as live energy costing engines enable businesses to see costs for consumption and emissions directly from their supplier for every connected circuit in the business. This means businesses can review historical energy consumption data and produce reports of their business gas and electricity costs at any time.

Businesses are keen to realise their energy and carbon reduction strategies, and digital technology is paving the way for this to happen more easily and efficiently than ever before.

**If you have any further questions about business energy management or energy management software solutions, contact ClearVUE Systems on +44 (0)3 300 300 200.**





L-R: Danielle Barry, Mark Henderson, Nicola Halse

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES SET THE STANDARD FOR ISO SUCCESS

ISO consultancy, Compliant, are helping businesses to grow and gain essential certifications with the help of ERDF funding.

Sunderland based ISO specialists, Compliant, are heralding a fantastic start to the year as they help businesses access up to 40% of the project costs when investing in an ISO standard.

The funding, which is available from a variety of outlets across the North East, including NBSL, is a fantastic opportunity for businesses in the Tyne and Wear, Northumberland & Durham area to gain an ISO standard for a fraction of the investment cost.

So far in 2022, Compliant, as a registered provider with NBSL, have helped several north east based companies with their funding applications, they have then gone on to successfully gain UKAS accredited ISO certifications which in turn is helping to grow their businesses.

The funding, which can be applied for in less than 15 minutes, can be used towards the cost of a project that brings in almost any external expertise businesses may need to move them forward.

In today's global marketplace, international standards help to keep a level playing field and encourage continuous improvement, one such organisation is ISO. The certification is a fantastic tool to add credibility and quality to a business and demonstrates a commitment to customer service to a client base. From a business with one employee up to the largest multi-national, gaining

an ISO certification can be a game-changer.

From quality, occupational health & safety, information security to environmental and business continuity, the popularity and benefits of ISO standards are proving a clear route for businesses to gain access to public sector contracts and large frameworks.

Due to Compliant's growth in the last 18 months, the company have reinvested their profits into the company and recently gone through a rebrand, new easy to navigate website and filmed a series of ISO question and answer sessions to help explain the process.

Digital marketing manager, Danielle Barry, who has been with the company since its launch in 2016, has also recently been promoted to Internal Audit Manager to help clients through surveillance audits and re-certification. Danielle will now work with Compliant's clients with internal audits, documentation, procedures and help during external certification body checks while also maintaining the companies online presence via their website, email campaigns and social media.



“

**...We have seen  
a huge increase  
in demand for  
our services  
in 2022...**



Nicola Halse, Sales & Marketing Manager at Compliant, is delighted with the recent success, commenting, “We have seen a huge increase in demand for our services in 2022 and this in part has been as a result of the funding being available for North East companies. Savings of up to 40% are a fantastic opportunity for businesses and we’re delighted we have been able to help.

Many businesses who initially approach us have the impression that gaining an ISO standard is extremely costly and can take a lot of their time and resources, however this is simply not the case. We have a very cost effective and transparent fee structure and by working closely with certification body, the British Assessment Bureau, we are able to offer monthly payment plans and competitive pricing for both the implementation and certification of the management systems.

With an increase in demand for public sector contracts, many of which an ISO standard is now a pre-requisite, this has led to more businesses researching the benefits and how they can help ultimately, to win them more business.

With our vast experience within the sector and as a company, also being UKAS accredited to the



*Compliant5, L-R: Danielle Barry, Nicola Halse*

five main ISO standards, we can demonstrate our knowledge, quality and commitment to our clients. If businesses are eligible for the funding, we can help them every step of the way, from assisting with the initial application, completing project logs and guiding them through the whole process, we ensure it is as painless as possible.

We’re using our platform as one of the leading ISO consultancy’s in not only the North East but the UK, to share information on the funding programme and ensure as many businesses as

possible can take advantage of the opportunity.

We’re looking forward to helping more businesses to access the funding and encourage anybody thinking of gaining an ISO standard to contact us for professional and friendly advice and guidance.”

**For more information on Compliant’s  
services visit their website at  
[www.compliantfm.com](http://www.compliantfm.com)**



## WORLD WAR WITH A 'Z' – BUT WHERE'S BRAD PITT?

It's amazing, at a time when the western world is reeling from the events occurring in Ukraine, those who seek to retain and maintain power are never more popular amongst their own populations.

**Hungary has returned one of Vladimir Putin's closest allies for a third term, ignoring a coalition of other parties calculated to overthrow him. President Xi recently has more or less given himself a job for life, as did Putin some time ago. Everyone seems happy with this, except those of us in liberal democracies who seem to feel that despite our own systems faults, the ability to oust leaders every few years, is a truly saving grace.**

Lord Acton's adapted proverb "power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely", is very apposite here. Power without accountability over many years can all too easily result in leaders losing sight of their perspective and orientation towards their office wherein factors such as ego needs, personal goals, religious and other implicit beliefs can skew the leadership function in a way that does not work well for the populace. To retain power their solution is often to suppress the people by total control of the narrative. Putin, for example, in recollecting the days of yore of the Russian people, seems to overlook that for over a century, highly murderous regimes that have prevailed there would eclipse Hitler on body count! Suppression extends not only restricting the narrative but substituting counterfactual perspectives and symbolism (e.g., Jewish leaders that are "Nazis", half a crude swastika and you get "Z"). Putin is not alone in this, the "American dream" for example, is both a belief system and aspiration shared by many but actually realised by relatively few. Shared narratives, however, maintain cohesion where there might otherwise be dissent. Cross national borders and the inverse becomes true, as these memes are crafted into perceived external threats creating cohesion from a false, Orwellian like external threat. Whether it is Nazis in Ukraine, Goering's "final solution", "Reds under the bed" or Kaiser Wilhelm's "Yellow peril", there is always some plausible reason to vilify one group to unite others whilst fuelling nationalism and calling it the reclamation of some ephemeral lost culture e.g., Putin's "Defender of the Fatherland" or Trump's "Make America Great Again".

So where are the populations of these countries? Well, a kind of Stockholm syndrome often features in many states. Oppress people enough and they begin to accept the views and values of the oppressors as their own. It's easier, it reduces resistance at a time of complete powerlessness, and where to dissent would be to have your already limited rights stripped away. It is the logical choice which is why fake news can simply be used to refute anything that is not generated by the PR instruments of state leaving the population effectively in a "Zombie"-like sense of compliant awareness with a smorgasbord of rewards and painful incentives to remain so.

Arguably, the western world is too vested in fiscal investment, tactically ill-advised but convenient dependency for resources and cheap labour. Then add the backstop fears of mutually assured destruction from nuclear arsenals. This pretty much guarantees a despot, crackpot, dictator or whatever title works, the hegemony to clump around parts of the world infringing human rights, torturing, murdering and promoting false ideology to support their cause whilst organising staff day trips to lovely places like Salisbury perhaps!

Everyone hopes there won't be wars, but they are always there, somewhere. Globalisation complicates this as boundaries between nationalities, tribe and cultural identity blur and money and influence crosses borders in the good times with little regard to falling out. It becomes harder to put a bully back in their place, because the stakes are too high, their behaviour morphs into prolonged conflicts with death tolls of attrition, lost rights, and profound suffering. Fears of greater mayhem in the instability that follows regime and other change feeds this.

This is the problem about the "truth" of how we engage in conflict, it is often a stranger than fiction and, as Hiram Johnson in 1918 suggested, it is always the first casualty of war. Perhaps however, the real first casualty is integrity!

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

“

**...Everyone hopes  
there won't be  
wars, but they  
are always there,  
somewhere...**





*Dr David Cliff*





## A GREAT PLACE TO WORK

At the start of 2022, SSCL was officially Great Place to Work-Certified™ following our Great Place to Work survey. We were ranked among the 38 Super Large organisations on the GPTW UK Best Workplaces™ for Wellbeing.

**Great Place to Work® is the global authority on workplace culture. Through employee surveys and For All™ methodology, Certification™ and Best Workplaces™ lists, they recognise what organisations are doing right and help them to continually improve.**

For SSCL to be placed on this list, shows we have supported our teams and committed to employee wellbeing, especially during the pandemic.

As a company we are leaders in business support services for the public sector, but it is our people who make the biggest difference.

SSCL consists of over 2,800 colleagues currently operating out of six regional centres of excellence: Blackpool, Glasgow, Gosport, Newcastle, Newport, and York, plus several smaller satellite offices.

We are incredibly proud of SSCL's expertise and client heritage, which is why ensuring SSCL is a Great Place to Work is one of our strategic objectives and has been since 2013. Ensuring a consistently great work experience for our employees is as important to us as the service we deliver.

We want our people to feel supported throughout their SSCL career and ensure everyone understands they can make a difference.

### Results and impact:

- SSCL Trust Index Score (an average of all the results for the core questions on the survey) is

now 69%, an increase of 8% compared to our last GPTW survey in 2019.

- The Engagement category has increased by 9% to 67%, and the wellbeing category has increased by 8% to 70%, both significant improvements.
- Overall SSCL has seen a positive change in all 19 question categories since the 2019 survey.

Table below illustrates the gradual improvements year on year since our first survey in 2014.

These results reflect the changes we are making to create an organisation we feel proud to work for and where we enjoy what we do.

We are making significant investment in technology, facilities and people. In the current economic climate this demonstrates bold leadership and reinforces our commitment in making SSCL a progressive great place to work.

We want to create a balance between employee flexibility and face to face 'connection' in fantastic office spaces.

Tech MarketView stated: "the company's caring culture shines through in its Tech for Good

programme and has been evidenced by the new initiatives set up in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, many of which are now being embedded as 'business-as-usual' activities."

### What's next?

The GPTW survey identified some key areas of focus for 2022:

- Ensuring we can all fulfil our career ambitions.
- Ensuring our managers and leaders act in fair and consistent way.
- Ensuring we involve people in decision making and seeking suggestions for improvements.

Developing focused actions as well as longer-term improvement strategies to build on the significant improvements we have made, will ensure that together we can continue to make SSCL a great place to work.

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SSCL GPTW Stats	2021	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
<b>Trust Index</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>45%</b>
<b>Taking everything into account....</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>30%</b>

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# INSIDE THE TYNE TUNNELS

This month TT2, who run the Tyne Tunnels, have supported local charity Daft as a Brush during the fuel crisis, by fuelling their fleet of over 50 ambulances for the entire month.

**The charity transports cancer patients in the North East to and from hospital but has been hit hard by the rising price of petrol and diesel. After Daft as a Brush founder Brian Burnie set up an online campaign to help keep the charity running during this period of rising fuel costs, TT2 donated the £8000 needed to fuel the fleet for a month.**

Daft as a Brush Cancer Patient Care founder, Brian Burnie said: "With TT2's donation we can now cover fuel costs for a whole month, for all of our ambulances."

We are very grateful. Hundreds of people rely on us to get them to their appointments and we can't let them down."

## Tyne Tunnels Support Ukraine

The team have shown support for the ongoing crisis in Ukraine by sponsoring a truck to Slovakia, filled with essential supplies.

Philip Smith, Chief Executive at TT2, explained: "All the team were anxious to show solidarity with the people of Ukraine and in some small way support them with both aid and donations as well as by making a gesture of solidarity. Our Ukrainian employee liked the idea of flying the national flag, so we were pleased to support and make the gesture."

Team members have also collected necessities internally and donated to the local Polish Community Centre in Newcastle.

## Team Members Work In Partnership with Age Concern

Some of TT2's tech-savvy team members have been helping senior citizens in South Tyneside by providing help with tech queries, thanks to a new course in partnership with Age Concern South Tyneside.



TT2 linked up with Age Concern to run a series of technology sessions to help the elderly community with IT, including how to use a tablet, create an email address, shop online and use the TT2 website.

Sessions ran weekly in Jarrow, giving locals the chance to meet the team and get assistance on the new system.

## Tyne Tunnels Team-up with Pathways4All

TT2 staff are getting together to run the Great North Run this year, supporting Pathways4All. This is a parent-led charity which launched in 2010, providing play and leisure services for disabled children and young people, which is based only five miles away from the Tyne Tunnels.



The charity ran a series of activities over the Easter holidays, to which TT2 donated over 400 Easter eggs for all children participating in activities.

[www.tt2.co.uk](http://www.tt2.co.uk)





Joanne Howe

## HOW TO HIRE

***"If you don't know where you're going, you'll end up somewhere else!" - Yogi Berra***

I recently got asked to present a training course on "How to hire and manage staff without losing your s\*\*t!" In my experience, the single most important HR function a business should aim to get right is the recruitment process. If we get the right person in the right post, then all the other HR functions fall into line and we spend our time on positive interactions with value driven professionals, rather than managing underperforming staff.

As a business owner you must put the time and effort into hiring the right staff. You should give serious thought to the following before you start any recruitment process:

- Job description.
- Salary.
- Hours.
- Skills, qualifications, and experience.
- Competency based questions.
- Tests - case studies, presentations, micro sessions, video of working style etc.
- The right to work, DBS and driving licence checks.

Your aim is to employ unconsciously competent people. Dan Miller in his book "Business Made Simple" states that you should employ people who can accomplish your mission and who add economic value to your business.

Some of the basics that interviewers get wrong

include, don't:

- Do all the talking.
- Make a rushed decision.
- Bypass all the employment checks.
- Offer job terms verbally, always put in writing.
- Employ family and friends if they can't do the job.
- Let the new starter struggle in the first week/month.
- Ignore financial targets.

Your next member of staff can make all the difference to your business.

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# MY WEEKEND



Maggie Pavlou

## MAGGIE PAVLOU

Trustee and a volunteer at The People's Kitchen, Newcastle

**The People's Kitchen supports hundreds of "Friends" across the city every day. Volunteers have supported people in Newcastle for more than 35 years serving up to 200 meals per service, cooking everything from scratch. The charity is run entirely by volunteers, no government funding is received, and absolutely no one is paid for their work.**

Here Maggie tells us how she spends her weekends.

### Do you ever have to work weekends?

I spent the first 15 years of my career working every weekend and most bank holidays so now I try and protect them as much as possible.

### Are most weekends the same?

No really varied, I love gardening, family time, eating out, concerts, seeing friends - we have a small holiday place in Bamburgh, so I get to spend lots of lovely time up there in the fresh air, walking along the gorgeous beaches. I also have a renewed love of running so like to pop my trainers on and get some miles in whenever I can.

### Do you find it hard to switch off?

I used to find that my Sunday afternoons and evenings were spent prepping for the week ahead - I've managed to switch that around now and am quite strict about finishing my working week on a Friday and not looking at anything again until Monday.

### What do you do on a weekend which you can't fit in through the week?

Gardening mainly, and a longish run if I'm in training for a race or event.

### Morning exercise or recovery lie in ?

I do love a lie in (a trait I inherited from my Mam) but equally I enjoy the smug feeling of satisfaction afterwards if I manage to drag my carcass out for a run at the start of the day.

### Prefer a big night out or a night in the house?

I very much enjoy a night out, although you can't really beat an afternoon into early evening event, it just takes me longer to recover these days, I'm a huge fan of The Stand and like to go as often as I can to watch live comedy, it's just such a great escape. Also, I very much enjoy live music and will go to listen to pretty much anything whenever I get the opportunity.

I also enjoy hosting so am already looking forward to the BBQ season - fingers crossed we have some decent weather, and we get to see more of

our friends and family this year.

### Do you watch sport at the weekend?

Not really, although I'm a NUFC fan at heart.

### Where do you like to eat out at the weekend?

I do love a Sunday lunch, however now that the boys are all up and away, we tend to go out more than eat in. This year we decided to challenge ourselves to eat somewhere different every other week and so I'm currently working my way through a list of random places and am enjoying giving each one a FAVS rating (Food/Ambience/Value/Service) on Insta.

I really enjoy all the new restaurants in town but the pub over the road, The Lambton Worm, does cracking food so I can often be found in there.

### How important is the weekend to you?

Weekends for me are a time to recharge, relax and really cherish - I love them.

### On a weekend you'll usually find me most happy...

Very scruffy and either up to my eyes in mud and soil in the garden or walking along the coastline in Bamburgh.

**For more information about The People's Kitchen or to donate [www.peopleskitchen.co.uk/donate/](http://www.peopleskitchen.co.uk/donate/)**



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## AN ARMY OF VOLUNTEERS HELPS THE PEOPLE'S KITCHEN

After a gruelling four-day trek walking along the length of Hadrian's Wall, the last thing you'd expect anyone to do is spend a long night volunteering with one of Newcastle's most vital charities. But that is exactly what a 10-man team from the 3rd Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery based at Albemarle Barracks did to help their local community.

Sargent James Berry and his team decided to spend an evening washing dishes, peeling potatoes, serving food, and talking to the friends of The People's Kitchen as a way of putting something back into their local community.

Lesley Black, a Team Leader at The People's Kitchen who has volunteered for almost 10 years was

pleased to welcome the soldiers to the Kitchen.

"The team really settled in quickly and reacted to our requests well. Nothing phased them and they helped us by serving food and looking after our friends. Their military training kicked in as they didn't need any supervision and we are really honoured to have them working with us," she said.

The People's Kitchen also runs on an army of volunteers as no one is paid for their time and the organisation receives no funding from government to carry out its work. The Kitchen relies on donations from individuals, organisations, and businesses to maintain the level of support it gives to the vulnerable people of Newcastle and its surrounding towns. Its volunteers have supported people in Newcastle for more than 35 years serving up to 300 meals every session, cooking everything from scratch.

Anyone wishing to donate can do so at [www.peopleskitchen.co.uk/donate](http://www.peopleskitchen.co.uk/donate)

## ANGEL WATCHES OVER CORINNE'S GIFT BUSINESS

An emotional connection to the North East and one of its iconic landmarks has helped a talented designer build her Durham based business sending geographical souvenir gifts all over the world.

Corinne Lewis-Ward came to Newcastle in 1998 from her native Wimbledon to study at university. Now more than 20 years later she calls the North East her home and has a design studio in the prestigious Ushaw House in Durham.

Celebrating 10 years since its formation, Powder Butterfly provides unique handcrafted gifts based on locations such as Newcastle, Durham, London, and York while Gifted Studios supplies corporate gifts for events and awards. Corinne's work includes many North East images including St Mary's Lighthouse, The Baltic, and the Tyne Bridge but it's the Angel of The North which takes pride of place in her work and in her heart.

"I love this landmark which is the most viewed



public artwork in the world, with around 33 million people seeing it each year thanks to its proximity to the A1. To me, it's a symbol of coming to the North East all those years ago as I arrived in the same week that the Angel was installed," she said.

Corinne's love of the area inspired her first collection based on the landmarks of Newcastle and Gateshead. She only uses high-quality British manufacturers such as pottery specialists in Stoke for her fine bone china products and pin badges and keyrings made in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter.



## MARK HELPS FINCHALE GROUP MARCH FORWARD

A North East charity is celebrating the arrival of a new member of the team.

Mark Hill MBE has joined Finchale Group to help the Belmont based charity provide life changing support, training opportunities and routes to employment. The charity has excellent links with the military and started life in 1943 as a rehabilitation and resettlement centre for disabled wartime servicemen. As well as continuing to help ex-military personnel it has expanded and diversified to deliver high-quality employability and vocational training programmes for learners of all ages.

Mark brings with him a wealth of military experience, with 32 years serving in the Duke of Wellington's Regiment and latterly the Yorkshire Regiment seeing operational tours in war torn countries including Afghanistan, Iraq, and Bosnia. In 2014 he was awarded the MBE through his work as the Army's Community Youth Engagement Officer for engaging with hard-to-reach young people who were not in employment, education, or training.

His new mission is to work alongside the veteran community and help deliver activities, apprenticeships, and skills. "As well as operational roles, I have spent a lot of time in the military as an instructor delivering skills to soldiers. I've worked with diverse communities, businesses and government departments and I'm looking to build on these connections in my role with Finchale," he said.

One of Mark's first successes was the opening of a new Veteran's Information Hub in Catterick Garrison which was opened by local MP, Rishi Sunak MP.

For over 85 years NE Youth have been making a positive difference in the lives of young people, now more than any time we need your support



Visit:  
[www.neyouth.org.uk](http://www.neyouth.org.uk)  
to learn more or  
email:  
[jon@neyouth.org.uk](mailto:jon@neyouth.org.uk)





## DESIGNING HOLIDAY HOME ACCOMMODATION WITH GUESTS IN MIND

Holiday home ownership is big business, with more and more families reaping the rewards of owning a second property to be let out.

**And while furnishing it may appear to be the fun part, there are a number of factors to consider, explains Bethany Walker, head of interior design at Styled.**

A successful holiday let isn't all about location, although that's definitely important. Increasingly, guests are looking for the wow factor inside too, and have an ever-growing list of requirements.

The key to designing holiday home accommodation that makes holidaymakers click on the 'book now' button is striking a balance between offering a 'home from home' feel whilst still having those all-important extras and finishing touches that make it feel more luxurious.

Here's how to achieve that perfect balance...

### The house

In terms of décor, pick a theme and stick to it. Whether it's coastal, modern or traditional, make sure each room reflects the style you've chosen to give off that polished and professional air.

Small touches like artwork and decorative items add to the homely feel, however, use them sparingly so as not to overwhelm the space or make it feel too cluttered – and try to avoid using objects that are easily breakable or costly to repair.

One thing many holidaymakers look for these days is both pet and child friendliness, so investing in a highchair, baby bath and even dog bowls can also help you stand out from the crowd.

### Living space

We can't stress this enough – make sure there's somewhere for everyone to sit. We've lost count of the times we've seen holiday homes that sleep six people whilst only offering a small sofa and armchair in the living room. Nobody wants to sit on the floor or a dining chair when they're relaxing on holiday!

To ensure your scheme will stand the test of time, it's best to stick to durable or

even stain-resistant fabrics (if your budget allows) for your soft furnishings and sofas. They may be a little more costly up front, however, will save you more in the long run from having to replace them every time an accident occurs. After all, people are naturally less guarded on holiday, and it only takes one glass of red wine!

### Kitchen

Nobody wants to be washing up on holiday, so a dishwasher is a must-have, as well as enough crockery and cutlery to serve all guests for at least two meals.

A starter pack is always a welcome touch, containing essentials such as tea, coffee, milk and sugar, so at least your guests can make a hot drink after their journey. Don't forget about those smaller items such as pots, pans and utensils, too. There's nothing more frustrating than going to cook a meal and not having the right tools for the job.

Leaving a small supply of cleaning products also means that guests can clean up after themselves, which can mean less work for you or your housekeeping team too!

### Bedrooms

No matter how many bedrooms you have, try to offer your guests a choice of sleeping options. Two double bedrooms could be quite restrictive for a larger family, so mix it up with the option of doubles and singles. A great option for accommodation properties is zip-and-link beds that can be used together as a king bed or split into two singles as needed!

As part of a relaxing holiday, everyone wants a good night's sleep, so make sure your bedrooms are as peaceful as possible. Blackout blinds or curtains are a great idea, especially if you're in a town or near a busy road, and make sure windows can be opened to allow fresh air in.

You'll also need to provide plenty of storage space – hanging and drawers – along with flat surfaces for things like toiletries and a mirror.

### Bathrooms

Having the option of a bath and shower is ideal, however if you must choose one, baths can be a deal-breaker for many when booking a holiday home, especially if they have young children or are planning on having a relaxing or romantic getaway.

Providing towels and toiletries is also a small touch that can reap rewards; nobody likes to fill their suitcases with bulky towels and leaking bottles, so this will definitely make guests' lives easier – and potentially see them booking with you again next time!

Simple touches like the above can make the ordinary extraordinary – which is all anyone can ask from their holiday home.

**For more information about Styled and its interior design services for commercial and residential clients, visit [www.styledinteriordesign.co.uk](http://www.styledinteriordesign.co.uk)**





## PLANTING THE SEEDS FOR TOWN'S GREENER FUTURE

The Mayor of Blyth Town Council, Councillor Margaret Richardson was joined by many eco friendly residents to plant more than 1200 trees in an area adjacent to Meggies Burn. Funding for the planting came from the Northumberland County Council's Local Authority Treescape Fund which aims to increase tree planting and natural regeneration in non-woodland areas.

Mayor of Blyth Town Council, Councillor Margaret Richardson said: "Blyth Town Council are committed to making Blyth a greener town following the pandemic. We all realised the value of open spaces and nature during that time and it's so important that we plant new trees as they have a whole host of other benefits for our environment. They also help to reduce carbon levels in our atmosphere, offer flood protection and create wildlife corridors with natural habitats.

"I'm delighted that volunteers have given up some of their day to help plant the trees and we will continue to hold community planting events in the future. It may seem insignificant now seeing the small whips being individually planted, but in years to come, they will help us in the fight against climate change and boost our resilience for our mental health. Blyth is a great town and planting more trees makes it even better for everyone."

Eleven species of tree were planted ranging from bushes of Hawthorn and Holly to more substantial trees such as Scots Pine and English Oak.



## SAM FENDER TO BECOME PATRON OF NORTH EAST HOMELESS

One of the North East's biggest musical success stories has announced his plans to put his support of a regional charity on an official footing, following two sell out gigs on home ground recently.

The singer has revealed he has agreed to be patron of North Shields based North East Homeless, which he has already been a strong supporter of in recent years.

Brian Burridge, who set up the charity with his wife, Emma, said that Sam had been a real champion of their work, even giving them a shoutout as part of his acceptance speech at this year's BRIT awards.

"Even though he's now an internationally recognised artist, Sam has always kept his strong connections with the area," said Brian.

"It started during lockdown when he couldn't tour so he used to pop in here all the time, sometimes just sitting and playing the piano.

"We've always been a bit of a safe space for him and he just always pops in when he can.

"We are absolutely delighted that he's agreed to be our patron."

North East Homeless operates from a unit at Northumberland Street, North Shields where it offers a range of services for homeless people, including food, training and support.

The Fish Quay Hub is also open to the public who can use the event spaces and the café, which helps raise funds for their work.



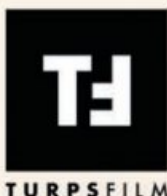
## KNIGHT SHIFT FOR HEALTHWATCH NEWCASTLE

Healthwatch Newcastle, the independent not-for-profit organisation who gather and represent the views and experiences of users of local health and social care services has appointed a new Chair whose experience brings a wealth of expertise to the organisation.

Jon Knight (33) is a national Director of St John Ambulance and he previously worked at a high level within the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. The former Ashington High School student has a passion for addressing health inequalities and getting the best out of local communities and a firm belief in the value of charitable and community organisations.

"Our mission at Healthwatch Newcastle is to make it easier for people to get access to the health support they need and generally improve the system by supporting those who are working in it.

"In my day job I work for St John Ambulance looking after all our volunteers and the many programmes we run nationally for young people. I get to see the very best in people and I also have an everyday insight into working within the healthcare system. It's a fact that everyone at some time will need to use the health or social care system so it is right that we ensure that it works in the very best way for us all. That is why I am so keen to be a part of Healthwatch Newcastle."



## Let video tell your story...

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# BEGINNING YOUR SHORT- TERM LETTING JOURNEY

The staycation market is booming, and UK-based holiday-makers look set to be joined by foreign ones as travel restrictions are lifted following the pandemic.

**All this means that owning and renting out a holiday property has never seemed so attractive – but, as Dale Smith, Founder & Director of holiday rental firm Host & Stay, points out, there are a number of things to consider before taking the plunge.**

In recent years, concerns have increased over the environmental impact of foreign travel, not to mention the difficulty of it during the pandemic, which has seen the UK holiday letting market increase in popularity.

We launched Host & Stay in 2018 with just nine properties, and we now have more than 500 on our books.

With growth like this being fuelled by both investor and guest demand, it's easy to see why, for many people, holiday home ownership seems like a win-win situation; your very own place to retreat to, along with an extra source of income when you're not using it.

And while both of these elements are true, it's not quite as simple as buying a house, letting it out, and enjoying the proceeds. There's a lot to consider, from legal and tax implications to the process of making sure you're getting bookings and the property is well maintained.

So how can potential holiday home owners start their short-term letting journey?

The first thing to do is find a property to let and, when it comes to choosing a location, the key question to ask is: would I like to visit? Because if you wouldn't, the chances are nobody else would either.

To maximise your returns, pick a spot in a fairly popular tourist destination, whether that's by the coast, in the hills or within travelling distance of an exciting city.

And don't forget that today's holidaymaker is a discerning one. Must-haves on their list nowadays include parking, WiFi, perhaps a safe place for children to play, and most certainly interior design that is better than their own home. If the property you've found doesn't have these, is there any way you can add them? If not, it may affect how much you can realistically charge.



Speaking of money, you'll also need to come up with a funding plan for buying your holiday home – unless you're a cash buyer.

The two most common options are either a mortgage or equity funding, and there are a variety of aspects to consider.

Firstly, a holiday let mortgage differs from a buy-to-let mortgage, where you borrow money to buy a property that will be let out to long-term AST tenants.

And because holiday lets can be seen as a more risky proposition, without the guarantee of long-term leases, it can be difficult to find a provider.

Unlike a standard buy-to-let mortgage, where the lender works out affordability based on the assumption that it will be let on an AST (Assured Shorthold Tenancy) tenancy of six to 12 months, holiday let stats can be a matter of days, and will have seasonal peaks and troughs.

A holiday let income will also fluctuate, meaning it's harder to guarantee repayments. That's where the income expectations from a reputable holiday let management agent like Host & Stay will be essential.

The other option is equity funding, whereby you remortgage your existing property to release funds to buy the holiday home. Depending on how much cash you release, you could either pay for the property outright or pay a deposit and take a loan for the rest.

Once you've bought the property, you'll then have to make sure it meets all the rules and regulations surrounding holiday home ownership.

These include things such as fire risk and landlord gas safety assessments, along with regular upkeep of the property to make sure there are no hazards for your guests.

And, while furnishing and styling your holiday home may be the most exciting part, furniture and electrical appliances will also need to comply with all relevant legislation governing flammability and maintenance – you can't just use



your old kettle or sofa.

Once your home is furnished beautifully (and legally), you'll need to make sure that your ownership of the property is above board; buying a holiday home comes with a variety of financial implications, not least of which is tax.

That's because, when it comes to the home itself, rates and taxes on holiday lets differ from residential. If your property is in England, and available to rent for 20 weeks (140 days) or more, you must be registered for business rates property tax, which replaces the council tax you would otherwise be liable for.

Furthermore, in terms of your personal tax payments, you're going to have extra income coming in, so you'll likely need to complete a self-assessment tax return every year.

Once all the above is in place, you're ready to welcome your first guest – but where will you find them?

At first, you'll probably have no shortage of willing family and friends ready for a mini-break, but, to really maximise your returns, we'd suggest working with a holiday home property management firm like Host & Stay.

Managing bookings, cleaning and maintenance, payments and advertising takes a lot of time, skill and effort, whereas a management firm can take care of every part of the process.

Because the last thing a holiday home owner wants from the experience is more stress.

**If you're considering taking the plunge into holiday home ownership, visit [hostandstay.co.uk/host/get-started](https://hostandstay.co.uk/host/get-started) for more information.**





## LEADING THE WAY

NE Youth have been making a positive difference in the lives of young people for over 85 years. Their CEO, Jon Niblo, talks about the strategic changes that are taking place in the organisation now & over the next three years.

### Coming out of the pandemic must have been hard for NE Youth and indeed all charities- what made you and your team decide to work on and implement a new Strategic Plan?

The world changed following Covid and we needed to understand the needs and aspirations of young people and how our new strategy could ensure that we were in tune with this. We were at that stage of the cycle to plan a new three strategy but it needed to be different. Supporting young people around mental health and transitions/employability would be key and we needed to align our business development strategy and stakeholder engagement accordingly.

### Tell us about some of the headlines?

Focusing on (see opposite page):

- People
- Sustainability
- Innovation
- Communications

We need to make sure that our core offer is relevant- our model is the traditional open access universal model of youth work and we are proud of that. With creativity, innovation and good communication we can ensure this remains relevant in the coming years.

We need to be in tune with the wider world and ensure the voices of young people influence the strategy at all stages.

With investment from unlocking some of our reserves we've been able to invest in the strategy, structure and team. Our skilled and experienced board have been at the heart of the plan's development and their support and encouragement has been invaluable.

Positive changes have taken place- for example, staff who were part time are now uplifted to full time with additional capacity and resources to be more effective in their role, giving them the support and training they need to step up and improve quality and achieve better outcomes for young people.



Jon Niblo

Investing in the team and their career journey is so important to me. Our offer and package is above and beyond salaries- we've also focussed on well-being.

One of the reasons youth work has fallen behind as a profession comes down to salaries, lack of full-time opportunities and short-term contracts. We've seen this over the last five years and knew something needed to be done. NE Youth now offers one of the most competitive packages to people joining the team. We are a stand out employer when it comes to pay and I'm really proud of that.

### Why are people at the heart of the strategy?

Your staff are your most valuable resource. In a climate where recruitment and retention is difficult we wanted to take some ownership and be a leading organisation to go above and beyond. We offer well-being packages for staff which include:

- A wellbeing resource library
- Moods Monday: once a month, one team member takes it in turn to prepare lunch for the wider team. This provides opportunities for strengthening relationships across all aspects of the team, regardless of role.
- Discounted gym membership to support physical health
- The Introduction of a Hybrid Working Policy

We have a Wellbeing Committee so our initiatives are designed by employees for employees.

We have a strong team culture and we believe in the importance of internal comms where there's a safe environment to talk.

### What could someone joining the team at NE Youth expect?

We are always looking to add good and different people to our team and increase diversity at all levels. New employees can expect to be valued, to be listened to, a team that has a strong work ethos and team culture. We offer a competitive pay structure, a chance to progress and we are fun... we love what we do!

### How do you keep your team motivated?

The key is to keep the organisation current and relevant. We need to be in tune with the Sector and Young People as beneficiaries. Career development is important for motivation- we listen to our staff, we take on board what they have to say and involve them in all key decisions. We are very proud of our team and the culture that we have created that helps to motivate us all on a daily basis.

### With a stronger team and clear focus- what's next for NE Youth?

We want to continue to provide high quality and innovative opportunities for young people and support for those who work in the youth sector. We are also very excited about our soon to be launched new website.

- Campaign
- Conference
- Events
- Get involved

[www.neyouth.org.uk](http://www.neyouth.org.uk)



# LEADING THE WAY TOGETHER, STRONGER

## The NE Youth Strategy

By 2025, NE Youth will have changed as an organisation. Our aim is to move NE Youth as an organisation forward, bringing ourselves even closer to the needs of the region's young people.

We will operate under, and be accountable to, our new core values, embedded at all levels within the organisation:

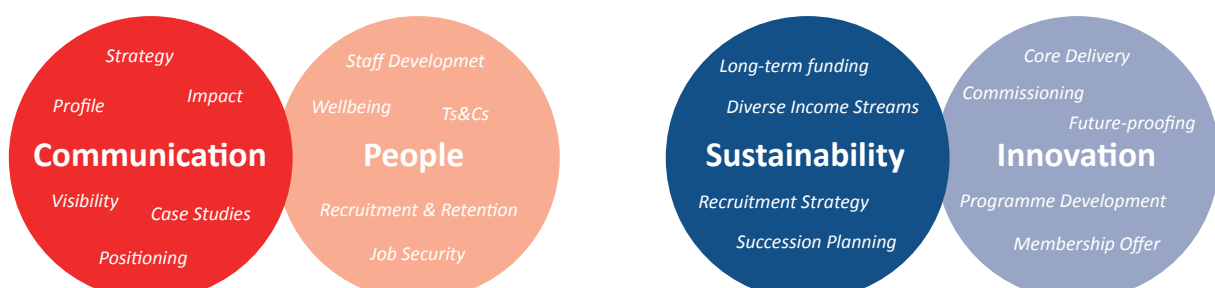
- **Insightful** (Building our expertise and our field of work);
- **Engaged** (committed long-term to the young people we engage with);
- **Impactful** (working to secure sustainable outcomes);
- **Professional** (with everything and everyone)

We will focus our efforts on four core areas, which are:

1. **Communication** – We will publicise the great achievements and impact of all NE Youth projects, to highlight the key role the organisation plays in supporting the region's youth.
2. **People** – We will continue to support the wellbeing of our staff and consider what we offer as an employer so staff feel valued for their work and NE Youth becomes an employer of choice.
3. **Innovation** – We will use our knowledge, expertise and youth engagement to develop our own unique youth programmes and we will expand our network within the youth sector so more young people can benefit from more NE Youth programmes.
4. **Sustainability** – We will ensure the future of NE Youth by securing sustained funding and by increasing our offerings and relevancy to the needs of young people.

Our work will be underpinned by robust governance, digital transformation and youth voice. The latter will see young people involved at all levels within the organisation, helping to inform our thinking and influencing our decision making. Their voice will help with our innovations and how we develop projects and services that truly meet the needs of the region's young people.

## The NE Youth Strategic Model







Mark Sumner

*An online partnership has been launched in Newcastle to provide businesses with a way to log crime, anti-social behaviour and other issues which are impacting on their business and the city centre environment.*

## BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP TO TACKLE CRIME

Operations Manager at NE1 Ltd, Mark Sumner talks about the new Business Crime Reduction Partnership in Newcastle city centre and what it hopes to achieve.

**Newcastle is a safe city, but like any modern city it has its challenges. Issues like anti-social behaviour, retail theft and petty crime affect businesses, residents, and the wider public. Thankfully, they are mostly minor inconveniences and do not significantly disrupt city life or hamper business, but in Newcastle, we currently do not have facts and figures on the scale of the problem because many businesses don't report these incidents to the Police.**

A survey conducted among NE1 businesses earlier this year found that the majority of respondents do not report minor incidents because they feel the process takes too long and few had any confidence that something would be done.

We also know that our team of NE1 Street Rangers are working hard to keep the streets of the city safe. They do a stellar job working with the police to be the eyes and ears on the streets. All these efforts are done without a clear and accurate picture of the scale of the problem. No concrete data exists of where the major problems lie, how extensive they are, and what resources are needed to tackle the issues.

NE1 has now devised a plan to address this situation. Launching the NE1 Business Crime Reduction Partnership, we hope to encourage businesses to report incidents of anti-social behaviour and criminal activity. Businesses will be encouraged to sign up to the platform, which will operate as a neighbourhood watch style initiative, where they can log in and report crimes or episodes of anti-social behaviour, however small. The new partnership will help NE1 and the police to record incidents, identify recurring issues and map where the problems are happening.

Being able to quickly report cases will give businesses a voice and will, in turn, allow the new partnership to gather accurate and timely data, which will help us to channel resources into tackling the problems and identifying what can be done to resolve the issues causing them.

Collating the information is the first step, the partnership can then determine the extent of the problem and work with the police to allocate resources to tackle these issues. Similar initiatives operate successfully around the UK, and we are confident that the scheme will work well in Newcastle and will benefit our businesses and the wider community.

We are launching the new Business Crime Reduction Partnership this spring, and are working closely with the business community, Northumbria Police, and Newcastle City Council to get it off the ground.

Businesses across the city are being invited to join the partnership which will be free for all NE1 levy-paying businesses, and available for companies outside the NE1 postcode area to join for a small annual fee. Operating through an online platform, the partnership will provide access to a members' forum to

record incidents, share information, and raise alerts to help prevent and reduce crime in the city centre, as well as improving safety for businesses, staff, and visitors.

In addition to logging incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour, businesses will also be able to review information on offenders operating in the city centre and keep abreast of criminal trends and activity. The platform will alert businesses to the presence of offenders in the city before they go into shops, or leisure venues, and enable these businesses to manage the risk appropriately.

Members will all agree to be bound by data protection rules relating to data sharing, how the information can be used, and access to the platform.

We believe that the new business crime reduction partnership will provide crucial information and will help to make Newcastle an even safer place as we constantly strive to improve. It is a major step forward in the support we offer our businesses in the city centre, and one we know will be of huge benefit to our members. By tackling crime and improving safety for visitors and staff, business losses will be prevented, and Newcastle will be a safer, more welcoming, and prosperous environment for everyone to enjoy.

We have enlisted the help of a national business crime management company, NBCS, to help set up and operate the Business Crime Reduction Partnership. We have been delighted by the response to the Partnership so far, with some of the city's key businesses, including many of the major high street brands, on board, and interested in joining the steering group. Together we will run the partnership, decide its priorities and work alongside the Police, and the City Council. We are confident that together we can reduce crime and disorder in Newcastle city centre and with business support these changes can be made quickly, effectively, and cost efficiently.

**Any business keen to register to be part of the NE1 Business Crime Reduction Partnership should contact [mark.sumner@newcastlene1ltd.com](mailto:mark.sumner@newcastlene1ltd.com)**





Bryony Gibson

## HOW TO TACKLE A SCARCITY OF TALENT

Bryony Gibson, Director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, shares insight into the biggest recruitment challenge, and how you can overcome it.

Even with a continuous flow of attractive roles, recruiters are finding it harder than ever to unearth skilled people who are keen to move.

**This shortage of talent is, in my opinion, the greatest business challenge we face and, regardless of sector, has been the case for some time.**

It is a sentiment reflected in March's KPMG / REC report on jobs. Following a survey of over 400 UK recruitment consultancies, it cites that as hiring activity continues to markedly increase, permanent appointments are expanding at the softest rate for 11 months due to candidate shortages restricting companies' ability to fill roles. With vacancy growth picking up, the combination of robust demand for workers and low supply has added even more upward pressure on starting salaries, which are now rising at the second-fastest

rate in 24 years of data collection.

Firms succeeding against this backdrop are those who collaborate with recruiters to get their offers to candidates right but, the good news is that there are also changes you can make within your business to tackle the talent shortage and avoid entering into salary bidding wars:

### Re-skill your team

One of the greatest opportunities is to retrain your existing workforce, especially if you have people in the business who have the right attitude and the softer skills needed for a role.

By identifying the competencies required in your team and up-skilling the right people, you will not only give someone the tools to help you grow the business, but you are also developing them as individuals and offering new opportunities, all of which will discourage them from looking for a new challenge elsewhere.

### Apprenticeship schemes

By expanding - or starting - an apprenticeship scheme and inviting more trainees into your business each year, over time, you will find resourcing much easier. While it may not solve immediate issues, scarcity of talent is a long-term problem, and a stream of new shapeable talent will ease the burden of recruitment in the years to come.

### Build your employer brand

Great people are never short of job offers, so the way your company is seen by prospective employees, and how a job opportunity is sold to a potential recruit, is crucial to attracting them. Start by thinking carefully about what it is that you

do and do not want to be known for. Next, make sure that everyone involved in the recruitment process sees it as a two-way interview. They must always show your business in the best possible light at every touchpoint, proving what it is that makes you stand out from your competitors.

### Re-evaluate your offer

Following COVID, people's attitude toward work-life balance and what they need from an employer has changed. There are more variables to consider when changing jobs: can they work from home; do they need to be in the office every day; can they work flexibly or run with part-time hours.

To recruit the best, you need to be clear about what makes your offer stand out. It doesn't need to be as revolutionary as a 4-day working week or unlimited holidays, but flexibility is important and the option to work non-core hours is generally welcomed.

### Act fast

From receipt of their CV to making an offer, you must move quickly and prioritise recruitment as once they decide to move, talented people receive job offers very quickly. If you find the right person, be prepared to act fast as it will not be long before one of your competitors attempts to steal them away.

### Get help from an expert

At a time when niche consultancies are replacing generalist recruiters, it pays to build strong relationships with experts in your field. Not only do they have access to wider talent pools, but they can also source the hard to fill vacancies non-specialists and in-house teams simply cannot do.

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



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# BRYONY GIBSON CONSULTING JOB OPPORTUNITIES...

## CORPORATE FINANCE EXECUTIVE

North East, £30-40,000pa plus benefits

**This is a marvellous and rare opportunity for a qualified Accountant to join a highly successful accountancy firm and transition their career into the field of corporate finance, with no previous experience required.**

You will need a strong background in general practice accounting and/or audit, and to be confident with analysis of accounts for valuations on SME businesses. As someone trained in all aspects, from valuations, M&A, fundraising, restructuring, due diligence, and basic tax knowledge, clients will look to you for advice.

In addition to being a qualified Accountant (ACA/ACCA), you must be a confident communicator, keen to meet new people and businesses, and let your curious mind drive new work. As someone who is hungry to work in the corporate finance arena - and enthusiastic about furthering their career across the region - you can base yourself from either Newcastle or Teesside.

## ASSOCIATE PARTNER/ SENIOR MANAGER

Darlington, £Competitive plus benefits

**Having enjoyed a healthy period of continuous growth, the time is right for this energetic and passionate Partner group to invite a professionally qualified accountant to join the business.**

With the responsibility of managing an established portfolio of SME businesses, you will benefit from being able to enjoy a good balance between work and home life. And, with a strong background in general practice accounting and advisory skills, will receive support and leadership guidance as you work towards reaching Partner.

As an ACA/ACCA with post qualification experience, you must have a desire to build client relationships, look for new business, and enjoy leading a team. With significant accounts preparation and disclosures experience and a good working knowledge of accounting standards and their application, effective communication and previous experience in staff management and motivating teams are required to succeed.

This is a desirable opportunity for anyone seeking a direct route to Partnership within a short period and, with an interesting and diverse client base to work with, it is also a great chance for an experienced manager to receive support to develop their career within an internal leadership programme.

## RECOVERY & INSOLVENCY SENIOR MANAGER/ MANAGER

Newcastle, £Competitive plus benefits

**We have an exciting opening in a Specialist Recovery and Insolvency team with a readily available path for succession or the flexibility for someone who enjoys operating at their current level.**

Working with local and national clients, you will manage a portfolio of cases, supporting distressed businesses through restructuring or insolvency processes.

An experienced professional in both personal and corporate insolvency, you must be able to lead by example, enjoy being part of a supportive team, possess excellent written and verbal communication skills, and bring with you the ability to lead and train more junior members in the team.

With a proven ability to build relationships and demonstrate sound commercial understanding of the local market, we are looking for somebody who is preferably JIEB qualified or has the desire to qualify and, as a minimum, is a qualified Accountant with a career in insolvency.

## CORPORATE TAX ADVISORY SENIOR MANAGER/MANAGER

Newcastle, £Competitive plus benefits

**Keen to strengthen its corporate tax offering, this independent accountancy firm seeks to appoint a Corporate Tax Senior Manager (or Manager) to work with desirable North East businesses at Plc and SME levels.**

With a plethora of interesting advisory projects, as a qualified corporate tax practitioner (ACA/CTA), you will be technically strong in compliance and planning, and be able to provide advisory services in corporate restructuring, transactional work, capital allowances, R&D, shares, management buyouts, SEIS and EIS. You do not need to be an expert in all areas if you have a foundation of knowledge and can call upon your colleagues for assistance.

Given the client portfolio, any exposure to private clients would be advantageous but is not essential as a team of private client specialists will support you.

The firm encourages promotion within and offers the opportunity for further progression as you develop. As such, mentoring junior staff plays a key role, alongside the appetite to network within the local business community and seek out further advisory projects.



# PUTTING INNOVATION AND AUTOMATION AT THE HEART OF BUSINESS



L-R: James Cleave – Chief Financial Officer,  
Craig Dallison – Chief Growth Officer,  
Josh Gill – Chief Operations Officer,  
Paul Williams – Chief Technology Officer

## Customers expect a lot these days – and rightly so.

**It's something Josh Gill, CEO of Teesside-based water supplier Everflow Water, knows all too well. In fact, he's built a business on it.**

We're entering a new age of customer service, one where automation and digitisation can mean a smoother, more stress-free process for all involved.

At Everflow, we've always been innovators, putting the client at the heart of our journey to make utilities simple.

And it shows. We've recently been shortlisted for the European CXA 2022 Best Customer Service Awards, and last year won a UK Business Award for best customer experience. We also have an 'excellent' Trustpilot score – something of a rarity in utility firms.

However, we're not resting on our laurels, and the team are constantly thinking up and developing new ways to make the customer experience simple and intuitive.

Our latest innovation is Instant Quoting, a tool that allows potential SME customers to get an instant quote for their water service, without having to go through a broker.

Until we launched Instant Quoting, 90 per cent of revenue came from SMEs going through brokers. And while brokers still pay an important part in the Everflow story, we also wanted to offer customers another option, a way of going direct.

This latest update allows our business customers to get a quote immediately through our website, leading to a smoother service for them – something which has been our goal from day one.

Added to this we have our customer portal, which also allows customers to deal with many aspects of their account online, without having to spend time on the phone to an agent – again, something they've come to expect.

It gives them access to 24/7 online support and allows them to do things themselves that they would previously have had to contact us for, such as downloading bills and arranging direct debits.

And as well as improving service for customers, both of the above also improve staff morale, freeing their time up to get on with their day jobs without spending hours on 'admin' that could – and should – be automated.

### A better place to work and do business

Everything I've talked about above feeds into my vision for Everflow: a place where people love to come to work and that also offers incredible customer service.

And I remain convinced that the best way to do this is through automation and digitalisation, and through putting that at the very heart of your business, not just as an add-on or in response to an emergency.

We started this journey with our Simple Quoting software, which has achieved what I originally set out to do; it has used automation to revolutionise the water industry.

Devised collaboratively throughout the group, with input from both sales and tech teams, it has streamlined the whole process from quote to contract, and is now used throughout the water industry – we don't believe in keeping things to ourselves.

The beauty of digital is that there are no limits and, at Everflow, we continue to innovate to continually

push the boundaries of what is expected in the water retail market.

Our approach is making waves throughout the industry. We've twice made it into the FT1000, the Financial Times' list of the fastest-growing companies in Europe – straight in at third place in 2021, with a repeat appearance at 54 this year.

We're also leading the way when it comes to environmental matters, having become the first water firm to become carbon neutral in the UK.

As a business and as individuals, we're committed to doing everything we can to protect and secure the environment for future generations, and we've implemented a number of schemes and initiatives to ensure this.

That includes taking measures to offset our whole supply chain, as well as our customers' supply chains, through buying carbon credits to offset all emissions produced in the process – from getting water from reservoirs, treating it and it going back into the sea.


Closer to home, we knew that many of our employees were interested in using electric vehicles, and so we've recently signed up to the Octopus employee electric vehicle scheme to make it more affordable.

Innovation is not always about tech, although it's a good place to start. Instead, it's about thinking deeper about what you want to create, and how you can go about it.

We put customer service and employee wellbeing ahead of profits, or keeping our creations to ourselves – and that's the true innovation.

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





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Governance Manager at [governor@ncea.org.uk](mailto:governor@ncea.org.uk).

[www.ncea.org.uk](http://www.ncea.org.uk)





Dr Louise Kempton



Kim Smith

## REALISING NORTH EAST AMBITION

A conversation with Newcastle University's Dr Louise Kempton and the North East Local Enterprise Partnership's Kim Smith.

**The North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has recently begun a collaborative project with Newcastle University called Realising North East Ambition. Here, Dr Louise Kempton at the Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies and North East LEP Enterprise and Education Lead Kim Smith talk about this important new research.**

### How did this project come about?

**Louise:** Ensuring our research has impact beyond the University is fundamental to the work we do at the Centre for Urban and Regional Development. We developed this project in collaboration with the LEP to design research that can directly benefit policy interventions in the North East.

In recognition of the value of this collaboration, the University and the LEP secured funding from the Economic and Social Research Council. The research council's Local Acceleration Fund aims to strengthen policy makers' access to research, data and academic expertise.

**Kim:** The LEP is always looking for ways to develop a robust and practical evidence base to develop our programming.

Our North East Ambition programme brings educators and businesses together to support young people with the careers guidance they need to succeed in the labour market. This improves the supply of a skilled workforce, ready and prepared for the world of work, ensuring that the North East has

a pipeline of talented employees.

So we are excited to be collaborating with Newcastle University to deepen our evidence base and assess what works in careers intervention.

### What is the main aim of the research?

**Louise:** Realising North East Ambition will study the barriers and drivers for young people's employment and career progression. It will combine innovative social science with the LEP's extensive local knowledge to provide new insights into the career destinations of young people and the policy design needed to drive positive change.

**Kim:** Working together will allow the project team to carry out new research on the formation and initiation of career pathways of young people. We will talk to colleges, schools and students, as well as charities and other voluntary organisations supporting young people's employment and career progression in the sector.

### What will the research involve?

**Kim:** We know the importance of excellent career advice and guidance, including high-quality work experience, knowledge of the labour market and understanding routes into work. But we still have so much to learn about how to design the best programmes to support our young people.

**Louise:** The team will study the journey from college student's initial aspirations and careers guidance through to choices, training and

destination. This will help us understand the barriers preventing young people from securing and retaining better jobs. It will also allow us to identify the drivers that promote a pipeline to skilled jobs with good career progressions.

Our research will delve into what works in careers education and guidance. It will go beyond formal barriers to examine the informal influence of parents, teachers, peers and role models. It will allow future interventions to focus on the most important factors affecting young people's career choices.

### And what outcomes can we expect to see from the research?

**Louise:** Over the next few months, the team will hold several events, workshops and roundtables with employers, educators and young people. Information about these events will be shared on our Twitter account and across social media.

Our research will bring together regional partners to share data and analysis. It will deepen collaboration between Newcastle University, the North East LEP and its partners. And it will build a productive relationship and enhance a community of practice, based around local intelligence and high-quality academic research.

**Kim:** A full report will be published this summer, including co-produced policy recommendations that will be actionable for colleges. It will provide the North East LEP and its partners with critical insights to inform both current programmes and future interventions. This will contribute to North East Ambition's goal to deliver outstanding and tailored careers guidance so each and every young person in the region can realise their ambitions.

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

# ENTREPRENEURS ARE THE LIFE BLOOD OF OUR ECONOMY, LET'S CELEBRATE THEIR SUCCESS!



Colin Bell

Colin Bell, Business and Sector Growth Director at the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), explains why the High Potential Startups programme has been such an incredible platform for North East entrepreneurs.

**Entrepreneurs are the life blood of our economy; they are courageous and incredible people so it's great to learn that a whopping 55.6%\* of the North East's workforce want to set up their own business. There is one problem however, which is that less than 1% step over the line and start their own company each year.**

Why is this? Well, the answer is simple. Stepping over the line requires huge amounts of courage and for many this means letting go of what could be perceived to be a comfortable and more predictable and stable existence in employment.

To level up, the North East needs to create more than 25,000 additional businesses, equating to 200,000 additional jobs and £10 billion of additional economic output. This requires more than 6,000 extra people every year to find the courage to take the plunge and start their own business, choosing freedom, excitement and opportunity over stability and predictability – no mean feat.

Within the population of people starting their own business is a group of people who create businesses that grow and accelerate quickly. This group of fast-growing small businesses generate approximately one third of new jobs and additional economic growth and are therefore important drivers of the regional economy.

High Potential Startups was created in 2019 to identify startups with high growth potential and to engage them in a support programme consisting of high impact workshops, coaching and funding. The programme gives people belief in themselves and their idea so they commit to the development of their new business.

Three years on and through what has been one of the most disruptive times, I'm pleased to say that the programme has proved to be a huge success. We were unsure how the pandemic would affect things but what happened was that people seemed to reflect on their lives and what was important to them.

Although it wasn't perhaps the best time, we saw the number of people applying to the programme with innovative and scalable business ideas vastly increase – the change and disruption to normality caused by the pandemic propelled people to take the leap. In the hardest of times, it was a massive inspiration to see so many people come forward and decide that now was the right time to develop new business ideas that for many had been left on the back burner for several years.

We've seen 58 of our participants founded a new business, most of which were created during the pandemic. Although it's still very early days for many of these, 99 jobs have already been created and several of these businesses have broken £500,000 turnover.

Entrepreneurs are the life blood of our economy, they have chosen freedom, excitement and opportunity over stability and predictability, they are courageous and incredible people and that's why we are celebrating them and giving them a collective pat on the back.

***If you are interested in starting your businesses, please get in touch or visit the North East Growth Hub website: [www.northeastgrowthhub.co.uk](http://www.northeastgrowthhub.co.uk)***

Source 64% of Britain's Workforce Wants To Set Up Their Own Business | SME Loans \*



## MENTAL HEALTH CHARITY DEDICATES RESOURCE FOR UKRAINIAN REFUGEES ARRIVING IN UK

A leading mental health charity is providing dedicated support and resources for incoming Ukrainian refugees and anyone hosting refugees in their homes – and is calling for organisations to work together to ensure help is available as quickly and efficiently as possible.

**Mental Health Concern, based in Newcastle upon Tyne, has a number of properties across the North East that can be used by anyone in need of short-term or long-term accommodation, and has pledged to provide any vacant properties to incoming refugees who need a place to stay. It will also put systems in place to offer post-traumatic psychological support to anyone who needs it, as well as readying Employment Advisor services to work with refugees who are eligible to work on arrival to get meaningful employment.**

The charity will provide financial support to any employees that house refugees through the Government's scheme, and is also calling on the Government, local authorities, and other organisations to work together to create community networks so support and accommodation can be accessed quickly and easily by those who need it most.

Mental Health Concern's sister organisation, Insight IAPT, provides NHS-funded talking therapies across England and is calling for other talking therapy providers to work together, to



Adam Crampsie

ensure that the right measures are in place to support those affected by the conflict in Ukraine, including translation services, locations for treatment, increased capacity, employment and housing support, and improved access to trauma specialists.

There will be a dedicated page on the Insight IAPT website for refugees and their families who are looking for help. The site's innovative AI online assessment tool will refer users to the right support channel as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Adam Crampsie, Chief Executive of Mental Health Concern, said: "We have all been affected by the devastating pictures coming from Ukraine over the past two weeks, and we are fortunate to be in a position to help those that need it. I am working closely with my own team, and other mental health service providers across the UK, to get measures in place so we can provide relevant and important support to anyone affected by the war.

"We have dedicated housing that can be used by refugees, as well as mental health specialists who can provide support to anyone dealing with trauma. We also recognise that opening your home to a refugee, especially at a time when the cost of living is increasing so rapidly, can have an impact on mental health, so we want to make sure anyone who has done so has access to the right support too.

"We have seen a lot of broad promises by the Government of fiscal support to local authorities and hosts of these refugees, but money needs to be spent wisely. We are keen to work with relevant organisations so we can pool our resources and make sure that systems are set up as quickly as possible for anyone who needs mental health support during this incredibly hard time."

**More information can be found:**  
**[www.mentalhealthconcern.org/news/services/our-support-for-ukraine](http://www.mentalhealthconcern.org/news/services/our-support-for-ukraine)**

# POPE BIOPIC DOCUMENTARY PREMIERES IN NEWCASTLE

Francesco: a film directed by Oscar nominated director Evgeny Afinevsky about Pope Francis had its Northern premiere at Tyneside Cinema last month.

Francesco highlights Pope Francis's progressive policies and the role he's played in pushing the Catholic Church to address major crises, including the issues of sexual abuse that have been hidden for so long. Francis also talks about climate change, migration and refugees, women's empowerment, LGBTQ+ issues, pandemic, border walls, and many more of today's headlines.

The premiere kicks off a series of events to be held here in the UK and across Europe. The main objective of the screening tour is to raise awareness around the film across the education sector and the wider public. Francesco is not deemed a 'catholic film' - it's a film about Francis, the global leader which highlights how passionate he is about issues that we all face today.

Alongside the film a curriculum guide has been produced. Aimed at students aged 13-21 yrs, there are six main lessons that fit in with global curriculums covering religious studies, geography, history and humanities.

During the first week of the screening tour over



600 school students, and 100 education heads, lecturers, teachers, clergy and media got to watch the film.

Evgeny, the director, flew over from LA to visit some schools in the North East including Sacred Heart Girls School and St Cuthbert's in Newcastle. Students watched the film then were able to ask questions afterwards.

Evgeny said: "This film is a love letter to the Earth and its people and will be there as a strong reminder of what can happen when we stop 'loving one another'. May we all follow the simple mantra and beautiful actions of this incredible man - Pope Francis. I hope that it will bring

attention to the important global issues portrayed in the film; and that we can come together to effect change in the world and preserve it for the future. With Pope Francis as the central figure in the film, it is a testament to the power of one person to make a difference, and an inspiration to the viewer to do the same. It's been amazing to meet so many people on my trip to the North East- especially the students'

**Francesco will be available to watch on all major streaming platforms from May 2022**

**The education curriculum is available to download now at: [www.francescofilm.com](http://www.francescofilm.com)**

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# GROWING YOUR BUSINESS THROUGH REFERRALS

Isn't it fantastic when a client refers you onto another great client?

**That warm feeling knowing you have done an excellent job, so good in fact that your first client is keen to introduce you to others. These unstructured referrals are brilliant for you and your business. What can you do to build on this and take a more proactive and structured approach to getting referrals?**

Here are three simple ways of making referrals work for you.

## **Think network first. How do you add value?**

If you approach this with the thought of "How do I add value to those around me?" then you shift your focus and your own approach in a subtle and important way. You start to look for opportunities to give and ask for referrals, you think about connecting your network up. Where you think clearly about how you can add value to your network, then your network starts to value you as an individual even more. Where your network sees you as high value they will want to refer other to you. It's a virtuous circle, the more effort over a period of time you put in, the more you will get back. Spend the same amount of time thinking about how you can give referrals to your network as the time you spend in asking for referrals.

## **Remember please and thank you**

I say this, as it's vitally important that you take the time to thank anyone who is good enough to help you. I always thank people for referrals and wherever possible I try and let people know how the referral went. It's simply good manners. A little while ago I connected two people up and didn't hear anything back from either party. I happened to bump into one of them at a networking event two months later. "How was that introduction?" I mentioned over coffee, "Oh, that was brilliant, thanks I even ended up taking a job with them" was the surprising reply. A brilliant outcome from a referral, but surely a quick call, email or text to say thanks from either or both parties would have been good. A little thank you can be the difference between me referring you again and again or just passing you the occasional opportunity.



Nevil Tynemouth

## **Ask, and ask in productive, planned, and purposeful way**

To ask in this way, we firstly encourage you to ensure the person you speak to is in a positive emotional state (this can help them be more adventurous, i.e. more likely to give you a referral). Simply check that they are happy with what you have done, make sure that they understand how you have added value and helped them as an individual or as an organisation. With this done, you are in the right place to make the ask. Sometimes you might ask (sometimes you might just decide it's not the right time). Whether you are right or wrong about the timing is up for debate, but have you ever reflected on how you ask? You might find yourself asking something that starts with "Do you know anyone who..." or "Is there anyone you can think of..." These are a good place to start, but a much more powerful way would be to start this conversation with "Who do you know that would benefit from..." or "Who in your network could benefit from...". The shape of these questions encourages the other person to

think a little deeper than they would with the first two questions. The shape of your questions can have a massive impact on how successful you are. Using the more powerful structured questions will increase your likelihood of getting that referral.

Oh, and the question of whether the timing is right? It normally is, you simply choose (for whatever reason) not to ask. I encourage you to try, ask and see what response you get. The worst outcome you are ever likely to get is "Oh, I can't think of anyone at the minute, let me come back to you". This isn't a bad outcome, just not the one you hoped for. Referrals are a great way to grow your firm. Having a process and plan for these referrals is key in ensuring your continued and ongoing success.

**To discuss your own business development strategy and how you can get many more referrals, speak to 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)**





Working as a business lifestyle photographer, my goal is to help companies elevate their brand through the use of striking photography. My service is especially useful for businesses who require photography in print and social media. I specialise in portraits, office, case studies and events.





# BULLYING AND HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

Bullying and harassment was a hot topic pre-pandemic and now research is showing a rise in the number of cases as employees return to the workplace, alongside a new wave of hybrid bullying.

**Louise Kennedy, Managing Director at Oculus HR has seen first-hand the increase in bullying and harassment related case work. This month, Louise shines the spotlight on why it's vital that employers have the mechanisms in place to deal with bullying and harassment, whilst also taking steps to predict and avoid it.**

Louise Kennedy, Managing Director at Oculus HR said, "As we see a return to the workplace, alongside this we've also seen an influx of cases around bullying, harassment, and intimidation. In a recent case, the employees all described themselves as being in an abusive relationship with the bully, to listen to a team describe this is heart breaking.

It is vital that employers take the right action to protect their employees to ensure they are safe in the workplace at all times, and it is equally of paramount importance that employees feel they can be at work without repercussions from speaking about their situation."

Bullying and harassment is a behaviour that makes people feel intimidated or offended and harassment is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010. Bullying is often long-term small comments or actions, that chips away at people. It can impact people in many ways, some would be upset, others angry, some avoid confrontation, and others may lose their confidence in their role in the workplace. This then in turn leads to the employer believing that there are performance concerns as the employee doesn't seem capable to do their job.

Louise said, "We see people with medical concerns, anxiety, depression, and stress, unable to come into the workplace. They go on to long term sick as they don't know how to handle the situation. Those that stay at work also don't know how to handle circumstances that arise, this can be very difficult, especially if the situation has not been reported to anyone.

Proactivity is key. Employers need to encourage open and honest communication with people who are safe sounding boards for employees to speak too. On occasions employees will express their concerns about being bullied, harassed, or intimidated at work, the employer may not consider it to be bullying – this is their opinion. However, what matters is how the person has been made to feel because of the actions, it is then for the employer to investigate fully to gather the facts."

It is critical that the employer investigates complaints made, appropriate time should be made to do this to ensure employees know the situation has been taken seriously. Finally, investigate fully with the right people, ask all the questions you need too. The key message is to keep communicating to the employees who have raised the concerns, offer help and support and be proactive.

Over the years risk assessments for health and safety have been imbedded within companies to ensure high standards, safety and productivity, this needs to be the same around the topic of bullying and harassment. Employers need to ensure that the appropriate policies are in place to support anyone experiencing these concerns around bullying and harassment such as having an Equality and Diversity Policy, Disciplinary Policy and a Grievance Policy and Health & Wellbeing Policy.

Changes in workplace working patterns has also seen a wave of hybrid bullying cases over the months.

Louise added, "With hybrid working the new norm, this environment also has the capacity to breed bullying. There are more opportunities for employees to be isolated from the team and to be excluded from decision making and even virtual team chats. Again, communication is key, and mechanisms need to be in place for remote workers to voice concerns as they would when in the physical workplace environment."

Not only can bullying, harassment and intimidation in the workplace have a detrimental impact on employees and their well-being, but there are also the long-standing implications for businesses who don't take action. Once word gets out about a toxic workplace and how a company has tolerated bullying, the businesses reputation and profile can be severely damaged, the direct result is that employers will have a hard time retaining and attracting employees.

Sunderland based Oculus HR provide innovative and flexible HR solutions to SMEs regionally and nationally through their dedicated and holistic approach.

**To find out more about the support packages available for businesses contact the team at Oculus HR at [louise@oculus-hr.co.uk](mailto:louise@oculus-hr.co.uk) or visit [www.oculus-hr.co.uk](http://www.oculus-hr.co.uk)**

“

**...offer help and support and be proactive...**



Louise Kennedy





# RISE STAR

## CARLY IVERS

Procurement Coordinator, North East  
Procurement Organisation (NEPO)

### What were your career ambitions growing up?

I left school not really having a clear idea of what to do next, which was pretty daunting. I was lucky enough to stumble across Gateshead Council's apprenticeship programme and soon started my first role as a business administration apprentice at NewcastleGateshead Initiative (NGI).

I'm a huge advocate for apprenticeships, they play a crucial role across the region and are a great option for those wanting to gain hands-on experience in a working environment.

### Tell us about your current role?

I am a procurement coordinator at NEPO, I joined the team in April 2020, so I have just celebrated two years! NEPO works in partnership with North East local authorities on the strategic procurement of high value goods and services to deliver savings, maximise efficiencies and promote best practice.

A typical day might start with a contract management meeting with one of our awarded suppliers, to developing invitation to tender documentation or exploring how we can incorporate social value to positively impact our communities and the environment.

Collaboration really is at the heart of everything we do, so I'm lucky to get to work with a wide range of stakeholders.

### What is the most challenging aspect of your job?

We deliver a work programme that features over 70 procurement solutions across a wide range of categories such as professional services, fleet, construction and energy. No two days are the same, which means you have to be agile and plan your workload in advance. We have set procurement deadlines to meet, so it's important that key tasks are prioritised, accordingly.

The variety of work is challenging, however, it's also one of the things I enjoy the most about my job. There is always something new and interesting happening.



Carly Ivers

### What's your biggest weakness and how have you managed this?

I'm a bit of a perfectionist, which means I tend to overthink and, occasionally, I spend longer on tasks than I'd like.

### What are you currently working on?

I've recently taken over contract management responsibility for NEPO's food and milk solutions. The challenges that the industry is facing at the moment are well publicised, and so it's crucial that NEPO maintain the strong working relationships that have been built with our suppliers.

### Tell us about your team?

I joined the team back in April 2020 and have worked remotely for the best part of two years. It was really difficult learning a brand-new role from home, I had to lean on the team for support and guidance. I can't thank my colleagues at NEPO enough for making me feel so welcome and part of their close-knit team.

### Who are your heroes inside and outside of business?

My hero inside business would have to be our managing director, Nicola Shelley. She's a great example of an inspiring female business leader. My hero outside of business is my Mam, she taught me to be the person I am today.

### Where do you see yourself in five years' time?

I'm currently studying with the Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply (CIPS) so in five years time, I'd hope to have finished my diploma and continuing to develop in my role at NEPO.

### How do you like to unwind outside of work?

I'm a huge foodie, so love trying out new restaurants in my spare time!

[www.nepo.org](http://www.nepo.org)

# ENCOURAGEMENT FOR A HEALTHIER WORKPLACE

Thursday 7th April was World Health Day, and the theme this year is Universal Health Coverage.

**While the COVID-19 pandemic showed us the healing power of science, it also highlighted the inequities in our world. Here in the UK we're lucky enough not to have to worry too much about the cost of healthcare, in other countries around the world falling ill or having an accident means you have a lot more than your health to worry about.**

But thinking a little closer to home, what can you do to encourage good health in your workplace?

Do you currently run any initiatives to get your people moving and making healthier choices?

Although it may take a little effort at first, the benefits to both your staff and your business as a whole can be massive. And there's so much you can do to make little tweaks that make a big difference. It all depends on how far you want to take things.

For example, if you wanted to encourage healthier eating at work, you could take away the communal biscuits and replace them with fresh fruit. You may decide to save the cakes and sweets for special occasions, or you could even start a healthy meal recipe group, sharing ideas for healthier lunches. You get the idea.

When it comes to exercise, there are even more things you can try. Team workouts could be a great way to get in shape but also to bond. There's nothing like team building over a press-up or 10!

Or you could set a group challenge to achieve so many active minutes, or miles walked, or even steps stepped. This can bring out your people's competitive sides and really get them moving!



Then there are things you can do that have a financial cost to you, like subsidised gym memberships or private healthcare.

When you start to take your employees' health seriously, they see the investment in them and return that with loyalty. They feel more valued and become more motivated. And when they're motivated, they're more productive. So, everyone wins!

We'd love to hear what health initiatives you've introduced to your workplace, or what you have planned this year. Drop us an email to let us know. Also, if you'd like any advice or help bringing in new health and wellbeing ideas, just give us a call to find out how we can assist you.

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

# BUDGET TAXIS ASSIST WOMEN'S STREET WATCH NEWCASTLE

**Newcastle-based taxi company, Budget are stepping up their involvement with Women's Street Watch, Newcastle (WSWNCL) by giving them a credit limit of free taxis every month for their use in securing the safety of women travelling home alone at night.**

The group, was set up by Beth Dunn and her girlfriend to patrol the streets of Newcastle to keep women safe, following the shocking murders of Sarah Everard and Sabina Nessa.

Now, groups of volunteers, wearing pink Hi-Viz jackets are a familiar sight on the streets, every weekend following their launch in October 2021.

Beth Dunn from Women's Street Watch, Newcastle Said: "We're extremely grateful for all of the suggested ways in which Budget Taxis are offering to help our cause and this is just one of the many incentives we will be hoping to roll out, in order to ensure the safety of vulnerable women out at night in Newcastle."

Since the group has been founded, the volunteers have been patrolling the streets of Newcastle City Centre every Friday and Saturday evenings from around 10pm-3/4am. Typically, a shift will see them assist girls who may have had too much to



David Singh

drink, had their drinks spiked or simply just lost their friends. Their intention is to ensure that they get home safely. They distribute water, snacks and phone chargers as well as providing support in finding lost friends or even just a chat! Their goal is to support women and help them get home safely.

David Singh, Customer Care Manager from Budget Taxis said: "We have been in correspondence with

WSWNCL since their launch last year with ideas of ways in which we can help, and this is just one of many initiatives we would like to roll out to assist them. No woman on a night out should feel unsafe and if there is a way in which we, at Budget Taxis can help, then we want to do our part."

**Women's Street Watch Newcastle  
Facebook – WSWNCL.**



# IN CONVERSATION WITH...

## ANGELA CARNEY

Managing director at Carney Consultancy and director at Carney CDM.

### What were your career ambitions growing up?

Growing up I wanted to be a doctor or a vet. I come from a long-line of strong women and my Gran was a doctor and she inspired me. However, I ended up on a totally different career path.

### Tell us about the inception of your company?

Having worked in the construction sector in site management and engineering for a number of years, I was asked to undertake as a delegate the NEBOSH General Certificate course in health & safety. As someone who is always up for a challenge, I jumped at it. As the company I was working for wouldn't let me return as a site manager after I had my son and I could see a gap in the market, I decided to use my NEBOSH and set up Carney Consultancy in 2002.

Two weeks after launching I gave birth to my son. I then went on to have my daughter a couple of years later. You can have it all as a woman, but not often all at the same time, running a business with two young children was very tough.

Most recently, myself and directors, Caroline Morton, David Wadds and Martin Crammond have established Carney CDM, and will undertake the roles of principal designer and CDM health & safety adviser services.

The company will deliver effective communication with clients and designers throughout the design stage of a project, facilitating design risk workshops with all duty holders and ensuring all pre-construction information is provided. It will also ensure any design changes are reviewed from a health and safety perspective, focussing on both construction risks and risks to end users of the project.

### What services do you provide?

Carney Consultancy, specialises in construction and engineering, providing health and safety, environmental and quality consultancy and training. Team members come from a main contracting and subcontracting background and apart from Caroline all our consultants have been trained from scratch never having done health & safety before.



Angela Carney

### What's your proudest business achievement?

The recession and pandemic were a challenge but fortunately we were able to grow the business during these periods but what I am really proud and passionate about is being able to develop my team. To watch them progress and to see their personal development is humbling.

I also am a huge advocate of supporting women in construction and early on in the business I found it frustrating at the lack of diversity within the sector. Thankfully, this is now changing.

I recently sold half of Carney Consultancy and promoted David Wadds and Martin Crammond to directors, this was a proud moment for me to see the younger generation flourishing and in providing them with an opportunity to steer the business forward.

I'm also proud to say that Carney CDM is an equal split when it comes to the directors – we have two females and two males and there is a real push from within the sector to highlight the diverse range of jobs available to women within construction.

### What challenges have you encountered?

From a sector point of view, we are increasingly seeing companies contracting a lot of work. Years

ago, there was always a clear succession line but now there is a lot of sub-contracting. This spans problems when it comes to developing teams - there is not enough investment from all sectors in the industry in apprentices and retaining skills.

### How has the industry changed?

There is a collective inward effort to make things better within the construction sector, particularly when it comes to employee wellbeing, mental health and promoting diversity and inclusion.

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

I have three:

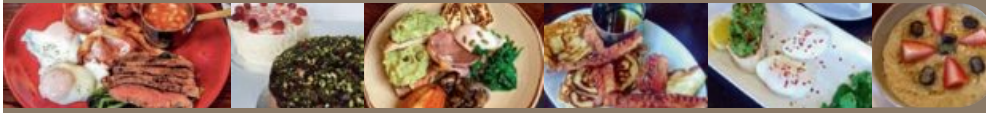
- Every problem has a solution.
- You are only as good as your people.
- I'll put one-foot in front of the other, let's look for the tunnel, then let's look for the light.

### How do you like to unwind?

By getting outdoors, I love open water swimming, paddle boarding and walking.

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

"To eat well in England, you should have breakfast three times a day." Somerset Maugham



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## A DECADE OF BEING IN SAFE HANDS

T3 Security reaches a landmark. Ten years ago, life was very different for Peter Moore and Richard Townsend. They were close friends who'd worked in the security industry for over 20 years, but within a short space of time they were both made redundant.

**It was a case of finding another career or taking the plunge and deciding to form their own security company.**


"We didn't want to work for any of the other firms...we wanted to do security our own way," says Peter. "We realised that the industry was moving forward and that clients no longer wanted someone sitting in a cabin or at a desk or spending long nights in a van. We'd also seen how other firms operated and we both knew there was a better way to operate and that customer service had to be a priority. Consequently, although it was a massive financial and personal risk at the time for both of us, we decided to set up T3 Security. We didn't rush into things and made sure that we had all of the correct accreditation, licenses and training. It was only when we were 100 per cent sure that we could provide the very best service and back-up that we launched the company."

Fast forward ten years and T3 Security has gone from being just Peter and Richard, to having over

400 on the payroll and what can only be described as an 'A list' of varied local and national clients such as KFC, Greggs, Malhotra Group, Stonegate pub company, Fenwick, Ubisoft, Mitchells and Butlers, The Apartment Group, Leica Biosystems, Durham University and hotels like the Crowne Plaza Group and The Maldron, plus numerous bars around the region including those run by JD Wetherspoons.

Arguably their biggest client is the NHS, working closely with the Newcastle and Gateshead Hospital Trust for the past six years. It's tricky for the T3 Security personnel because they need to assist the NHS staff while also helping to control the public. Needless to say that this has been a taxing couple of years courtesy of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thankfully, confidence in T3 Security has been one of the main benefits for clients because every member of the T3 Security team is SIA registered...Security Industry Authority. The company has also achieved ACS...Approved Contractor Status. In other words, the staff are





experienced and the company is monitored to ensure that it follows the best practices. It's a stamp of approval and shows that T3 Security does things properly.

No wonder T3 Security, based in Newcastle, is widely recognised as the North East's leading security firm.

"Technology has been something that we've grasped with both hands here at T3 Security," adds Peter. "CCTV, remote monitoring and infrared devices are now a large part of the security business. We've also started to install solar panels onto many of these devices which means there is no longer any need for engineers to continually visit sites to recharge batteries."

And of course, if you want to know that your team of security men and women are doing a good job, the best way is to train them yourself. That is precisely what Peter and Richard are now doing at T3 Security via their own security

academy. They not only train personnel from scratch but also update current members of the team on important areas such as first aid, security techniques and customer care. T3 even helps other companies like shop, café and bar owners who would like to train their own members of staff. At the end of a 6-day course, the successful candidates will be fully SIA licensed.

In other words, no matter what sort of security you require, T3 Security can sort everything for you.

Here's to the next ten years. T3 Security; you're in good hands.

***The best idea is to contact either Peter or Richard at their offices at Seaton Burn in Newcastle. They'll then explain what your best options are. Email [info@t3security.co.uk](mailto:info@t3security.co.uk) or call them on 0191 284 4730 or for full details why not log onto their website [www.t3security.co.uk](http://www.t3security.co.uk)***

“

**...we both knew there was a better way to operate and that customer service had to be a priority...**

*Peter Moore and Richard Townsend*





## NORTH EAST DESIGN COMPANY TAKES ITS SERVICES TO THE NEXT DIMENSION

A leading North East design company is harnessing cutting edge technology to bring projects to life for clients, using fully immersive virtual reality.

Space VR was set up by a group of illustrators who have over the years created computer generated imagery for projects, mainly within the leisure and architectural industry.

But now they are using their experience in creating 3D images not only to offer the opportunity to get inside the actual space they are creating, but to also move into new areas such as health care.

Space VR, based at Boldon Colliery, Tyne and Wear, was set up by Jeremy Ramsay, Marc Hardy and Michael Simmons, who also run leading interior design company, Space ID.

The growth in VR and its widespread applications across a whole host of sectors has led to it being set up as a stand-alone company, able to offer clients a unique visual perspective.

Jeremy and his team create CG models which are then run through a special computer programme, resulting in an avatar which can be guided through the space.

"The experience is further enhanced with the ability to fully interact with the space, changing materials, switching on lights and even opening doors, all in real time," he said.

"It means clients can actually get inside the project and get a completely immersive experience."

He added: "Virtual reality is changing the way the industry works, allowing an immediate understanding and functionality to the built environment – without the need for costly site visits or part constructions.

We are proud of the fact that we are really leading the way in the use of VR across so many different applications."



## GATESHEAD'S ADVANTEX CONNECTING THE CLASSROOMS WITH NEW WI-FI CONTRACT

A North East technology specialist has won a six-figure contract to provide next generation Wi-Fi services to a Durham high school as part of a national Government IT initiative.

Advantex won the work as part of a deal to supply Belmont Community School, which is one of the main secondary schools in the county, with a specially configured Wi-Fi system and switching technology running on new fibre optic cabling. The firm is also supporting the project with a 24/7 maintenance and management package.

Specifically, the contract sees Advantex providing a new cloud managed Cisco Meraki network at the school, which will provide improved access to eLearning resources, faster connection times, broader coverage and greater reliability.

Improved Wi-Fi capability has been installed across the school's campus as part of an initiative that will support a suite of technologies to keep almost 800 students, teachers and support staff safely online either onsite or working remotely.

The work is being carried out under the Department for Education's 'Connect the Classroom' scheme, which is providing hundreds of millions of pounds of national funding to help schools across the country upgrade their network and IT provision.

The project is one of the largest of its type in County Durham and is the latest success for Follingsby Park-based Advantex, which provides a host of IT and connectivity services to many other North East schools.

Currently employing 50 people and targeting a £6 million turnover this year, the firm is seeing growth on the back of new product and service introductions, investment in a highly skilled workforce and a strong pipeline of orders on the books for 2022.

## MORE SUCCESS FOR TRUSTACK

Managed IT Services Provider TruStack has been named partner of the quarter by Arctic Wolf®, a leader in security operations.

The Cramlington-based company, specialists in cybersecurity, received the award after only six months of working with the U.S.-based company thanks to it successfully introducing Arctic Wolf's Security Operations Cloud to several of its existing customers.

Arctic Wolf delivers a comprehensive platform designed to give organisations the protection, resilience, and guidance they need to defend against these cyber threats.

Recent Government statistics show that cyber-attacks are on the increase: According to gov.uk ([www.gov.uk/government/statistics/cyber-security-breaches-survey-2021/cyber-security-breaches-survey-2021](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/cyber-security-breaches-survey-2021/cyber-security-breaches-survey-2021)), 39% of businesses and 26% of charities report being the victim of cyber security attacks in the last 12 months.

These attacks are more prevalent among medium-sized businesses (65%), large businesses (64%) and high-income charities (51%).



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# TALKING TECH AND DIGITAL

In the latest in these popular series of features Michael Grahamslaw talks to...

## PHIL CAMBERS

Commercial Director, TruStack Ltd

### Did you always envisage a career in the world of Technology?

Definitely not! When I was younger I had an obsession with aeroplanes and wanted to be a pilot. I really had no clear path and after scraping through my A Levels I got a place at Leeds University via the clearing system. Here I studied Media and History, due to a vague interest in journalism, and having written for the Ponteland and Darras Post. After graduating I then got a job at the Cardiff Gazette, but at the last minute opted to stay in Leeds and took a job in IT!

### Tell us about your career path so far?

I really took a job in IT as a stop gap but found I really enjoyed the environment and after six months co-ordinating engineers I was promoted to a supervisory role and then into management. I moved back to the North East in 2003 and enjoyed a five year spell with a local IT company. By this stage I had moved into a sales role which I really enjoyed.

In 2008 I took the plunge and formed the SITS Group with Paul Watson and Russell Henderson who are still two of my partners to this day. Our vision was for a boutique IT organisation working in the mid market to enterprise space.

The architects Faulkner Browns LLP became our first client and others rapidly followed including the Port of Tyne, Northumberland National Park Authority, Muckle LLP, Vertu Motors and Sintons LLP. In more recent years we have also developed a lot of business in the offshore oil and gas sector and even worked with The Premier League.

In 2018 we decided to broaden our horizons and merged with PCI Services from Rainton Bridge. This gave us a far more comprehensive offering with Joe Olabode and Richard Common also joining the board.

2019 saw us rebrand as TruStack.

### What attracted you to a role in Technology?

Going back to 1998 I could see how integral it was going to be to business and realised it was something I wanted to be a part of.

### What tips would you give to someone looking to work in the industry?

Aim to stand out and be different. Try and find those marginal gains and keep learning every day.

### What is the most exciting thing you are currently working on?

We have recently been named partner of the quarter by Arctic Wolf, a leader in security operations. Their Security Operations Cloud is a very exciting product and we are looking forward to rolling it out to our existing and prospective customer base.

### How important has Technology been during the Coronavirus pandemic?

Absolutely critical as it has allowed clients to work in an agile fashion. For us it represented a great opportunity and we grew turnover, customers and staff during that period.

### What is your fondest career memory?

Travelling the world due to my career and expanding my network. Starting the business was also immensely rewarding.

### What are your future career aspirations?

With the merger just being in 2019 we are certainly not finished yet. Hopefully much more growth and potential future acquisitions.

### What is your favourite piece of Technology?

My iPhone...lost without it!

### Who are your Heroes and Mentors?

As Business Partners we mentor each other and our non executive Chairman Geoff Hodgson is also a very positive influence.

Mark Knopfler is a true hero. A simply wonderful musician who has never forgotten his North East roots.

### How do you like to unwind?

I'm a very keen cyclist and skier and a huge fan of watersports. Salmon fishing is also a huge passion.

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“

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Phil Cambers





# ARE YOU READY FOR HYBRID WORKING?

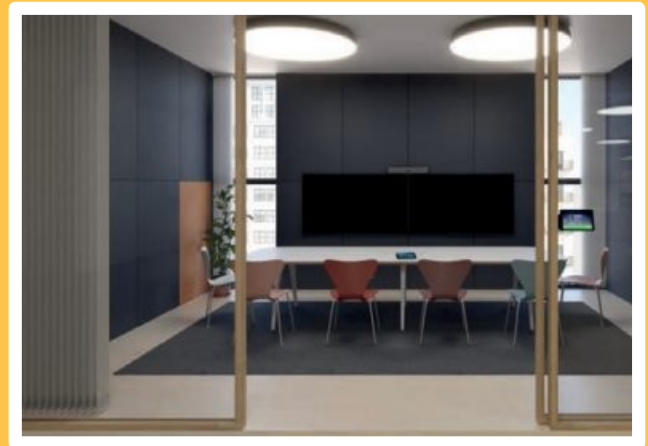
As we look to the future, we see our offices as places for collaboration between both in-person and remote meeting participants.

Enabling the hybrid workforce to be successful requires technology that is flexible and simple enough for any employee to use.

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Kristoffer Galloway

# NEED TO FILL AN IT VACANCY? GO TO THE SPECIALISTS

Use a recruitment agency that knows IT inside out.

**You've probably heard the saying...Jack of all trades, master of none. That applies to many recruitment agencies because they promise to find you the perfect candidate no matter what the job title or job requirements.**

The problem is that if you are looking for a candidate with a particular skill or experience in a specialist area, you may end up with an agency that doesn't understand what you're looking for. They've dabbled in a bit of everything and don't have an in-depth knowledge of the field in which you work.

Take IT for example. The number of specialist areas within IT seems to increase regularly. It's a complicated discipline. Most roles need to have a degree of understanding which can range from basic to seriously advanced.

So, if you have an IT vacancy, wouldn't it be handy to use an agency that speaks your IT language and won't be bamboozled by specific requirements?

Thankfully there is such an IT specialist recruitment agency, and they're based in Newcastle.

Newcastle IT Recruit Ltd.

"Our aim is to help companies identify their IT requirements and find the right person with the right IT requirements for the right IT position," says company founder, Kristoffer Galloway. "Whether you want a permanent, freelance, contract or flexible part-time role filling, we support businesses along every step of the way. We also help people find jobs in IT."

Kristoffer has spent over 20 years across the IT sector in industries such as banking, utilities, FMCG and social services, and worked with well-known tech companies. He won't be flummoxed by requests to find someone with a specialist talent or someone who can cover a variety of roles.

"We're seeing IT roles merging across different skill sets to enable tasks to be completed by one person rather than multiple teams," adds Kristoffer. "For example IT staff are taking on new challenges to incorporate climate change and study how a company can become carbon neutral or use latest technology to save energy.

The workplace has also changed. Some companies operate hybrid working where staff can either work from home or only call into the workplace on an odd occasion. Some people prefer this and may decide to leave a firm if hybrid working isn't introduced.

And of course staff no longer need to live close to where they work. It means companies have a national pool of talent to dip into rather than one which is local or regional."

Which is where Newcastle IT Recruit can help because they have national contacts.

They're also a firm which doesn't find a candidate and, if successful, leave that person to fend for themselves. They work closely with the firm they'll be joining to ensure that the recruit hits the ground running because they'll already have an understanding of their job, what it entails and what their line of command is.

Newcastle IT Recruit call it 'on-boarding.'

"We train recruits so they know exactly what to expect. We help the company to be ready for a new recruit. The recruit is then comfortable, familiar with the company they're joining and understand what they're doing and what is expected of them. Most new recruits know whether they've made the right decision about the company they've joined within a couple of months. Consequently it's much better if the recruit is fully prepared and the company is ready to welcome them. There are no surprises.

I know how the candidate and the company feel because I've been in both situations. I explain to recruits how I started in IT and what my progression was. When they realise I've had a foot in both camps they take confidence from whatever I tell them. We also tailor everything individually. We don't do anything 'off the shelf'.

Kristoffer has gone one step further to give candidates and clients additional reassurance by being fully ISO 9001 compliant. In other words, they do things the right way.

"We've developed our careers page ([careers.newcastleitrecruit.com](https://careers.newcastleitrecruit.com)) to help candidates with FAQs and for clients to learn about me and about us as a company. We've invested in the latest software for CRM/ATS to help manage data streams. This keeps clients and candidates up to date along every step of the recruitment journey."

So, do you need help in either recruiting someone or finding a job in the world of IT?

The best idea is to visit the website, [www.newcastleitrecruit.com](https://www.newcastleitrecruit.com) where you'll find full contact details and a clear explanation of what Newcastle IT Recruit do and how they do it.

Sort IT recruitment with the IT recruitment experts.

[www.newcastleitrecruit.com](https://www.newcastleitrecruit.com)

“  
...We train recruits  
so they know exactly  
what to expect...”



# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: KEEP THE STAKEHOLDERS CLOSE, BUT THE END USERS CLOSER



Digital transformation is a vital part of surviving and thriving in today's competitive market, but 70% of transformation projects fall short of their objectives. While the technological part of any digital transformation is important, the people using that tech are crucial – without their knowledge, help and buy-in, you could be wasting both money and time.

**Digital transformation is a fundamental business change – from culture to operation – using technology, but only by incorporating and aligning the needs of people as well as processes can it be successful, balanced and valuable.**

Without interacting with those on-the-ground, it is almost impossible to understand their challenges and requirements.

For example, a management team looking to improve efficiency decides to invest in developing and implementing a new system for the entire

workforce. As time passes, it becomes clear that the business has become less operationally efficient – the opposite of the intended objective.

Why? The end users don't like the system as they can't capture everything they need, so it doesn't do what they need it to.

How did this happen? Because the project was based on a mere assumption by the management team.

To avoid this, three things should always be considered to ensure that value is always at the centre of any project:

**Feasibility:** Can it be done? Is the technology solution within reach?

**Viability:** Does this align with the business objectives and budget?

**Desirability:** Does this solution satisfy a need? Is it usable and will it be used?

How much focus is spent on each component of the value centred model depends on the project in question, but they should all be given some consideration. Right at the centre of all three components is what has been coined 'the innovation sweet spot'.

When considering a new product or service, the focus should always be on the right people, generally the end users; aiming to understand their challenges and thoughts to test assumptions and provide the evidence needed to make informed decisions.

Involving end users from the start means user needs helps define the project scope and ensure the solution will fit actual needs and desires rather than assumed ones – potentially avoiding costly mistakes, changes or even abandonment.

**Find out more about how Waterstons can support your digital transformation by contacting [info@waterstons.com](mailto:info@waterstons.com)**

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# LEADING TECH COMPANY ASPIRE RATED 'EXCELLENT' FOR ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND GOVERNANCE (ESG) PERFORMANCE

Former North East Company of the Year, Aspire Technology Solutions has received an 'excellent' rating for its Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) performance from Sustainable Advantage, one of the UK's leading energy and waste consultants.



**Upon evaluating x57 ESG metrics to measure positive impact on employees, community, customers, and environment, Aspire's ESG performance was measured at 75%.**

The Excellent rating was driven by a number of factors including:

- Aspire's management team sees ESG as an important priority and we have made significant efforts to improve our environmental, social and governance credentials.
- Aspire recently moved into a newly constructed, energy efficient, head office at Gateshead Quays which has helped to reduce their carbon footprint.
- Aspire's supply chain is deemed low risk in terms of responsible sourcing issues.

This latest development comes just weeks after Aspire secured significant minority investment from LDC, the UK's leading mid-market private equity firm, in a transaction which values the business at £85m.

Aspire is one of the fastest growing IT managed service and cyber security providers in the UK and was launched 15 years ago by CEO, Chris Fraser. The company now has multiple offices in locations including Gateshead, London and Stockton-on-Tees, and employs more than 200 people.

Aspire is currently delivering plans to create more than 150 new North East jobs across its recently opened HQ, based on the site of the former iconic Baja Beach Club at Gateshead Quays, and a new base at Fusion Hive, a business and innovation centre based on Stockton's Northshore.

With a large network of UK customers, Aspire delivers leading technology solutions across a range of applications including cloud, connectivity, voice, technical support, and cyber security. Its full fibre network provides bandwidth speeds of up to 100 gigabits per second – some of the fastest connectivity speeds available in the UK.

The business has scaled rapidly with revenue rising to £30m in the last 12 months of trading, growing more than 48% over the past three years.

Rob Fraser, Chief Revenue Officer and lead director for ESG at Aspire said: "We are delighted that this report recognises the social value that Aspire is delivering. I am pleased with the progress we have made with our ESG strategy. This is an area of focus for our stakeholders, including many of our employees and customers.

Whilst this is a great outcome for a first assessment, we are not resting on our laurels. We are planning a number of initiatives to improve our ESG credentials such as benchmarking our performance and tracking our sustainable development goals".

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# ANDREA JOINS TO SUPPORT GUARDIAN'S INNOVATION

Plexus Innovation has expanded for the third time in as many months, this time with the addition of a new operations coordinator.

**Andrea Drakulic brings with her a wealth of experience in operations, as well as an academic background in global security. Most recently, Andrea completed a postgraduate degree in Defence, Development and Diplomacy at Durham University, focusing primarily on the emerging tech sector.**

Born in Cyprus, Andrea has lived all over Europe and the 29-year-old, who now lives in Durham, is a former showjumper. The opportunity to learn and be involved in the early stages of GUARDIAN®, Plexus Innovation's remote IoT technology that significantly improves business operations whilst reducing risks, costs, waste and environmental impact, is what most attracted her to the role.

Co-founder and managing director of Plexus Innovation, Ian Murray, said: "As we welcome Andrea to the team, we are embarking on an exciting period of growth. In her new role she will focus on streamlining our existing processes and developing new operational systems, which should automate a lot of our internal systems benefitting both the team and our customers.

"By providing both programming and monitoring support, Andrea will be key in providing the first line of technology support, freeing up time for more product development and customer care."

Plexus Innovation is changing the way many sectors monitor and measure essential services that need consistent compliance data, with their innovative IoT product GUARDIAN®.



Andrea Drakulic

GUARDIAN® remotely monitors and measures temperature, CO2, humidity and water systems, enabling insight-driven decisions via reliable compliance reporting, complete with real-time alerting to health risks or failing assets that otherwise may not be known about.

Andrea had the following to say: "My initial focus will be on developing a system to streamline existing processes, with the aim of making everyone's lives a little easier. This should then afford the experts in our team more time to concentrate on innovation and on ensuring Plexus Innovation continues to deliver impact. I am excited to be joining the company in its early stages of growth as, while the team may be small, they are already doing big things, particularly in the social housing and health sectors."

**More information on GUARDIAN® and Plexus Innovation is available by contacting [andrea@plexus-innovation.com](mailto:andrea@plexus-innovation.com) or by visiting [www.plexus-innovation.com](http://www.plexus-innovation.com)**

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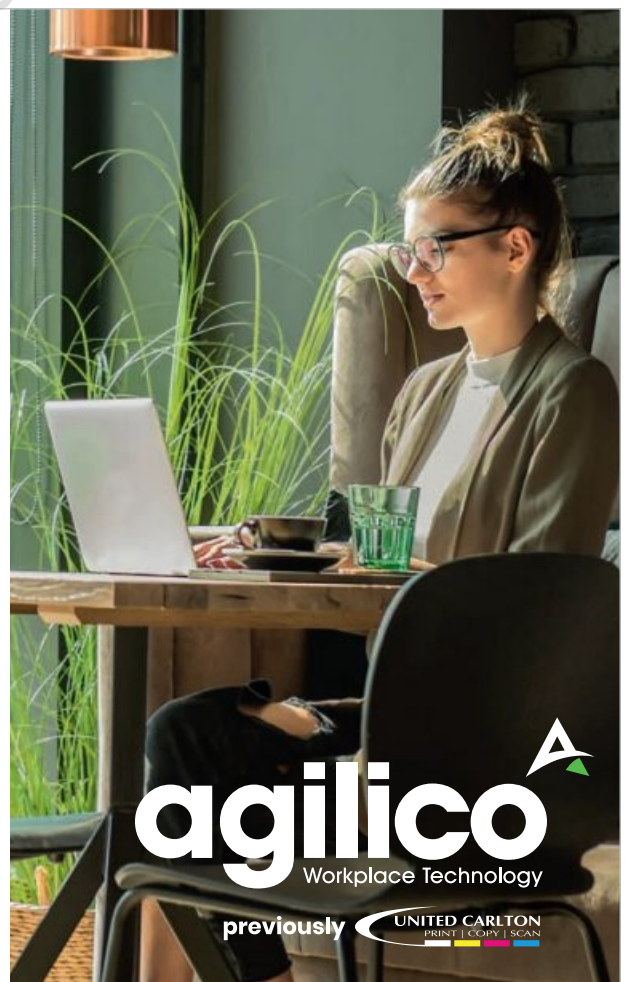
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## BARRATT DEVELOPMENTS NORTH EAST SECURES FIVE STARS FOR RECORD 13TH YEAR

Local housebuilder Barratt Developments North East which includes the Barratt Homes and David Wilson Homes brands, has received the maximum 5 star rating in the new Home Builders Federation (HBF) annual New Homes Customer Satisfaction Survey.

The number of stars awarded is based on customer responses to the question: "Would you recommend your builder to a friend?". Over 90% of Barratt Developments customers said they would recommend the housebuilder to a friend.

This is the 13th year in a row that Barratt Developments has achieved the 5 star rating – a record unmatched by any other major national housebuilder.

Stewart Baseley, executive chairman of the Home Builders Federation, said: "To achieve a 5-star rating whereby over 90% of Barratt customers would recommend them to a friend demonstrates the commitment of the company to its customers and is a significant achievement."

To celebrate its latest 5 Star award, Barratt Developments is donating £100,000 to Starlight, a



charity which provides distraction and boxes filled with sensory toys and games to hospitals around the UK to use the power of play to make the experience of illness better for children.

Cathy Gilman, CEO of Starlight, says: "Thank you so much to Barratt Developments for choosing Starlight for such a significant donation. Their generosity will help us to provide time, space and even more opportunities for play in hospital for seriously ill children across the UK. Thanks to Barratt, we will be protecting play with important resources like Distraction Boxes, Boost Boxes and sensory trolleys."

Steven Ball, Sales Director at Barratt Homes North East, said: "We are very proud to have been rated by our customers as a five star housebuilder for a record 13 years in a row. We focus on looking after customers by building high quality homes using sustainable methods and materials, so it is always great to hear back from them saying how much they value this, and rate us so highly."



## CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON £29.5 MILLION STUDENT SCHEME NORTH OF LEEDS CITY CENTRE

Alumno Group (Alumno), purpose-built student accommodation specialist (PBSA), and Heitman LLC (Heitman), a global real estate investment management firm, have begun to regenerate a disused site in Whitelock Street, north of Leeds city centre, with the start of construction on its latest high-quality development to support the city's growing student population.

The development, valued at £29.5 million, has been designed by Durham-based architecture practice, Howarth Litchfield, which has worked with Alumno from pre-planning stage on proposals to demolish several vacant buildings on the site in preparation for its full re-development.

Built over six and seven storeys with a gross internal area of 11,840sqm, the 411-bed building with ground floor commercial and cultural uses, is of a substantially brick facing design and features storey height windows and deep reveals with feature brick detailing.

It will contain a mixture of cluster flats and studios, including ten accessible bedrooms, an entrance hub with communal space, offices, a meeting room, laundry and gym.

At ground floor level there is also flexible gallery and studio space which will be used to support local artists and will feature workshops, a kiln and exhibition area. It will be run by a local non-profit organisation.



## KNIGHT FRANK WINS MAJOR CONTRACT TO MANAGE FLAGSHIP DURHAM DEVELOPMENT

Knight Frank has won a major property management instruction to manage Durham city's brand new Milburngate mixed-use development, which is due to practically complete at the end of May.

The developer, MGH Card LLP, has appointed Knight Frank to manage the 450,000 sq. ft. development which sits at the heart of an ambitious regeneration scheme on the banks of the River Wear.

The scheme comprises offices, leisure, retail and high-end apartments - all overlooking the River Wear and with views of UNESCO World Heritage

Site, Durham Cathedral.

The facilities will include a hotel, cinema, bars, restaurants, high quality landscaped public realm, 153 residential apartments, 53,000 sq. ft. of Grade A office space and underground car parking.

Knight Frank, which won the contract following a competitive pitch, is now recruiting for a general manager to manage the site.

Head of Office and Partner at Knight Frank, Peter Bowden, said: "We're excited and absolutely delighted to be a part of this brilliant scheme and we're looking forward to ensuring Milburngate reaches its full potential."

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## BEAMISH PARK GARDENS

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Beamish Park Gardens is a magnificent country home situated within its walled gardens and grounds which include a building plot with Listed Building Consent Approval to create another luxury, single storey home if desired.

This beautiful home is located in a fabulous setting and is an extremely good example of very fine architecture, environmental design and superb detailed planning. EPC: C

GUIDE PRICE: £1.75 MILLION



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## THE OLD VICARAGE

NORTHUMBERLAND STREET,  
ALNWICK

The Old Vicarage is a 7 bedroom period stone built house in the centre of the historic market town of Alnwick, with grounds of just over 1.8 acres including a large paddock of circa 0.68 acres with potential as a building plot for a four bedroom, stone built detached dwelling.

This much loved family home offers well proportioned accommodation and retains many period features. EPC: F

GUIDE PRICE: £1.5 MILLION



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## SILVERTOP HOUSE

KILN PIT HILL,  
NORTHUMBERLAND

Silvertop House is a stylish 'pocket-sized' estate of approximately 4 acres of land, including a fully renovated six bedroom stone built detached house, equestrian facilities and superb Tyne Valley views.

This period home, which has been lovingly refurbished, offers superbly proportioned and flexible accommodation with an abundance of character, completed to an exquisite standard throughout.

GUIDE PRICE: £1.695 MILLION





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## APPERLEY FARMHOUSE

STOCKSFIELD,  
NORTHUMBERLAND

Apperley Farmhouse is a delightful, Grade II listed, six bedroom, detached family home within circa 11.79 acres including stabling, large manege and 8.57 acres of paddocks. The property combines period features with the modern amenities expected from a 21st Century residence and has a number of outbuildings which could be converted into a separate annex, subject to planning/listed building consents.

GUIDE PRICE: £2.2 MILLION



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## WEST GRANGE ESTATE

SCOTS GAP,  
MORPETH

West Grange Estate provides a magnificent, period, ten bedroom 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. There is also a three bedroom cottage, a two bedroom annexe apartment, and a stone barn with potential to develop it into a residential dwelling subject to planning consents.

GUIDE PRICE: £1.995 MILLION



Tel: 0191 223 3500



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## HAWKWELL GRANGE

### HAWKWELL, STAMFORDHAM

Hawkwell Grange is a magnificent country house, built in 1921, with beautiful grounds and paddocks extending in total to circa 11.2 acres, including stables and a lovely two bedroom detached bungalow.

The bungalow occupies a beautiful, private garden site of circa 0.89 acres and offers the potential to create a larger detached dwelling subject to normal planning consents.

GUIDE PRICE: £2 MILLION



# IS YOUR RENTAL INVESTMENT READY TO COMBAT THE RISING COST OF LIVING?

As the cost of living continues to rise through 2022, in addition to the significant impact we have seen from the Energy Price Cap in April, we are finding tenants are becoming more astute and prepared when considering their next move. As a result, residential landlords must re-evaluate their current portfolios and how they perform in the market.

Sanderson Young's lettings team have an unrivalled wealth of knowledge and expertise in our field, where we work hard to find the right property to fit in with the lifestyle choices of our prospective tenants. We also advise landlords on the changing legislation and suitable property upgrades to stay ahead of the curve in a demanding and evolving market.

I am currently retained by my landlord clients to consult on a range of legislative changes, as well as pursuing opportunities to futureproof their rental income through the use of grant schemes such as the Boiler Upgrade Scheme and the Electric Vehicle Charging Point scheme.

Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings have influenced the market for the past few years and will further affect the letting of substandard properties with lower energy efficiency ratings. We are already gearing up for the 2025 legislative changes which will prevent the letting of a property with an EPC rating lower than C and are working together with our landlords to ensure maximum efficiency for our tenants in a climate impacted heavily by rising fuel costs.

We also pride ourselves on offering exclusive rent protection policies on your regular income to protect your asset. There is no better time to rent out your home knowing you are in safe hands.

***If you would like to hear more on how to invest in changes to secure future income, I would be delighted to help and welcome you to contact me directly for further assistance.***

**Gail Mclean MARLA, Regional Lettings Manager, 0191 2233510**

**[Gail.mclean@sandersonyoung.co.uk](mailto:Gail.mclean@sandersonyoung.co.uk)**



Gail Mclean

The continued adventures of...

# Ziggy!



Hi everyone,  
No questions this month again as I am still the proud brother to my little sister Cally's hoard. Just gone onto solids now and all have teeth. They can all escape from their box now and have been causing chaos around the house. Updated picture for you all to see. Aren't they big?

Please send me your building queries through facebook - @WDLne, website: [wdlnortheast.co.uk](http://wdlnortheast.co.uk) or through my Dad's good pal Michael Grahamslaw at Northern Insight on [mjgrahamslaw@outlook.com](mailto:mjgrahamslaw@outlook.com)





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# SOLVING THE ENERGY CRISIS? OR, AS AN ARCHITECT, AT LEAST LOOKING AHEAD

By Neil Turner, Howarth Litchfield

I am drafting this article in very changeable circumstances with a war in Ukraine and financial pressures at home causing separate and linked problems across our energy and living costs in the UK.

**I am not political, and my articles are not intended to be so. However, as an architect I want to use my expertise and skill in design and buildings to help guide those that can make changes.**

I have recently been trying to get a smart meter fitted to my home which has three phase electricity, powering my heat pumps and PV array. Getting the meter has not been easy but that is another story!

The accompanying leaflet from the energy company featuring a coloured sea monster, explains how to turn everything down but only has a passing reference to the building fabric. I find it amazing, that in 2022 we are telling people to simply turn off their power, but not to think how their houses can be improved.

I have written before in Northern Insight about energy efficiency, grants, VAT and heating systems options, but surely now is the time to look again.

The chancellor Mr Sunak has recently altered VAT on heat pumps, insulation, and PV to 5% but not

altered the tax on storage batteries. So, a person investing in home batteries will pay 20% whilst they can still buy coal with 5% tax – it does not seem logical to me. If everyone with existing PV panels could install batteries to store their electricity, they could be virtually off grid.

We need to see zero VAT on home energy improvements across the board to encourage everyone to improve the thermal performance of their homes, which will then reduce energy consumption, without people tuning off heat for longer periods.

If all our buildings use less energy, we put less demand on the region and country for energy demand, which must be a good thing in the long term with such volatility abroad in importing oil and gas.

How this helps people in the short term is extremely difficult to see. As energy prices go up this invariably hurts the poorest members of society as they have a greater proportion of spend on their energy and basic food requirements. Here in the North East, we still have challenging areas that require help. The awful truth is that people who can't afford the home improvements are those that need it the most.

So as an architect I believe we really must look to make sure that future houses, at whatever level, are built to the improved performance levels. The energy efficiency of new social housing must be made much higher so that our elderly and those living in social housing not only use less energy but may find they have absolutely no heating costs. Planning authorities should grant permission for innovative designs where technology is engineered into the design of new houses and not just bolted on as an afterthought.

We need to see greater innovation and experimentation in one-off houses to evaluate new technologies and ideas. It is only by building test bed designs and designers experimenting with technologies that we will be able to assess what works for all housing.

The architecture, building and planning process can really assist the future. I just hope we can help people today through this difficult period.

**Neil Turner, Director, can be contacted on 0191 3849470 or email [nturner@hlpuk.com](mailto:nturner@hlpuk.com) [www.howarthlitchfield.com](http://www.howarthlitchfield.com)**



Neil Turner





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## AWARD-WINNING SURVEYING PRACTICE CONTINUES TO EXPAND ITS EXPERT WITNESS AND CLAIMS SERVICES

Ashdan Consulting, the award-winning Quantity Surveying business within the Ashdan Group is well known for its wealth of expertise and a client-focused approach to construction projects.

**This includes the preparation and submission, or defence, of claims for clients, main contractors, and subcontractors throughout the construction industry.**

A perhaps lesser known, but key part of the practice's portfolio of services includes supporting legal firms and insurance companies by providing expert witness services during construction disputes and professional indemnity insurance claims.

Whilst confidentiality constraints prevent disclosure of specific details, the practice has been the 'go-to' QS partner of a major regional and national legal firm for the past five years and works with well-known major insurers on some of the UK's key construction cases.

As Ashdan Consulting's Managing Director, John Johnson explains: "This has been a fundamental part of the success of the business since its formation in 2015, and I am particularly grateful to those clients who have repeatedly valued the services provided by Ashdan Consulting, and with whom I have developed some excellent personal relationships.

Whether it's simply advising construction subcontractors and contractors on their contractual entitlement, or by preparing a full-blown construction claim, the practice is known for its wide range of knowledge and experience across many aspects of construction.

A key element of this is that the senior staff have spent many years working for construction contractors and have therefore been instrumental in delivering construction projects on site. This practical experience, where we have 'seen and



John Johnson

done it', as opposed to simply having a theoretical knowledge, is certainly something that clients value highly, and it has been a major factor in the continued success of the business.

Having personally been appointed to provide Expert Witness services on several legal cases over the past five years, I have been fortunate to have been involved in some very interesting and challenging disputes, including one of the top construction law cases in 2018 of Williams Tarr Construction Ltd. v Anthony Roylance Ltd.

Continuing to expand these services with existing and new clients across the legal profession, insurance sector, and within the construction industry is a key focus of the business in 2022 and beyond, as we believe that our breadth of knowledge and experience can add significant value to construction claims and Expert Witness appointments.

Despite the success of the business in providing support, advice and expertise relating to

construction disputes, I firmly believe that 'prevention is better than cure', so a key goal is to be involved from the outset of projects to provide the necessary knowledge and experience to stop disputes from arising in the first place. Albeit, where this can't happen then we believe that we are well placed to help resolve matters, and encouragingly, our clients appear to have formed the same opinion."

Having recently won the Prestige North of England award for 'Chartered Surveyor of the Year 2021/22', where the judges were specifically impressed by the variety of services offered and the focus on client care and satisfaction, the practice continues to develop its presence in the North-East where it strives to provide a first-class service which adds significant value to all clients.

**To contact John Johnson, Managing Director of Ashdan Consulting, email [jjohnson@ashdan-consulting.com](mailto:jjohnson@ashdan-consulting.com)**



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*Damiano Rea*



## A CRAB FOR YOUR FLAT

There is good news in the post for leaseholders as legislation comes into force to remove some of the most outrageous abuses of this legacy arrangement. 'The Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Bill' has received Royal Assent. So from June, new leases will no longer be allowed to charge Ground Rent. The old 'peppercorn rent' has made a permanent comeback. Why peppercorn rent? Why not just allow the leaseholder to pay nothing?

**This is because a leasehold agreement is a contract and in order to be binding, must include a consideration for the freeholder. Back in the mists of time, peppercorns were a valuable imported spice so a peppercorn had value. Over the years, solicitors got whimsical with this caveat and there are examples of one crab, a single red rose, one apple and a posy of flowers being written into leasehold agreements.**

Respected leasehold expert Shula Rich first became involved in leasehold legislation when the leaseholders in her block were presented with a £2,000,000 bill by the freeholders, Mars Securities of chocolate bar fame. A friend living in an eight flat block in Newcastle received a bill for her share of £40,000 for a new roof. She commissioned an independent surveyor who ruled the roof was fine.

We are increasingly taking instructions under the 'Right to Manage' legislation. This is the mechanism by which owners can take control of their block. Prior to this useful bit of legislation, the Leaseholders had to prove mismanagement and were often subject to very high legal costs or had to purchase their freehold.

Every time we take over the management of a block, we find ways to significantly reduce the service charge demands. The main issue is often excessive insurance premium costs. The key here is to be absolutely thorough and examine every aspect of every contract from lift and garden maintenance to decoration of communal areas.

Until recently block management has largely been the preserve of big outfits based in the South East who may have hundreds of properties under management. Often contracts have simply rolled over for years and nobody

has questioned value for money. We have the advantage of local knowledge and a local skills base. Our trades people are experts in their field and while they may gaze wistfully at fees charged by their counterparts in the south east, they have their feet firmly on the ground here in civilisation.

These new working methods represent wins all round. We get additional instructions, our contractors get a steady stream of local work and leaseholders, at long last, get a fair deal. This has all been a long time coming and as it is simple common sense, one may wonder why it has taken so long? The cynics among us suggest that legislation must be approved by the House of Lords where, by a spooky coincidence probably the biggest collection of freeholders in the UK sit in judgement. It's a thought, but my sunny Italian disposition does not allow me to comment. Instead, I simply welcome the changes with open arms.

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*Heaton Property is an award winning full-service estate agency from the North East set up in 2005. In September 2021 the company won gold in the 2021/2022 Best Estate Agent Guide.*

“

**...The key here is to be absolutely thorough and examine every aspect of every contract...**



# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

## EMILY SEAGER

Emily Seager MRICS, is a Partner in the lease advisory team at Knight Frank in Newcastle. She has specialised in commercial property lease renewals, rent reviews and lease restructures for over 17 years.

**6.45am** Our eight-year-old son and daughter, 4, usually get us up around this time. Then the mad dash to get ready, prepare and eat breakfasts, sort bags and find lost shoes, reading books etc. begins.

**8am** My husband, John, and I, split the children's drop offs at school and nursery between us.

**8.30am** I'm at my desk, tea in hand, and I start with my emails. I represent landlords and tenants on everything to do with commercial property leases, across the retail, industrial and office markets.

It's an exceptionally interesting time because the three markets are more diverse than I can ever recall. Industrial is booming. Retail is evolving and - in many areas struggling. And offices are changing rapidly. So, in turn, my enquiries are incredibly varied.

Manufacturing and logistics tenants, for example, are looking for ways to protect themselves against careering rent levels in a thriving market. Landlords in retail are looking for advice on how to keep hold of tenants but also improve upon the short-term concessions they offered at the height of the pandemic. Office landlords are encouraged by the return of workers to their offices but are needing to accommodate their tenants' evolving space needs. As well as dealing with rising occupational costs, in terms of utilities and energy efficiency works.

As market conditions change and lease renewal dates and break options occur, clients get in touch with me to negotiate the very best deals they can get.

**9am** I catch up with my Lease Advisory colleague, Judith Summers. We rely on each other as a sounding board for current instructions, lease issues and life generally.

**9.30am** I'm off on a site visit to inspect and measure a property and do some investigative work so that I can fully understand the building and the surrounding area.



Emily Seager

Today I'm dressed in PPE to inspect a 50,000 sq. ft. industrial unit in Teesside. I visit a vast range of buildings - from tiny lock-ups, to big sheds, to high street retail units, to brand new, high-end offices, and everything in between.

Just because a lease is a document - it doesn't mean my job is all pen-pushing and desk work, I still get out on site and get my hands dirty. Climbing over - and through - walls and the like.

I've done many interesting inspections. From uncovering whole secret floors that have been boarded-up in retail properties; a factory that's sole purpose was to ripen bananas; to a stunning champagne bar.

**11.30am** I meet with colleagues in our office agency team to discuss a client we're acting for on an office property in town. They have a lease break option coming up and need advice on the likely occupational costs and incentives available if they stay - compared with relocation alternatives. I'm fronting negotiations with the existing landlord whilst our office agents are getting the best possible relocation terms. We'll then work with other teams in the office, such as the building surveyors and business rates team, so the client can make a properly informed decision on costs and liabilities to support their longer term business needs.

**12pm** I have a call with a tenant - a builders merchant - who has a lease renewal due next year and is keen to try and fix their current rent now. They are nervous because they know it's a landlords' market. Their rent is already inflated, and they don't want it to rise. This is a complex case

and I've already instructed our industrial agency team to search for an alternative property as a contingency, and to strengthen our negotiating position. I've gone through their lease and I've found a couple of clauses that could work in their favour.

**1pm** Lunch at my desk - usually a homemade soup.

**1.30pm** I make some calls to chase solicitors to try and get some lease variation deals over the line. Depending on the complexity, leases can take anywhere from two months, to two years to negotiate and complete.

**2pm** I speak to some local retail agents, on behalf of a landlord whose rent review I'm working on in Durham, to check details of rental incentives on the latest lettings. A lot of detective work is needed for my job!

**3.30pm** I have a meeting with a new client - a corporate landlord - who is looking to maximise the potential of their portfolio. Around 70 leases will need to be reviewed. So, we are agreeing on a strategy to make this happen.

**5pm** I leave the office, pick the kids up and deal with piano practice, cubs, spellings etc and dinner.

**8pm** John and I have wrestled the children into bed. Now, some downtime, an hour or so of TV before a quick tidy-up and bed - if I'm lucky!

**Emily Seager can be contacted on 0191 594 5046 or [emily.seager@knightfrank.com](mailto:emily.seager@knightfrank.com)**



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Oliver Joslin



Molly Flannigan

## youngsRPS LOOK TO THE FUTURE WITH GRADUATE APPOINTMENTS

Further to the appointment of four new Associate Directors last year, youngsRPS strengthen their team with two graduate recruits.

Here the new Graduate Planning and Development Assistant and Graduate Commercial Surveyor talk about their experience of transitioning from studies to employment and what benefits they bring to youngsRPS;

### Oliver Joslin, Planning and Development Assistant

Life as a graduate planner is a challenging and exciting affair. Your time in education cannot wholly prepare you for the world of planning: the informative site visits; back and forth negotiations; passionate public consultations; innovative projects; complex legislation; persistent deadlines. Hours once spent reviewing academic literature is substituted with hours spent reviewing planning documents; now however, you are tasked with putting theory in practice. One area where education does prepare you is your

ability to solve problems which, together with project management, form the foundations for a prosperous career within the planning and development industry.

Personally, I gain most enjoyment from the multidisciplinary nature of planning. The opportunity to engage with communities and people, meet with clients, design teams, and case officers, whilst simultaneously work on complex projects across distinct disciplines and departments means that no two days are the same. The role surfaces responsibility that makes you feel valued. At YoungsRPS, working in the city provides the opportunity to have a meaningful impact on the spaces and places we live, work, and play.

Life as a graduate in a vibrant city is fun and engaging. You can balance your responsibilities during the week with that of a social life on the weekend - a social life which comes in handy for business development.

### Molly Flannigan, Graduate Commercial Surveyor

I began my career at YoungsRPS in March 2022. Following completion of my master's degree in real estate at Heriot Watt University, I was delighted to be offered the position of Graduate Commercial Surveyor at the Newcastle office, based on Grey Street. Raised in Northumberland, the prospect of working in the regional capital was exciting: the 'Heart of the North-East' is recognised as one of the fastest growing cities in the UK.

Working as a commercial graduate at YoungsRPS offers ample opportunity to learn from senior colleagues and industry professionals, ranging from commercial investment to residential agency. Within my role, I assist with the management of workloads across commercial property transactions within both private and public sectors, maintaining continual progress towards achieving my APC. A

typical day involves engagement with the purchase, sale, or leasing of property or land, supplemented by surveys and property valuations. Recently, I have had the opportunity to be involved with Pilgrim Chambers residential development - sited along Pilgrim Street, we will be launching 40 luxury residential apartments to let. Another opportunity currently in the process of being marketed is the brand-new café/wake facility at Hambleton Crematorium, Maple Park, Thirsk. Coverage provided by YoungsRPS, consolidated by its offer of valuable graduate experience, provides opportunity to work across a range of sectors whilst maintaining a high service offer to clients and promoting career progression.

### Why hire graduates?

**Ready to mould** – eager to learn, keen to get stuck in, trained to meet company standards.

**ROI** – given the right opportunities and incentives, graduates appropriate long-term yields.

**Enthusiasm** – after four years of education, the professional environment is highly anticipated.

**Trial periods** – graduates are willing to gain experience where possible – why not volunteer?

**Strong talent pool** – with 50% participation rates in higher education, there is indeed plenty of fish in the sea.

Michael Blake, Director of the Newcastle office adds: "We have enjoyed great success over the years in employing graduates across various roles at YoungsRPS. Developing their youthful enthusiasm and academic learning, together with training and experience, can further their development as competent professionals; a strong asset for both graduate and company."

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



## MODO BLOC EXPANDS INTO COMMERCIAL PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT

Fast-growing North East developer Modo Bloc has secured planning permission to develop an industrial site on Teesside.

**The Newcastle-based developer has received permission from Stockton Borough Council to build 22 light industrial units on a brownfield site on Cowpen Lane Industrial Estate, Billingham.**

Construction of the 30,000 sf ft of new industrial space is set to begin in the summer.

This £4 million project represents the first of

several planned projects in the commercial property development arena.

George Jenkins, MD of Modo Bloc, explained: "Most of our work to date has been residential but we always planned to move into commercial property development as soon as the right opportunities arose. This Cowpen Lane project is a perfect location where demand for modern, light industrial units is high."

Modo Bloc is also seeking planning for a £2m industrial and retail mixed use site in South Shields. Elsewhere, the company recently acquired a warehouse in Coxlodge, Newcastle. The company is already looking at other sites around the region including an opportunity in Morpeth.

The ambitious developer recently established Modo Bloc Construction to help accelerate some of its new residential and commercial developments.

Construction is already well underway on three, five-bedroom luxury homes at Stannington, near Morpeth, Northumberland. Dave Hansell, the site manager for Modo Bloc Construction, reveals that already a buyer has been found to buy one 'off plan' for £595,000.

Ollie Stapleton a co-director at Modo Bloc, acting as PM on the Stannington site, while spearheading the commercial projects, said: "With the growing volume of work, we needed to better

control costs and quality. We are gradually putting the management team in place, and the new construction business will allow us to push on and manage the projects we have.

"We have lots of exciting schemes on the go or set to start in the coming months. Our construction business will allow us to manage those up to around £2m in build value. For the larger projects we will continue to seek to work with experienced, medium-sized construction businesses around the region."

Over the last two years, Modo Bloc has pipelined over £60m worth of developments. George Jenkins explained that he and his team have moved on from student accommodation and small refurbishments to larger residential conversions along with building new homes and land development. Modo Bloc has several development sites in Ouseburn Valley, overlooking the river Tyne.

George added: "Our future projects are getting larger and more substantial. Modo Bloc has ambitious growth plans to build more homes and develop more land to increase our pipeline even further. We're always looking at interesting investment and development options in the North East and beyond."

**More details: [www.modobloc.co.uk](http://www.modobloc.co.uk)**





*Bernicia Chief Executive, John Johnston, has announced the Group will invest an impressive £210 million into North East communities over the next four years.*



# BERNICIA UNVEILS £210M INVESTMENT INTO THE NORTH EAST

North East housing association, Bernicia, has announced it will invest £210 million into homes, estates and communities over the next four years as part of ambitious plans to support tenants when they need it most.

**The investment will focus on building at least 600 new homes across the region, delivering major works to improve existing homes and neighbourhoods, and helping people into work.**

Tenants' views have helped shape Bernicia's new corporate strategy which outlines how it will deliver exceptional services, sharply focused on customers' needs at a time of major financial pressures on households.

The housing association owns and manages 14,000 properties, employs over 550 staff across the North East and has an annual turnover of £90 million.

Over the next four years, Bernicia will:

- Invest £85m in new housing, building at least 600 new homes.
- Deliver £63m of major maintenance works to improve existing homes and estates.
- Spend £61m on day-to-day and cyclical repairs programmes.
- Ensure well over 90% of its homes meet energy efficiency rating SAP C or above, five years ahead of Government target.
- Pledge an additional £2m to help local people into employment, creating a new employability team to work with regional businesses.
- Generate £15m of added social value for the region.

Bernicia will commit additional resources to help tackle fuel poverty as households face a cost of living crisis. It will install more efficient heating systems into homes, fit extra insulation, photovoltaic panels and air source heat pumps.

John Johnston, Bernicia Chief Executive, said: "Over the next four years, we will put our human and financial resources to work, using our skills to release more capacity to support our tenants, customers and communities at a time when arguably they need it most.

"The North East is where our tenants and communities live, where our financial strength has been generated, and where the company has always been based, and we want to use our strength to help it grow.

"We are pledging significant extra resources to support financial inclusion, building aspiration and increasing confidence, providing the training, skills and job opportunities people deserve.

"We are more than just a landlord. We are an anchor institution for communities and we will continue to work with partners to help deliver ambitious plans for the North East."



*ECGI image of Bernicia's new Rosebrough Court development in Cramlington which includes 60 high quality affordable homes.*

Bernicia's strategy aims to create £15 million of added social value, partly by channelling the profits of its commercial arms; Kingston, a block and estate management and landscaping specialist; and estate agent Living Spaces, back into supporting tenants and the communities they live in.

Bernicia's new employability team will work with regional schools and colleges to deliver more apprenticeships and placements and will engage with employers to give young people the 'work ready skills' they need to launch their careers.

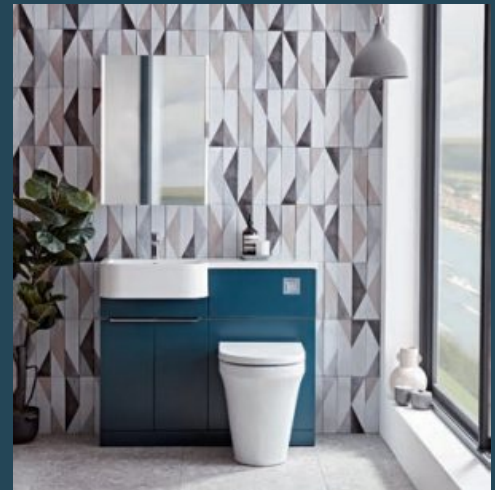
As well as its £210 million investment plan, Bernicia will continue to collaborate and work with a host of regional partners to help promote the potential of the North East, the place, its people, and its role in the Government's national 'Levelling Up' agenda.

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





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## BONDED EXPANDS INTO OWNED MEDIA, WITH NEW DIRECTOR APPOINTMENT

**Bonded has appointed Siobhan Byrne to their Senior Management Team, as the digital and media agency expands into owned media.**

Siobhan joins from global network agency Dentsu, bringing over a decade of agency and product experience to the fast growing Bonded business.

Commenting on the appointment, Steve Underwood said: "I'm so pleased to welcome Siobhan to the Bonded Senior Management Team. Siobhan is a great leader, technically strong and a great communicator.

It's brilliant to appoint a senior director, who is at the cutting edge of industry innovation and shares of our values of human connection.

I'm looking forward to working together; to build an industry leading owned media offering.

The appointment comes as Bonded builds on its paid search, paid social and ATL media offering by expanding into organic search. Siobhan will be responsible for developing the organic search and content proposition from Bonded's office in Newcastle Upon Tyne.



## PR SOFTWARE IS AGENCY'S LATEST STEP IN THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION

**A forward-thinking PR agency has launched its own bespoke software to make the client experience run even more smoothly.**

Harvey & Hugo, which is based in Darlington but works with clients around the UK, has created PRefix, a project management system for PR agencies that helps improve communication flow to clients.

Charlotte Nichols, founder and managing director of Harvey & Hugo, said: "I'm always looking at ways

to continually improve our offering by investing in technology.

"PRefix will help to create more efficient processes with clients, such as the approvals system, as well as creating a hub where clients have access to content whenever they need it.

"Along with our Pay-as-Hugo e-commerce platform, which we launched last year, it's another way to work in the changing world we find ourselves, where the office-based nine-to-five has been replaced by something altogether more flexible."

The project, which was funded by the Tees Valley Mayor and Combined Authority's Collaborative Networks Fund, was developed by Stockton-based Sapere Software.

## MEDIAWORKS CONFIRMS WPP DIGITAL LEAD APPOINTMENT

**Mediaworks, one of the UK and Ireland's largest independent digital marketing agencies, has confirmed Leigh Gammons as the group's new chief customer officer.**

He arrives from WPP, where he was CEO of Wunderman Thompson Technology, leading the £40m specialist digital division and a team of 600 across seven offices globally.

In recent years, Leigh was named in the BIMA Top 100 of Britain's most influential digital operators and was subsequently invited into its board of judges and mentors. In his seven-year career at WPP, Leigh became global lead for a host of their digital and technology client relationships and played a key role in the agency being named partner of the year in each of the last three by both Adobe and Sitecore.

CEO and founder at Mediaworks, Brett Jacobson said: "Leigh is exactly the calibre of person we're attracting to Mediaworks. His experience of growing a digital business to a £40m operation



across multiple, international sites will be of huge value as we chart our own growth journey. He has a deep understanding of the digital industry and how that's applied with the very best global brands.

"Leigh brings an exciting, new dynamic to the senior team here. He'll be a critical part of the team's focus on making us the biggest and best UK headquartered digital agency."

The organisation, which was founded in 2007 by Jacobson, continues to grow its portfolio of internationally renowned clients, which include the likes of Gap, Puma, Dune and Metro Bank. To meet demand, the agency has also opened new operations in Edinburgh, Manchester and Dublin in the last 12 months alone, adding to its growing Leeds operation as well as its North East HQ.



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## SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM PROMOTIONS AT O

**Newcastle-based O.agency has promoted its senior management team, with the appointment of a new managing director and two associate directors.**

Kirsty Ramsey has been appointed as Managing Director, with founder Kari Owers moving to the role of CEO and co-owner Robin Owers as Director of finance and operations.

Fran Ratliff moves from her Head of Client Services role to Associate Director of the corporate client team and is joined by former Creative Director Lauren Regan as Associate Director of the consumer team.

Founder Kari Owers said: "Our management team was very newly formed just before the pandemic and have been instrumental in supporting us as we navigated through 2020 to go on to achieve growth again in 2021, hiring ten new people in recent months.

"Their management experience has been supercharged in the last couple of years, so we are very excited to now see them oversee delivery across our client portfolio and develop our talented and growing team.

"Collectively they bring a wealth of strategy experience to our client portfolio and as they have all worked with us for many years, they will ensure our award-winning culture remains at the heart of our agency as I focus on our continued future growth."



## NORTEDGE INVESTS IN LEADING LIFE SCIENCES MARKETING SPECIALIST

**Lower mid-market private equity firm NorthEdge has completed its investment into life sciences marketing agency, ramarketing, to support rapid service expansion and increased international presence.**

North-East headquartered ramarketing employs more than 50 people globally with offices in Newcastle, Manchester and Boston, MA. The full-service marketing firm, which supports clients operating in the high-growth pharmaceutical and biotech markets, is regarded as one of the fastest-growing life sciences agencies in the world.

NorthEdge is backing Raman Sehgal, Founder and Global President, and Emma Banks, Managing Director, alongside ramarketing's highly experienced team to deliver an exciting and

ambitious growth plan.

Commenting on the deal, Raman said: "Finding the right partner for our next phase of growth was critical, and from the outset, NorthEdge had a strong understanding of our business, our industry, and our aims for the future, whilst mirroring our own values.

"We are evolving into the type of next-generation growth partner that our clients will need in the future. Data-driven, embedded in industry and truly global. That type of ambition requires the right partner, hence why I am really looking forward to growing the business in partnership with the NorthEdge team over the coming years."

With NorthEdge's support, ramarketing will continue to expand and support its international client base, building on its reputation as a leading provider of marketing services for companies in the life sciences sector. Its growth plan is underpinned by strong market fundamentals, with outsourced marketing spend in the life sciences market forecast to grow by c.12% CAGR through to 2024.

## MEDIAWORKS APPOINTS NEW CHIEF DELIVERY OFFICER

**One of the UK and Ireland's largest independent digital marketing agencies, Mediaworks, has appointed Helen Whitfield as its group's chief delivery officer.**

She joins the award-winning agency with 30 years' experience in leading transformational processes for successful global operators. Most recently, she was COO at NBS, who grew to become a pioneer and disruptor in the construction industry with its transformational SAAS platform.

Helen joins at a time where Mediaworks has substantially grown its client portfolio, partnering with the likes of Gap, Puma and Metro Bank on a range of digital transformation projects. The agency has also opened new operations in Edinburgh, Manchester and Ireland in the last 12 months to service its growing client demand.

Helen, who has built a reputation for developing positive, customer-centric enhancements



throughout her career, has led growth and opportunity during some of the most challenging market conditions.

She says: "I take immense pride in being part of any successful growth journey. I'm a firm believer in continuous improvement and innovation achieved through investment in colleagues, commitment to company values and ultimately to the customer. For me, Mediaworks ticks all those boxes, and the ability to work on digital transformation projects for some of the globe's biggest brands was a hugely enticing draw."

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*Tony Hardy and Adrienne Hughes*

# MARKETING AND MEDIA MATTERS

*In the latest of these popular series of features we talk to...*

## TONY HARDY AND ADRIENNE HUGHES

Co-Founders of Canny Creative

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

**Tony:** My background is in branding, design, and marketing. I didn't envisage a career in the media industry, more the design industry. But as I started to follow agency owners and founders online, I started to enjoy learning about the business and marketing side of things more than the design stuff. By the time I was midway through University, I'd decided I wanted to setup my own agency. I just didn't think I'd end up doing it as soon as I left University.

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

**Adrienne:** When Tony left University and started Canny, I was working as a waitress. When we setup the business, even though Tony was doing the majority of the design work and dealing with clients, there was a gaping big hole in the business and operations side of things.

**Tony:** And every night when I was stressing about things, Adrienne always had the answers. "Do this, do that." And it worked a treat. She was the brains of the operation, and it was obvious that she needed to step into the business full time too.

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

**Adrienne:** Definitely that first hire! We had whiteboards full of financial calculations and "if this happens, then what?" type scenarios drawn up. That was probably the biggest challenge we faced. But once you've done it once, it gets much easier moving forward!

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

**Tony:** Honestly the media and marketing industry has such a (perceived) low barrier to entry that anyone doing it, and doing it successfully, I can't help but respect. There's so many scheisters and tricksters out there, that if you've built a reputable company in the industry, then fair play. Specifically, I massively admire Peep Laja from Wynter and CXL, Chris Walker from Refine Labs, Jonathan Dane from Klientboost, and Carrie Rose/Stephen Kenwright from Rise at Seven. And for my sins, I do enjoy a bit of Gary Vee too.

### Which fictional media character can you most relate to?

**Adrienne:** The Tasmanian Devil. Every day working in the industry is an absolute whirlwind - haha!

### How did you adapt your business during the coronavirus crisis and support clients?

**Tony:** Luckily we win and connect with our clients through our blog. Therefore, the Covid crisis didn't effect our lead flow, website traffic, or work too much. We actually managed to turn it into a positive and we're winning more international work than ever before.

**Adrienne:** Marketing was one of the key areas that people spent a lot of time and focus on during Covid. So just being on hand, and able to help our clients in the same we've always done took us from strength to strength.

### What is your greatest strength?

**Tony:** It's the partnerships and relationships we build by being truly "us." It's the authenticity. Working in marketing can be intimidating, and just by being normal, approachable people, we manage to build relationships that last for years and years.

**Adrienne:** There's no suits or sharp presentation decks with us. We're always just there, present, in the room, listening and working with our clients to help them achieve their goals.

### What is your biggest weakness?

**Tony:** Honestly, having no real business training has been a bit of hinderance at times. But I've fixed that lately by joining the Goldman Sachs 10KSB programme and that has taught me a lot of things that I probably should have known from the start!

### What has been your proudest achievement?

**Adrienne:** Getting to work with clients on every single continent is huge. We love that!

**Tony:** Except Antarctica. Penguins don't need marketing support.

### What are your future career aspirations?

**Tony:** I'd imagine over the next few years for sure, we start to open up "hubs" in different locations. We're building some workshop events that we're delivering in Belfast and Texas later this year, then if that goes to plan, we'll do the same around the world next year. Hopefully that's the start of us having a physical presence in other countries.

### How do you see your industry evolving in the next 10 years?

**Adrienne:** I think software is going to replace a lot of the "easy bits" of our job. You're already seeing that with different website builders, and branding-by-numbers type software coming out left, right, and centre. And that's why building real relationships with our clients, and working with them as people rather than treating them as "another customer" is going to be vital as the world changes.

### How do you like to unwind?

**Tony:** Travel. We get to travel a lot with our job which is amazing, but there's nothing like a few days away, be it in a hot tub, or a city break, to totally refresh and reset the mind.

[hello@canny-creative.com](mailto:hello@canny-creative.com)

[www.canny-creative.com](http://www.canny-creative.com)







Charlotte Nichols



## A UNIQUE INTERVIEW...

**Unique**  
magazines  
*The Source of Knowledge*

## CHARLOTTE NICHOLS

Director, Harvey & Hugo

### How did you get into PR?

My early jobs in my parents' shops and a leisure centre put me on the path to PR and marketing. I was fascinated by why customers made their buying choices and what made them decide to come into our shops over others.

This was further fuelled during my time at university, where I enjoyed the marketing module of my degree in sports science and management the most.

Following university, I got a graduate job in a PR agency in Newcastle and loved it so much I set up my own business a couple of years later.

### Who or what inspires you?

My family. I watched my parents work incredibly hard running the retail business my grandfather had set up in the 1970s whilst raising a family.

I didn't get to spend much time with my grandfather as he died when I was three, but his legacy and work ethic have always been my motivation – I've wanted to make him proud.

### What advice would you give to anyone interested in getting in PR?

Be a great communicator – you really need to be an all-rounder in today's multimedia world. Work on your written skills, your verbal skills and your body language.

Get as much work experience as you can, and don't be afraid to work for free initially to build up your knowledge and experience – it will pay off further down the line. If you can do this alongside studying for a relevant qualification, even better – it will help the theory make more sense.

Read and absorb as much news content as you can. There are so many forms of media now – social, radio, TV, print, online etc – that it helps to get a good grasp of all channels.

### What has been your most memorable moment to date relating to your business journey?

During lockdown, I found an old diary that I'd written not long after I started Harvey & Hugo and it was lovely to look back and reflect on where the business has come from and how it's grown over the years.



I realised that I'd achieved some of the goals I'd written back then, so it was a rare moment of reflection and an opportunity to feel proud of how far I've come.

### What are your favourite magazines?

A big part of PR is reading a large variety of magazines for our clients. I've read everything from Drain Trader to Funeral Service Times – you wouldn't believe how many industry-specific ones are out there!

So when I have some spare time I enjoy reading magazines that are completely different to the ones I read at work. My favourite is Women's Health, but I've also been reading the Investment Times recently to learn more about investing.

### What's the future hold for Charlotte Nichols?

In the immediate future, sleepless nights and baby cuddles – I'm due to have my second child in May! After that, I'm looking to continue to grow Harvey & Hugo while enjoying time as a family of four.

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

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

“

...Work on your written skills, your verbal skills and your body language...





Paul Fraser



# PR NOT WORKING? THEN REPHRASE IT

When it comes to PR and dealing with the media, you can't beat experience. And it's even better when you know what works...and what doesn't.

**Granted, you'll probably hear a lot of PR professionals tell you that, but the difference with Paul Fraser and his Rephrase PR and Media Services, is that he views everything through the experienced eyes of a journalist who's seen more pieces of PR float across his desk than anyone should really have to.**

Paul is one of the North East's most respected journalists having racked-up over twenty years covering the region for the Hartlepool Mail and, since 2001, the Northern Echo. He knows what it's like to be under serious pressure to produce interesting articles on a daily basis.

And of course a handy way for Paul to write those articles is if someone else either does some of the leg work for him or gives him a decent lead to follow via some background information.

"There was nothing better, when facing a really hectic day at the office, to receive a good piece of PR which I could either chase-up or, in the best cases, immediately drop into one of my columns," said Paul. "It was a win-win situation. I could quickly produce an interesting article and the PR company got some terrific publicity. Perfect. Sadly, some of the PR I received was either badly written, had no real angle to it or was plainly just a shot in the dark by a PR company who are trying to keep a client sweet. In many respects, poor PR is worse than no PR because, certainly from my experience and those of my colleagues, as soon as a journalist sees the name of the company who's sent the story through, there is a serious temptation to ignore it. The shot in the dark has backfired."

Which of course gives Paul one massive advantage in that he already knows what sort of PR works...and what doesn't. You'll find that Paul is refreshingly honest about the way he operates. If he thinks you are asking for something which could turn out to be a retrograde step, he'll tell you. It might not be what you want to hear but at least you're not wasting your time and money.

However, and this is where almost 25 years in journalism comes in really handy, Paul can invariably spot where a potential story lies.

"Clients are understandably fully focussed on their business or on the product or service they provide. Something that they find to be seriously interesting may, for the average person reading a magazine such as Northern Insight, turn out to be rather dull. So why not look for another angle... approach the subject in a different way...give it a bit of a twist. It is often down to how a story is presented...come up with a punchy headline...produce a top quality photograph.

Thankfully, having been at the sharp end of journalism where I've received hundreds of pieces of PR, I know what catches the eye of an editor and is likely to make it into the media.

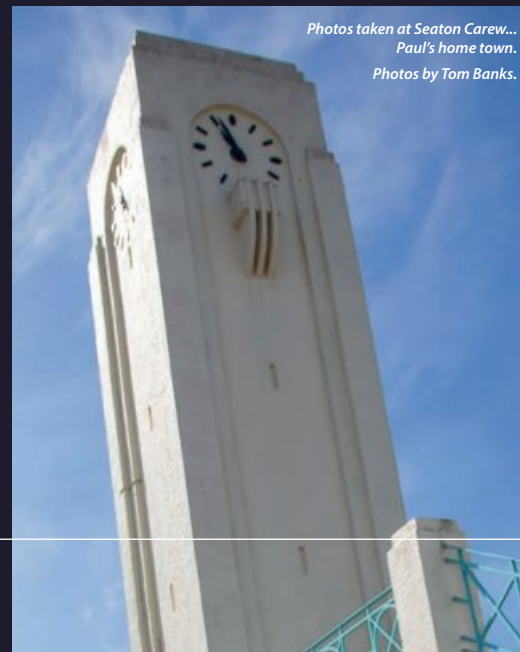
"It's also important to have a broad view on PR because social media is now an important part of the mix. For some firms it is the most important part because it reaches the sort of client or customer they're looking for. Other firms find more success in traditional print journalism via local newspapers and magazines. Some prefer to go down the route of leaflet distribution. During my time at the Hartlepool Mail and Northern Echo, I've been involved in the full mix of how a company can promote itself. I've seen at first hand which ones work."

In other words, Paul Fraser and his Rephrase PR and Media Services can point you in the right direction and get you the right sort of publicity. He can also help you avoid any pitfalls. If you are looking to promote your business or you think you have a good tale to tell, the best idea is to get in touch with Paul and he'll tell you what he can do for you. He's also got a list of contacts which could turn out to be extremely handy for you to dip into.

You'll also be getting the advice and guidance of someone who's been in the media and communications industry for over 20 years. He knows how to help businesses and individuals raise their brand awareness. He'll help you achieve your goals.

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email [info@rephrasemedia.com](mailto:info@rephrasemedia.com) or visit his website  
[www.rephrasemedia.com](http://www.rephrasemedia.com)**



*Photos taken at Seaton Carew...  
Paul's home town.  
Photos by Tom Banks.*





## RISING COSTS AFFECTING NORTH TYNESIDE BUSINESSES

Businesses in North Tyneside are asking for support urgently from both government and their customers as they face increasing costs to continue to run their businesses.

Concerns have been rising along with costs, from many members of the North Tyneside Business Forum. The increase in fuel charges, along with supply costs for goods such as food are having a huge impact on both consumers as well as businesses.

Chair of North Tyneside Business Forum Karen Goldfinch said, 'Our business community have been through so much over the last few years, they've survived one of the toughest times known, we were coming out the other side, only now to be hit with these additional worries.'

'I would urge those in positions of power to meet with us to discuss the needs of our business community, to hear our concerns and to act quickly to help support us get through what is going to be yet again a very difficult time ahead. We would like to see more financial support to help businesses such as energy subsidies, reduced VAT and further business rates relief.'



## BEST-SELLING AUTHOR FINALLY LAUNCHES A DETECTIVE SERIES SET IN HER NATIVE YORKSHIRE

An international best-selling novelist from Yorkshire has brought her writing talent home with her latest crime thriller.

Smoke & Cracked Mirrors, the eighth novel from historical crime fiction writer Karen Charlton, is the first book she has set in her native county.

Set in 1940 with Jemma James returning to York, the city of her birth, to set up the York Ladies' Detective Agency with her best friend, Roberta 'Bobbie' Baker. The budding detectives quickly find themselves embroiled in a series of mysterious cases.

Born in Sheffield, Karen grew up in Leeds and now lives on the coast at Marske-by-the-Sea and she has always wanted to set a novel in her home county.

"Friends and neighbours have been asking me for years to make Yorkshire the focal point of a series, I feel like I've finally come home."

## INTERNATIONAL DESIGN AGENCY POTTERS WITH LOCAL EXHIBITION

A Gateshead design agency that works with some of the world's largest character licensing brands and toy companies in EMEA, North America and APAC has added a uniquely British character to its portfolio alongside other iconic global characters found in Star Wars, The Minions, and Barbie.

The team at Blue Kangaroo Design were commissioned by Penguin Ventures (part of Penguin Random House Children's) to create a touring installation to celebrate the 120th anniversary of Beatrix Potter's naughty but loveable Peter Rabbit. The Peter Rabbit Storytime Trail allows children to play interactively in a garden setting and experience some of the things that Peter Rabbit would do himself



including crawling under a garden gate, hiding in a watering can, and looking at his reflection in a mirrored water pool.

MD of Blue Kangaroo Design, Jason Knights was delighted that his team had been selected to work on the installation.

"I'm very proud of the North East and whenever I work in the USA or Europe, I always promote our

region to the people I meet. We work with huge brand leaders on major projects including TV and movie character licensing, but this is the first installation that we have done specifically for use in our area. I'd like to think that if Beatrix Potter could see how we have brought one of her most loved animal characters to life that she would be very proud."

## ...MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU...

*May the Fourth is sometimes called "Star Wars" day because of the "may the force" quote.  
Keith Newman of Highlights PR asked some of his RADAR clients what movie would sum up their business.*



The Notebook, because every time I share my story about what inspired me to start my business which is to have a positive impact on employers and employees, it makes people cry. Just like the Notebook does.

**Nikki Masterman Inspired HR**  
[www.inspired-hr.co.uk](http://www.inspired-hr.co.uk)



My business would be the film Gaslight from 1944. Set in the 1880s it shows that no matter how far we have come, or the progress we have made as a species, a narcissistic abuser is still a narcissistic abuser.

**Rie Pearson, Author, Be Kind. No Excuses**



It would be the feature length: 1 hour 13 minutes long: anthology film that I made, "Horrormail", because just like an anthology, film has several different stories shown end to end with something in between them all to hold them together. I finish one book and start another again meaning that my life is like an anthology film always doing and offering more than is the norm: most films have only one story: my life has many books. I would love to appear in more films made by other people at this time.

**S Rob, Occultist Author, [www.srob.co.uk](http://www.srob.co.uk)**

Off the Grid Adventures CIC is all about getting people healthier, active and into the great outdoors for an adventure! If we were a movie it would have to be "Indiana Jones and Raiders of the Lost Ark" It's a classic film about adventure, travel, crazy wildlife, and interesting people. It's exactly what we are all about. Always trying to challenge people, getting them to face their fears and try something new and different. Often that involves rock climbing, bushcraft, archery, expedition work or a night in the woods! If you are interested in finding your adventurous side just get in touch.

**Paul Kirkpatrick, [www.offthegrid-adventures.co.uk](http://www.offthegrid-adventures.co.uk)**



**Last month our RADAR members appeared on TV News, BBC Radio, Local TV and many magazines and newspapers.  
To find out more about the benefits of becoming a RADAR member, contact [keith@highlightspr.co.uk](mailto:keith@highlightspr.co.uk) or call Keith on 07814 397951**

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- Exclusive offers on PR, media training and more
- LED advert beamed from the floating office



**Contact Keith Newman for more details.**

**Visit him on his floating office**

**[keith@highlightspr.co.uk](mailto:keith@highlightspr.co.uk)**

**07814 397951**

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







## STRATEGIC MOVE SEES KAROL MARKETING ACQUIRE FUSION PR CREATIVE

PR and communications agency, Karol Marketing, has announced the acquisition of Fusion PR Creative. This move will drive forward a vision to offer the very highest level of strategic communications, marketing, digital, public affairs, and public relations expertise to its regional, national, and international client base.

The buy-out follows the appointment of Fusion PR Creative's founder John McCabe as chief executive at North East England Chamber of Commerce, and builds upon significant results achieved by Fusion and Karol for existing clients across sports, renewable energy, construction and regeneration, healthcare, hospitality, and leisure industries. Both companies will continue to operate under their respective brands within the new Group, working on behalf of their regional, national and global clients.

This new venture will allow for further growth as it will help carve out and realise new business opportunities, enabling some of the region's leading companies to access the very best strategic communications expertise locally.

Founded by Stefan Lepkowski in 1992, Karol Marketing is one of the North East's longest established integrated and multi-award-winning PR, digital, and creative communications agencies. The company has secured five, major new clients in the last twelve months adding to its portfolio which includes Mental Health Concern, Eldon Square, Agilio Software, as well as leading consumer brands Keela, Montane, Vango, EDZ and Ventile and has seen billings jump by 61.7%.

Fusion has also continued to show strong performance over the last two years, representing clients such as Northumbria University, Newcastle Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Collaborative Newcastle, The Great North Care Record (delivered in partnership with Karol), The UK Pellet Council (Biomass Heat Works!), AkzoNobel and Bernicia Group.

Both companies will now consolidate and strengthen their market specialisms, skills and expertise as one Group, with Karol coming together with members of the Fusion team who will remain in key roles and there will be new investment in staff and increased resources.

Group Managing Director, Stefan Lepkowski, says, "This is a strategic and purposeful move designed to reinforce and strengthen our long-standing



“

**...Fusion is the absolute perfect fit for Karol, bringing a highly specialist and exemplar skills set to our offering for clients...**



*L-R: Former vice-chairman of Bond Dickinson and non-executive director John Marshall, group managing director Stefan Lepkowski, associate director Kathie Wilcox and former Fusion PR Creative managing director, John McCabe*

commitment to the region, providing the very highest level of strategic communications, public affairs, marketing and PR expertise to the North East's business community. We're proud to work with and alongside the businesses, charities and public sector organisations that make up this thriving and vibrant part of the world.

"Fusion is the absolute perfect fit for Karol, bringing a highly specialist and exemplar skillset to our offering for clients, especially B2B companies and public sector organisations, who may be operating on a very local level or UK-wide and beyond."

The acquisition of Fusion PR Creative is the culmination of several strategic appointments made over the last two years by Karol Marketing. Former vice chairman of Bond Dickinson and non-executive director, John Marshall, was appointed as an advisor to the leadership team and past NGI client and communications director, Kathie Wilcox, also joined the team on a consultancy basis as associate director, working alongside Stefan to develop the strategy and lead the team. Both John and Kathie have played key roles in securing the deal.

Stefan continues, "By working as we do in the way that we do, both companies have achieved huge results for clients, whether it be growing their business and market share, lobbying Government, delivering crisis comms, developing strategy or getting them talked about and seen (positively) by their target customers. Much of our work is done behind the scenes, but

*Stefan Lepkowski*



the results speak for themselves, and we have become integral to many organisations by adding considerable value. By investing in our team, we anticipate that these results will get even better, and both businesses will continue to thrive.

"I want the Karol Marketing Group to play an integral role in delivering marketing and communications services to North East based business and organisations and, to that end, I will be embarking on a recruitment drive aimed at attracting the very best talent, to support what I already firmly believe, is the best group of communications experts in the North."

Commenting on the deal, John McCabe says: "I have great admiration for Stefan and for Karol Marketing. It's a business which has stood the test of time but as Stefan has shown with the purchase of Fusion and the other appointments he has made to his team, it continues to innovate and stay at the top. I wish Stefan and his new team all the very best for the future and I'm confident great things lie in store for this outstanding business."

**[karolmarketing.com](http://karolmarketing.com)**



## NORTH EAST MARKETING CONSULTANCY SHORTLISTED FOR NATIONAL STARTUP AWARD

Wearside based marketing consultancy, Riverside Marketing Solutions, has been named as a finalist in the StartUp Awards National Series in the professional services category.

**The company, which was launched in April 2020 by owner, Nicola Halse, offers flexible marketing and business development solutions for sole traders and small businesses including social media management, marketing strategies, email campaigns and PR.**

The StartUp Awards National Series were launched to recognise the booming startup scene across the UK which has accelerated since the pandemic began. In 2020, more than 770,000 startups were set up in Britain with similar increases seen in other European countries.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, brands have had to adapt as people seek new ways to communicate, seek information and purchase. It has been essential for businesses to maintain their marketing presence to ensure they don't get forgotten and to find new ways of reaching their target market, the services of Riverside Marketing Solutions have been invaluable to small businesses throughout this time.

Owner, Nicola Halse, was delighted to have been shortlisted and commented, "After finding myself out of work one week into the UK's first lockdown and worldwide pandemic, I decided to take the plunge and within a couple of hours, Riverside Marketing was born, it really was that quick of a decision!

Having worked for many small businesses during



Nicola Halse

my career I knew the problems and concerns they experience therefore I decided to offer my services on a no contract, no ties basis, this enabled clients to try my services without having to commit to a long-term contract. This flexible solution has worked extremely well and is very appealing to smaller businesses, with many clients using my services on a short-term basis for a particular project or, for several clients, continuing to use my services on a longer-term basis to ensure they have consistency in their marketing and business development, a key to ongoing success in any business.

Now having the flexibility of running my own business, it's also allowed me the opportunity to get involved in many community projects and to help young entrepreneurs, something I'm really passionate about. During the last two years, I've taken part in several career talks, mock interviews, became a mentor for The Girls Network and

recently was appointed as a trustee of a local secondary school. The role of business in the community and to help inspire the younger generation is something that shouldn't be underestimated and I'm so pleased I can hopefully inspire somebody else to start their own business and quite simply, go for it!

I really couldn't have gotten this far without the help and support of my family, friends and fantastic connections throughout the north east, to be shortlisted for the award is not only recognition of my hard work over the last two years but also their unwavering support too.

After obviously what has been a challenging two years, I can't wait to enjoy the awards final and whatever the outcome, celebrate with fellow new business owners."

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



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# A NEW SERVICE TO REMEDY REGION'S WEBSITE ISSUES



Jackie Latham

An experienced and award winning website expert has launched a unique new service to support WordPress website users in the North East.

**Jackie Latham, owner of Jackdaw Web Design, is opening up her expertise offering coaching sessions to assist others using the platform who may have struck an unsolvable problem, dead-end or who simply want to improve their own skills.**

Ideal for individuals who look after their own or clients' websites, for those who look after their employers' websites, marketing departments and those who are taking over a website from others and can't find their way around, the sessions last an hour each and cost just £55.

Delivered on Zoom to individuals or multiple people, the sessions are recorded so that they can be replayed time and time again. Jackie, who has been voted in the top three web

designers in North Tyneside said: "Many people either hit sticking points or don't use WordPress to its best, and they get confused by the amount of information on the internet. Sometimes a problem can be simple or sometimes more complex, but either way having that human touch to help you rectify it is all that people need.

"Many people go on training courses but get tied in circles and forget the training over time. My coaching offer is jargon free and you can share the recording around your team, but the real beauty is that the training is bespoke to your specific needs as and when you need it, so is completely current!"

Covering off WordPress basics, good design,

security, plugs in, widgets, content, html, terms and conditions, privacy policies, responsiveness to devices, online shops and more, the coaching can also look at imagery and accessibility to get the most out of your site.

Jackie offers a free discovery call first so she understands your issues to ensure that she structures the coaching right for you – you then pick the topics and can concentrate on one or numerous niggles, whatever you need to get your website performing to its best!

Clare of Salad and Ketchup recently used Jackie's coaching service. She said: "Very helpful, professional service. Jackie tailored her training to exactly what I needed, and I learnt a lot. I look forward to working with her again in the future."

**For more information please visit: [jackdawwebdesign.co.uk/wordpress-training/](https://jackdawwebdesign.co.uk/wordpress-training/) where you can book your discovery call and find out more about the service.**

# nesma

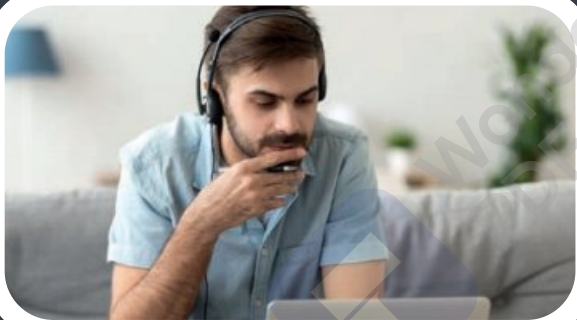
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## CHANGE CAN BE STRANGE

The one constant of recent times is change. So it's essential to make sure those around you have the right skills to adapt and effect change positively.

---

*Jacqueline Jackson, 5th Generation Partner, Thomas Jardine & Co*



**Change Management is just one of the key topics that the nesma Know-How and Do sessions help you to consider. They are all built to develop critical skills that enhance the topics taught in the CIM and CIPR qualifications. For instance, Leading Change is a stand-alone module on the Masters Level CIM Marketing Leadership Programme.**

Veronica first met Jacqui Jackson when nesma started to deliver CIM qualifications for Cumbria from The Guild. Jacqui Jackson is the change expert at Thomas Jardine & Co, a fifth-generation family business. Their consultancy arm specialises in supporting individuals, teams, and businesses as they adapt to or create change within their organisation. They also own and operate The Guild in Carlisle, where similar support is offered to local businesses and professionals.

#### **Why is understanding Change Management an essential skill we should all have?**

Change Management skills can help organisations deal with the opportunities and threats brought about by changes in their marketplace or supply chain. Recent global events have highlighted the importance of changing how teams are managed so they are always ready to react to future opportunities or threats. Leaders need to develop skills to lead their organisations through the supply chain or marketplace changes. Leaders must also build management skills internally (or deputise management operations) to prepare their organisation for future changes.

#### **So why do we find Change Management so hard?**

The change management process is a series of tasks outlined for a seamless transition from a current state of affairs to a new one without obstructing the workflow or suffering any damage. But what that dictionary definition doesn't consider is that you need first is to recognise the need for change. And then take people with you on the change journey, and most importantly, make it stick. The workshop Jacqui has developed for nesma identifies what change is, what it needs and how you can add value to create and deliver your seamless process.

#### **Why is Change Management a universal skill that all managers should understand?**

As a manager, you must understand why change is happening in your organisation. To be effective, you must communicate the need for this change and deliver it to the satisfaction of the strategic leads and delivery teams. It was always complicated; now, the real challenge is to unpick the 'how to' of making it happen in clear, realistic steps. We can all benefit from growing as a change leader, working effectively within your organisation's structure, and defining your role to have the most impact within the change process.

#### **What nuggets will you be sharing in these workshops?**

These courses are for people who want to help their organisations move forward and be part of the 'solutions team' that navigates through the sea of change. They provide supportive, interactive sessions which look at who's driving change; why do we need it; what is a future vision; how the 'change curve' impacts us and who are our early adopters; how do we communicate a future vision so it is tangible for all and ultimately how to make change stick. You will acquire complementary skills that will benefit you and the company you work for.

They are happening on Thursday 12 May and divided into three parts, so you can choose to do all three or select the sessions most relevant to you;

10:00 am - 11:30 am

**How do we recognise the need for change and make it happen?**

1:00 pm - 2:30 pm

**How do we take people with us?**

3:30 pm - 5:00 pm

**How do we make it stick?**

**nesma can bring all workshops in-house to your teams, or you can check our website or socials for open courses. You can book your place directly on the website or contact Jon at [jon.davison@nesma.co.uk](mailto:jon.davison@nesma.co.uk). We do offer all nesma students and alumni a discount on these sessions.**

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Paul Fraser



- The Northern Echo's former Chief Football Writer Paul Fraser aims to raise the profiles of clients
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## TOT ZIENS...SPONSORED BY DFDS

West Denton Primary School (WDPS) recently embarked on an epic journey which saw them cycle a 14-mile route from their school in Newcastle, to the DFDS Ferry terminal in North Shields, before travelling via ferry to Amsterdam, to take part in an experimental and intercultural visit to the Netherlands capital.

**After meeting the ship's captain, being introduced to the crew, and even being treated to a selection of popular foods from Amsterdam, prepared by the ship's chefs, the staff and students from years 5 + 6 were given a wildlife talk by the on-board Orca expert.**

Robert Bately, Commercial Head onboard King Seaways said: "We were delighted to welcome West Denton Primary School onboard to experience life at sea before spending time in a school in The Netherlands. Once our customers step onboard their experience begins and it is a pleasure to contribute to the cultural experiences of the local school children."

West Denton Primary school's trip was part of the UK government's Turing scheme which aims to provide funding for post Brexit international opportunities in education.

Mick MingStones, Head Teacher at WDPS said: "We wanted to give WDPS students the opportunity to compare their own lifestyles with those of Dutch counterparts. The Dutch lifestyle is outdoor-focused and cycling is part of their daily routine. So, by showing our children how making healthy choices can impact positively on all aspects of a person's life, we hope to be able to encourage our students to make even more positive choices when they return to Newcastle."

The visit helped form friendships with Dutch students by cycling to, and around Amsterdam and learning together. The WDPS students gained an understanding of England being part of Europe and the world and they were able to compare similarities/differences in their respective lifestyles, including primary education and how we can promote healthy lifestyles for all.

Students learnt about possibilities for outdoor and creative activities, healthy snack and meal options, strategies to use in stressful/conflict situations and the importance of an active lifestyle, in order to enjoy life to the full and to contribute fully to UK and overseas communities now, and in the future.

Before the students went to Holland, the children gained knowledge about Dutch students' lifestyles

through the online meetings which focused on 'Meeting Each Other', 'Hobbies' and 'Food and Drink'. This gave them confidence to work with the Dutch students due to having minimised barriers prior to the trip. Post trip, they intend to strengthen these friendships.

By spending two days learning from each other in a Dutch school, sharing a meal with a Dutch family in their home, visiting the Tropenmuseum and travelling on a ferry, canal boat and tram plus walking and cycling around Amsterdam; there is no doubt that this has increased the students' cultural capital exponentially.

From a school that introduced the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) many years ago and then used this to develop their own bespoke curriculum, it's clear that now they are creating a culture for their students to live and think as global citizens as they strengthen their working relationships with the Dutch school.

Mick MingStones concluded: "As a Head Teacher, I am also in a position to provide advice to International Newcastle and to other schools on the logistics and do's and don'ts for making a Turing project (Including regular mobilities) a cornerstone of their wider curricular offer."

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





# FROM THE HEADTEACHERS STUDY

Northern Insight talks to...

## DAVID TICKNER

Newcastle School for Boys

### What was your background prior to joining Newcastle School for Boys?

I started teaching in 1993. Prior to that I had spent six years working in accountancy and financial services. Although this didn't particularly inspire me in my twenties, I didn't know then that I was acquiring financial knowledge and skills that would become very useful when I became a Headteacher.

My first teaching post was at Alleyn's School in Dulwich, south east London. I taught English and Games and threw myself into the wider life of the School. I coached cricket, football and hockey and joined the CCF, ski trips and more besides. I loved it and progressed to the role of Housemaster before moving to The Perse School in Cambridge as Head of Middle School in 2001. Back then, The Perse was a boys' school and my experience of the GCSE year groups and curriculum made me well suited to join Newcastle School for Boys in 2006, shortly after its formation.

### What have been your major achievements at the school?

Newcastle School for Boys has come a long way in a relatively short period of time. Formed only in 2005 out of the merger of two prep schools, the School has established itself on the region's independent school landscape as a provider of an excellent all-round education for boys aged three to 18.

The School opened its new sixth form centre in 2017. This has allowed us to provide a unique and broad sixth form curriculum in an excellent learning environment.

We were very proud when our inspectorate recognised the School's achievements awarding us the highest possible judgements of 'excellent' following an inspection in January earlier this year.

### What positive changes have you seen in education generally and what further changes would you like to see going forward?

Pastoral care has improved immeasurably, and we now have a much greater understanding of what works in teaching and learning as well as how to support children with additional needs. That said, there remains a great deal to do particularly following the Covid pandemic and the effects it has had on children's learning, personal and social development as well as their mental health. The pandemic has also brought about something of a technological revolution in education from which there is no going back. The challenge now is to harness and incorporate the use of technology to benefit children's learning and personal development.

### How much emphasis do you place on extra-curricular activities?

They are a very important part of our pupils' experience and character development at Newcastle School for Boys. There is an extensive programme at both our Senior and Junior Schools. We see these activities as co-curricular – something that goes with the curriculum – rather than as 'extra' and all boys are encouraged to take a full and active part in them. The limited scope to provide a full co-curricular programme during the Covid pandemic served to highlight just how important these activities are to young people's personal and social development as well as to their enjoyment of school and wellbeing.

### What major student achievements have happened in the past 12-18 months?

Our pupils have continued to show remarkable resilience and fortitude in the past 12 to 18 months as we have emerged from the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. A level, GCSE and other examinations were cancelled again last summer. Our pupils and staff worked very hard and adapted brilliantly to a new system of assessment – just as they had in the previous year – to ensure our pupils achieved the best possible qualifications arrived at fairly and rigorously.

Despite the pandemic – our pupils have continued to thrive in so many other areas as well. A number have achieved representative sports honours including recent leaver, Ollie Fletcher, being called up for the England Under 20 rugby team. Similarly, a number of our pupils have recently achieved high standards in their music grade exams including head boy, Josh Mitchell-Rayner who has also been awarded a place to study at the Royal College of Music next year.

### What has been your biggest challenge?

It has undoubtedly been the Covid pandemic and the constant adaptations schools have had to make over the past two years. I am very proud of how our whole community responded to a very demanding and ever-changing situation. Our staff worked incredibly hard during this period and we enjoyed a great deal of support from pupils' parents and families. It really has been quite remarkable.

### What can prospective parents expect from Newcastle School for Boys?

We certainly don't treat all of our boys as if they are all the same. They're not. There is a great deal of difference and diversity across our boys. Nevertheless, there are some general characteristics that apply to how boys access learning and their school experience that, as a single-sex boys' school, we tap into.

Current parents might also point to a supportive and caring small school environment that ensures each boy is well-known to his teachers both as a learner and as an individual.

### What have you got coming up in 2022 and beyond?

It's great to be emerging from the pandemic and its restrictions and re-establishing many of the activities and events that we enjoyed pre-Covid such as local and international trips, performances and fixtures.

We are pleased to be underway with a significant programme of investment in technology including the roll-out of a one-to-one device programme for pupils and staff. The aim is to harness the use of technology to enhance our pupils' experience of school to support their academic progress and character development.

### How do you relax away from the desk?

In recent years, I have developed something of a passion for cycling. The roads and tracks of Northumberland offer plenty of enjoyment, challenge and distraction. When not on the bike, I love reading, watching sport and walking our dogs on the beach at Tynemouth.

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



“

**...Newcastle School  
for Boys has come a  
long way in a relatively  
short period of time...**



## THE VALUE OF VALUES

By Kieran McLaughlin,  
Headteacher, Durham School

Central to the education we offer at the Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation are our values. They are prominent within our school environment, with many posters and reminders of their importance on the walls and corridors.

**Our rewards system is built around it, as is our appraisal system, and pupils know and understand what each of our values means and how they are expressed in our community. Perhaps most gratifying of all, parents, staff and other visitors to our school comment that our value system isn't some marketing slogan grafted in to the school but something which is absolutely and thoroughly embedded in all that we do.**

We encapsulate our values in the acronym MARK. We want DCSF to make its mark on our pupils and we want our pupils to make their mark not only whilst they are with us but long after they have left. MARK stands for Moral Integrity, Ambition, Responsibility and Kindness.

We arrived at this distillation after much discussion and reflection. We invited all of the members of our community – pupils, parents, staff and former pupils – about what it meant to be a Dunelmian. This involved meetings with working groups consisting of representatives of each of the stakeholders at the school, together with some targeted questionnaires across the wider community. We asked them to articulate what they felt was best about the school and what we were able to do to develop the young men and women who pass through our doors. The responses of course were very varied but we believed that the MARK mnemonic provided an organic but memorable way of crystallising our education.

The values themselves are very easy to understand in a school context but that doesn't mean we assume that they don't need to be made explicit. As mentioned above, pupils receive awards (known as lauds) for demonstrating behaviour which exhibits one or more of the



Kieran McLaughlin

values. So, looking after a younger pupil who may be upset, for example, would be one way in which pupils would be living our values and the system allows recognition for that.

Why have we spent so much time developing and interpreting this value system? Fundamentally it derives from the belief that education is a preparation for life in the broadest sense. Of course we want pupils to leave us with the best grades they can get (and indeed encourage them to be ambitious for their subjects and to be responsible in working hard to succeed) but if all they leave us with is a collection of numbers and letters then they will be ill-prepared for the challenges that life will throw at them in the world of work and broader society. And, regrettable though it may be to say, there are other influences on youngsters in today's online society which will highlight the importance of other values, such as wealth or fame, which are less beneficial to a fulfilling life.

It may sound pompous to say it, but without a core set of values which add meaning to life, it

becomes a rather empty existence. In a society which does rather emphasise the importance of short term gain, either in terms of material goods or power, over the longer term good then I believe it is important that as a school we have done our best to instil a sense of what is right and important. Many pupils will go on to positions of responsibility at many different levels and will be faced by situations which challenge them. I would hope that they have a sufficiently embedded set of values that they will have the moral integrity to make the correct difficult choice rather than the wrong easy one. For whilst in the moment it may be expedient to say or do anything to get out of a scrape, if we aren't true to what we know to be right then our lives, if not our bank balances, will be impoverished as a result.

**For further information about Durham School, or to arrange a visit, call 0191 731 9270, email [admissions@durhamschool.co.uk](mailto:admissions@durhamschool.co.uk) or visit [www.durhamschool.co.uk](http://www.durhamschool.co.uk)**



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# TWO KEY APPOINTMENTS SIGNAL NEW ERA FOR NORTH EAST ACADEMY TRUST



L-R: Lee Kirtley and Ian Kershaw, two top appointments by Kenton Schools Academy Trust

Kenton Schools Academy Trust (KSAT) which operates two secondary academies in the Newcastle area - Kenton School and Studio West - has announced the appointment of two highly experienced senior leaders.

**Ian Kershaw FRSA and Lee Kirtley will not only consolidate the trust's educational standing but ensure a sound platform for continuing success as the trust embarks on a new era of academic achievement, improvement and growth.**

Mr Kershaw has been appointed chief executive officer (CEO). He is a well-known and highly respected educationist and independent consultant with expertise in leading and supporting complex organisations and improving outcomes for young people.

With a lifetime spent in education, he has worked latterly as a consultant and from 2014-2017 as CEO of Northern Education Trust, where he presided over the growth of the trust to twenty

schools, making it one of the largest multi academy trusts in the north of England. He was also appointed by Birmingham City Council in 2014 as its independent chief adviser, leading the investigation into claims contained in the so-called 'Trojan Horse' letter.

He was appointed KSAT's CEO by the trust board upon the retirement of his predecessor.

Commenting on his role, Mr Kershaw, said: "I am proud to be working for a dynamic trust board comprising highly experienced educationists, business professionals and university leaders who bring a wide range of corporate experience to their roles. I am delighted to be able to draw upon this and share my own experience with colleagues as we seek to expand the number of academies under our supervision in the future and ensure that KSAT becomes a top performing trust."

One task already performed is to assist the trust board in the appointment of an executive principal, Lee Kirtley, who will oversee improvements across both academies operated by the trust with a particular focus on improving outcomes at Kenton School.

Mr Kirtley, who has worked in education for twenty years, took up his role at the end of February. Prior to this, he led Manor Community Academy in Hartlepool from

Requires Improvement to an Ofsted Good judgement. Here, as well as holding the role of principal since June 2018, he also worked as associate executive principal for two years as part of the Northern Education Trust's executive team leading the trust through the complexities of COVID-19 and supporting Dyke House Academy, also in Hartlepool.

Previously, he held senior leadership roles at academies operated by Outwood Grange Academy Trust and Rye Hills School.

Already making an impact on day-to-day operations, he said: "My vision for education is that students are at the centre of everything we do. Staff are supported to improve their practice to enable them to deliver a high-quality inclusive curriculum. This enables all students to achieve their full potential. Bringing my vision alive within both of our schools is my absolute priority."

Kenton Schools Academy Trust operates two academies – Kenton School and Studio West, an enterprise and innovation campus located in the west end of Newcastle at West Denton. Kenton School is one of the largest 11-19 academies in the North of England with 2010 places, while Studio West is smaller with around 600 students.

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

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"The school really listens to students. There are different interventions and amazing support and opportunities."

Hannah - Year 13

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## NEW RESEARCH BY NCFE AND CENSUSWIDE SHOWS THE DIGITAL SECTOR IS 'NOT A WELCOMING SPACE FOR WOMEN'

A new poll has revealed that nearly four in 10 (39%) women are discouraged from entering the digital sector because they do not feel it is a welcoming space for women.

The exclusive research, that NCFE carried out through Censuswide, found this issue was particularly acute among 16-24-year-olds specifically, with almost half (45%) feeling discouraged.

Drawn from the responses of more than 1,000

women aged 16-34, the findings highlight the structural and deeply gendered issues still facing women who would otherwise look to pursue a career in a rapidly expanding sector.

More than half of respondents (53.5%) believe their school or college did not provide them with the skills or understanding required to pursue a job in the sector, while nearly half of women (47%) would like to learn more digital skills or pursue a career in the digital industry, but do not know how to do so.

In January 2020, the UK Government noted that the digital sector was worth more than £400 million a day to UK economy – a figure which will likely increase in the coming years as more and more roles become digitised.

However, our findings confirm that there are still huge strides to be taken to make it a more accessible sector for women. More than a third of respondents (35%) believe the sector will always be dominated by men, while 44% (51% among 16-24 year olds) believe that a lack of female role models makes them less likely to pursue this as a career.

Commenting on the results, Brona Brilliant, Transformation Director for NCFE, said: "These sobering results reflect the deep-rooted issues women face when looking to access the digital sector. These are also issues which are only going to become more acute, as the sector continues to grow in size and influence.

"Not only does the current system hamper gender equality, but also signifies major issues on a larger economic level. The country cannot hope to be competitive on a world stage in the digital sector if more than half the workforce feels alienated from entering it in the first place.

"The best way to tackle this is to ensure women

have the access, skills and qualifications required to break into the sector. Making sure there are accessible courses for women of all ages will make a huge difference and begin to push through the cultural change which is desperately needed."

Kate Daniels, Portfolio Director at NTT DATA UK, said: "It's clear that overdue change is needed to make the tech sector more inclusive and welcoming to women. For too long, businesses have relied on the same narrow pool of candidates, missing out on the rich range of skills and perspectives that can only be provided by an equal and diverse workforce.

"At NTT DATA UK, we have implemented a variety of initiatives which seek to foster an inclusive working environment and make careers at NTT DATA UK both accessible and welcoming for all. We remain committed to supporting a diverse and inclusive workforce, and to promoting diverse and inclusive practices across the wider industry as a whole."

### Changes are happening

Despite this picture, according to NCFE's analysis of government data, the number of females starting ICT apprenticeships has doubled (from 16% to 31%) between 2016 and 2021, which is fantastic to see. NCFE is committed to creating quality routes into the sector – for all individuals from all backgrounds. The educational charity was selected by the Government to spearhead the development of the flagship digital T Level qualification, created in collaboration with employers. NCFE is also responding to learner demand and the high growth of the sector with new digital end-point assessments in Data Analysis and Data Technician.

[ncfe.org.uk](https://www.ncfe.org.uk)



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*Simone Niblock*

## DURHAM: A COUNTY LIKE NO OTHER

As I was reading *The Sunday Times* the other day, I came across a supplement about the best places to live in Britain. I won't even get on my high horse as to why *The Sunday Times* sees fit to put the North East and Yorkshire together as being one region- typical London-centric geographical blindness going on there!

Anyway, although it was lovely to see that Tynemouth and Morpeth were mentioned in dispatches, County Durham was not on the list, and not even the glorious city of Durham. As we all know, County Durham is down to the last four in the bid for the City of Culture for 2025, and no disrespect to the other contenders- Bradford, Wrexham, Southampton- there is no contest as to why County Durham should win the nomination, and here are a few reasons why:

**Durham Cathedral-** it and its surroundings were designated UNESCO World Heritage status in 1986 and you would be hard pushed to find a more beautiful or spiritually uplifting place of worship in the whole of the UK. There is the world-famous shrine to St Cuthbert, the resting place of the Venerable Bede, and the hauntingly beautiful Paula Rego painting of St Margaret, amongst many other objects of loveliness and reverence. Also, for the time being at least, it is 'free' to enter, unlike York Minster or Westminster Abbey.

**Durham University-** one of the best in the UK and has had many unusual and interesting Chancellors from the Arts. In 1981, Dame Margot Fonteyn, Prima Ballerina, became Chancellor in 1981, the first non-royal female Chancellor of a British University. She was then followed by the brilliant actor and raconteur, Sir Peter Ustinov, and then the jovial Bill Bryson was in post until 2011. The opera star Sir Thomas is the present incumbent.

**Alun Armstrong-** he of the granite features and acerbic tongue in *New Tricks*, Alun Armstrong was born in Annfield Plain, between the towns of Consett and Stanley. Armstrong is an Olivier-Award winner for the title role in *Sweeney Todd* and originated the role of Threnadier in the first London production of *Les Misérables*.

**Mark Gatiss-** the co-creator of the peerless *Sherlock*, amongst many other works of popular culture, was born in Sedgefield in 1966 and his contribution to the culture of the UK is enormous, including *The League of Gentlemen* and many episodes of the rebooted *Dr Who*.

**Norman Cornish-** born in Spennymoor, a town seven miles south of the city of Durham, Norman Cornish is nationally renowned as a painter who used his experiences as a miner to record life in the mining communities. He was a friend of LS Lowry and was still working as a miner until he was in his mid-40s.

**Bryan Ferry-** the creator of Roxy Music, is from Washington, which was historically part of County Durham when he was born in 1945. He is probably best known now for his crooning of songs such as *Dance Away* and *Slave to Love*, but he and the rest of his band were at the forefront of Glam Rock and it has been suggested by some critics that his early style and aesthetic could be considered to be as influential as that of David Bowie.

Finally, **Sting** says that we should win it. I know that he is not from County Durham- Wallsend was his birthplace- but if Gordon Sumner, erstwhile Police member, writer of the glorious *Moon Over Bourbon Street*, and the foxiest 70-year-old in the world, says that we deserve it, then who are we to argue?

**Every day is an Open Day at Durham High School. Call 0191 384 3226 or email [enquiries@dhsfg.org](mailto:enquiries@dhsfg.org). uk to find out more or arrange a visit.**

“

**...and the foxiest  
70-year-old in the  
world, says that  
we deserve it, then  
who are we to  
argue?...**





Geoffrey Stanford

## IT'S ALL ABOUT THE TEACHER

By Geoffrey Stanford, Headmaster

Most people can remember one or two teachers who particularly inspired and motivated them during their time at school. It may be they conveyed enthusiasm for their subject or perhaps they devoted time to support pupils, helping them believe in themselves and achieve success.

**At the recent funeral of a long-serving former member of RGS staff, it was impressive how many alumni attended and it really made one realise how, across the course of their career, this individual had positive impact on the lives of so many people. The challenge for any school is to recruit people like this.**

The spring term is very much the recruiting season for schools as they try to ensure that they have found all the teachers that they will need for September. This may be recruiting to replace

long standing staff who are retiring or (perhaps) filling gaps left by those who have secured a job elsewhere. In the independent sector, teachers typically have to give a term's notice which means that, as far as possible, appointments need to be made by Easter so, as in any year, we have been interviewing recently.

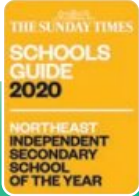
As in any industry, the recruitment process can be time consuming; creating the advertisement, reading applications, shortlisting and interviewing. However, recruiting is something I prioritise as this is what creates the future of the school's community and finding the right person for a post will determine the success of the next generation of pupils. I enjoy meeting candidates, hearing about what inspired them to teach and understanding how they interact with our young people to ensure learning takes place. I also want to understand the broader contribution they will make to the school's community. At the RGS, we expect teachers to do far more than just teach their subject. We make it very clear that they should contribute across the full range of academic, pastoral and co-curricular activity. A teacher has to radiate excitement for their subject and quality of teaching is always the starting point but great teachers also care about the wellbeing of pupils, act as role models and commit to engaging in the wider life of the school. Will they coach a sports team or direct a drama production? Perhaps they will help with the outdoors programme, take a service activity or lead a debating club? This is an opportunity for people to share their enthusiasm for activities that not only allow the teacher to see pupils

outside the classroom environment but also allow children to see the teacher in a different light.

The question I typically ask when making a final appointment decision after interviewing shortlisted candidates is: "Who is most likely to inspire and motivate our pupils?" Getting this right is perhaps the most important decision we will make for the benefit of our young people. Often the ability to inspire and motivate has little correlation with length of experience or even quality of degree. We regularly recruit a mix of Early Careers Teachers and those who have taught for quite a number of years.

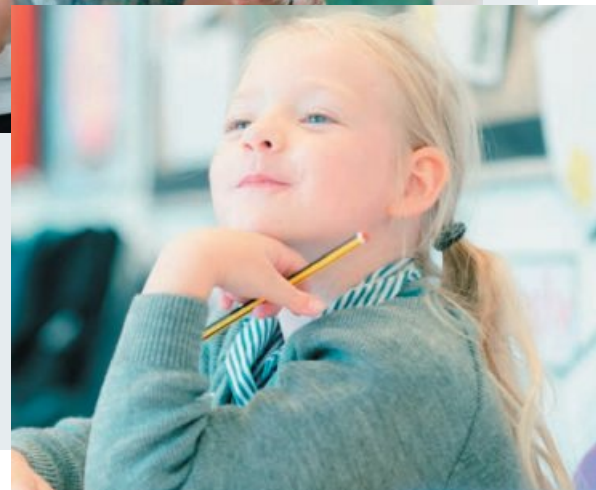
As each successive cohort of teachers arrives, it will be our responsibility to ensure that they are properly inducted and given the support and training they need to do their job well both in and outside the classroom. There is also real satisfaction when this support helps a teacher's career to develop and they receive a promotion, whether internally or through stepping up to a role in another school. To quote the first headmaster I worked for, "This demonstrates the strength of our common room." While finding the right person who will inspire and motivate can be challenging, we are lucky that there are some wonderful teachers already in the North East and we also find that many people who grew up in the region want to return. Each and every one of them has an important part to play in helping to raise aspirations and attainment across the region.

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



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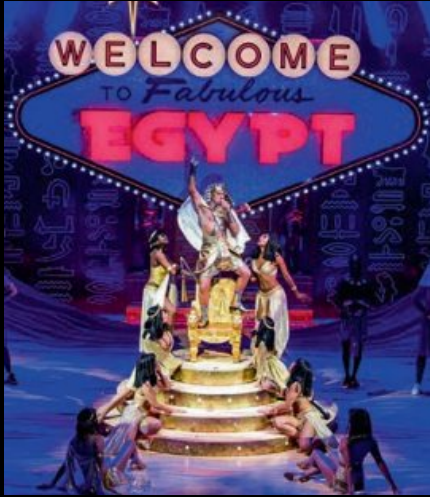
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## JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT RETURNS TO NEWCASTLE THEATRE ROYAL

Linzi Hateley, Jason Donovan and Jac Yarrow will be lighting up the stage when the sensational brand-new production of Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Joseph and The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* comes to Newcastle Theatre Royal for a much-anticipated two week run Tue 24 May – Sat 4 Jun 2022.

Having performed to packed out audiences at the London Palladium, Linzi Hateley stars as Narrator, with Jason Donovan reprising his role as Pharaoh, and Jac Yarrow once again donning the famous coat in the titular role.

Audiences and critics were unanimous in their acclaim for the legendary musical - the first major collaboration by Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber – when it returned to the London Palladium in 2019 and again in 2021.

Released as a concept album in 1969, the stage version of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* has become one of the world's most beloved family musicals. The multi-award-winning show, which began life as a small-scale school concert, has been performed hundreds of thousands of times including multiple runs in the West End and on Broadway, international number one tours, and productions in over 80 countries as far afield as Austria and Zimbabwe and from Israel to Peru! The show features songs that have gone on to become pop and musical theatre standards, including *Any Dream Will Do*, *Close Every Door To Me*, *Jacob and Sons*, *There's One More Angel In Heaven* and *Go Go Go Joseph*.

Tickets are priced from £20.00 and can be purchased at [www.theatreroyal.co.uk](http://www.theatreroyal.co.uk) or from the Theatre Royal Box Office on 0191 232 7010.



## BLOOD BROTHERS RETURNS TO SUNDERLAND EMPIRE

Bill Kenwright's legendary, award-winning production of the international smash hit musical, *Blood Brothers* returns to Sunderland Empire this September for a five day run.

Niki Evans, returns to the iconic role of Mrs Johnstone, after first joining the show in London's West End and received standing ovations for her powerful and poignant ballads, while Sean Jones returns as Mickey Johnstone, a role which he has previously made his own, to critical acclaim.

Written by award-winning playwright Willy

Russell, few musicals have been received with such acclaim as the multi-award-winning *Blood Brothers*. Considered 'one of the best musicals ever written' (Sunday Times), Bill Kenwright's production surpassed 10,000 performances in London's West End, one of only three musicals ever to achieve that milestone. It has been affectionately christened the 'Standing Ovation Musical', as inevitably it "brings the audience cheering to its feet and roaring its approval" (Daily Mail).

*Blood Brothers* will hit Sunderland Empire's stage from Tuesday 20 September - Saturday 24 September 2022. Tickets priced from just £13 are available from the Ticket Centre on 0844 871 7615 or online at [www.ATGtickets.com/sunderland](http://www.ATGtickets.com/sunderland)\*

## talkSPORT's ALAN BRAZIL AND RAY PARLOUR BRINGING LIVE STAGE SHOW TO NEWCASTLE

Alan Brazil and Ray Parlour are the most lethal strike force on British radio. Together on the talkSPORT breakfast show they've proven to be a hilarious double act.

They have just announced that they will be live at the Tyne Theatre and Opera House in Newcastle on Tuesday, 21st of June. Tickets are on sale now from [www.talkSPORT.com/events](http://www.talkSPORT.com/events).

Both presenters have lived life to the full, both in their playing days and subsequently on and after their talkSPORT radio show! The guys will be telling tales from the dressing room, from the studio, from their playing days, travels on international duty... and of course Cheltenham.

Alan Brazil was a UEFA Cup winner with Ipswich



Town under Sir Bobby Robson, played in the World Cup for Scotland under the late Jock Stein and also played for Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester United.

Ray Parlour, also known as the 'Romford Pele', holds the all-time appearance record for Arsenal in the Premier League and has played with – and against – some of the biggest characters in the game.

# Blagdon Gallery

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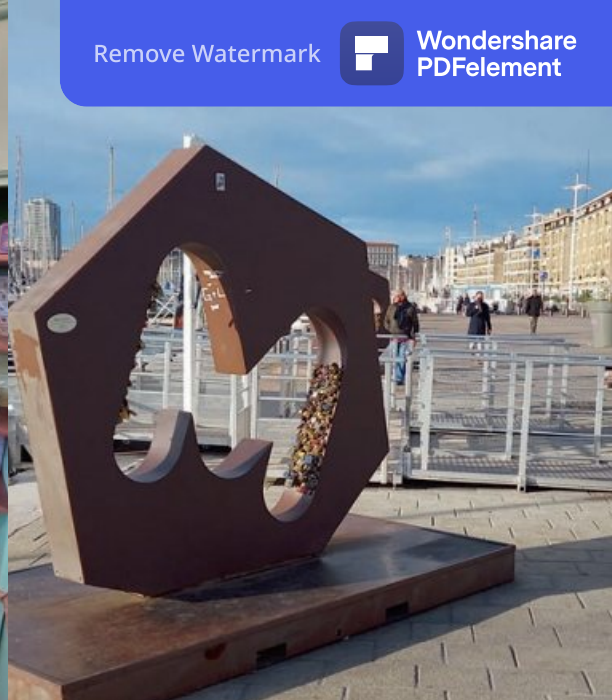
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# MARSEILLE THE MELTING POT OF FRANCE

By Caroline Preston

Marseille is France's oldest and second-largest city, founded by Greek seafarers in 600bc it's been a major trading point for over 2500 years. The city's past is important because it's this and its location that makes it the cultural melting pot it is today.

**We are here for the day and our exploration starts at 'le Vieux Port' (the Old Port), you'd never guess this immaculate harbour was once a major industrial fishing port. This was the place seafarers landed their catch, and it functioned like this from its discovery until around the 1840s. Unfortunately after this, the Old Port went into decline when larger deeper berths were constructed to accommodate larger ships.**

But it wasn't just the fishing industry that shaped the future of this city, its proximity to the major ports of North Africa, Italy and Spain meant that Marseille has always been a refuge for multiple waves of immigrants that have and continue to settle here.

To the present day, Marseille like any large city has its challenges. Increasing demand for affordable housing and lack of large-scale employment means sadly unemployment for its burgeoning population is high. Vast sums continue to be poured into regeneration schemes here but sadly the label that Marseille is a 'dangerous city' still lingers.

Does this mean Marseille is off the menu for visitors? I'll answer that with a resounding no, in fact, the opposite is true, this is a great city. It's always advisable when visiting any major city or unfamiliar place to stay alert and be a little street-savvy, and it's no different here, there will always be opportunistic crime and no-go areas no matter where you go.

So what can you expect when visiting this city? I'll start where I began, overlooking the now revamped and mainly pedestrianised Vieux Port. Friday is Fish Market day and people come from far and wide to buy straight off the boat. It's amazing to see the fish being prepared for customers, the chatter and the hectic atmosphere, it's worth a look.

If early starts aren't your thing, then why not just wander in the pleasant surroundings, perhaps take a look at the fabulous installation L'Ombrière de Norman Foster, Foster is an award-winning British architect known for his modern designs of steel and glass. L'Ombrière is a giant polished steel canopy reflecting the visitors walking underneath, very Instagramable.

Heading uphill behind the Port we enter the Le Panier district, 'panier' in French means 'basket' and this place is a small basket in the middle of the city. It's one of the few historically old districts of Marseille left standing after WWII. Having once been known as 'a little grubby' area Le Panier was given a new lease of life in the 00s, following its selection for European Capital of Culture in 2013.

Here, every street corner is a museum, walls are adorned with extraordinary street art and its narrow alleyways with pretty buildings, small shops and cafés connect to larger spaces that double as extended terraces for cafés in warmer months. Take your time and admire, visit the 'Vieille Charité' (Old Charity) building, a historical workhouse now utilised for arts and cultural activities.

Having now ventured back towards the Old Port we reach Marseille's enormous Cathedral, Cathédrale La Major. A national monument of France, its dimensions are similar to the St. Peter's Basilica of Rome, and it took over 40 years to build.

This city and the wider region of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur offers so much to the visitor making city breaks, and longer holidays all very possible and of course this is France, the home of gastronomy...Marseille is no different, it's stuffed with eating possibilities, and thanks to historical immigration the food choices here go off the Richter scale.

Africa, Italy, Greece, Spain, Corsica and more are all represented here, take your pick from the markets offering fresh produce, fish and spice or head out for fine dining, harbourside eats or sample a taste of Africa, Ghanaian, Moroccan, Tunisian the list goes on.

Marseille is a fascinating multi-cultural melting pot, something that's replicated in its famous dish 'Bouillabaisse', a rich fish stew with perfectly balanced exotic flavours. It's so famous there's even a national day for it! A good Bouillabaisse takes a long time to perfect, each unique ingredient blending with the other to create something really special, that's Marseille in a nutshell...get it on your 'to-go' list.

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



## Travel notes:

*Caroline travelled to Marseille in January 2022 travelling by cruise ship Grandiosa by MSC Cruises as part of a 7-night Mediterranean adventure.*





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## TIERS FOR FEARS

By Jack Grahamslaw

One thing glaringly apparent from last month's business lunch review at Marco Pierre White Newcastle was the number of three tiered cake stands. The restaurant is clearly a hotspot for afternoon tea, transporting the genteel English custom from the pastoral to the cosmopolitan glamour of downtown Newcastle.

**This hasn't gone unnoticed by my girlfriend Rosie who has been nagging me for a while to join her. Unfortunately, this landed on the same Sunday as a certain Man City/Liverpool potential title decider although this was far too good of an opportunity to pass up, so we donned our Sunday best and booked in for all Hotel Indigo had to offer.**

Much like our last visit, the dining area had a palpable buzz and we were greeted warmly and shown to our cosy corner snug. Hot drinks have

been specially selected with tea pigs tea and Musetti coffee - two ever presents in the gourmet Christmas hamper - used very well here. It would be tea for two and a glass of fizz which is available for £35.00 for two with the standard offering available for £29.95, not to mention a headline champagne afternoon tea with two glasses of Laurent Perrier for £44.50.

Soon after our stand arrived - three storeys of sweet and savoury goodies. Sandwiches were served on both white and granary loaf with unsalted butter. Severn and wye smoked salmon was crossed with a light cream cheese whilst sliced Wiltshire ham came spiked with Colman's mustard. Co-starring was traditional roast beef with a devilish horseradish whilst Rosie enjoyed the vegetarian sliced cucumber with mayonnaise. On the next floor up, came scones, fresh and doughy and dusted in sugar. These were perfect for slathering in cream on jam and indeed jam upon cream.

Top of the tree was a rainbow of crowd-pleasing sweet treats which we shared between us. Pick of the plate was a chocolate & caramel mirror slice whilst we also enjoyed a grand slab of carrot cake, a zingy lemon cheesecake and a selection of house macaroons.

Much thought has clearly gone into afternoon tea at Marco Pierre Newcastle - another branch of a highly polished food and drink offering.

**For more information, visit [www.mpwrestaurants.co.uk/our-brands/steakhouse-bar-and-grill/newcastle/afternoon-tea](http://www.mpwrestaurants.co.uk/our-brands/steakhouse-bar-and-grill/newcastle/afternoon-tea)**





NORTHERN

# INSIGHT

2022

# Wedding Venue

## GUIDE

Northern Insight picks out the best of the region's wedding venues from slick cityscapes to sweeping coastlines and stately country piles. These are each magical places, each offering something different, where the course of true love really does run smooth.



# Newcastle

## *The County Hotel*

This railway facing hotel has had a real facelift in recent times and offers affordably glamorous weddings in the heart of the city. The County Hotel is one of Newcastle's original hotels dating back to 1874 and combines incomparable Victorian grandeur with contemporary elegance and luxury. All aboard!

## *The Vermont*

Another of the city's landmark hotels from the same collection. The hotel flaunts the same timeless elegance, not to mention jaw-dropping panoramic views of the Quayside. An established venue for over 20 years, the stunning ballroom was once The County of Northumberland Council Chambers while the much-vaunted Sky Lounge & Garden with its 360 viewpoint, affords the most stunning views of the city. Where else can one get married with the Tyne Bridge standing triumphantly in the distance?

## *Jesmond Dene House Hotel*

Why not tie the knot in leafy Jesmond Dene? Formerly the residence of Lord Armstrong, grade II listed Jesmond Dene House is an independently-owned boutique hotel with 40 individually-decorated bedrooms surrounded by a woodland valley dotted with waterfalls and rustic bridges. The hotel lets its guest's tear up the rule book: Dine from a lavish banquet with two AA rosette food, feast on Afternoon Tea with plenty of fizz or skip the formalities and party the night away with a bespoke buffet. Eat, drink and be married!

## *The Mansion House*

A totally unique place to get married in the splendour of Newcastle City Council's chambers. The Mansion House has been welcoming travellers to Newcastle for over 150 years with five beautifully-appointed guest suites and striking Summer gardens. Some of the most collectable trees are on show to provide you with the perfect mansion house setting for photographs to last a lifetime.



The County Hotel

## *The Royal Station Hotel*

Brought to you by the Cairn Collection, the Royal Station provides the perfect backdrop with its grand, sweeping staircases and spectacular chandeliers lending a real touch of glass. The hotel's sumptuous Collingwood and Victoria Suite offer real period glamour for those looking to get married in more traditional surroundings.



The Vermont



The Vermont



Jesmond Dene House Hotel





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# Newcastle

## *The Crowne Plaza*

A relatively new addition to the city, the Crowne Plaza sits in Newcastle's burgeoning Stephenson Quarter – a trendy hotbed of creativity and innovation. The hotel is inkeeping with this, a real state-of-the-art affair with 251 bedrooms, modern British brasserie, rejuvenating mineral house spa, not to mention a host of city wedding packages.

## *The Biscuit Factory*

The UK's largest commercial art, craft & design gallery also forms a stunning backdrop for a celebration with a difference. Industrial architecture and original features are complemented by contemporary art in this sprawling urban venue that can be yours for your special day.

## *The Grand Hotel, Tynemouth*

A venue steeped in 19th century history, the Grand has played host to innumerable colourful characters from the worlds of stage, cinema, politics and sport, surviving two world wars and numerous changes of ownership. Today, set on the North East's dramatic coastline, it's the ideal place to say "I do" with a view!

## *Holiday Inn Seaton Burn*

The hotel boasts easy transport links and a contemporary setting with stylish, versatile spaces able to accommodate between 40 and 300 guests making it a must for larger scale ceremonies. When the drinking and dancing demands a break, the Holiday Inn features 151 bedrooms and a dedicated spa perfect for a pre or post big-day pamper.



Setting the scene...



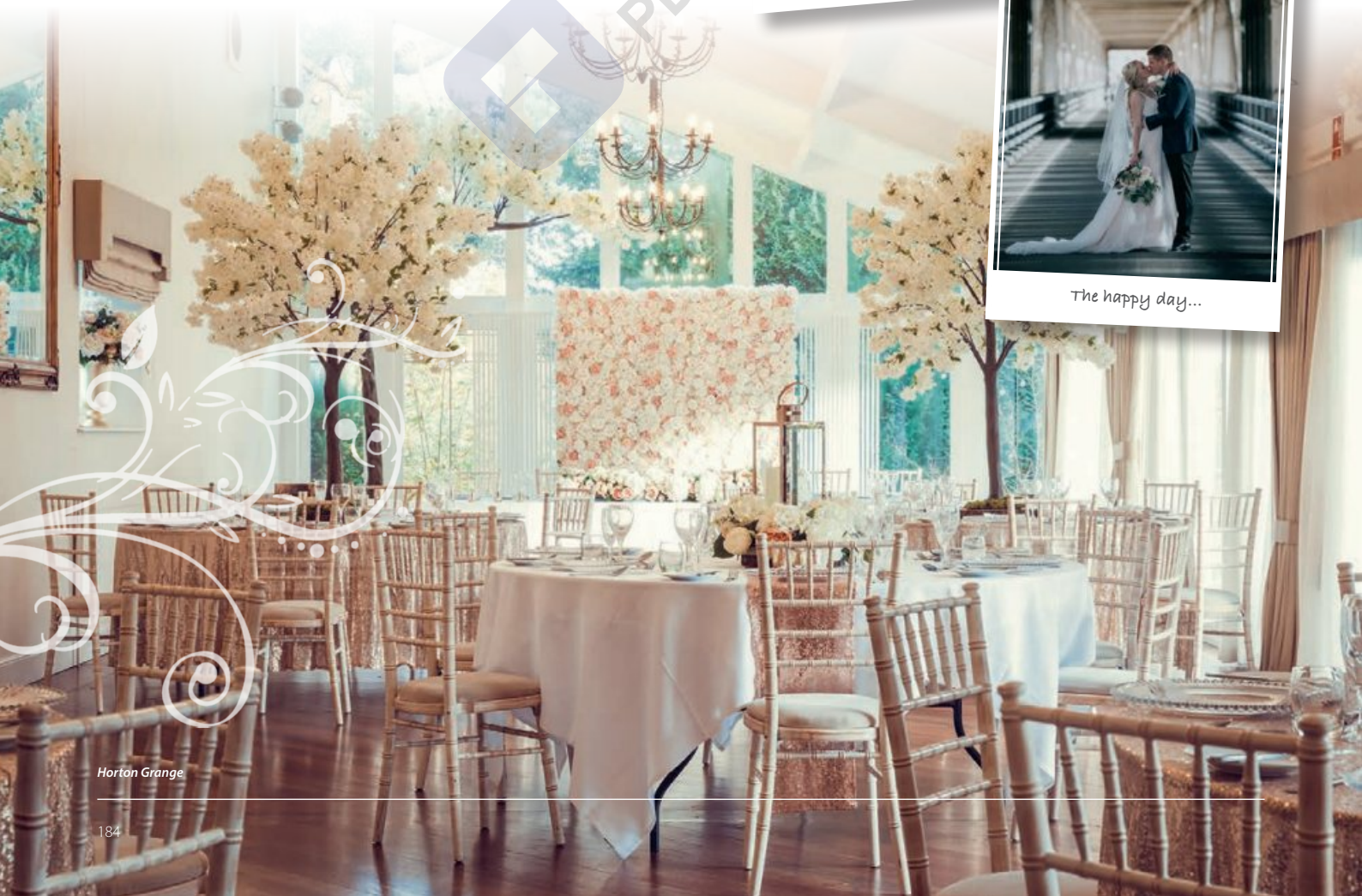
The Grand Hotel, Tynemouth



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We can also create a tailor made wedding breakfast thanks to our expert catering team, who can provide everything from a lavish banquet to an evening buffet with any extra special twist.

We source locally whenever possible so you can be assured whatever you choose will be created with the freshest of ingredients – and lots of love. Our online wedding hub is a fast and easy-to-use way of looking at the options available and building your own special day – then one of our expert wedding team will be in touch.

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# Wearside

## County Durham and Teeside

### *South Causey Inn*

The luxury hotel boasts British cuisine, deluxe accommodation and premium eventing all in the heart of the Beamish Valley combining the country feel of a family pub with themed suites and luxury hot tubs. This winning mix makes it a firm favourite for weddings of all shapes and sizes. Especially worth noting is The Hotspot, a quirky cocktail bar set aboard an original 1960s fire engine.

### *Black Horse Beamish*

Perched high looking across the Beamish conservation valley lies Red Row Estate - a glorious 37 acre sprawl with lavender field and woodland, riddled with wildlife and farmyard antiques, and home to the Black Horse Beamish restaurant, The Orchard Marquee, Old Red Row Rooms, Red Row Retreat, and Huckleberry Cottage. A wedding at Black Horse Beamish can be a classical fairy-tale or story of rock 'n' roll indulgence (or sometimes, a little bit of both).

### *Ramside Hall*

One of County Durham's most sought after wedding venues with a huge range of function suites available to cater for ceremonies and receptions of all sizes. Uniquely, the hotel now offers bijoux 'Treehouse Weddings' for something a little different, not to mention two championship golf courses and an award-winning spa for pre or post nuptials.

### *Wynyard Hall*

An estate forged by history, the gardens at Wynyard Hall date back to 1623 and have endured many different stages in their development and restoration since. 120-acres of privately owned working estate and exclusive wedding venue offering plot to plate dining experiences, restful breaks and botanical escapes. Check out their 12th century chapel also.



Stunning!

### *Crathorne Hall*

Another country house idyll. Crathorne Hall sits on the edge of the North Yorkshire moors with captivating views across the Leven Valley. Step inside this inspiring venue where every ornate detail, period feature and soft glow from a decadent chandelier exude romance. A guaranteed house party like no other.



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Black Horse, Beamish





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# Wearside

## County Durham and Teeside

### *Beamish Hall*

Beamish Hall understands the magic of the big day offering elegant function suites and enchanted woodland ceremonies. The hotel's showstopping Shafto Hall is complemented by oak panelling, stained glass windows and minstrels' gallery. Perfectly suited for a classical or vintage look with endless décor and lighting possibilities.

### *Holiday Inn Washington*

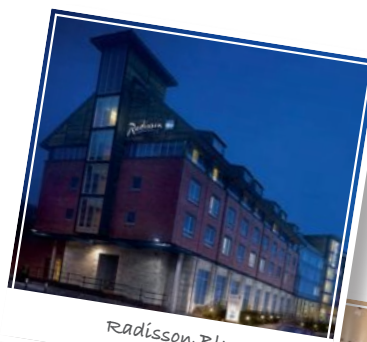
Convenient road links make this hotel easy to find which makes it a stellar choice for those with guests travelling from far and wide. The attractive grounds make it a pleasant backdrop for photographs whilst there is plentiful free parking and preferential room rates for those travelling from further afield.

### *Roker Hotel*

One of the most longstanding and most loved hotels in Sunderland. Its traditional seaside façade belies a contemporary interior which has had a real update in recent times. Dance the night away in the Six Soldiers Suite – the Roker's traditional grand ballroom - before collapsing into bed in the sea-facing honeymoon suite, free of charge to newlyweds!

### *Radisson Blu Durham*

Durham's riverside makes for an enviable wedding location at this top quality big-chain hotel. A bright and airy aspect and lots of natural light make this a firm favourite for Summer ceremonies. The Radisson combines city centre coordinates with the best of a destination retreat with a dedicated serenity spa and modern British dining on site.



Radisson Blu



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Ellingham Hall Chapel



Perfect Day!



Holiday Inn Washington



Holiday Inn Washington





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# Northumberland and Tyne Valley

## Linden Hall

This 450 acre country pile was originally built by merchant banker Charles William Bigge in 1812 and has become one of the best weddings venue in the region in intervening years. With picture perfect grounds, 18 hole golf course and fully-equipped spa, we can see why. Linden's dedicated team of weddings coordinators also guide you through every step from first visit to first dance.

## Langley Castle

Want your wedding to pack that extra "WOW!" factor? Well Langley Castle has this in spades, a converted 14th century castle offering showstopping weddings amidst its seven foot thick stone walls and historic turrets. Its medieval grandeur opens up limitless options from woodland and traditional white weddings to Tipi and Game of Thrones themed ceremonies.

## Horton Grange

This privately owned, country house venue can be exclusively yours for the day offering the USP of complete privacy. No members of the public, no golfers, no interlopers, just you and your family & friends on your perfect day in rural Ponteland.

## Ellingham Hall

Ellingham specialises in unique two-night weddings with exclusive hire of the estate and its 29 bedrooms, sleeping 56 guests. Arriving the night before, couples can kick back with a glass of fizz, open up the board games in front of the fire or sit and be pampered. Wake up the morning of your wedding surrounded by family and friends and tie the knot with real aplomb.

## Doxford

This award-winning barn wedding venue is nestled within a 550 acre private country estate, along the Northumberland Coast near Alnwick. Guests can enjoy a mix of one day to three day ceremonies before unwinding in its cosy cottage accommodation. The venue's Threshing Hall is unquestionably the jewel in the crown, a lovingly restored stone & oak barn with hand-carved walls, exposed balcony and a flagstone floor.

## Le Petit Château

Le Petit Château is a 30 bed boutique hotel and truly unique wedding venue. Located in Otterburn, Northumberland, North East UK, this luxury French, country manor is a great example of shabby chic, blended with elegance, nature and beauty, wrapped up in a historical story.

## Derwent Manor

Following a multi-million pound investment, the Derwent Manor is one of the area's best boutique hotels set in the rolling hillsides of the Derwent Valley. Say "I do" under the spectacular chandelier of the Great Hall before resting those dancing feet at the end of the night in one of the hotel's 54 bedrooms, five luxury suites and six boutique cottages.

## Bamburgh Castle

A truly extraordinary venue, Bamburgh Castle has welcomed courting couples for centuries to its fairytale setting with sweeping sea views and stately grandeur. Today, the venue is a sage choice for intimate micro-ceremonies to large-scale celebrations. Make an entrance in the castle's centrepiece King's Hall before exchanging vows in the light-crowned King's Hall or descend the staircase into the 12th century keep.



Ellingham Hall



Langley Castle




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## NEWCASTLE RESTAURANT RAISES OVER £30,000 FOR UKRAINE WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM ITS FRIENDS



**A dinner and raffle organised by a Newcastle restaurant has now reached its target of raising more than £30,000 for UNICEF's Ukraine appeal, thanks to a little help from its friends.**

The five-course £75 a head gourmet dinner sold out within hours so the restaurant staff turned their attention to organising a large scale raffle with prizes including meals for four guests at all the Hooked-on Group restaurants - Blackfriars, Dobson & Parnell and Hinnies, as well as vouchers for other restaurants, food tours, theatre tickets, hotel stays, limited edition bottles of Hepple Gin, and vintage Moët & Chandon Champagne with every penny going directly towards Ukraine's humanitarian crisis.

However, it wasn't until the restaurant owners' friends in the north east leisure and tourism sector came together and donated funds raised from the North East of England Tourism Awards

raffle that the appeal finally made its target.

Andy Hook, managing director of Blackfriars Restaurant said: "I'm absolutely delighted with how much we've managed to raise. It's absolutely heart-breaking to see the people of Ukraine suffer so unnecessarily in this way. We were desperate to do something to help and thought the #CookforUkraine was the right initiative - raising some much-needed funds to help those in the crisis. We're so grateful to our staff who gave up their time for free, our suppliers for the food and drink generously donated as well as all the local companies who provided so many amazing prizes. And every penny will go to the UNICEF appeal."

If you would like to donate to the appeal you can go on to Blackfriars' Just Giving page [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/blackfriars-restaurant](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/blackfriars-restaurant)



## NORTH EAST VENUE GETS NEW LOOK – AND A NEW NAME!

**One of the North East's largest event spaces has got a new look following a £250,000 revamp, along with a brand new name.**

The former Lancastrian Suite at Dunston, Gateshead has been renamed The Fed, a nod to the Federation Brewery which was previously based at the site.

And the large venue – which can take up to 1000 people for a standing event and up to 700 for a sit down dinner and dance – is already attracting a wide range of bookings, along with running its own programme of events.

The Fed was purchased last year by Ramside Estates, which also owns Ramside Hall Hotel, Golf and Spa, Hardwick Hall Hotel, Bowburn Hall Hotel and The award-winning Impeccable



Pig at Sedgefield, with the company investing heavily in upgrading the site.

A state-of-the-art sound and light system, video walls and new floor have all been installed, with the venue having also been redecorated throughout.

## WYNYARD HALL APPOINTS NEW EXECUTIVE HEAD CHEF

**Wynyard Hall is delighted to announce the appointment of Gareth Rayner as the new Executive Head Chef.**

Gareth Rayner is a graduate of Kirby College, Middlesbrough where his culinary career began and now spans twenty-two years of experience. Rayner received his unique experience from working at local pubs in his hometown then at Middleton Lodge where he oversaw their food of the multiple outlets there. He will now lead the Wynyard team to create seasonal, modern British menus, with a plot to plate twist.

As an exceptional professional in the industry, at Middleton Lodge, he was recommended for four rosettes and oversaw the opening of two successful restaurants which he claims are some of his most poignant achievements in his career thus far.

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## SPRING IS IN THE AIR AT LASUN

Review by Jackie Marston

First day of the light nights and I decided to go with a place that, well, just sounded sunny! LaSun in Westoe Village, near South Shields fit the bill perfectly. Delicious Indian food, cosy restaurant was promised by my friend who recommended it, but as I'd never been before, I didn't know what to expect.



**The first thing you notice is that it is indeed quite small, probably only about 30 covers at any one time. A really warm welcome greeted me though, by the front-of-house manager, and although it was supposed to be spring, it was cold outside, so I was really relieved it was indeed nice and cosy inside.**

I noticed the waiter welcomed most of the guests by their first names, which is always a good sign, as it means that they are clearly regulars. The menu is quite big and there were lots to choose from, but the Tandoori Spring Lamb Chops shouted out to me, keeping it on the spring theme.

When these came, boy were they big. Really crispy on the outside, beautiful red in colour and soft and tender in

the middle. The meat was deliciously tender and seasoned perfectly. They were served with mint raita and a fresh salad. I don't say this often, but probably the best Tandoori Lamb Chops I've ever had.

For main course I chose King Prawn Makhani, as I am a bit of a big girl's blouse with anything spicy. I went with a Peshwari Naan to accompany it, however if I'm honest, I was actually quite full from the starter. When it came, again, the prawns were really big and there were plenty of them. This is a lovely mild, yet flavoursome curry which tasted delicious and certainly didn't disappoint. The naan bread was crunchy, well done, as that is how I'd requested it and stacked full of fruity/nutty bits.

I only actually managed a very small amount of this, but they were more than happy to let me take the rest home. As I am definitely a curry for brekkie type of girl, I knew that it wouldn't last the morning!

LaSun is a winner on every front, from the friendly welcome, the décor, the staff through to the food. It's a little gem and I'll definitely return in the future.

Brekkie was awesome the next day, by the way! Curry is always better the next day, in my opinion!

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\*\*Products which contain alcohol are strictly for sale to 18 and over, we operate a challenge 25 policy. Please drink responsibly.





L-R: Racheal Straughan and Michelle Jones

## THE FUTURE IS KIND!

I am delighted to announce that Kind Currency will be working in partnership with Mayfli. In April thousands of small businesses went on strike against high profile e-commerce company. Why? Because this marketplace puts profit before people. It ruins businesses and destroys people.

**I have listened to the horror stories experienced by many small businesses trying to survive in a world of profiteering e-commerce companies.**

When I heard about a new start up Mayfli, an ethical ecommerce company, putting people and their small businesses at the heart of their marketplace I had to find out more.

I could not wait to meet with Mayfli Founder Racheal Straughan, who is just so lovely and kind.

Mayfli like Kind Currency has been created from darkness, created to make a change and lead with kindness. Racheal and her life and business partner Mark are on a mission to create the first person-centred marketplace; an ecommerce company that helps small businesses, providing them with a safe place to sell. They want to nurture the businesses and the people within the business, they will be providing so much more than an online selling facility, they will be an abundance of opportunity to benefit small businesses and the people within them.

Mayfli is a safe and nurturing marketplace, putting people before profit.

Racheal and Mark's story is quite something, they have suffered at the hands of leading ecommerce marketplaces but although it has been challenging, it has provided them with the experience, knowledge, and expertise to challenge the market, to shift the dial for small businesses and deliver positive change.

I connected with Racheal instantly. I got her mission, her anger and frustrations and her need to create a change. Racheal's personal and business ethos aligns with my own. The essence of Mayfli aligns with Kind Currency.

Small businesses matter, behind them are real people with lives to live, bills to pay and food to put on the table.

Mayfli is the only ecommerce company Kind Currency will support and celebrate because it is the only KIND marketplace. Mayfli is a transparent, low cost and supportive all in one ecommerce solution giving you both a shop on the marketplace and your very own website, all controlled with a single seller dashboard. Giving you control of your online shop and business, no hidden agenda, and no hidden costs, only heaps of care. It is really the only marketplace to be, to protect you and your business.

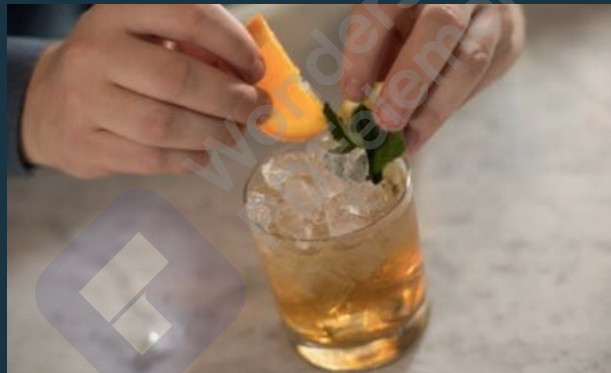
Ethical businesses that join Mayfli will be introduced to Kind Currency. At Kind Currency we celebrate kind businesses, letting everyone know you are KIND and connecting your business directly with those ready to shop kind for free.

The uniting of Mayfli and Kind Currency is a step further in the fight against poverty and the climate crisis, protecting people and planet. The future is kind! Does your business wish to be part of it?

**Michelle Jones, Founder of Kind Currency,**  
[www.kindcurrency.co.uk](http://www.kindcurrency.co.uk)  
[hello@kindcurrency.co.uk](mailto:hello@kindcurrency.co.uk)  
 07751 564 684



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## RIVER OF DREAMS

By Michael Grahamslaw

Now firmly into the warmer weather, the Radisson Blu Durham offers the perfect place for a Summer staycation as discovered by my wife Lisa and I on a recent visit.

**Set by the riverside, the hotel is in close vicinity to the highlights of the Cathedral City and is the perfect basecamp from which to set out and explore its maze of hilly, cobbled streets on foot.**

Impressively, the hotel also combines its enviable city centre location with the best features of a destination retreat with a salubrious in-house spa and fitness centre, not to mention a modern British brasserie on site.

With seemingly so much to do, we set off early for what would be a mini-break which would live long in the memory.

The hotel boasts a lovely, capacious, open-plan reception area with vast floor to ceiling windows affording much natural light on a gorgeous springtime day. We were checked in cheerily and with our rooms not ready until 3pm, ditched the bags and sampled all Durham has to offer.

Few hotels boast so many UNESCO world heritage sites on the doorstep so we enjoyed the best of the cathedral and castle palace green area with its manicured, sun-dappled lawns and rich cultural history. A pit stop for a coffee and a mooch round the city's many interesting bookshops was also a must in this quintessentially British University city.

Returning to the hotel, we were equally impressed by the high quality of our guest suite. The hotel comprises 207 bedrooms in total which offer trademark Radisson contemporary design and mod cons. All are equipped with Flat Screen TVs, plush armchairs and high-end toiletries whilst the best (and priciest) feature panoramic river views and Nespresso coffee machines.

With a few miles in our legs, we decided to unwind for the afternoon in the hotel's dedicated 'Nu Spa'. This advertises itself as a "glorious sanctuary that soothes the soul from the moment you walk through the door". Fortunately, this proved not to be hyperbole as a tranquil space bathed in neutral tones complete with swimming pool, jacuzzi, sauna, steam room and gymnasium. More conscientious guests had even booked in for a range of spa treatments with a number of

spa days/deals available.

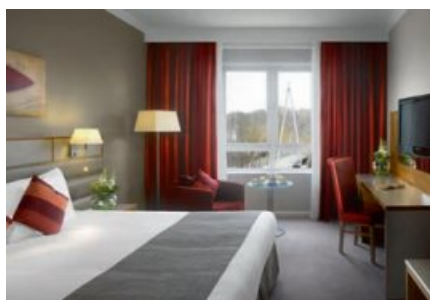
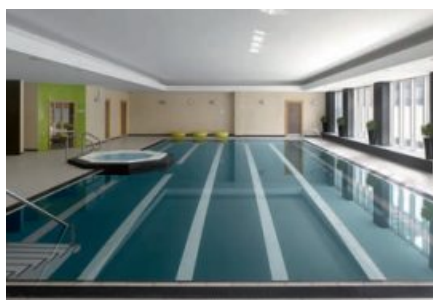
All of this lounging by the pool worked up an appetite so we had a quick change for dinner before venturing down to Collage – the Radisson's modern British eatery. This combines British classics featuring modern inflections with a mouth-watering grill menu where the diner is free to mix steaks, sides and sauce however they fancy.

Lisa kicked off with mushroom arancini before following up with beef shin whilst I opted for chicken wings and rib eye steak. Both expertly presented and cooked masterfully. Much thought has also gone into a well-curated drinks menu which matches the menu's seasonal produce. Suffice to say, a sagely-recommended bottle of malbec set the red meat off exquisitely.

My Great North Run preparations resumed the following morning with a bracing jog along the river whilst Lisa had trouble peeling herself away from the cosy clutches of our room's kingsize bed. We did however reunite for a customary hearty breakfast which featured a winning mix of cooked and continental fayre.

We headed home relaxed, recharged and re-energised. Or as you might say, re-radissoned!

**For more information, visit [radissonhotels.com/en-us/hotels/radisson-blu-durham](https://www.radissonhotels.com/en-us/hotels/radisson-blu-durham)**





# JESMOND DENE HOUSE

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Jesmond Dene House is a 40 bedroom boutique hotel with a relaxed air about it and ample free parking. Take time out from busy city life and feel a million miles away as you do business with us.

We have three meeting rooms which can take up to 12/20/30 people, one of which boasts a private terrace overlooking the beautiful, tranquil Jesmond Dene. For larger meetings, presentations and exhibitions, the Great Hall can seat up to 100 people and has its own private bar.

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## YOLO TOWNHOUSE BUBBLES & BITES

Over the past few years, restaurants across Newcastle have witnessed the rise of the 'bottomless brunch'. A trend so popular it has diners booking out dates in their diary weeks in advance, to rustle up their gang and get in on the action.

**And this trend is no exception for YOLO Townhouse, the lively hangout in the heart of High Bridge.**

Spread over three floors on one of Newcastle's most historic streets, this trendy bar offers a ton of quirky character and an equally elegant interior – making it the perfect spot for a free-flowing Prosecco and small plate offer.

Normally known for their main menu of gastro-

pub delights, it seemed only fitting that YOLO would tailor their 'Bottomless Bubbles & Bites' option to include their best selling, and versatile small plate dishes. Perfect for a late brunch or early evening feast before heading out for a night on the town.

Diners can enjoy 90 minutes of bottomless delights, picking their way through succulent Panko breaded King Prawns and Thai Sticky Coated Chicken to name a few of the options.

Wash this all down with a bottle or two of Prosecco, and you're really onto a winning combination.

And if their selection of small plates wasn't enough to whet your appetite, YOLO Townhouse also include their generously portioned Loaded Fries as part of the deal too. Meaning you can duck and dive into their Crispy Duck Loaded Fries as one of your small plate options.

Bottomless Bubbles and Bites is priced at £25 per person, with a maximum group size of up to 6 diners. The venue is able to accommodate groups across its many floors, including the open-topped roof terrace – a hidden gem perfect for warmer Spring days in the sun.

**Bookings are available Sunday through to Thursday from 12noon to 7pm, and during the day on Friday and Saturday from 12noon to 5pm. To find out more information and book your own table, please visit: [www.yolotownhouse.com](http://www.yolotownhouse.com)**





# RELAX & UNWIND

## AT ST MARY'S INN



ST MARY'S  
INN



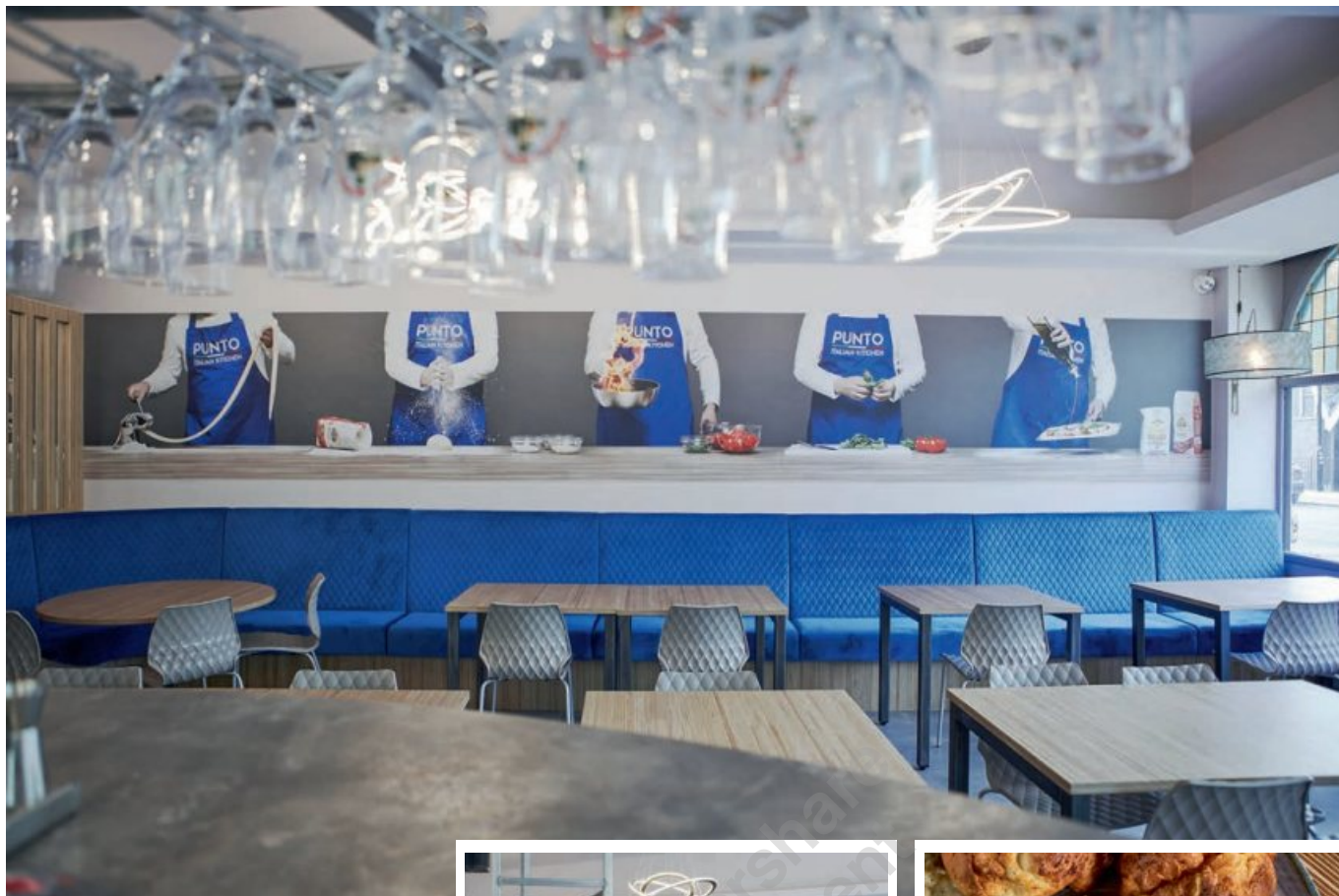
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## SUPER SUNDAY

By Jack Grahamslaw

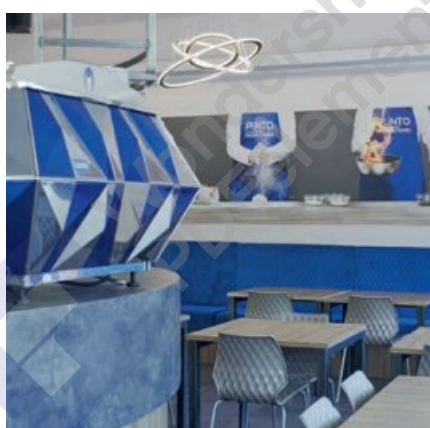
I have certainly had one eye on the progress of Punto. The Italian restaurant at the end of my street has made big strides since opening in the latter part of 2021, trading the waxy Chianti bottles of yesteryear for a fresh, modern approach to Italian cuisine.

**Punto, situated on suburban Heaton Road, offers sourdough pizzas stonebaked in a wood-fired oven and pasta freshly made on the daily by a devoted team of pastai.**

From morning til moon, the restaurant operates as the best of a neighbourhood haunt, serving everything from bracing espressos and pastries on the pavement café to light lunches at the bar and evening feasts.

In recent times, it has reached higher renown, voted the #1 Italian restaurant for pizza in Newcastle on Trip Advisor whilst its bright and airy interior – flooded with natural light- has noticeably been really coming into its own during the warmer weather.

Zeno, the restaurant's operations director has even shared his expertise on these pages dispelling common Italian cooking misconceptions whilst



offering home recipes and preparation tips.

Suffice to say then, I have been plotting a return since sampling its seasonal winter menu over six months ago and leaving hugely impressed.

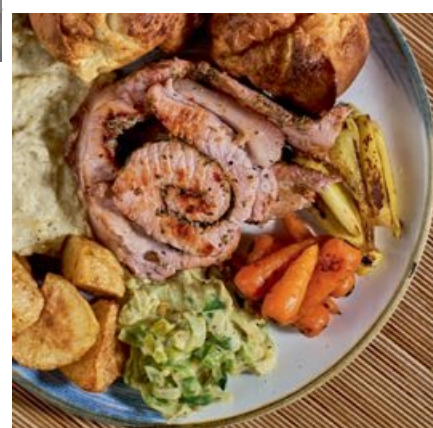
Mothering Sunday proved the perfect point to do so with a dedicated Sunday Lunch menu in full swing in addition to its usual authentic Italian fayre.

On a sun-soaked afternoon, the dining area had a buoyant atmosphere and we were greeted warmly by restaurant manager Andrew who invited us to enjoy a drink at the restaurant's impressive, circular centrepiece bar.

This was a great place to reunite with family over a pair of signature Punto Arancione cocktails – tangerine, aperol and lime with a vodka kick- for mother and sister Holly, not to mention a couple of gamma ray IPA's for father and son.

Sunday, of course, remains central to the Italian working week and Punto have done this justice with a delicious Pranzo della Domenica menu (Sunday lunch to you and me) with meats sourced from other local favourite Block & Bottle.

First up though was a selection of antipasti: vine



ripened tomatoes sat atop a hunk of pan-fried garlic sourdough on a vinaigrette-enlivened bruschetta whilst fried calamari, white bait and oven baked king prawns formed a crown-pleasing plank of seafood well worth the additional 15 minutes cooking time.

Main course meanwhile offered a choice of beef, pork or lamb each served with seasonal vegetables and 'Yorkshire Pudding'. It would be the slow-roasted spring lamb with balsamic glaze for yours truly and the roast topside of beef for the girls whilst dad went completely off-piste with a double-egg Fiorentina pizza he remembered so fondly from last time.

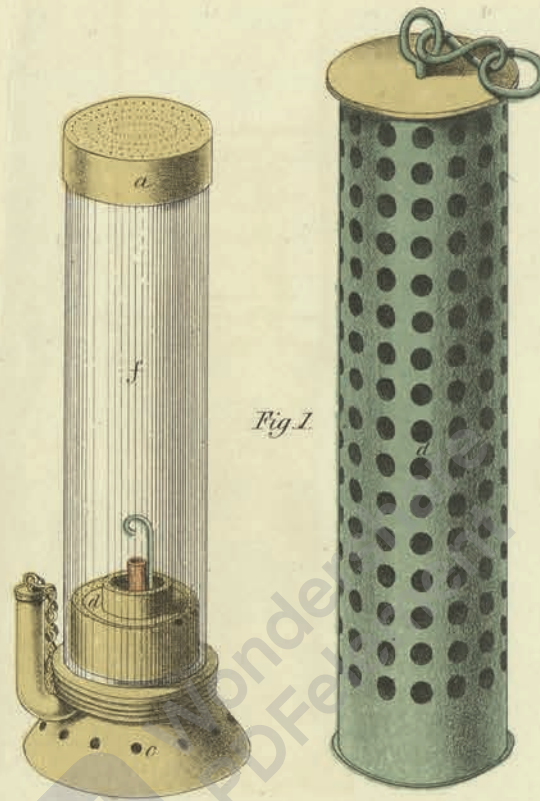
Service was flawless throughout and Mum was even offered a complimentary glass of prosecco, bellini or rossini in toast to Mother's Day which shows Punto is a restaurant which really understands the little touches.

A winning neighbourhood favourite deserving of its much wider acclaim.

**For more information, visit  
[puntoitalian.co.uk](http://puntoitalian.co.uk)**

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## THE BLACKBIRD FLYING HIGH WITH AWARD WIN

With a new menu, an award win under their belts and summer just around the corner, the team at the Blackbird, at Ponteland have plenty to look forward to.

**While the Blackbird has long been known by its customers for its excellent service and impeccable standards, it now has the credentials to prove it.**

The venue beat out competition from across the region to take home the title of Pub of the Year at the prestigious North East England Tourism Awards earlier this year.

And the accolade was a particularly welcome achievement after such a challenging period for the hospitality industry brought on by the pandemic.

In fact, the pub's reaction to these hurdles were among the qualities praised by the judges.

During lockdown, the Blackbird worked quickly to implement a takeaway service and its chefs created a series of themed boxes to help their diners mark big occasions at home.

Thinking ahead to when they would be able to welcome customers back to the venue, the team turned their attention to the al fresco offering.

Expanding its outdoor area meant the pub could serve its customers safely and a tipi ensured that the venue could continue operating outdoors while accounting for the unpredictable British weather.

And the tipi was so successful that the Blackbird later made the decision to make it a permanent installation, along with a street food kitchen.

Not only does this relieve the pressure from the indoor kitchen team but it also created an additional events space for the venue – with an even larger guest capacity.

Weddings, christenings, baby showers and birthdays are just some of the special occasions that have been held at the tipi in the last year, with the option to create bespoke menus and decorate the space exactly to a host's liking.

And while the team have put plenty of thought into the new developments at the venue, a pub would be nothing without a fantastic food and drink offering to match.

Head chef Ralph Hellens has worked tirelessly to create exciting, seasonal dishes which complement the changing venue around him.

With dishes fit for a fine dining experience, including scallop ceviche, North Sea monkfish and duck breast, diners can also choose from high-end pub classics and a new light bites menu.

Coupled with a huge variety of gins and spirits, wine, fizz, ales, beers and lager – including the new Madri Exceptional on draught – and there's sure to be something to suit every occasion.

Stuart Young of the Northumberland Pub Group, which operates the Blackbird, is delighted to have the pub recognised with such a prestigious award.

"It's a fantastic feeling to be named Pub of the Year, especially as we were up against some pretty



tough competition in our category," he said.

"We have always strived to provide the best possible experience for everyone who visits us and it is amazing to have our efforts pay off and now be known as an award-winning pub.

"Our whole team has worked incredibly hard to get us to the point we're at today and we are very grateful to all of our amazing customers who have supported and visited us over the last seven years."

**For more information, or to book, visit [www.theblackbirdponteland.co.uk](http://www.theblackbirdponteland.co.uk)**





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# LORD OF THE DANCE CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF STANDING OVATIONS

Michael Flatley is reviving 25 years of Lord of the Dance. The most successful touring show in entertainment history is set to return to Sunderland Empire from Monday 23 May - Wednesday 25 May 2022.

Since its premiere, Michael Flatley's Lord Of The Dance has visited over 1000 venues worldwide and been seen by over 60 million people in 60 different countries on every continent.

Michael will revive and update the original Lord of the Dance for new generations of fans. The show, described by the Los Angeles Times as a "showpiece extravaganza", features more than 150,000 taps per performance as it transports the audience to a mythical time and place, capturing hearts in a swirl of movement, precision dancing, artistic lighting and pyrotechnics.

The journey to Lord of the Dance began with Michael Flatley's dream to create the greatest Irish dance show in the world. Forged from his ambition and a performance that caught the world's attention at Eurovision 1994, Lord of the



Dance is the culmination of Flatley's belief that "Nothing is impossible. Follow your dreams."

Lord of the Dance has gone on to receive unparalleled accolades, and to break theatrical records across the globe. Michael Flatley's Lord of the Dance not only brought Irish dancing to the world stage; it catapulted the art of Irish dance to a higher plane, unprecedented worldwide recognition and dove straight into the hearts and minds of millions worldwide.

Much of the secret to its phenomenal success is that it speaks to all, crossing boundaries of age, gender and cultural diversity.

The show will go to the next level in 2022 for its 25th anniversary show. Fans can expect new staging, new costumes and choreography plus cutting-edge technology special effects lighting.

Michael Flatley commented: "I'm so excited to bring the original Lord of the Dance back to UK Theatres in 2022. I feel like this is the most vital tour in our 25-year history! The return of the arts is so incredibly important. I hope the tour will help renew spirits and put a smile back on everyone's faces..."

[www.atgtickets.com/sunderland](http://www.atgtickets.com/sunderland)



# QUEEN'S JUBILIEE



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*"We laugh together, we comfort one another. It's absolutely amazing."* A Whitley Bay resident.

Our Wallsend home has been specifically designed to enhance the lives of people living with dementia, with specially-trained staff seeing to our residents' specific needs. The home provides residents with lots of independence, features spacious grounds - including a special reminiscence area - and even has a hair salon, cafe, library and pub!



# FAST GROWING NORTH EAST LEISURE GROUP CONTINUES TO INVEST



A North East hospitality organisation – launched in the middle of the pandemic – is continuing its rapid expansion programme.

**The Inn Hospitality Group – set up by events company owner Oliver Bennett and event catering expert, Matt Daniel – took over the historic The Percy Arms at Chatton, Northumberland in January 2020.**

And despite buying the property at one of the most challenging times in the industry's history, the investment has paid off, with the pub with rooms now proving a huge success.

The directors invested £200k in the refurbishment of the property, which included the creation of new outdoor space, upgrading the kitchen, a new

roof and full redecoration.

The five bedrooms have also been given a new lease of life, stylishly transformed into comfortable and chic places to stay.

The success of the venture has led to the Group making three further purchases – The Derwent Arms at Edmundbyers which has also undergone a £100k upgrade, The Anglers Arms at Longframlington and The Olde Ship at Seahouses.

Each of the properties has undergone extensive refurbishment, along with the creation of a new food offering for each venue which focusses on traditional, hearty dishes most of which is sourced locally wherever possible.

The aim now is to not only build strong local loyalty but also to tap into the lucrative visitor market of people coming to stay in Northumberland.

"We pride ourselves on the fact that each of the properties is unique and offer something very special," said Oliver.

"They have all been at the heart of the local community for years and the feedback we've had so far is that people really appreciate the investment and the new offering.

"We also believe we can make a strong contribution to the local economy by attracting visitors who want to stay somewhere unique and with a really homely and welcoming feel."

Matt added that it had been a risk starting a new venture during lockdown, but it's one that's paid off.

"We know people thought we were made to look at a hospitality venture at a time when the whole industry was virtually shut down," he said.

"But it's a move we're very glad we've made and we're very proud of the four unique properties that we have to offer which are in prime locations across Northumberland."

**For further information visit  
[www.percyarmschatton.co.uk](http://www.percyarmschatton.co.uk)**



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# OUT AND ABOUT - LINLITHGOW



There are four train operating companies running between Newcastle and Edinburgh: LNER, TransPennine Express, CrossCountry and Lumo. This means that fares are very competitive and on Thursday 7th April I went to Edinburgh for £7.35 each way with my railcard. Then onward to Linlithgow, the ending pronounced as in low rather than how. It's a compact town and my list of places to visit was simple: Palace, Church, Loch, Museum and Canal Basin. All are close together, although the natural loch is quite large and if you want to walk round the perimeter it is a pleasant 2.3 mile stroll.

Whilst I left Chester-le-Street on time, my train for the main leg of the journey, TransPennine's 0919 train from Newcastle to Edinburgh, had been cancelled. A quick visit to the ticket office had me reserved on the 0947 non-stop LNER service to Edinburgh, which arrived on platform 9 on time where my connection to Linlithgow was fortuitously waiting on adjacent platform 8. Accordingly I arrived at my destination at the originally scheduled time of 1133. The subway between platforms of this station is very low. I am not tall at 5ft 11ins but there was only an inch clearance above my head. First stop was the Post Office to dispatch one of my railway maps ([www.railmap.org.uk](http://www.railmap.org.uk)). It was actually going to Oxfordshire, but with prices having gone up, I felt I was getting better value for money for my £6.95 sending it from Scotland.

Then time for a cup of coffee at the Cafe 1807 (named after the fountain completed in that year outside the cafe), and a visit to the welcoming and fascinating Museum inside the 1939 Court House and Administration building of the County of Linlithgowshire, which provided a useful orientation to the town. It is now part of West Lothian managed from the new town of Livingston. The attractive building was opened in 1939, and the museum comprises three rooms, admission free but donations welcome. It is now named after Tam Dalyell, the local MP who holds the record for the most suspensions in the House of Commons.

The railway station at Linlithgow may be the earliest station to be photographed anywhere in the world. There's a picture dating from 1845, and the railway line slices through the south of the town on its way from Glasgow to Edinburgh. In 1822 the canal, further south and at a higher level, also passed east west and was called the Union Canal with a canal basin constructed to allow goods to be loaded and unloaded.

Lunch was in the Star and Garter pub, including some haggis, before I walked

up to St. Michael's church and found the adjacent Palace closed for high level renovations. The town motto is "St. Michael is kinde to straingers". As an ancient town, Linlithgow is not immune from controversy: not everyone likes the aluminium super-structure built on the church tower (although I did). The high street is an eclectic mix of different period buildings with a large 1970s brutalist concrete development, the Vennel, where the loch reaches closest to the town. Most recently, though, controversy has raged about a pub named after the Black Bitch, see the statue photographed, celebrated for swimming across the loch daily to bring sustenance to her master who was marooned and chained on an island. Echoes of Greyfriars Bobby in Edinburgh (where you can break your journey). The Black Bitch pub has been renamed this year as the Willow Tree.

[alexnelson@dunelm.org.uk](mailto:alexnelson@dunelm.org.uk)

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The Northumberland Golf Club, High Gosforth Park, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 5HT



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## PROSTATE CANCER - NUFFIELD HEALTH NEWCASTLE HOSPITAL LAUNCHES AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Are you male and have you flown out of Newcastle Airport lately?  
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Hopefully you will have read the information because it is really important. It concerns prostate screening.

### Let's start with a few basic facts.

Prostate cancer is the most common form of cancer in men in the UK. Its causes aren't clear, but if you have a male family member that has been diagnosed with the disease, there is an increased risk of you developing it. And the risk of getting prostate cancer gets higher as you get older.

The figures don't make for pleasant reading. Prostate cancer causes 10,000 men to die every year in the UK and there are over 35,000 cases diagnosed every year. The majority of those cases and deaths involve men who're aged 50 and over, but it can affect men who are younger. Age is no barrier.

### What are the symptoms?

The first sign is generally a bit of a struggle to go for a pee where you need to strain to empty your bladder. Weirdly, another sign is having to go for a

pee more frequently and the urge to urinate more at night. You should also watch out for any sign of blood in your urine. Erectile dysfunction could start to affect you and you may even feel pain or a burning sensation while having a pee. It's also worth keeping an eye on any lower back pain and aching in the hips or pelvis.

If you recognise any of these symptoms you need to get them checked by a GP.

As we all know however, COVID has caused major problems for the NHS. There's a massive backlog of cases and waiting lists are still much longer than everyone would hope for.

In other words, it can take time before you are checked and before you receive any possible treatment.

COVID-19 has not only caused a massive headache for all healthcare professionals, it has also seen many of us get out of the habit of going for a check-up with our local GP whenever we feel ill or when something doesn't quite seem right. Time easily slips by.

And if there is one big enemy when dealing with prostate cancer it is time. The sooner you get things checked, the sooner you can have any treatment and the greater your chances of making a complete recovery.

These symptoms don't automatically mean that you have cancer. In fact, they are also symptoms of Benign Prostate Enlargement which is common in men as they get older. This condition is not cancerous, however still comes with the same

symptoms. However without assessment, it is difficult to differentiate between these conditions.

The great news is that you can speed-up the entire assessment and diagnostic process by speaking to Nuffield Health. Their modern hospital is based on Clayton Road in Newcastle and they have a magnificent reputation when it comes to diagnosing and treating a whole range of health problems.

And the main focus of their latest campaign and investment is prostate screening and treatment.

Talking of investment, the Nuffield Hospital in Newcastle is spending over £150,000 on buying and installing a laser machine which will help with less invasive prostate treatment. It reduces the need to have invasive surgery by delivering a surge of energy onto an enlarged prostate to shrink or remove excess tissue which is causing a restriction to the flow of urine. The lasers use concentrated light which produces an accurate and totally painless beam of heat.

The Nuffield Hospital in Newcastle had to previously hire a laser, which wasn't ideal, but now the arrival of their own 21st Century piece of equipment means they can treat more men more quickly, which is fantastic news.

If you have any of the symptoms mentioned above, you need to take action...and do it sooner rather than later. The Nuffield Hospital is a safe, COVID secure environment so you can visit in confidence.

Remember, time is critical when it comes to all cancers. Don't grin and bear it if you suspect there's a problem. Act now; act quickly...it could be a life saver. Your life.

Nuffield Health; award-winning healthcare.

***If you'd like to have everything checked as quickly as possible and undergo any potential treatment, the best idea is to visit the Nuffield Health website, [www.nuffieldhealth.com](http://www.nuffieldhealth.com) where you will find full details of what you need to do and also a guide to costs.***

# Prostate screening. Why wait?

## What do we mean by Prostate?

The prostate or prostate gland is part of the male reproductive system and sits just below the bladder. It is about the size of a walnut and wraps around the urethra.

## How would you know if you had an issue with your prostate?

Sometimes your prostate gland can increase in size, particularly as you get older. Some symptoms that may suggest an enlarged prostate include:

- ♦ Urinating more frequently and feeling like you need to get to the toilet quickly
- ♦ Urinating more slowly or feeling like you need to wait for the flow to start
- ♦ Feeling as if you haven't emptied your bladder
- ♦ Urine continuing to trickle after you have stopped.

## What should you do if you have any of these symptoms?

See your GP initially who can perform a number of tests, which will help determine if your prostate gland may be the cause. At this point, you may be referred to a Consultant Urologist.

**Nuffield Health Newcastle Hospital can offer prompt expert assessment and treatment for these challenging conditions**



To find out more search **Nuffield Health Newcastle Hospital** or scan the QR code for more information.







## ARE YOU IN AN OVERINDULGENT AFFAIR?

Eating and fuelling the body has unfortunately evolved to be an excessive and overindulgent affair. We repeatedly eat way more than our body needs to function. Meal after meal, day in day out, month after month, even decade after decade we eat the wrong kinds of foods alongside portion sizes increasing.

**Of course that's not the whole story if we also add all the fat and sugar laden unhealthy snacks in between meals, the pressure on already overloaded metabolic processes and systems is huge.**

The body can cope easily with periods of fasting. It is now widely understood to be hugely beneficial to put your body into an intermittent fasted state. Several important metabolic processes commence when the body is in this state including vital cell repair and regeneration. Growth hormone (the hormone responsible for maintenance of muscle tissue and anti-ageing processes) increases by up to 60%.

Very few of us eat in a mindful, functional way to give the body the correct amounts and types of food it needs to function optimally to keep us in ongoing good health. Repeated overindulgences put an incredible strain on our body's organs.

Many chronic conditions such as inflammatory bowel disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, stroke, heart problems, obesity and type 2 diabetes stem from decades and decades of continued food-abuses on the body's metabolism.

Our bodies eventually become overloaded to the point that organs and bodily processes can no longer function properly, and chronic health conditions then become apparent. A preventative approach is far better than trying to fix years of damage, some of which cannot be reversed.

### So where are you going wrong?

- Food types – too much rich, processed high sugar, fatty foods.
- Portion sizes – buy a food portion plate to help you portion your meals.



David Fairlamb

- Inactivity – storing fats/sugars instead of burning them off.
- Emotional eating – bored, stressed, low mood and turning to food.
- Being blind to your own behaviour. (choosing not to fix the problem).
- Not hydrating enough.
- Lifestyle – your too busy or stressed to eat well, yet eating better will help you physically and mentally.
- You may not be giving your body enough rest or sleep time.
- Continuing to eat once you are full.

### How can you fix it?

- Keep a food diary – eat the correct types of food. High fibre, moderate carbohydrates, high

protein, low fats and sugars.

- Cut out processed foods and refined sugars.
- Reduce your portion sizes. You will soon adjust to a new normal.
- Stay hydrated – drink at least two litres of water daily.
- Educate yourself on food – examine labels and learn what you are actually consuming.
- Stay active – exercising will burn excess fats and sugars instead of storing them.
- Develop healthy routines to prevent emotional overeating and snacking.
- Try one of the many Apps available on your phone to track calorie intake versus what you burn through planned efforts.

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

## DAVID'S SUMMING UP

*Make eating well a way of life rather than seeing the changes as being on a diet. Choosing to live well will safeguard your future health.*

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## THE LAST WORD



Barry Speker

from **BARRY SPEKER...**

**It was the result of Dominic Cummings' dubious lockdown drive to Barnard Castle which brought the historic Durham town into the limelight. Tourist numbers soared with cynics looking for Specsavers and buying eye-test postcards.**

Now the dramatisation of *The Thief, His Wife and the Canoe* means it may be time for Seaton Carew to have its moment of fame. The exploits of John and Ann Darwin, his faked apparent suicide and the subsequent insurance fraud made riveting viewing. However locals spotted that the filming was on Hartlepool's beach and headland rather than scenic Seaton Carew.

The owners of the Staincliffe Hotel are reportedly wishing to distance themselves from the notorious couple - and propose to rename the fine dining Darwin Room Restaurant as well as the Seaton Canoe Bar. Also no enthusiasm for canoeing skills weekends.

Some welcome return to normality arrived with the resumption of Robbie Howard's spring golf trip to North Berwick. We received a great welcome from Chris at The Open Arms in Dirleton after the two year break and I even managed some decent golf at Kilspeindie and Longniddrey. Preparation for the arrival of self-driving cars this summer has prompted changes to the Highway Code. The hope is that driverless cars will improve road safety bearing in mind that human error is a contributory factor in 88% of road accidents. Of course drivers of these cars must follow the manufacturers' stringent instructions and be able to retake full control at all times. In July the Highway Code will provide:

1. If the car is in self-drive mode you may not be liable if it crashes.
2. Drivers can watch films or TV behind the wheel.
3. You will still not be allowed to use a phone (risk of driver being distracted).
4. You must stay in the driving seat.
5. You must be sober.
6. You still need MOT, tax and insurance.
7. You may not be liable for speeding tickets if the fault is the car not the driver.

I hope self drive cars will display bright red warning lights on the roof so we can give them a very wide berth in case the non-drivers are engrossed in a Netflix boxed set.

It is to be welcomed that proposed new laws will criminalise fake online reviews. The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) estimates that £23 billion a year of consumer spending is influenced by online reviews but leading retail and review websites such as Amazon and Trustpilot, hotels and restaurants are plagued by fake reviews.

Some businesses try to buy five-star Tripadvisor reviews. The new law will make it a crime to pay someone to write a false review and make it illegal to offer or advertise to submit, commission or facilitate fake reviews.

Understandably, *Which?* Magazine feel this will protect consumers and customers- but will people want to spend the extra time researching to get valid, objective, independent appraisals of services, products, facilities?

Trustpilot, Amazon, Google, Facebook and Tripadvisor claim that they already spend large amounts of time and money stopping and removing false reviews or identifying people trying to sell them. Quite a challenge in store for the marketing 'industry'.

As \$50 billion is wiped off the value of Netflix following its first drop in subscribers in 10 years, perhaps there is a lack of realism. The pandemic and lockdown contributed to vast growth but

the freedom to get out of the house and the cost of living crisis will make many question where they are getting value for money. The plans by Netflix to 'monetise' (meaning increase charges) existing customers and charge for sharing of subscriptions may fall foul of the golden goose principle. Introducing advertising breaks will not make the product more attractive.

And mention must be made of the sense of relief on Tyneside. From seven points and no wins by 30 November 2021, Newcastle United have won eight home matches and have reached the safety of 40 points and guaranteed Premiership football next season. Who knows Howe?

**barryspeker@hotmail.com**





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