

NORTHERN

INSIGHT

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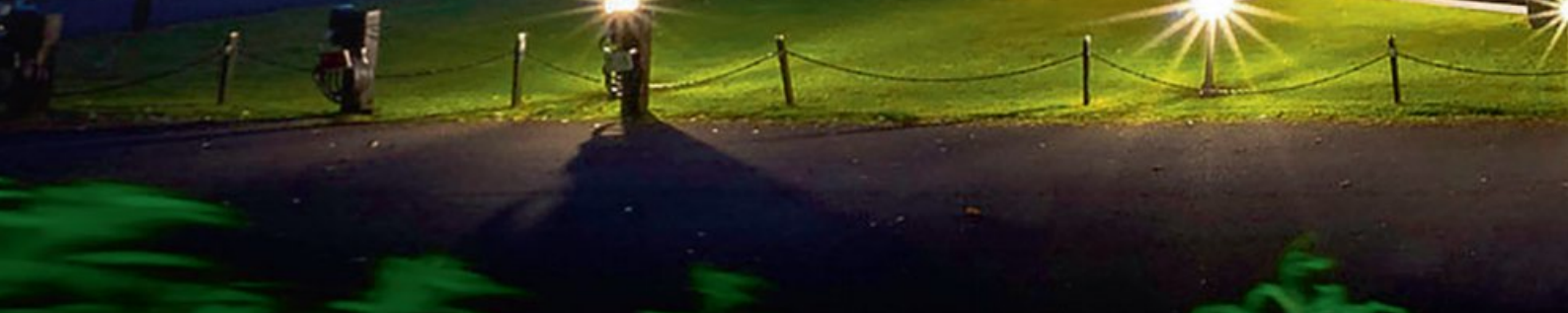


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FOREWORD

Welcome to the June edition of Northern Insight.

Synergi IT return to out front cover this month and reflect on their best year ever in 2021. Within a packed business section look out for some great coverage from NE1 on the plans to transform Pilgrim Street. Our popular Charity of the Month feature also returns whilst regular contributor Ammar Mirza reflects on the momentous Jubilee celebrations.

On our travels we sample lunch at Newcastle's Cote Brasserie and enjoy a first visit to the lovely Glass House at Wynyard Hall.

We hope you find something to enjoy within our 80th edition, another landmark on our journey so far.

Thank you to everyone concerned for the continued support.

Until next month...

M.J. Grahamslaw
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SUCCESSFUL NORTH EAST INVESTMENT FUND CONTINUES TO PROMOTE LEVELLING UP IN THE REGION UNDER NEW NAME, 'DEVELOP NORTH PLC'



Newcastle-based investment fund, TOC Property Backed Lending Trust, is highlighting its role in the levelling up of the North of the UK under its new name, Develop North PLC (Develop North).

Since its launch in 2017, the London Stock Exchange-listed fund has supported the development of 31 residential and commercial projects, across

the North East of England and Scotland with a combined value of £66m and an estimated £160m Gross Development Value (GDV).

As Develop North, the fund aims to attract investors and property developers of all sizes, looking to contribute to the economic regeneration of the North.

Managed by Newcastle-upon-Tyne-based wealth and fund management specialist, Tier One Capital (Tier One), Develop North currently has 19 schemes benefiting from Develop North loans, ranging from small scale, high value executive homes to larger developments of more than 140 properties.

John Newlands, Chairman of Develop North PLC, said: "The fund's new name gives a clear signal of its Northern UK credentials and aspirations.

"Since its launch in 2017, the fund has allowed regional developers the opportunity to bring forward schemes which have added to the broader availability of housing and commercial premises.

He added, "Such projects contribute to unlocking the potential of the North. We look forward to working with more developers, creating a shared commitment to enhance communities and economies across the North."

Ian McElroy, Chief Executive of Tier One, the investment adviser, and fund manager to Develop North, said: "We have built a strong portfolio of projects in areas such as Tyneside, County Durham and Tees Valley and currently have loan facilities worth a combined £32m supporting the development of schemes in these areas and across the North.

"We have an active pipeline of new projects and an outlook for continued growth, which we are confident will be enhanced by the Develop North banner, bringing greater focus to the fund's commitment to the region."

COUPLAND LEATHER STORMS AHEAD WITH DIVERSIFICATION

In early 2022, North East-based luxury leathersmith, Stuart Coupland announced growth of an additional 70 per cent in turnover compared to Coupland Leather's turnover in 2021, and has now added an entire new range of products to its portfolio as well as being announced as one of Insider Media's '42 under 42'.

The range of high quality clothing items feature the company's logo and strapline 'let's get leathered' and have been welcomed with excitement by customers who have been snapping them up.

This diversification comes as Stuart Coupland was highlighted as a new and upcoming business leader and 'one to watch' by Insider Media, just weeks after being personally congratulated in a handwritten letter from Mayor Ben Houchen. He has also taken on a permanent member of staff to support growth in sales.

In addition to this success, Coupland Leather is in the process of agreeing contracts to provide high quality, handcrafted leather items for businesses including a well-known country outlet, designed to their specification and in their own brand with further announcement expected in the coming weeks.



Formed at the beginning of the first Covid lockdown in 2020, Coupland Leather has repeatedly gone from strength to strength and through savvy investment, strategic marketing and building new partnerships, is set to continue this trend.

Stuart said: "The brand has received some amazing attention and we're lucky to have some fantastic, highly supportive customers. The clothing has been a huge success already and it's a proud moment to see people walking around wearing t-shirts with my logo on them!"

Coupland Leather's most recent success was thanks in part to the company's growing popularity in the US, Dubai, Belgium, Hong Kong and Australia, and these new projects mean Stuart is setting the bar high for this year too.

He continued: "We have already attended some great events and expos, with more in the pipeline, and have some great projects in the pipeline including bespoke luggage tags for a travel consultant – we're only a half of the way into the year and I'm excited for what's to come."



ST OSWALD'S HOSPICE ANNOUNCES LATEST WILD IN ART SCULPTURE TRAIL FOR NEWCASTLE IN 2023

Following the success of Great North Snowdogs in 2016 and Elmer's Great North Parade in 2019, St Oswald's Hospice has announced it will be bringing a third art trail to the region next year, to celebrate the support shown by their community throughout the pandemic.

Created in partnership with creative producers Wild in Art, the larger-than-life art project will see around 50 specially-designed sculptures bring colour and conversation to the streets of Newcastle and surrounding areas.

The chosen sculpture remains a top secret for now, but they are planned to be unleashed from July 2023 to form an art trail for visitors and locals alike to enjoy throughout the summer. As well as raising awareness and funds for St Oswald's Hospice, the trail aims to give something back to the North East

communities who have proven to be a vital source of support to the charity during a challenging couple of years.

The project has already been many months in the planning and now the momentum is growing with the hospice calling on local businesses and organisations to consider getting involved with sponsoring a sculpture or lending other practical support.

Jane Hogan, Head of Fundraising at St Oswald's Hospice said: "After two very difficult years when we have all been struggling, we are just so excited to announce the launch of our third art trail which we hope will be something glorious for our whole community to look forward to. It's our way to give something back to those who have held our hand through a very challenging time, as well as an opportunity to support the revival of high streets and our creative communities. We think it's time to have some fun, and what better way than unleashing giant art sculptures across our city?"

"Our chosen sculpture remains a secret for now, but we are very confident that everyone will love it as much as we do!"



SUNDERLAND BUSINESS FESTIVAL RECRUITMENT FAIR ANNOUNCES TWO EVENTS

The success of a recruitment fair launched as part of last year's Sunderland Business Festival has led to two events being announced for 2022.

And the fairs – which will both take place at the Stadium of Light – will give employers, educators and training organisations the chance to showcase

their opportunities to people of all ages.

The previous event attracted around 50 companies and training providers, with more than 1000 people attending to find out about jobs in a range of industries.

And the hope is now to attract even more people this time round, particularly young people who may be preparing to leave school.

The fair – organised by Sunderland Business Partnership – is being held on Thursday 30 June from 10am until 3pm and companies have already begun signing up to take part.

Ellen Thinnesen, former Principal of Sunderland College and chair of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership Skills Advisory Panel and of Sunderland Business Partnership, hopes the event will be well supported again.

"Our first Sunderland Business Festival was a great success and the Recruitment Fair played a great part in that," she said.

"It was really well received by both businesses from across the region and the people who attended, which is why we have decided to host two events this year."

The events are being designed to appeal to everyone from students to people thinking about a change of career, want to upskill or have been out of the job market for any length of time.

While the June fair is a stand alone event, the October fair – which will take place on Wednesday 12 October – will be part of the second Sunderland Business Festival. The cost of attending for companies is £200 plus VAT or £350 plus VAT for anyone booking both events.

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Jessica Williams

PROFESSIONALISING THE SALES INDUSTRY

Last month we covered the myriad of misnomers surrounding the sales industry as a whole and how our ethos at both Just Williams and sister company, The Just Williams Sales Academy has been to professionalise the industry from the outset.

Back in 2019 at the embryonic stage of development, we planned in partnership with Teesside University Business School to launch an annual Sales Conference. Needless to say, 2020 didn't happen, neither did 2021 so here we are almost three years later ready to launch.

The North's first Sales, Service and Success Conference at Teesside University International Business School.

Just Williams celebrated its 7th birthday this month and as our Sales Academy turns one in September, we have organised an incredible line up of inspirational, educational and industry leaders in the field of customer service, sales and business development. This day will bring together industry professionals covering these remits to share, learn and create an ongoing peer to peer network of like-minded professionals. 2022 marks the first year of our ambitions to run an annual conference of this nature.

Last month we talked about professionalising the sales industry and creating an industry standard across the board for all sales professionals. In partnership with the Institute of Sales Professionals and Teesside University International Business School we will be bringing you the industry thought leaders, some key tips and takeaways to help recruit, retain, train and drive your sales teams forward to achieve growth, exceptional customer service, higher retention and improved performance across the board.

If you are interested to find out more about attending, sponsoring, exhibiting or just intrigued – contact us on JWSA@justwilliamssales.academy. With only 100 tickets available, tickets will go online in a few months so register your interest ahead to receive first refusal.

We look forward to welcoming you!

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@JustWilliamsSa1

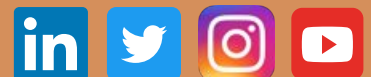
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COVER STORY



SYNERGI ACHIEVES RECORD LEVEL GROWTH FOLLOWING BEST YEAR EVER IN 2021

Success for cloud solutions and managed services provider follows record level growth in the technology sector.

The technology sector in the UK has grown exponentially in the past decade. Despite the challenges of 2020 including lockdowns and the Brexit transition period, the sector has shown resilience and record levels of growth in investment.

It's becoming clearer for many why the sector is experiencing this record level growth; The world has changed and working practices continue to evolve. How we now live and work is having a major impact on business technology requirements. Organisations embracing the right modern technology solutions is the driving force behind the growth in both the sector and for Gateshead-based technology partner Synergi.

Cloud solutions and managed services provider Synergi is mirroring the industry trend, having already out performed Q1 2021 in the current financial year by over 20%. The Synergi team is proud to have helped existing and new customers from a host of different industries to maximise their investment in modern technology. This includes changing and digitising working practices, improving cloud collaboration and adoption, and critically, securing data to protect against rising cyber-crime and threats.

Fundamental shifts in how people now prefer to work, brought on by the pandemic has meant that businesses need to invest to retain and attract top talent. Pre-pandemic, most organisations adopted an in-office working culture, post-pandemic this is being challenged. The role of modern technology is to bring control together with flexibility to empower the 'work from anywhere' revolution.

How can 'non-tech' businesses thrive with technology?

A survey conducted by the London School of Economics found that 75% of firms in their survey had adopted productivity-enhancing technologies since the start of the pandemic. Synergi continues to help implement such technologies for varied industry sectors across the UK and has seen first-hand how manufacturing companies, the professional services industry, transport, travel and charities to name a few, have seen positive impact and efficiency gains in their business resulting from new technology investment.

Ambitious, high-growth organisations recognise the value in technology and are harnessing that potential by working with specialist technology partners, like Synergi, who possess a knowledge of their sector. It is important to invest intelligently

“

*...Ambitious,
high-growth
organisations
recognise
the value in
technology ...*



L-R: Justin Short, Peter Joynson and Paul Burns

with a prioritised roadmap that will scale with their business growth and make them a modern attractive place to work that will attract and retain its people.

Here are six ways to empower innovation, growth and agility in your business

1. Effective & performance driven hybrid working – the ability to work from anywhere cannot be overlooked. The pandemic was termed a 'wake-up call' for many workers who now view hybrid working as the new normal. Cloud technologies such as SharePoint and Microsoft Power Platform have the ability to increase staff performance and effectiveness.

2. Finding the right technology partner – Working with a managed IT provider, such as Synergi, means you have access to the best experts and technology to transform your business. Many are now turning to a co-managed approach whereby the Synergi team works in collaboration with your in-house IT team to pro-actively manage and secure your whole IT environment. This allows your in-house team to focus on business improvements.

3. Focus on cybercriminals and threats – It's a common misconception that your Microsoft data is 100% protected by Microsoft, which is why it is essential to assess your full cloud and on-premise environment and put into place cyber-security measures and data protection.

4. Automation for the everyday – Think about the everyday processes within your business such as starters/leavers/quotations/sales/onboarding new clients etc. These processes can often be repetitive, time-consuming manual tasks. We often find they are not properly mapped out or considered organisation-wide. That's where process mapping



and automation can really transform, saving time and money and removing frustration from your end-users.

5. Accounting from anywhere – Gaining remote access to some of the more well-known accounting systems throughout the pandemic was a challenge to say the least. That's where Microsoft Dynamics, specifically Business Central, really drives value. Synergi's Microsoft Dynamics practice, Unifi, takes customers from old, often hard to access systems into a secure cloud environment with secure access anytime, anywhere.

6. Embracing the modern digital workplace – The new digital workplace is a virtual form of the traditional in-office approach. Many organisations are now utilising the modern technologies available to bolster their staff productivity. For example Microsoft Teams was quickly embraced when we all were forced to switch to work from home, however there is potentially so much more to the platform than many are currently utilising such as telephony and SharePoint intranet integration.

**Talk to the team at Synergi today to see how they can help you discover what's possible in your organisation. T: 0191 477 0365
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SYNERGI GOLF DAY

Gateshead-based cloud solutions and managed services provider, Synergi, excitedly welcomed a number of customers to their first golf day of 2022.

Held at Close House, the event saw Synergi customers from across the region learn about the latest in process mapping and automation, cyber-security and how the Synergi co-managed service offering is empowering SMEs to take a pro-active approach to their business technology. Synergi customers then engaged in some friendly competition and hospitality.





CMYK CELEBRATES THE QUEENS PLATINUM JUBILEE



The region's leading Business Technology provider CMYK have planted 70 trees as part of The Queens Green Canopy to celebrate The Queens Platinum Jubilee.

The idea of a dedicated 'Platinum Plantation' of 70 trees to mark The Queens Platinum Jubilee was planned in early 2021, to coincide with the 2021/2022 tree planting season and the Jubilee celebrations. Whilst plans were underway, the Royal Household were also planning their very own initiative to mark the Jubilee celebrations. The Queen's Green Canopy (QGC) a unique tree planting initiative created to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee in 2022 which invites people and organisations across the United Kingdom to 'Plant a Tree for the Jubilee'. So it made absolute sense to combine the 'Platinum Plantation' alongside the QGC project.

The team were delighted to welcome back Mrs. Sue Snowdon, Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of County Durham, along with Councillor Alex Watson, the amazing learners and Staff from Learning For Life, Consett Junior School to Haystax and the CMYK Community Tree Planting Project to celebrate the first of 70 trees being planted at the 'Platinum Plantation'. The ceremony was filled with laughter, enjoyment and some heartfelt speeches from all involved on the importance of sustainability for our next generation.

Ian and Lorna Adamson, owners of Woodlands Park Farm in Knitsley near Consett, formed a partnership with CMYK in early 2021 to launch the CMYK Community Tree Planting Project. The Tree Plantation Project is exclusively and freely available to all CMYK Clients. As part of CMYK's drive to be socially responsible, to give back to the local community and to help create

an environmentally sustainable future for their business and their clients, they automatically enroll all clients into the Tree Plantation Project. This means trees are planted for every one of CMYK's new clients which helps to protect our environment for generations to come.

However, the great work doesn't stop there...also occupying the same site at Woodlands Park Farm is Haystax Inclusive Farm Experience. Due to be launched later this summer Haystax, designed by Lorna and Ian on their site at Woodlands Park Farm will be a specially designed complex to accommodate families who have a family member with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The Farm experience centre will provide facilities such as animal therapy opportunities, sensory rooms, quiet rooms, arts and crafts facilities, a classroom for educational

information sessions, an indoor play area, pedal tractor fun, woodland watch & walks, insect hotels, beehives and so many more exciting outdoor activities for the whole family to enjoy. The site will also provide much needed respite for parents and carers to socialise and enjoy a refreshment from the Café. Lodges have also been introduced to the site to open up these amazing facilities to families who live further afield.

With a commitment of thousands of trees still to plant, everybody involved with the project from Haystax and CMYK are very excited to see the site develop as building work continues and tree planting resumes later this year.

To find out how your business can be involved please contact c.pratt@cmyk-digital.co.uk or call 0191 389 7751



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BUSINESS LUNCH



VIVE LA FRANCE

By Michael Grahamslaw

An ongoing love affair with French food led us to one of Newcastle's standout chain restaurants on a scorching Bank Holiday Weekend.

Côte Brasserie is one of the city's few French restaurants and has really offered diners something different since opening around five years ago.

Occupying the former Barclays Bank site in the heart of the city, striped canopies create a distinctly French exterior whilst inside the dining area exudes that trademark brasserie chic. On arrival, the place was absolute bustling with its lunchtime offering and extensive wine list clearly proving a hit with punters.

The restaurant's showstopping a la carte menu showcases a tantalising array of brasserie classics whilst there's also good value available through the week on a prix fixe menu with two courses available for £14.95 and three for £18.95.

In addition to this, there's a 35-bottle strong wine list with an impressive 14 of these available by the glass. We picked out a lovely, smooth Bordeaux rouge along with a bowl of spicy olives and a fougasse provençal garlic bread to pick on.

Following on, I chose the traditional crab maison – a delightful blend of tender crab meat, avocado, capers, red onion and mayonnaise. My wife Lisa meanwhile enjoyed fresh, wispy smoked salmon with pistou crème fraîche and a fennel and apple salad.

Main courses also found their mark. Lisa chose the luxe Poulet Breton – a rich poultry dish originating from Brittany in Northern France. This comprised half a chargrilled chicken cooked in a cider-based sauce with Dijon mustard, leeks, thyme and onion and served with pomme frites and wild rocket.

With many big flavours vying for attention, this was when the wine really came into play and our bottle of rouge set off my classic eye steak frites exquisitely. An extra helping of roasted vegetables completed this pretty picture.

This had already been a superb meal yet we rounded off with real aplomb with a pair of table-tappingly good desserts.

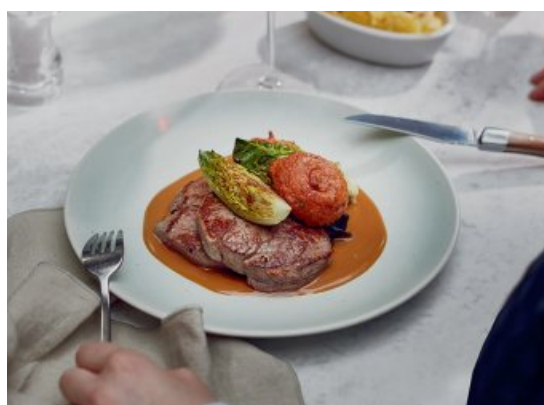
Lisa chose the strawberry and basil pavlova with peach & raspberry compote, crème fraîche and meringue whilst I opted for the Crème Caramel – traditional-set vanilla pod custard with dark caramel and cream.

Inspired by restaurants in Paris, Côte Brasserie champions all-day dining with its sumptuous A la Carte menu perfect for special occasions or winning business lunches. available in addition to its cheaper fixed price menu. Amidst the current cost of living crisis, the restaurant offers an affordable alternative.

This is also a venue which likes to shake up its offering with ever-changing seasonal specials sure to feature some sprightly, summery dishes now well into the warmer weather.

At Côte Brasserie then, we have something of a rarity. A chain restaurant with that added *je ne sais quoi!*

For more information, visit www.cote.co.uk/restaurant/newcastle

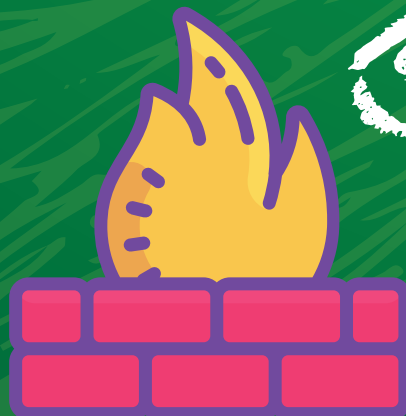
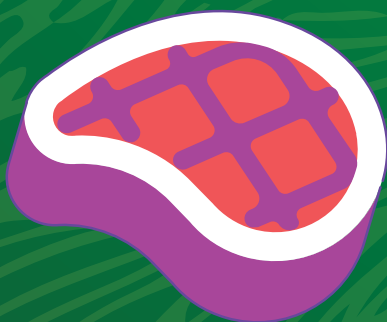
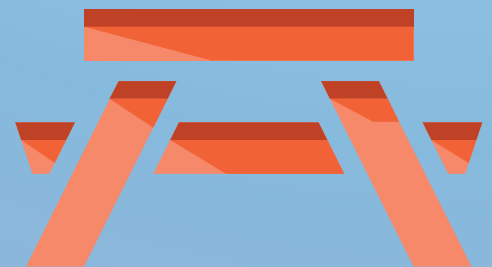
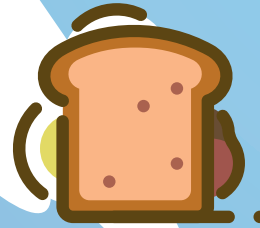


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NEW SIGNINGS AND CONTRACT EXTENSIONS BOOST FALCONS' 2022-23 CAMPAIGN PREPARATIONS



Josh Peters
in action for
Doncaster Knights

Photo credit: Rodney Wetton.

Newcastle Falcons' preparations for the 2022-23 Gallagher Premiership season are well underway with the announcement of two new signings and key player contract extensions.

As the season draws to a close, Newcastle Falcons have been busy planning for the new campaign, bolstering the squad with two new signings in fly-half Tian Schoeman and second-rower, Josh Peters.

"I've only heard good things about Newcastle, both as a city and a club, and I'm really looking forward to playing here" said Schoeman, the 30-year-old from Pretoria, South Africa. Signing on a three-year deal, Schoeman had previously played for South African sides the Bulls and Cheetahs, as well as spells at Bordeaux, and most recently, Bath.

Schoeman is currently rehabbing from a knee injury that kept him out of most of this season and upon reflection and looking ahead to the new campaign, he added: "My journey at Bath was tough, with coming over in January 2021, playing five games and then suffering a serious injury, but Newcastle is a fresh start for me, and I can't wait to get going.

"I want to bring some flair and an attacking mind-set, and I really back myself with the ball. Hopefully I can transfer that into the team once I start properly in the summer."

Speaking on his new team-mates, Schoeman added: "One of their things throughout has always been to have a great pack of forwards. You get a lot of front-foot ball playing behind those guys, and as a fly-half that excites me."

Joining Schoeman for next season, is 26-year-old Peters, standing at 2.04m (6 foot 8) and weighing 117kg (18 stone 5). Capped 10 times for Spain, the Spanish international joins from Championship title contenders Doncaster Knights, having previously enjoyed spells at Northampton Saints academy, Coventry, Cambridge and Blackheath. Speaking on his move to Falcons, Peters said: "It's a great opportunity to go up a level and challenge myself in a Premiership environment."

Signing on a two-year deal, Peters joins an already competitive list of Falcons second-rowers but is confident of bringing an extra dimension to the squad, adding: "It's exciting to be making the move, with set-piece and physicality being the main areas of strength in my game, through hard work and learning, I'll look to push for a place."

Further to the new additions to the squad, Falcons have also been busy securing key player contract extensions. Matias Orlando, Connor Collett, Brett Connon, Adam Brocklebank, Mark Tampin, Philip van der Walt, Mateo Carreras, Tom Penny, Iwan Stephens and Freddie Lockwood have all committed to future seasons in the North East, many having come through the club's academy.

Speaking on his recent two-year extension, Connon said: "I've been involved with the Falcons since I was 15, and even before that I came here as a fan. I would be waiting for the players' autographs after the games, so to be here now as a player myself is really special.

"Playing for the club you supported as a boy is most people's dream, and as well as being close to family and friends, it's great being part of something exciting with the way we're building here.

"We always talk about games like Toulon away and Montpellier at home as being the best times at the club, and over the next two years if I can help us get back to occasions like that, then I'll be happy.

"Getting back into the top half of the Premiership



Tian Schoeman playing against the Falcons, last season



Brett Connon

and into the top level of European competition is where we want to be, for the club and all of our supporters."

Season ticket memberships for 2022-23 are on sale now from www.newcastlefalcons.co.uk

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Michelle Jones with Mayor Jamie Driscoll.

A KINDER WAY OF DOING BUSINESS

Faced with a perfect storm of the climate crisis, poverty, and unsustainable consumer choices, I wanted to come up with a solution. A new way for consumership and doing business in the region that tackles the poverty crisis with climate action. For small, local enterprises, huge, messy, and intractable problems such as these can seem outside their sphere of influence – collateral damage left by big faceless corporations.

But everyone can do something to embed ethics and sustainability in how we choose to do things. That's why I created Kind Currency – a community interest start-up, based in Newcastle, with a mission to create an economy of kindness that protects people and the planet.

Kind Currency functions as a community. The power of community is the energy to create change. Community simplifies the problem by working collectively to deliver one purpose, ultimately enabling a solution to a capacity that not only allows us to overcome our issues, but also allows us to flourish beyond expectation. The community has two pathways, providing local businesses and local people with the power to challenge social injustice and climate change.

The community connects ethical businesses that join the Kind Business Club for free with our Human-kind Club subscribers, conscious consumers keen to make more ethical and sustainable choices, ready to shop kind. This subscription fee subsidises our 'Kindness Fund', which is then used to provide resources and opportunities to the kind local people living in deprivation; our voluntary and charity workers, care workers, NHS workers and ex-service people.

In setting up Kind Currency, there seemed to me to be a natural overlap between our mission and that of The Good Work Pledge, established by the North of Tyne Combined Authority, headed by Metro Mayor Jamie Driscoll. The Good Work Pledge is designed to help local businesses demonstrate their commitment to providing not just jobs but good jobs – ones that provide security, development opportunities, and a decent standard of living.

To 'take' The Good Work Pledge means signing up to five 'pillars' of good practice:

- Valuing and rewarding the workforce
- Promoting health and wellbeing
- Effective communications
- Representation developing a balanced workforce
- A social responsibility.

Taking the pledge, said Mayor Jamie Driscoll, is a chance for businesses "to showcase the fact they're a good business, and a good employer, providing and delivering consistently good work".

The similarities in purpose between Kind Currency and The Good Work Pledge provide a clear opportunity for collaboration between the two initiatives. And so, as part of their application to join Kind Currency and be celebrated as a 'kind business', local enterprises are required to meet the first pillar of good practice – that is, valuing and rewarding the workforce – and any two of the remaining pillars. The idea being that kind businesses are good to work for – and vice versa. Both communities support local people, local businesses, local communities, the local economy, and the local environment, embedding kindness and sustainability in what they do.

It's early days for Kind Currency but it's fantastic to have the support of The Good Work Pledge, the NTCA, and the Mayor. I'm looking forward to the opportunities we can create together for the people and businesses in an effort to make the North East the kindest region in the UK. No-one can do everything, but everyone can do something. A kinder way of doing business is just a start.

Our collective voices and actions can deliver change.

We can alleviate the poverty crisis and the climate emergency but only if we come together, community is our most valuable asset.

To find out more about Kind Currency visit...
kindcurrency.co.uk





Steve Batey, Owner of Rural Generator Services.
Photo credit: Nat Wilkins, Canny Productions.

SUPERCHARGING RURAL BUSINESS GROWTH

Northumberland companies are being boosted by large-scale support programmes, which are helping them to diversify and supercharge their growth plans across the rural economy. Advance Northumberland looks at the success to date – and urges businesses who want to benefit to get in touch.

“I’m really optimistic about the future,” says Ralph Thompson, owner of Alnwick-based Silvermoor Ltd. “We have loads of new products in the pipeline to launch and also opportunities with export as well.”

These are exciting times for Ralph and his team, who produce haylage for the equestrian, dairy and poultry sectors.

Silvermoor’s growth has been supported by the North of Tyne Rural Business Growth Service Programme, which helps micro, small and medium-sized businesses in the rural areas of Northumberland, Newcastle and North Tyneside.

The programme – delivered by Advance Northumberland and Northumberland County Council and part funded by the North of Tyne Combined Authority – will assist more than 300 businesses on their growth journeys by 2023. More than £1 million of support has been awarded to date. And just under £1 million is still available for businesses to tap into.

The programme offers a Capital Grant Investment Fund to support investment in projects that enable rural businesses to expand productive capacity and / or diversify into new markets or products, which will lead to new job creation.

In addition, its Business Advice and Support Services can help companies with the development of growth plans and guide them towards appropriate sources of finance. There’s a single point of contact, with access to 1-2-1 specialist advice via Technical Advisors that specialise in business planning, financial planning and management, financial projections, supply

chain, resilience planning, legal advice and taxation.

Powering expansion, workforce development and diversification

In Silvermoor’s case, the £57,974 worth of grant assistance received under the North of Tyne Rural Business Growth Service Programme has helped the company tackle new markets.

Visit the company’s site and you’ll find new bailers, a new briquette machine and a new forklift truck, which are powering its progression.

The investment also provided a catalyst for workforce development, with the appointment of several new machine operators.

For Glendale Engineering Milfield Ltd – a Wooler-based company specialising in large-scale commercial and agricultural steel frame construction – the programme has helped to fund plant machinery, create new jobs and enable diversification.

The firm was awarded £42,640 through the programme, which supported the purchase of a 14-tonne excavator with steel wrist tilt rotator: this has enabled it to engage and complete civil engineering works along with the manufacture and erection of steel frames on large scale construction projects.

The result? Glendale Engineering can take on larger scale projects and it has been able to start a new arm of the business specialising in ground works: four new staff members were taken on to support this.

Paul McKenna, Glendale Engineering Finance Director, is in no doubt of the programme’s impact. “This expansion project into ground works has been in our business plans for some time now as we were receiving more and more enquiries to deliver the complete package from civils to structural steel, including M&E,” he explains. “We would not have been able to get this project off the ground in such a timely manner without this support.”

The programme has also made a big impact on Pilgrims Gelato, which sells vegan gelato from its shop on Holy Island. Funding of £23,053 has supported the creation of a purpose-built production facility in Denwick, and helped Pilgrims Gelato extend its reach to tourism hotspots across the North East.

“The future looks really exciting,” says owner Charlotte Thompson.

And for Mousen Ltd – named after its location near Bamburgh – grant funding of £150,000 supported investment into a factory to produce environmentally-friendly heat briquettes and compost briquettes. The company, which is part of the Calibrate Group, states that the investment in the site will help to create new job opportunities.



“
...the future
looks really
exciting...”

These are just some of the companies who have benefited from the Rural Business Growth Service. North of Tyne Cabinet Member for Culture, Creative, and Rural Cllr Glen Sanderson, who is Leader of Northumberland County Council, said: "It's wonderful to see great Northumberland companies like Pilgrims, Glendale and Silvermoor flourish as a result of support from the North of Tyne Rural Business Growth Service Programme and North of Tyne funding."

"Support for business is key to the North of Tyne devolution deal. We're committed to seeking ways to unlock potential, create conditions for businesses to flourish, nurture investment, and support long term opportunities for growth."

Putting rural communities at the heart of business growth

A new business has been launched to provide families living off-grid with specialist maintenance and servicing of home generators across rural Northumberland.

Launched in late 2021, Rural Generator Services, owned by Steve Batey, specialises in the maintenance and servicing of home generators, providing a lifeline to the 350 off-grid households across the county.

Reliant on the use of generators to provide their electricity, these households have, until now, had to call on support from outside the region when their systems have broken down or needed maintaining.

Steve worked alongside the Rural Design Centre Innovation Project - delivered by a partnership between Advance Northumberland, Innovation SuperNetwork and Northumbria University - as part of the 'Powerless People' campaign, which has involved working alongside Community Action Northumberland to help find short- and medium-term solutions to the issues faced by the off-grid community in rural Northumberland.

Steve Batey said: "The support I received inspired me, encouraging me to 'take up the spanners' again, and that's how I came about setting the business up."

"People are struggling to get someone out to look at, and look after, generators in the rural area, so I thought, 'well, I can help'."

Interested in support for your business? Don't waste any time!

The Rural Business Growth Service can help growth plans and guide businesses towards appropriate sources of finance and enable expansion and diversify for the future.

We'd encourage any Northumberland businesses who want to take up this support to contact the Rural Business Growth Team as soon as possible.

A Rural Enterprise Specialist will diagnose, develop and manage an individual tailored programme of support for your business.

You can reach the team on 01670 528 400, email: ruralsupport@advancenorthumberland.co.uk or visit www.ruralbusinessgrowthservice.co.uk

Further information

The North of Tyne Rural Business Growth Service 2020 – 2023 is a £7.9 million programme of investment part funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) as part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014-2020, and the North of Tyne Combined Authority.

The Rural Design Centre Innovation Project is working alongside local communities across Northumberland and providing local SMEs with the tools to develop new products and services. For more information about work happening near you, head to the website; <https://www.rural-innovation.co.uk>

The Rural Design Centre Innovation Project is part funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) as part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014-2020, and the North of Tyne Combined Authority.



Silvermoor in Alnwick has been supported by the North of Tyne Rural Business Growth Service Programme



Michael Cantwell

PREPARING YOUR BUSINESS FOR SALE

By Michael Cantwell, head of corporate finance at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors Ltd

The last two years have been the catalyst for change on a wide range of different fronts within the commercial world.

Without the pandemic, there's no way, for example, we would have seen remote and flexible working being such a common occurrence as it is today, as without being forced to go down this route, most businesses wouldn't have been willing to take the risk of finding out if it worked for them and their staff.

There's also been a surge in the number of people deciding to go into business for themselves, with more than 4,200 new companies set up in the first quarter of 2022 alone.

These new entrepreneurs may have had, perhaps for the first time, the opportunity to flesh out a business idea while on furlough, or they may now feel that, after everything that we've all been through, they should simply seize the day.

At the other end of the business management process, we're finding that a growing number of business owners are changing their plans around selling it on.

Before the pandemic, many entrepreneurs would have been content with continuing to run their businesses up to a point in the far-off future when they would consider selling or passing them on.

But whether through their personal well-being, a change in priorities or gaining a new perspective on the world, we're seeing more of them bring these succession plans forward with a view to them being able to enjoy the fruits of their labours sooner rather than later.

If you're in this position, there are a number of issues to think about to make sure you get full value for your assets and can dispose of it in a way that suits your needs.

Selling a business is usually best approached as a long-term project, although in the present climate, the process has been condensed by seeking out the right kind of expert advice.

First of all, consider how you want to leave the business – by making a clean break, as would seem likely in this situation, or having an agreed handover period to ensure a smooth transition to the new owners?

The latter approach may realise you more capital in the longer term, but may not fit with your present needs.

Your next consideration is who might buy it from you? Your management team might be your best initial port of call, especially as it could cause bad feeling among key staff members if they don't get an early opportunity to express their interest in the business.

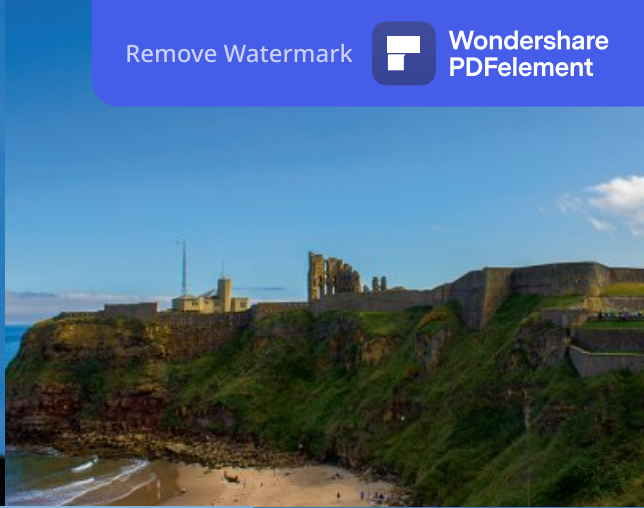
Alongside this option, there might be rival businesses in your sector that are looking for acquisitions as part of their growth strategy, while your professional advisors might also have contacts who they know are on the lookout for a new challenge and could be a good match for you and your business.

When any discussions begin, showing that you've successfully achieved solid sales and profits in the past is clearly going to be important, but it's equally important to be able to show that you've got the structures and people in place to carry this on in the future.

Potential buyers are going to be interested in three main areas - your client list, your brand/ reputation and your infrastructure, all of which will combine towards creating sustainable value in your business, so you should be doing all you can to gather robust information in each of these areas as early as you can.

We're clearly still in a volatile economic situation, but that doesn't mean there won't still be buyers out there for quality businesses, and getting robust, independent advice on your disposal plans will help you get everything you need in place to maximise your chances of achieving your sale objectives.

For further information on managing all aspects of business disposals and acquisitions, please contact Michael Cantwell at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors on 0191 256 9500 or via michael.cantwell@r-m-t.co.uk



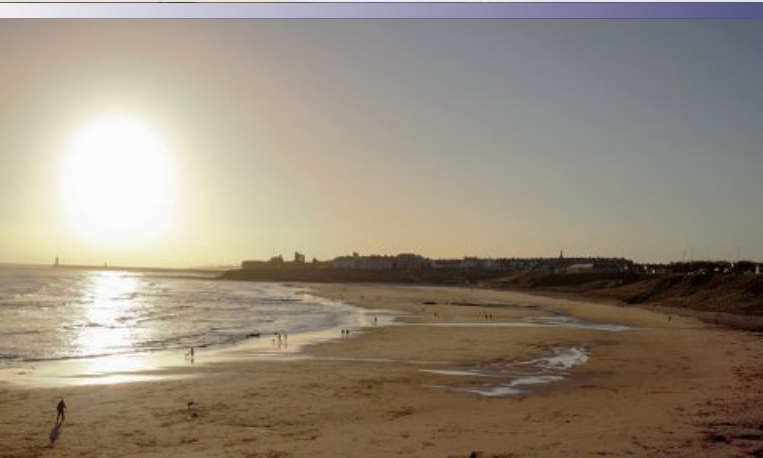
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FORMULA PLASTICS RENEWS NEL INVESTMENT RELATIONSHIP AS PART OF NEW SCALE-UP STRATEGY

A County Durham injection moulding firm has renewed its longstanding relationship with the North East's most active business investor as part of its plans to double its turnover by the end of next year.

Formula Plastics has worked with NEL Fund Managers to bring in a £100,000

investment from the North East Small Loan Fund Supported by The European Regional Development Fund via the Recovery Loan Scheme as it looks to regain ground lost during the pandemic.

The Newton Aycliffe-based firm manufactures high tolerance precision components which are used by companies in a growing range of sectors, including automotive, engineering, lighting and electronics.

Having diversified its customer base and enhanced its business development resources, Formula Plastics is now aiming to take its current £2m turnover up to around £4m by the end of next year, with up to 20 new jobs set to be created as the business grows.

Formula Plastics' relationship with NEL goes back to 1996, when it provided start-up funding to get the business going.

The new Small Loan Fund investment is the seventh time that the two organisations have worked together, with Formula having successfully exited their most recent agreement in 2015.

John Suggate, chairman at Formula Plastics, says: "In common with many companies, the last few years have proved challenging for us, but we're now see signs of improvement across all the sectors in which we're active and want to capitalise on the opportunities this provides.

"The high standards to which we've always worked and the quality of the work that we deliver are being recognised and welcome by clients in a growing range of industries, and we're seeing our order book filling up across all the markets in which we're active."

RGCF CONTINUES EXPANSION WITH LATEST APPOINTMENT

RG Corporate Finance (RGCF) continues to grow its team of experienced corporate financiers with the addition of Corporate Finance Executive Sam Shield.

Sam joins RGCF following the promotion of Tom Cosby from Corporate Finance Executive to Corporate Finance Manager.

Sam, who is an exam-qualified Chartered Accountant, graduated from the University of York in 2018 with a BSc in Chemistry and a MSc in Management and he joins the firm from Deloitte where he was an Audit & Assurance Assistant Manager.

As a result of Sam's appointment, RGCF now boasts a team of 23, making RGCF one of the largest, full-service CF advisory boutiques in the North East. Working with clients regionally, nationally and internationally, RGCF has built a strong track record for advising its high growth clients on all aspects of growth, change and transformation, including M&A transactions, such as acquisitions, disposals, MBOs and MBIs, and fundraises.

Carl Swansbury, Partner and Head of Corporate Finance at RGCF, who founded RGCF back in May 2011, said: "Sam is a brilliant, welcome addition to our growing CF business, which is continuing to excel in the advisory services we provide to our clients.

"Having advised on 42 completed transactions in 2021, including the sale of Fostr to IDHL, the MBO of Energize, eQS's acquisitions of EW Group,



Challenge Consultancy and The Educational Guidance Service, the sale of Epco to Mega Group and the MBO of Komatsu, to name a few, we entered 2022 with a very strong pipeline of M&A transactions, which has continued to increase and has created the opportunity for us to grow the team.

"We're delighted to have Sam joining us. His experience of working with a wide range of

businesses across a number of sectors will be of great value to our clients.

Sam Shield said: "I am looking forward to progressing my career with RGCF and working alongside Carl, Nick, Simon, Grahame and the team. RGCF is a very dynamic, fast paced CF advisory business, which has an excellent reputation in the North East and further afield."



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LOWES FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT STRENGTHENS TEAM STRUCTURE



Andy Gardiner

Leading North East financial advisory firm, Lowes Financial Management, has strengthened its leadership team with the appointment of its first associate director.

Andy Gardiner has been employed to the new role as part of a wider restructure and expansion of the practice and services.

As a multi-award-winning IFA, Lowes – which last year celebrated 50 years of servicing clients – recently opened a new office in Teesside to further develop its national and regional profile.

With headquarters in Newcastle, the firm has plans to open further offices during the year and is adjusting its team structure to accommodate and manage the planned changes and growth.

Chartered Financial Planner and Fellow of the Personal Finance Society Andy Gardiner, 40, of Gosforth, Newcastle has been with Lowes for more than 16 years and has seen the financial advisory market alter significantly during that period.

Andy said: "It's a real pleasure to be taking up this new role at this exciting time. Lowes has some big plans to build on its strong traditions of personal finances being cared for personally whilst also embracing greater use of technology to enhance client service and our fantastic investment proposition.

"I look forward to playing a key role in helping to promote and develop the firm, taking things to the next level, establishing an enhanced advice proposition to ensure sustained growth for the business."

He will continue to have a client-facing role but will also have a focus on developing new, improved strategies to further grow and enhance the business.

"Financial services have changed significantly in the last 15 or so years. We need to understand and use technology more, but only for those tasks that can and should be automated," he said. "Face-to-face meetings and the personal service will always be key features of what we do but we also need to be aware that some of our younger, internet savvy clients, are far more comfortable using digital services."

Ian Lowes, MD of Lowes Financial Management, said: "For a successful business with a 50-year history under our belt, it's time to start writing

the next chapter. We need dynamic people like Andy and others in the team to drive the business forwards, to cement Lowes as the largest and best IFA in the North East.

"It is important that our advisers constantly add value and help clients build and maintain their wealth. It's important that in the next few years we make Lowes the 'go to' company for financial advice."

Lowes advises clients across a wide range of financial aspects such as inheritance tax planning, investment management, pensions, tax mitigation, long term care and other general financial planning issues helping clients and their families to secure their financial future. More specifically, Lowes is a recognised national authority in the profession on structured retail products.

Last October, Lowes was once again recognised as the UK's Best Investment Advice Firm by financial adviser magazine Money Marketing – winning the award for three out of four years, being runner up in 2019. The Money Marketing Awards are one of the financial services profession's most prestigious awards that recognise and reward the sector's leading advisers and providers.

For more details about the firm visit www.Lowes.co.uk

£1.5 MILLION FUND TO SUPPORT NORTH EAST'S CONSTRUCTION SKILLS SHORTAGE

One of the region's leading colleges has been awarded funds to help create new employment opportunities in the construction, engineering and built environment sector.

Gateshead College has successfully secured £1.5million in funding to establish BuildNE, a new initiative designed to enable long-term unemployed people across Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland enter the workforce. BuildNE will tackle the barriers people face to entering further education, training and the workplace. One of the key goals of the scheme is to provide greater access to sustainable and secure employment opportunities.

The project is also designed to meet a chronic skills shortage in roles such as labourers, joiners, maintenance workers, groundworkers, and road/rail infrastructure engineers. It's specifically intended to support those aged 16 and above struggling to find jobs in the construction sector, especially females and those from BAME communities looking to enter or return to the industry.

Steve Logan, Project Director at Gateshead College, said: "We need to do more to create training opportunities for people to enter the North East construction sector so that we can



address the large skills shortage across the industry.

"BuildNE provides a package of support, training, education and information that enables people currently unemployed and economically inactive to find a way to work, a way to return to employment or a new career direction.

"The project will not only create specific job opportunities for those who need them most, it will also help employers with skills development, providing workers with the appropriate training and skillset to carry out the job required.

"We have well-established and strong working relationships with some of the region's biggest construction employers.

"This, combined with our ability and experience to enable people to learn new skills, new trades and give them access to appropriate qualifications, means we can help people who are struggling to find employment and provide a solution to the construction skills shortage the region faces."

BuildNE includes the provision of advice sessions, taster sessions and training courses that deliver a broad range of work-ready skills for the construction, engineering and property sectors. Through the project, people will gain access to general and specialist skills learning, specific courses, work placements, accredited qualifications guaranteed interviews and access to apprenticeships and jobs.



LUXURY NORTHUMBERLAND HOMES BUILT WITH FW CAPITAL INVESTMENT

A development of luxury country homes has been made possible with investment from the North East Property Fund (NEPF).

North End Farm comprises six high-end, detached homes and four contemporary barn-style properties on the site of a former dairy in Longframlington, Northumberland.

The developer, Form Properties Limited, received a loan of £1.5m from the NEPF to fund the construction of the homes, two of which have already been reserved.

Led by Form Properties Director Michael Foster-Smith, an experienced property developer, work on the initial phase is currently underway and is scheduled to be completed in late summer. Phase two will see the four barn-style homes added to the development.

The site is located on a former dairy at North End Farm and just a few minutes walk into the centre of the village. Longframlington is on the A697, 11 miles north-west of Morpeth and five miles south-east of Rothbury.

Managed by FW Capital, the NEPF was established with the aim of supporting the development of small-scale property schemes and is backed by Santander and the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

FW Capital Investment Executive Tony Cullen said: "This investment provided the opportunity to support the creation of these beautiful, high-quality rural homes in Northumberland. We're pleased to be supporting Form Properties with a finance package from the North East Property Fund and am grateful to Rob Peacock of Solutions Northern Ltd for the introduction.

"Longframlington is a lovely small village located between the Cheviots and the coast – a superb location for buyers.

"In addition to bringing new family homes to the area, the construction work is being completed by a number of local tradesmen, meaning job creation and support for the local economy."



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RYECROFT GLENTON SUMMER DRINKS PARTY

Leading Newcastle-based advisory firm Ryecroft Glenton was delighted to host its long-awaited summer drinks party for its many clients, professional contacts, and friends on the evening of the 12th May 2022. The celebration, held at Banyan Newcastle, was attended by more than 200 guests who gathered to mark the firm's 120th anniversary. The event, postponed from last year due to Covid restrictions, proved a great opportunity for the firm's many guests to socialise and reconnect with one another.





MAVEN LEADS £1.5 MILLION INVESTMENT IN ROMAN

The UK's largest shower manufacturing plant receives funding package from Finance Durham and the North East Development Capital Fund to support record sales demand.

Maven Capital Partners ("Maven") has led a £1.5 million investment in Roman Ltd ("Roman"), a local business that manufactures, sells and installs shower screens, trays, bathroom furniture and fixtures and fittings. The transaction includes an £800,000 investment from the Finance Durham Fund ("Finance Durham") established by Durham County Council and overseen by Business Durham, and a £700,000 investment from the North East Development Capital Fund

("NEDCF"), supported by the European Regional Development Fund.

The funding package will be used to support a significant increase in demand, invest in Roman's 400,000 sq ft manufacturing plant in Newton Aycliffe to purchase new machinery and materials to supply to its growing number of customers.

Roman designs and manufactures shower products to trade merchants and independent retailers, whilst supplying white labelled own branded products to national retailers. The business also has a special projects and supply & fit service that provides bespoke bathroom and shower design, alongside supply and fit solutions to house builders and hotel groups both domestically and internationally.

Providing showering solutions for over 37 years, Roman is the UK and Europe's largest shower manufacturer with a strong presence in over 70 International markets. They support an impressive range of international hotel groups, architects and designers, including Berkeley Homes, Taylor Wimpey, Keepmoat, Miller, IHG hotels and Hilton.

The home furnishing market is large and mature with the UK the second largest market in Europe. Demand has increased during the pandemic and is forecast to continue to grow with opportunities existing within both the online channel retailers, and traditional retailers and merchants.

David Nixon, Senior Investment Manager at Maven, said: "Roman is a well-established business,

with a good reputation and a strong order book. We are delighted to support such a high-profile manufacturing business in the North East and this is a great example of our regional funds working together to provide a long-term finance solution to enable a local business to grow. David and the team are highly experienced and knowledgeable and we look forward to working with them to help the business expand."

David Osborne, CEO of Roman, said: "We find ourselves in a period of prolonged growth and expansion in the UK and internationally. This North East based funding allows us to focus on optimising some amazing opportunities and continuing to create sustainable long term jobs and careers in County Durham."

Cllr James Rowlandson, cabinet member for resources, investment and assets at Durham County Council, said: "It is fantastic that the funding we are providing through Finance Durham has enabled Roman to take advantage of the growing demand for their products, both nationally and internationally. As one of the longest established businesses on Aycliffe Business Park we recognise how additional funding will help create more and better jobs and contribute towards a strong competitive economy for the future."

mavencp.com

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Andrew Marsh

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.

Following on from his diversity article last month, Andrew is this month looking at the importance of a robust policy and approach for engagement rather than simply paying lip service here and there.

"In the Diversity, Engagement and Inclusion conversation each are as important as each other, and intricately bound together, but for the purpose of this article I am focusing on Engagement.

"So what is Engagement? In essence, Engagement is how you communicate and create an environment for people, namely employees, customers and stakeholders; and how you encourage them to interact with your company or organisation long term.

"Engagement isn't just a one-way street. Good engagement not only creates a channel for sharing, it should also create a channel for listening to inform further engagement. And it isn't just about creating the right environment, it's about what you do with that environment and why. People will only engage repeatedly if they feel the feedback is positive, and if their engagement action was made easy by you.

"Engagement isn't just about the language and communication tools you use. It is also a physical act like providing ramps for wheelchairs, changing rooms for babies, hearing loops, braille, prayer rooms, suitable washroom facilities...the list goes on for physical engagement but at its core, it is about how you allow people to consume your offering, on their terms.

"Once you start with engagement you must continue it, and that is very important when it comes to internal engagement with your team and throughout any recruitment process.

"The subject of Engagement is so wide, that it takes on the potential of a whole book, not just an article, so for the rest of this article I am going to concentrate on talent engagement.

"Talent engagement is currently a real challenge, following both the pandemic and Brexit, the UK has become a job seekers market. There is a shortness of skilled people, and those who are skilled can command silly salaries in certain sectors. So, it is paramount that as an employer you use as many engagement tactics as possible to keep your team loyal and connected. Being an attractive employer takes much more than ticking boxes, so let's explore what you can do.

"Firstly, everyone deserves to be comfortable where they work, so look at your facilities – are they clean, modern, fit for purpose? Are work stations good for posture, is the lighting right, do you have good kitchen facilities? Is hygiene high and is everyone in your employ's needs taken into consideration? I once heard a story about an employee who returned from maternity and had to express in the disabled toilet, storing her breast milk in the fridge where people's lunches and milk was stored – was that employer engaging with her as an employee to make her feel valued at a time when she was probably very emotionally stretched? It goes without saying that company lost that employee and her talents.

"Holidays are also very important to most people. Does your policy meet needs for adequate time out and seem fair? I am hearing of more and more companies that close between Christmas and New Year

but expect their team to knock those days off their annual holiday allowance, with no option. Imagine how great they would feel and how much more engaged in the New Year they would be, if you gifted them those days you are closed as a thank you!

"Many people engage more when entrusted with responsibility and accountability. By having ownership, many employees find their motivation and determination to do well. By trusting, you encourage a long-term engagement and a trust that is given back to you. It is a win-win situation.

"Respect is also important – both ways. Open forums and honesty create a mutually respectful engagement. Showing you are human, and you have understanding also goes a long way, as long as there is a fine line understood that isn't crossed bringing too much personal baggage or too many mistakes into play.

"Regular team and one-on-one focus meetings foster an excellent opportunity to engage with each other's needs and expectations. Bonding and co-created visions help team structure and make people 'belong' which is key to commitment and engagement.

"Rewards should also be personalised to encourage ongoing and dependable engagement. Not everyone is motivated by the same goals. For some it's money, for some it's a positive experience, for some it's time off, for others it's acknowledgement. Find out what makes your people tick personally, and they will engage right back. Showing you care, that you take time to know them and want them to feel good, is priceless.

"A Vistage 2020 survey stressed that engagement had to be ongoing to be successful. And if it is done right sales, staff retention and profit all took a positive turn of up to 20% organically. Donald Rheen also talks about how employee engagement increases profitability, but it needs measuring to make sure the outputs justify the inputs, and that it isn't just taken for granted which is when profitability starts to drop off again.

"Support organisations such as ScaleUp Capital are investing in engagement platforms, and CEOs across the UK are visibly driving cultural change to tackle staff turnover. According to a recent Deloitte survey, 28% of UK employees either left their job in 2021 or plan to this year. According to an article in Investment Times this month, the same trend can be seen across the globe, with the 'quit rate' reaching a 20-year high.

"All that added together means we must accept that it is time to acknowledge our engagement as a whole needs to improve area, and as leaders we have to step up and be the ones to drive it!"

If you need help improving engagement throughout your company or your board, then do get in touch with Andrew on andrew@marshbusinesstransformation.co.uk



Gemma Graham

ACCOUNTANCY FIRM LAUNCHES MARKETING COACHING SERVICE LINE

Accountancy firm Robson Laidler has launched a marketing coaching provision as part of its advisory services, making it the first professional services firm of its kind to offer a creative solution to its clients.

The firm, which has offices in Jesmond and Durham, has launched this service due to a demand in its clients wanting a more holistic approach to their business strategy.

The marketing coaching will be delivered by Robson Laidler's head of marketing Gemma Graham and will be run as one-day programme with follow up sessions covering strategic marketing planning, audience mapping, sustained competitive advance and creative tactics to help businesses reach their goals.

Gemma Graham said: "The marketing coaching is aimed at providing a seamless solution for clients who utilise our business advisory services but can also be done as a standalone project.

"We've been considering offering marketing coaching as part of our suite of business advisory services at Robson Laidler for some time, as when planning for growth in business, there is often

demand for marketing to help fuel the business strategy.

"Expansion or diversification often means there is a need for initial and ongoing marketing advice as well as support around business development and PR. Therefore, it makes sense to bring together our marketing expertise in-house and coaching capabilities to complement our own business advisory support; helping companies to achieve their goals, remain competitive and stand out.

"After the coaching session clients come away with clear marketing goals and KPIs to help them achieve results and a comprehensive marketing strategy that they can utilise in their business."

Robson Laidler has already achieved marketing success with clients including online fashion retailer Dressmezee, money laundering consultancy Sage Consult and garage D&R Tyres.

Sue Hart general manager at Dressmezee said: "The marketing coaching service from Robson Laidler was a no-brainer for us. We were already working with our RL business coach who introduced us to Gemma as we had questions on our current marketing tactics and how these fit with our overall business goals. Gemma was able to help us unpick this and pull together a revised marketing and PR strategy and worked alongside our current marketing assistant to execute this. Robson Laidler has also helped us break into the local media scene, helped with the recruitment of our new marketing manager and is always on hand for advice."

Client relationship director Martin Wardle said: "We are excited about working in this way with our clients and we have already seen amazing results from those who have undertaken the marketing coaching service.

"Often business development, marketing and business strategy work hand-in-hand, and we are thrilled to be able to offer this full suite of support to the businesses we work with. It's a natural development for Robson Laidler and a great extension to our business."

Robson Laidler's other business advisory services include, business planning, cashflow management, forecasting, identifying wastes, organisational reviews and assistance with funding applications.

www.robson-laidler.co.uk/accelerator



L-R: Andrew Moorby Managing Partner, Peter Gallanagh, Regional CEO, North, Azets

AZETS ACQUIRES £13M TURNOVER TAIT WALKER IN THE NORTH EAST

Azets, the UK's largest accounting firm and specialist business advisor to SMEs, recently announced the acquisition of Tait Walker, one of the largest independent accountants and business advisors in the North East.

It marks the third UK acquisition in four months as Azets continues to deliver on its ambitious growth plans, with the £13m turnover firm advising around 4,000 clients.

Tait Walker was established in 1937 and has five offices across the North East and Cumbria – headquartered in Gosforth (Newcastle), with offices in Stockton (Tees Valley), Morpeth, Durham and Carlisle.

The acquisition takes Azets' UK regional network to 84 offices and enhances the UK Top 10 accounting firm's key service lines including Accounting, Audit and Assurance, Tax, Data Analytics, Corporate Finance, and Payroll services.

Tait Walker also provides a Wealth Management service, authorised to provide regulated activities by the FCA, which expands Azets' UK Wealth Management service into the North for the first time, extending its successful business in the South.

Tait Walker clients will benefit from Azets' current and future investment in technology, with digital platforms such as Azets CoZone being further developed to help deliver a technology enabled, advisory-rich service to help clients grow and

provide them and our people with tools and information to enable real-time business and commercial advice.

Acquiring Tait Walker adds over 170 talented smart people in business support and client-facing roles to the Azets team, including 12 Partners.

Azets already has a strong presence across the North with eight offices in the North East, six offices in the North West and two in Yorkshire.

Chris Horne, Group CEO of Azets, which supports some 120,000 clients across its network of over 165 offices in the UK and Nordics, said: "We're excited to welcome Tait Walker to the Azets family; this firm has a reputation for high-quality people providing first class client service. The acquisition is another significant step on our growth journey to increase revenue by 50% in the next five years, following quickly on from our recent acquisitions of Garbutt + Elliott in Yorkshire and Inspire Accountants in Poole. Tait Walker is established among the leading accounting and business advisory firms in the North East, with a long heritage of excellence and a broad capability across accountancy and business advisory services.

"Azets offers trusted, business critical advice, compliance and outsourcing services to ambitious companies and business owners. Tait Walker Wealth Management is a logical and valuable add on as we work to provide our clients with more advice that will improve their businesses and their lives."

Peter Gallanagh, Regional CEO for the North at Azets UK, added: "We believe strongly in the local delivery of personalised client services, whilst giving businesses in the North East the opportunity to benefit from our breadth, depth, and experience as an SME focused international accounting, tax, audit, advisory and business services group. Tait Walker has a strong regional reputation for its personable approach and specialist expertise which, combined with Azets' local and international reach, opens up a wealth of opportunities for our clients."

Andrew Moorby, Managing Partner at Tait Walker, said: "This is a wonderful opportunity for Tait Walker and our clients, and the acquisition demonstrates our commitment to the continued growth of our business, as we enter the next phase of our long and successful journey as part of the UK's newest Top 10 accounting firm. Azets is a business which shares our clear focus on people and clients – it is the perfect fit both strategically and culturally.

"Tait Walker has a long-standing reputation for delivering service excellence to businesses across the North East. As part of Azets, existing and new SME clients will benefit from an even broader set of specialist expertise, as they continue to drive forward the UK's economic recovery."

www.azets.co.uk



UNW'S EMPLOYMENT TAXES UPDATE 2022

Newcastle-based independent chartered accountancy and business advisory firm UNW recently held its annual Employment Taxes Update at The Catalyst building in the Newcastle Helix development.

Following on from last year's virtual update, this year saw a return to an in-person event, with around 100 guests from a wide range of sectors in attendance.

Following an introduction by UNW's Employment Taxes Partner Lee Muter, attendees heard some of the latest industry insight from the firm's Employment Tax specialists, David Paul and Paul Tucker, who presented on National Insurance Contributions and Tax Exemptions respectively. Special guest speaker Katy Hampton (Ex-HMRC and Managing Director of Fair Pay Hub Ltd) gave a presentation on the main issues employers should be aware of in relation to National Minimum Wage before the panellists joined each other on stage to answer questions posed by the audience.

If you would like more information about UNW's employment tax offering, please visit www.unw.co.uk





"WHAT IF WE DON'T CHANGE AT ALL...
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THE FUNDING SUPERHERO

This is a tale of how help can come from unexpected places. The key is to take advice. You may well be very pleasantly surprised.

Mr. Max Profit, business owner, and his Finance Director, Arthur Sixpence, are having a meeting as to how they should fund the much-needed modifications to the production line of the business, "Profit and Moore Manufacturing Limited."

"Max, I don't think the bank will help us with the £200,000 we need," moaned Arthur. "And if they do they will probably want a charge over your house."

"Well they can't have that. Mrs. Profit would never put up with it. It is where we brought up the little Profits and so she would never risk it. I don't like the idea either. These are challenging times," opined Max.

"But we do need new machinery?" Arthur was

seeking confirmation.

"No doubt about that" affirmed Max. "We need to keep up with the competition."

Arthur scratched his chin in an effort to look as though he was thinking. In reality he just had an itch. "What about looking for a business angel to invest?"

Max raised an eyebrow in a rather Roger Moore manner. "Really? Are you serious? Such an investor would want a chunk of ownership of the company for a paltry £200,000."

"It's not paltry if you haven't got it yourself," proffered Arthur nervously.

Max swung toward Arthur, eyes ablaze, and was about to lambast him when the door flew open!



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

"It is I, The Funding Superhero! You have known me as your independent financial adviser but I have Super Funding powers."

"David!? What on earth...?" stammered Arthur.

The Funding Superhero pulled himself up to his full five foot seven and a half and announced "You think you do not have the wherewithal for the new machinery, but you do! I have been advising you, Max, on your pension for the last few years and it can fund your needs."

Max and Arthur looked at each other in some disbelief.

The Funding Superhero continued, "The pension fund can take a charge on the new machinery and lend the company the money to purchase it.

The company will pay interest which is deductible against Corporation Tax but it goes into your pension fund tax free so you get the profit on lending money. The interest rate can be very competitive too and no need for a charge on your house."

Max grinned. "That's brilliant! How much can I borrow?"

"Up to 50% of your fund value as long as the pension fund can take some security."

"So, I could borrow more and get some new delivery trucks?" asked Max.

"Yes, and any older pension plans could be consolidated and used for lending purposes," said David, The Funding Superhero.

“

...The Funding Superhero pulled himself up to his full five foot seven and a half...

"David, you are a genius and have given me and my business a new lease of life. But I must ask."

"Anything" said David, "I am here to help."

Max continued, "Do you really think that the Y Fronts worn over your blue pinstripe suit is a good look?"

If you would like more information, or would like to discuss your own position, then please do not hesitate to contact me or my colleagues, David Hughes and Denise Graham.

Peter Rutherford is a director at Rutherford Hughes Ltd. He can be contacted on 0191 229 9600 or peter.rutherford@rutherfordhughes.com www.rutherfordhughes.com

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Di Keller

TAKING A LEAD ON EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Specialist Di Keller talks all about her role at Karbon Homes and why she volunteers with the IoD North East (North) branch to spread the equality, diversity and inclusion message.

Tell us about your role at Karbon Homes.

At Karbon Homes we build, manage and look after affordable homes for people across the North. And then we go further, we give them the strong foundations they need to get on with life. My role as Strategic Equality Diversity and Inclusion Lead is to help Karbon deliver its ambitions to be more inclusive for our people, our communities and our organisation.

Why is Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) so important to organisational success?

For me there are four key areas; Financial, Legal and Regulatory, Market and Reputation and People. There is a lot of high quality research available that will give more in depth context into the importance of each of these areas, but most will circle back to people, whether that is people in your organisation or the people who are your end users, be that your customers, communities you work with or other organisations. As a society we are demanding more and especially post pandemic we've seen a seismic shift in what people are looking for from their worklife as an employee through to the environment we are living in. ED&I is at the centre of all of these areas and should be a key part of any business strategy, but often we see it as a bolt on.

How are you bringing your ED&I experience to bear as a branch member for IoD North East (North)?

Wherever an organisation is on their journey with ED&I it can sometimes feel overwhelming, uncomfortable and there is often a huge concern for getting it wrong. I have worked with many organisations and across many different sectors. This has given me great insight into what has worked well and what hasn't in terms of ED&I. It is a continual journey of learning for us all. As all members bring their own expertise and experience to the branch network – my role as a member and an ambassador is to support our current and future members on their journey with ED&I.

Why is being an IoD member so important to you?

I work within a number of networks and have found huge benefit from the diverse aspects they all bring to my personal and professional development. In honesty, the IoD felt as though it was out of my reach, that I wasn't good enough to be a member. I then realised that I had fallen into 'Imposter Syndrome' which is something I talk to other people about quite often. I knew Sarah Waddington, who is now our branch chair, through another of my networks and after chatting with her I realised that the offering of the IoD was very broad and diverse and very much open to everyone. So for me it is about challenging the status quo – both from building our approach to ED&I from within, but making it feel more accessible for others to feel that it's the network for them.

If you had to share one IoD membership benefit with others, what would it be and why?

Opportunity! From meeting and working with peers across our region to the discounted courses that are a great framework for all stages of your journey as a director.

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www.iod.com/locations/yorkshire-north-east

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MINCOFFS SOLICITORS WELCOMES NEW PARTNER

An award-winning North East law firm is consolidating a successful start to the year with the appointment of a new Partner.

Head of Residential Conveyancing Emma Liddle has been promoted to Partner at Jesmond-based Mincoffs Solicitors.

With more than 20 years of experience in the field, Emma – who is a Chartered Legal Executive – has been pivotal in growing the service at the firm since she joined in 2013, with restructures to both the team and its processes.

The promotion takes the number of Partners at Mincoffs to 12 and Emma is looking forward to stepping into the role.

"It has been an incredibly tough couple of years for everyone involved in the property market, with the uncertainty of Brexit and the pandemic followed by a surge in demand bolstered by the stamp duty holidays," she said.

"I am delighted to be appointed to Partner and I hope to assist the firm as a whole so we can continue to grow and flourish."



DURHAM LAW FIRM STARTS FINANCIAL YEAR WITH ELEVEN NEW APPOINTMENTS

Durham City's leading law firm, Swinburne Maddison LLP (Swinburne Maddison) has started a new financial year with a further eleven appointments and promotions as part of its continuing expansion plans.

One year later, Jonathan Moreland, managing partner and head of the firm's dispute resolution and employment teams, reports that the benefits of the new strategic leadership to both its employees and clients have been dramatic, with an increase in fee income of 19% and a rise in net profits of 5%, placing Swinburne Maddison within the top quartile of all law firms nationally.

Leading this new wave of appointments and promotions are Catherine Lowther and Andrew Allon, who have both been promoted to managing associates. Catherine, who is an expert

in family law, has worked for Swinburne Maddison for eight years while Andrew, who specialises in residential property, has three years with the firm.

Three legal directors have also been appointed – associate solicitor in the corporate and commercial team, Mike Ward, who has been at Swinburne Maddison for nine years; Kath Hill, head of the family law department and a CILEX Lawyer, who is a much-valued long-term employee with over 25 years at the firm and David Canwell, a solicitor with ten years of employment in the residential property team. All took up their new roles from May 1.

The firm has also appointed six new associates – Charlotte Excell and Lauren Rutherford, (commercial property), Rebecca Harper (residential property), Lewis Brown (dispute resolution) and Eleanor Bradshaw and Sophie Allerton (corporate and commercial law). With 33 years of service between them at Swinburne Maddison, these latest appointments will provide each member of staff with a springboard for further career development in the future if they so wish.

WBD ANNOUNCES SENIOR PROMOTIONS AT FIRM'S NEWCASTLE OFFICE

Law firm Womble Bond Dickinson (WBD) has confirmed a number of senior promotions across its UK offices, including three new Partners and one Legal Director in the firm's Newcastle office.

Stacey Hall, Sarah Daun and Gavin Ellison have been promoted to Partner, and Liz Evans has been promoted to Legal Director.

Stacey predominantly focuses on corporate transactional work and has experience working for serial acquirers, owner-managers and investors, and has been involved in some of the region's leading deals.



Sarah specialises in privacy law and has significant experience of drafting and negotiating complex commercial agreements across the public, private and third sectors on a national and international basis, with a focus on the manufacturing sector.

Gavin has over 15 years' experience acting for trustees and employers on pensions law, working with clients on formulating and progressing benefit restructuring and transition management exercises for a combination of defined benefit, hybrid and defined contribution schemes.

Liz's principal focus is commercial landlord and tenant work and investment property sales and acquisitions. She has experience of acting for both investors and owner/occupiers in the acquisition and disposal of commercial properties, as well as acting for both landlords and tenants on commercial lease arrangements.

Nigel Emmerson, head of WBD's Newcastle office, commented: "I am thrilled that the Newcastle team is set to benefit from the expertise of three new partners and a new legal director.



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DTUK004168_05/22



Tim Hill with Max and Mollie.

SOLICITOR OF THE MONTH

TIM HILL

Partner and Solicitor Advocate in Eversheds
Sutherland's Environment, Health and Safety team. He
is also the Senior Office Partner for the Newcastle office.

Did you always envisage a career in the industry?

Yes! I love classic film and TV dramas and always harboured romantic notions of finding that 'smoking gun' in the evidence which would turn a Courtroom scene on its head. Fair to say the real legal world is not quite so dynamic, although I like to think I have had my moments!

What has been your career path so far?

I grew up in Newcastle, then had a gap year working for six months at Kidd & Spoor in the City Centre as a combination of general office runner, legal secretary and what would now be regarded as a paralegal; before 6 months travelling and working in France.

I studied law at the University of Nottingham then my LPC at Nottingham Law School. I always envisaged being a corporate lawyer in the City so having secured a summer placement with a magic circle firm I thought I was made. Then on day one of a four week scheme the penny dropped that this was the last thing I really wanted! I changed all my applications to Newcastle firms and was delighted to be offered a training contract with Dickinson Dees. I qualified as a litigator in the Commercial Disputes Group and started picking up elements of health, safety and environmental matters, as well as 'personal' criminal matters for existing clients (!) and licensing when it was still within the remit of the Magistrates'.

My career then took a dramatic turn on 5 October 1999 in the aftermath of the Ladbroke Grove rail crash outside Paddington station: one of the firm's biggest clients operated the franchise of the train which went through the red light leading to the tragedy. Working with specialist health and safety lawyers appointed by insurers, I was inducted into that area of law over the next four years and never looked back.

I then moved to Eversheds in April 2006 to specialise further in a wider range of regulatory criminal work for corporate defendants across a national and international client base. 16 years on and never a dull moment, with the EHS team maintaining its #1 position in both Legal 500 and Chambers & Partners ever since I joined.

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

The nature of my work genuinely means 24/7 access in the event of a crisis, so juggling critical and urgent situations with ongoing work, not to mention testing the patience of my family with short notice changes of plan, presents an ongoing challenge. Usually the rewards of helping clients navigate a way out of those dilemmas makes it all worthwhile, but it never seems to get any easier.

Who do you most respect in your industry?

I was fortunate enough to play a small part in a pro bono project we supported last autumn to help Afghan judges, particularly female judges, try to escape the country after the Taliban's rise to power. To hear first-hand the price they risked paying simply to dispense the justice we all take for granted was truly humbling.

Which fictional lawyer would you most like to meet?

Guilty pleasure: Fletcher Reede (Jim Carrey) in "Liar Liar" – he finds the path of righteousness in the end!

What is your greatest strength?

Being accessible and always finding time to discuss matters with colleagues. I have been Graduate Recruitment Partner for many years and it is always rewarding to be part of the career progression of the next generation of lawyers, and helping them learn and develop into great lawyers.

What is your biggest weakness?

See above: not being able to say No to anyone asking for help!

What are your future career aspirations?

I am delighted to have recently taken over as Senior Office Partner. I am passionate about the growth and strengths of businesses in the North East and having been Regional Chair for Business In The Community for the last three years, it is time to draw those connections together. That should be quite enough to be going on with for the next few years then (hopefully!) time to think about winding down a little.

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

I think there will need to be more consolidation of law firms which presents both opportunities and challenges depending on where you sit. Sadly this may result in even more polarisation between global corporate firms and smaller local firms which does cause me a concern in terms of wider access to justice and the continued delivery of high quality legal advice in a way that is accessible to businesses and individuals at all ends of the spectrum.

How do you like to unwind?

I am rather partial to travel, wine and food, so my two working cocker spaniels are essential to keeping me fit and healthy as well as a perfect way to enjoy the very best walks Northumberland has to offer.

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HAY & KILNER CHOOSES NEWCASTLE'S LUMEN BUILDING FOR NEW STATE-OF-THE-ART HEADQUARTERS



Leading North East law firm Hay & Kilner is making a major investment in relocating its headquarters to one of Newcastle's most exciting new developments.

The independent practice, which celebrated its 75th anniversary last year, is taking over the whole of the fifth floor of The Lumen, which sits on St James' Boulevard within the landmark Newcastle Helix hybrid city quarter.

The 14,600 sq ft open plan space comes with iconic views over the surrounding cityscape and will allow Hay & Kilner to bring its whole Newcastle team together in one place, while also providing room for further colleagues to join them as the practice expands in the future.

While Hay & Kilner has adopted a flexible working model which enables staff to split their week between being office and home-based, each employee still has an allocated desk in the new building to provide the workplace continuity that the staff asked for as part of the move.

A large social space and breakout spaces are also included, while a dedicated client suite runs along the front of the building.

The practice expects to complete its move from its present offices in Newcastle's Cloth Market in the summer.

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.

It has a growing presence in all commercial areas, including in the technology sector, as well as a particularly strong reputation for its private client and rural work.

Jonathan Waters, managing partner at Hay & Kilner Law Firm, says: "The Lumen offers everything that we could have asked for in a new headquarters building and it's fantastic to be starting the next phase of our development in such a spectacular location.

"The quality of the office space, the facilities it provides and its position within our home city are all second to none, while the Helix's wider focus on science and technology reflects an area in which we're already growing our own presence.

"Having a modern open plan office environment will deliver so many benefits in terms of

collaborative working and sharing ideas, while ensuring everyone retains their own dedicated space will provide an important degree of continuity and belonging.

"Our long-term aim is to become a bigger, better version of ourselves and growing the team is very much part of this plan, so we're allowing space in our new offices for more people to join us in the future.

"Our future development will be based around the same basic principles that have always served us well – providing high quality advice and support to clients which meets both their commercial and personal needs, understanding what's important to them as people and bringing our different teams together wherever possible to deliver a comprehensive service that meets all their requirements.

"We're proud to be building on more than 75 years of history in Newcastle and plan to be an independent part of the city's professional services community for many more decades to come."

www.hay-kilner.co.uk

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LAW FIRM

WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND



L-R: Claire French, Mike Cattermole, Stephanie Rodgers, Samantha Edward, Emma Etherington and Nathan Maddison.

It was Richard Branson that once said “if you take care of your employees, they will take care of the clients.”

It's a mantra that's been firmly adopted by a fast-growing, award-winning firm of North East solicitors, whose approach to people development and employee engagement has seen it attract some of the best professionals in their field.

EMG Solicitors started off in a modest way, from a small rented office in Durham, with just a handful of experienced solicitors.

Fast forward a few years and not only does the company have a huge office block in Durham but it also has a branch in Gosforth – and is just about to open its third base in the Lake District.

Overseeing the new Penrith operation is Samantha Edward, a director and head of EMG's Wills, Trusts and Probate division.

Samantha helped launch the Newcastle office – in a prominent position on Gosforth High Street and has now taken on the task of opening in the north west.

If ever confirmation was needed that EMG is not your standard law firm, it's when Samantha reveals that it was her personal wellbeing that helped Managing Director, Emma Gaudern, make the decision to open a third office.

“My family and I are originally from the Lakes and after spending lockdown working from home in Newcastle we wanted to move back to be closer

to family,” said Samantha.

“Emma was concerned about me balancing my work and family life and about me coming back and forth to the North East so she made the decision that we would expand and that meant I could work closer to home.”

Samantha will still retain her role as head of this busy department, but because staff are hand picked for their expertise, she knows that each office is in safe hands.

“We are very lucky to have such a good reputation that many solicitors want to work with us, but we take our time and ensure that we pick the right people,” she said.

Those “right people” in recent years have included bringing in Stephanie Rodgers, who joined as a senior associate early in 2022.

She had previously worked with Samantha at a top 100 law firm in Newcastle before moving to London to join a prestigious company, handling private client work and advising on wills, inheritance tax and estate planning, the administration of estates, the preparation and administration of trusts and capacity matters such as Lasting Powers of Attorney and Deputyship applications.

“I always wanted to bring Stephanie to EMG so I was delighted when she came back to the North East and we got the opportunity to have her on our team,” said Samantha.

“As a Senior Associate Solicitor she brings so much expertise, with the added bonus of being really experienced at business development so she's a complete all-rounder.”

Stephanie is now part of a strong group which includes associate Claire French, who is dually

qualified as both solicitor and accountant and specialises in Wills, Trusts Probate and Court of Protection, solicitor Michael Cattermole – who Samantha also mentioned she was lucky enough to bring to the team earlier this year – and Emma Etherington who both Samantha and Stephanie have worked with previously and who is vastly experienced in a range of private client matters but particularly estate administration.

“We've gathered together people with a huge amount of experience in the area that they specialise in and who fit completely with the ethos of EMG”, added Samantha, who also works for a range of prominent private clients handling multi-million pound estates and advising business owners on inheritance tax planning.

Recognised each year in the Legal 500, Samantha is also now building up the team at Penrith, ready for the official opening later this year.

“EMG Solicitors really isn't like any other law firm,” said the director.

“It is such a great place to work with such a positive culture of inclusivity and support, not just of people professionally but on a personal level.

“The fact that people are happy and want to come to work here filters down to the clients, where everyone is so committed to putting the clients first and doing the best job for them.”

As well as their expertise in Wills Trusts and Probate, EMG Solicitors also offers Court of Protection work, employment law, residential conveyancing, commercial property support, dispute resolution and family law.

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Mark Hipkin

What's the effect of not abiding by Rule 59? It doesn't say 'must' but says 'should'. I see arguments against the cyclist for not abiding by the Highway Code. Does this mean that a cyclist will not get the benefit of the doubt of a Judge in proceedings?

The old Rule 163 stated that cyclists should be given at least as much space as you would a car. Now, the Code says when you pass a vulnerable road user you have to give at least one and a half metres safe passing distance in speeds up to 30 mph and two metres for horses and pedestrians. Another big change is for cars turning left at a junction, to give precedence to cyclists going ahead on their nearside.

This is a risky scenario for cyclists.



CYCLISTS – TAKE CARE!

By Mark Hipkin, Alderson Law LLP

May is blossoming as I write this article and, wherever you go, you can't miss noticing the number of cyclists on our roads, both country and urban. I thought it would be a good idea to remind cyclists of certain legal issues that affect them from racers to folding bike commuters to BMXers.

to motorcycles and scooters, then to cyclists and to pedestrians. Cyclists, you will note, are second bottom of the ladder. There are crucial new parts of the Code. There are new rules about cycle tracks and shared spaces; cycling positioning and riding in pairs and riding in the centre of the lane, together with passing and overtaking, action at junctions and roundabouts and not riding on the pavement. Part of the Code also states that car drivers opening car doors onto cyclists use the 'Dutch reach', i.e. the driver looks over their right shoulder when parked and reaches round to open the door with their left hand rather than opening with their right hand, forcing them to look over their shoulder into their blind-spot.

This should be reflected in court decisions on proof of liability in claims and in criminal prosecutions for driving incorrectly.

There is nearly a 'must' in the Highway Code at Rule 59 for 'cyclists should (my underlining) wear a cycle helmet which conforms to current regulations, a cycle helmet...appropriate clothes for cycling. Light coloured or fluorescent clothing (which helps other road users to see you in daylight and poor light)...reflective clothing and/or accessories in the dark.'

The recent revamp of the Highway Code provides us with the 'hierarchy of road users' in descending order with larger vehicles such as lorries and buses, going down to cars and

“

*...Cycling is
a healthy,
gregarious,
inspiring and
very enjoyable
pastime...*



Another particular problem for two-wheelers is highway defect claims. Potholes are a particular hazard. Two-wheelers approaching a pothole on an already wet road are unable to see that there is a pothole under what appears just to be a bigger puddle of standing water. This requires a careful consideration of the depth, width and length of the pothole and the inspection regime of the highways authority normally the local council, depending upon the frequency of inspection intervals (often six months) but can be daily on a motorway or yearly on a country road. I include negligent 'banding' and/or linear gullies as cyclists can tram line along them. These are often bitterly contested cases especially if the injuries of the cyclist are severe. Witnesses at the scene, immediate and detailed photographs with measurements, enquiries of the nearest householder to the scene as to the level of complaint/inspections, are essential.

These are a few topics that I felt would interest cyclists (and other two-wheelers). Cycling is a healthy, gregarious, inspiring and very enjoyable pastime (or way of life) and you can argue that the UK is miles behind our friends on the continent in how we look after our cyclists. How long will it take for the UK to reach a similar situation on our overcrowded islands? Keep pedalling – and gan canny!

Mark Hipkin practises at Alderson Law LLP in sunny Whitley Bay (it is always sunny in Whitley Bay!), and is a Partner/Head of the Personal Injury and Civil Litigation department. He welcomes your e-mails or calls on the law (or your cycling experiences) at wbay@aldersonlaw.co.uk or call 0191 2533509.

COLLECTIVE CONSULTATION: LESSONS FROM P&O

As nearly 800 P&O Ferries employees were dismissed on 17 March 2022, many asked the question of whether their actions were legal. P&O Ferries CEO, Peter Hebblethwaite, admitted to MPs that his Company broke the law by failing to consult, whilst maintaining that he would make the same decision again.



Paul McGowan

The story is a useful reminder of an employer's collective consultation requirements and the legal and commercial consequences of getting the process wrong.

What is involved in a collective consultation process?

Where the employer makes a proposal to dismiss as redundant 20 or more employees at one establishment, within a 90-day period, the employer is required to engage in collective consultation with a recognised trade union or elected employee representatives.

This process is geared towards minimising the impact of redundancies on impacted employees by providing a period of time, while the redundancy proposal is still in its infancy, for discussions before any dismissals take place.

The consultation process must be conducted with a view to reaching agreement with the employee's representatives on: avoiding dismissals, reducing the number of dismissed employees and mitigating the consequences of dismissals.

Where an employer is proposing to dismiss between 20 – 99 employees within a 90-day period, consultation must begin at least 30 days before the first dismissal takes effect. Where the number is more than 100 employees, this increases to 45 days.

Employers are also required to notify the Secretary of State of their proposals.

The costs of getting it wrong

P&O staff were told that P&O would not be "viable" without jobs being cut immediately. Employers are accustomed to weighing up legal risk against the commercial realities of day-to-day operations. Not only has P & O's approach been a PR disaster there is usually little commercial sense in taking such a ruthless decision, especially when one considers the value legal risks.

One key component of an award for failure to collectively consult is a protective award. The award is capped at a maximum of 90 days' gross pay per employee but considering the nature of these dismissals and their sudden nature, one would have expected a hypothetical award in such a case to be at this maximum level. be near the maximum amount. This would be on top

of payment for notice for impacted employees and unfair dismissal awards and redundancy payments..

However, P&O pre-empted these actions through a reported £36.5 million severance package to cover all their impacted employees via settlement agreements.

P&O could also now face potential criminal charges for failing to inform the Secretary of State about the proposed redundancies. The Insolvency Service announced on 1 April 2022 that it had commenced formal criminal and civil investigations.

Comment

Most employers will not have to deal with redundancies on such a large scale, but this unfortunate situation is a reminder for employers that disregarding the requirement to consult not only has legal and financial risks, but reputational and commercial ones too.

Paul McGowan is Managing Partner at specialist employment lawyers Collingwood Legal www.collingwoodlegal.com



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COMMERCIAL LANDLORDS: DON'T GET LEFT OUT IN THE COLD WHEN IT COMES TO EPC RATINGS



Dale Smith

There have already been several changes in the past five years when it comes to the minimum energy efficiency standards (MEES) and EPC ratings, and now the government is further emphasising its pledge on green energy by introducing new legislation for commercial property leasing.

But what are the changes, and how will they affect your property? Dale Smith, founder and director of residential and commercial conveyancing firm Grey-Smith Legal, explains all...

Going for green

Back in April 2018 the government introduced new legislation to tackle the leasing of unsuitable premises by making it unlawful for a landlord to grant a new tenancy on a commercial property with an EPC rating lower than E. The emphasis here is on new, so existing properties could continue to be leased.

However, in 2020 the government released its energy whitepaper which set out the steps it must take in order to 'power our net zero future' and meet its commitment to reach zero emissions by 2050.

One of the changes it has pledged to make concerns existing property leasing. This means that, as of April 2023, it will also be unlawful to continue

renting a property with an EPC rating of less than E, or indeed, renew a lease too.

Upgrade your EPC

There are several changes you can make to improve the EPC rating your property is given. For commercial property, this includes:

Replacing your boiler

Heating and hot water can account for up to half of your monthly expenditure. Replacing an old boiler with a new, energy-efficient one can typically save you up to 25 per cent if you choose a condensing model. But not only will it save you money, it will also improve the energy efficiency in the building, and, as a result, the EPC rating too.

You could also consider replacing other items such as refrigerators, air conditioning and lighting too. If you're unsure where to start, the government has a list of independently verified energy-efficient products.

Installing roof and wall insulation

Many old commercial properties do not have any insulation, but a well-insulated building can significantly reduce the amount of energy lost, improving your EPC rating in the process. High R-value materials are the most effective, and while you may be able to install some products yourself, a qualified professional will have the skills to ensure you get the maximum thermal performance.

Installing double-glazing

You could save 10 to 20 per cent of energy by replacing single glazed windows and doors. Doing so will mean less heat is lost to the outside, lowering your energy bills and keeping the building warmer. Not only will the ongoing cost be lower

than before, but the EPC rating will improve too.

Installing a renewable energy source

If you have the space and budget to allow for it, install renewables such as solar panels, ground-source heating or biomass boilers. Doing so will ensure your business is at the forefront of sustainability initiatives, as well as raise the EPC value of the property.

Support for businesses

If this sounds expensive, and you are worried about having the budget to pay for the necessary improvements, you may be eligible for support.

There are a number of government schemes offering loans, grants and subsidised energy-saving measures to help businesses reduce their impact on the environment.

Contacting your local council is a good approach as they will often provide funding for energy efficiency or sustainable business growth plans. Some initiatives may also be available for business innovation funding.

Business grants may be available from your energy company too, though these will likely depend on the size of the business, location and sector.

You could also try searching for free grants online.

Act now

We are fast running out of time to make the necessary changes to buildings before the new legislation is introduced. By acting now, you will ensure you can continue to use and lease your commercial properties and avoid any nasty surprises further down the line.

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THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN WRITING YOUR WILL

What is a Will?

A Will is a legal document which lets you decide what happens to your money, property and possessions after your death.

Who should make a Will?

Everyone aged 18 or over who owns property or has savings and/or investments should make a Will.

What happens if I do not make a Will?

If you do not have a Will then the Intestacy Rules will dictate who will inherit your money, property and possessions and these people may not be the ones you wish to inherit anything from you.

If you are cohabiting but are not married and you do not make a Will then your partner will not benefit from your estate.

If you have re-married your children from a previous marriage or relationship may not benefit at all on your death.

If you are married and do not have any children then your surviving spouse will inherit everything.

If you are married and have children then your surviving spouse will inherit:

- All personal chattels
- The first £270,000.00
- Half of the remaining estate (if the estate exceeds £270,000.00)
- The right to acquire the deceased's interest in the matrimonial home

The other half of the remaining estate exceeding £270,000.00 will go to any surviving children.

How many Executors should I appoint?

The minimum number is one. In principle, there is no maximum. However, as only a maximum of four can apply for the Grant of Probate there is little point in naming more than four Executors.

If only one Executor is named then there is a risk that they may predecease the testator or become unable or unwilling to act for some other reason. It is therefore prudent to appoint at least two Executors, or name a substitute.

What are the impacts of jointly owned property?

There are two different ways of jointly owning property. These are as beneficial joint tenants or as tenants in common.

If the property is held as joint tenants, in the event of one of your deaths, the deceased owner's share automatically passes to the surviving owner and not in accordance with their Will.

On the other hand, if the property is held as tenants in common, then in the event of one of your deaths, the deceased owner's share will not pass to the survivor of you but will pass in accordance with your Will.

Gemma Brown



Can I amend my Will?

You cannot amend your Will after it has been signed and witnessed. The only way you can change your Will is by making a Codicil which can be utilised for any minor changes, e.g. removing an Executor. For major changes then you should make a new Will.

How can I avoid a challenge to my Will?

Unfortunately, there is no way you can completely lock down your Will against any contests or disputes. However, you can take the following steps to help avoid the situation:

1. Plan as early as you can to ensure that you have the requisite mental capacity when creating the Will.
2. Use a professional lawyer who will be able to pin-point any potential loopholes or pitfalls.
3. Make at least a lump sum provision in your Will for those relatives who may have a potential claim under the Inheritance (Provision for Family & Dependents) Act 1975.
4. Avoid making regular payments to those relatives you wish to leave out of your Will.
5. Write an accompanying letter to add context to your decisions.
6. Keep your family members in the loop.
7. Give charitably during your lifetime.
8. Review your Will every five years and after any major change in your life, e.g. getting divorced/married or having a child.

As with all other legal documents, we recommend you obtain specialist advice before making a will.

Contact our Wills & Probate expert Gemma Brown by email on Gemma@sweeneymler.co.uk or by phone on 0345 900 5401 for more information.

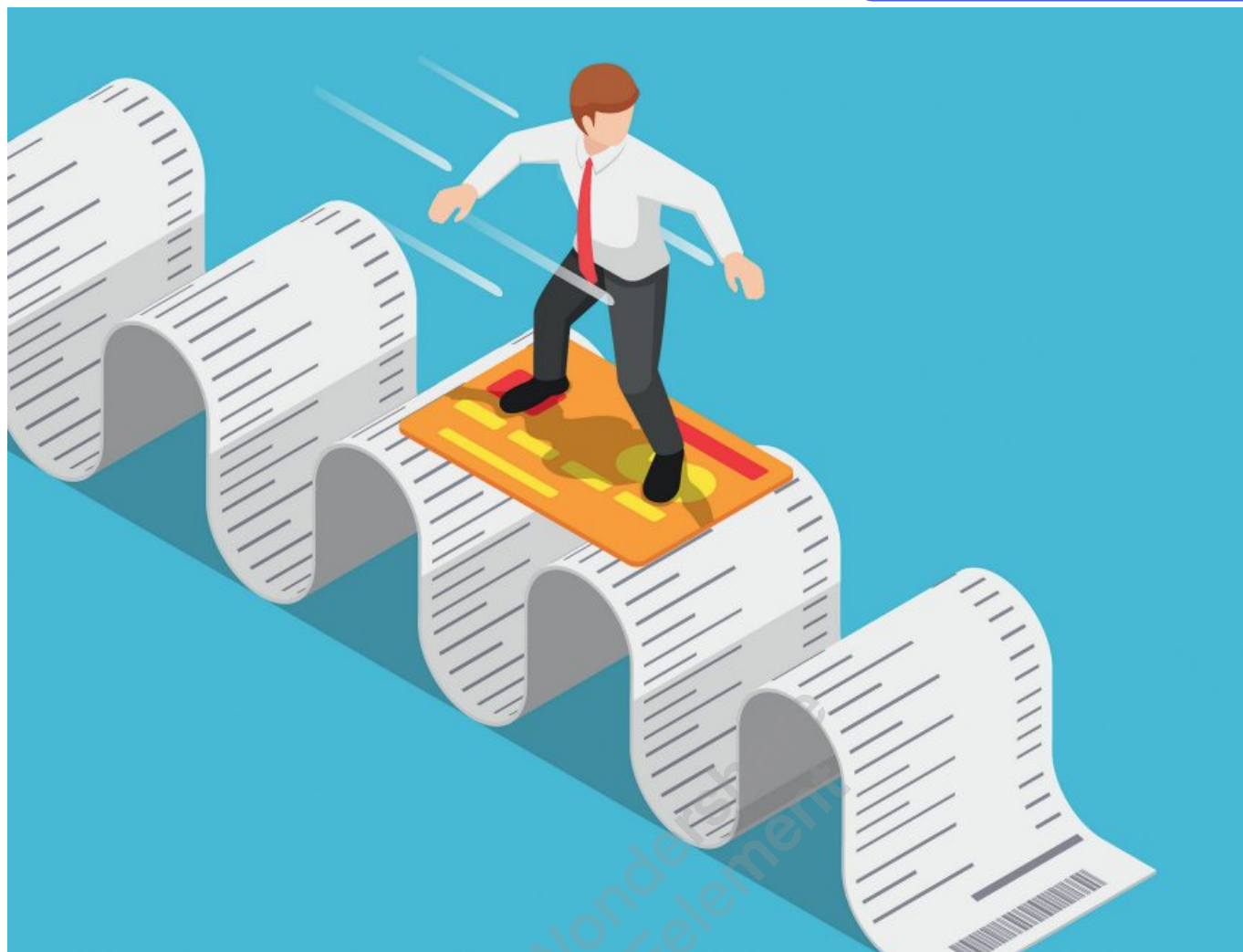
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SOLICITORS



EXPERTS WARN OF 'DEBT TSUNAMI' ON THE HORIZON

The insolvency profession has sounded warnings for quite some time about a predicted 'debt tsunami' resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Now it looks like it's finally arrived. But what can businesses do to get ahead of the wave?

Cash flow shows no signs of improvement and inflation will continue to surge in the coming months – compounded by the recent cost of living crisis, high inflation, supply chain issues and soaring energy prices. Debt recovery experts at Muckle LLP advise it is crucial for those with debt owed to seek advice at the earliest opportunity to get customer invoices paid quicker.

According to recent figures released by the FSB, one in ten businesses (8%) say late payment is now threatening the viability of their business and that close to one in three (30%) has seen late payment of invoices increase over the last three months. Research carried out by industry body R3 showed that almost 670,000 North East companies had unpaid invoices on their books, and more than 38,000 regional businesses had overdue bills.

It also looks like the cash flow squeeze is starting

to translate into formal insolvency procedures. Figures show that, in February 2022, the total number of company insolvencies rose by 121% compared to February 2021 and was 13% higher than the number registered pre-pandemic, in February 2020. This increase has been driven by Creditors' Voluntary Liquidations, which were 40% higher than pre-pandemic levels.*

Beverley Oliver, Head of Debt Recovery at Muckle LLP, said: "We understand the damaging impact this is having on businesses in the region. Our clients tell us that chasing customer payments is a significant distraction from their businesses' day-to-day running.

"But now isn't the time to be complacent. Your customers will likely have multiple creditors. Businesses that are proactive with their debt collection will see their invoices paid first.

"If you've already asked for payment but not received it, then warned you'll escalate and still

not been paid, then you need to seek help. Using a professional service to collect payment will save your time, money and resources.

"Our market-leading debt recovery team has an enviable track record, recovering 92% of B2B debts. We help you get paid quicker, reduce debt write-off, and in some cases, reclaim more than the debt is worth. While results are important, we understand it's a delicate topic, and we ensure that we act appropriately and ethically at what is a difficult time for many organisations. We advise any business to seek professional help as early as possible to make the process seamless for all parties involved."

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To find out more about Muckle Collect, visit: www.muckle-llp.com/mucklecollect or contact our Debt Recovery Team on 0191 211 7889 or email collect@muckle-llp.com

* The Insolvency Service Monthly Insolvency Statistics for February 2022

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Mary Kelly Foy

NORTH EAST MP BACKS CAMPAIGN TO CUT NHS DIABETES CARE COSTS

Mary Kelly Foy, MP for the City of Durham, has thrown her support behind a new campaign by North East NHS GPs Dr Paul Baker and Dr Amanda Porch to cut the cost of diabetes care for the NHS.

The North East MP has a longstanding interest in public health as a former Cabinet Member of Health and Wellbeing at Gateshead Council and intends to raise the issue in parliament.

Type 2 diabetes is a major health crisis affecting 3.9 million people in the UK and is set to rise to 5.5 million by 2030. It also places a huge financial strain on the health service; the NHS spends at least £10 billion a year on diabetes care. Almost 80% of the NHS's money spent on diabetes goes on treating complications after the damage is already done.

In response to the crisis, husband and wife medical duo Paul and Amanda have recently launched Diabetes Lifestyle Doctors, a social enterprise style initiative to help reduce and reverse the effects of type 2 diabetes for high-risk patients. As part of their work, they are calling for a step-change in the way diabetes is treated with a great focus on early intervention, which can help prevent future problems before they start.

Research has consistently shown that combined lifestyle interventions such as diet, physical activity and sustained weight loss can effectively reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes by around 50%. Paul and Amanda's work offers patients a 12-week programme of support based on diet, behaviour and lifestyle change to deliver long-term sustainable results.

Dr Paul said: "I truly think the NHS does an exceptional job in light of the scale of the problem we're facing in this country. But, unfortunately, the majority of the resources are directed towards managing diabetes complications, of which there are many."

"We know from research that more intensive lifestyle intervention, particularly earlier on, around the time of diagnosis, is a particularly powerful tool for reversing the root causes of type 2 diabetes. If everyone diagnosed had easy access to a diabetes lifestyle programme, this could be a game-changer for managing the condition and

benefit our nation's health."

Paul and Amanda still practice as NHS GPs in County Durham and decided to reach out to their local MP, Mary Kelly Foy, to support their campaign for change. Mary currently serves on the Health and Care Bill Parliamentary Committee and several health-related All-Party Parliamentary Groups and has repeatedly called for greater Government action to tackle health inequalities in the North East.

Mary Kelly Foy commented, "Diabetes is a major health issue in my constituency and the North East as a whole. Our region suffers from serious health inequalities, and diabetes is an important aspect. According to Health inequalities expert Professor Marmot, someone who lives in a deprived area of the North East will likely have poorer health outcomes than someone living in a similarly deprived area in London."

"Tackling this challenge isn't easy and will require rebalancing the standard of care available in deprived areas like the North East. This will also involve changing the treatment paradigm for health conditions like type 2 diabetes, with a greater focus on preventative work and early intervention.

As such I will be looking to raise the importance of this approach within the NHS in Parliament at the earliest opportunity.

diabeteslifestyle.com

CHARITY STARTS @ HOME

Local company JAM Prints & Marketing have teamed up with their neighbours FACT Charity at Pride Radio Media Centre to do their social media free of charge for a year. As part of their commitment to assist one charity a year, FACT will benefit from the social media offering from JAM by planning their posts to increase traffic to their online platforms.

Lorraine Hawthorne from FACT Charity, which stands for Fighting All Cancers Together said: "Although we have tried to keep on top of our social media, we're not exactly experts, so it's great having JAM on board to assist us in this. We're extremely grateful for the help JAM give us."

JAM has written up a full social media strategy and post daily for the charity, as well as running special promotions on their online channels.

Geeta Patel-Ral said: "Each year we choose a charity to work with and as FACT Charity are in the same building as us, it seemed a natural choice to help the one on our doorstep this year. They are a great charity and it's good to give something back to this very worthwhile cause."

Lorraine concluded: "It's great working with the Jammy Dodger's at JAM, we feel like they represent us in a very positive way. Long may it continue."

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Geeta Patel-Ral and Lorraine Hawthorne

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Ammar Mirza CBE

A LOYAL TOAST

Reflecting on the momentous Jubilee celebrations and how fortunate I am to have met Our Majesty the Queen on a few occasions over the years. From being invited to a garden party at Buckingham Palace to attending Galas and the most memorable and daunting experience at St Pauls in 2017.

The 23rd and 24th May 2017 were meant to be one of the most exhilarating and exciting days of my life. And they were. However, the day before on the 22nd May 2017, was also one of the darkest days of our United Kingdom. An attack at Manchester Arena that took a number of young innocent lives. **Coupled with the 20th May which is the date the most amazing and inspirational person in my life – my late mother - sadly passed away.** For both good and bad these dates I will never forget.

2017 was the 100th Anniversary of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire which was created by King George V to reward both civilian and military wartime service. Subsequently the honour was changed and bestowed for meritorious service to the government, in peace as well as gallantry in wartime. **There are over 100,000 living members of the Order and I am extremely proud of being a Commander of the Order.**

The 100th Anniversary Celebration was taking place at St Pauls and a ballot was held for

members of the Order to attend. As a Commander I had successfully submitted an application to join and was invited to the ceremony. **However, much to my surprise I was asked to join the procession and say a short bidding prayer as part of the service.**

I had never been inside St Pauls Cathedral, nor had I considered the gravitas of the event, prior to attending. On the morning of the 23rd May I got the red-eye train to London and onto St Pauls for the rehearsals. **I will never forget the feeling of awe and wonder upon entering the Cathedral.** What an incredibly beautiful vast space and place filled with centuries of history and heritage.

In front of me were approximately 40 members of the Order including the Knights Bachelor, Bishop of London and numerous others, all dressed in their respective regalia preparing for the ceremony. This included two members standing in for Our Majesty the Queen and Prince Philip. **And it was at this point that I realised how big of a deal the ceremony was.**

Understandably the following day, the mood had changed slightly by the Manchester attacks and the security surrounding the event enhanced. Nonetheless, the pomp and ceremony remained astonishing. The look of disbelief on the usher's face as I showed them my ticket which had an allocated number on the front row a few seats away from our Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness Prince Philip.

When I got up to share a prayer with Our Majesty in front of 2,000 dignitaries, it was one of the most daunting and scariest experiences ever, but equally one that brought me immense joy and pride. **Here was a Geordie Asian born on the banks of the Tyne, coming from abject poverty and now stood at the front of St Pauls sharing a prayer with Royalty.** I remember looking up and thinking of my late mother, how I wish she could see me, but in my heart, I knew she was looking down on me.

The whole wonderful experience is something that I will never forget, especially as I have the video too. **I am so proud, honoured and humbled by my everlasting royal experiences. As we rejoice the 70 years of Our Majesty's reign, let us all collectively raise a loyal royal toast to acknowledge the landmark celebration. God Save Our Queen.**

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.



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PILGRIM STREET – HISTORY IN THE MAKING

By Stephen Patterson, Chief Executive, NE1

As a city, Newcastle has always been synonymous with innovation and change. Names like Armstrong, Grainger, Grey, and Dobson which grace the streets and monuments of the city bear witness to the 'Greats' who shaped Newcastle in the 19th century with their engineering, architectural and creative vision. Today, the city continues to honour their legacy with new and ambitious plans for transforming the heart of the city centre.



Image Credit: Ryder Architecture

These plans moved a step closer with the announcement that planning has been approved on the next phase of the transformational investment in Pilgrim Street and the creation of what is being described as the 'landmark' Pilgrim's Quarter building.

The council approved plans to create what will be the largest single office scheme ever built in Newcastle City Centre. The proposals will see the regeneration of the northern block of Pilgrim Street which has in the past housed Commercial Union House, the former Odeon cinema and Stack Newcastle, the temporary shipping container leisure complex, which operated on the site until recently.

This decision signals a huge step forward in the long-awaited regeneration of the Pilgrim Street site. Owned by the Reuben Brothers, the whole site covers three blocks from Northumberland Street in the north to the Tyne Bridge in the south, spanning a 7.9 hectares site.

Now that permission has been granted for Pilgrim's Quarter, the developers have said they intend to step up the pace of work on the development and start building the nine-storey, 463,000 sq ft office scheme. They hope to be finished and the building occupied by 2027. Even before the plans were submitted, a deal had been struck with HMRC to occupy the site on a 25-year lease, moving 9,000 Government workers from their current head office in Longbenton to Newcastle city centre and the Pilgrim's Quarter Building.

Bringing HMRC into the city centre is fantastic news for the city. The agreement will cement the Department's historic links with Newcastle for another 25 years, making Newcastle the HMRC's single largest base in the UK. When complete, the whole Pilgrim Street site will employ 15,000 workers. To put this in perspective, Newcastle currently has in the region of 75,000 office-based workers across the entire city centre, with this development alone boosting numbers by 20%.

“

*...This is history
in the making and
will have a major
transformational
effect on the city...*



Stephen Patterson

BUSINESS INSIGHT

Since the pandemic, office workers have been the last piece of the jigsaw for the city as it emerges from lockdown and businesses transition from working from home to returning to the office. With new premises being built across the city and the number of office workers increasing dramatically, the whole of Newcastle and the wider region stand to benefit.

This huge influx of workers into the heart of the city centre is exactly what the wider business community needs. Leisure operators, food and drink businesses and retailers will all benefit serving the needs of this newly established audience. Footfall on Northumberland Street is currently around 40,000 per day, when complete the Pilgrim Street development could increase footfall by as much as 75%.

It is not just retail and leisure that will be helped, it is also great news for public transport across the region. Bus companies and the Metro, hit hard by the pandemic, can now look forward to bolstering their fleets and services with an impending significant increase in their customer base.

Rising passenger numbers and ticket sales are exactly what these services need to justify improvements and investment both in the medium and long term. And, the £389m investment already earmarked for the Metro network could not have come at a better time.

This is history in the making and will have a major transformational effect on the city.

I have not seen such transformational change happening over such large swathes of the city in my lifetime. Pilgrim Street's regeneration is huge and its proximity to Newcastle's retail core reinforces the need for the £50m that is being channelled into the City Centre Transformation programme. These plans are designed to transform the retail core of Northumberland Street and surrounding streets by prioritising people and public spaces over traffic and creating the right environment for the city's future growth. The increase in

office workers and the potential 75% daily hike in footfall demonstrates that the vision and strategic approach for Northumberland Street and the retail core has proven to be the correct one, and that the investment is already bearing fruit.

These developments all link to plans we, and many others, have been championing to reimagine the future for the Quayside. With the help of world-leading architects, Gehl, local architects and designers, and the people of the region, we have been exploring key themes and ideas for the future of the area, which will see more than £850m of private investment in the next decade. In June, we hope to present the findings of these collaborative efforts and recent public surveys for consideration and next step development.

It would be a mistake to view these investments as solely about the city centre, Newcastle is the region's capital and any new investment and jobs provide employment for people in the suburbs and across the North East. The social and economic impact of any city centre investment and improvements will be felt far beyond the confines of the buildings under construction.

Seeing cranes on the city's skyline is a clear sign of the optimism, prosperity and hope for the city's future. The landmark development of Pilgrim's Quarter marks a crucial milestone in the whole Pilgrim Street rejuvenation. Collectively, these investments will transform the city in a way not seen since the days of Dobson and Grainger, and the city and the region will be better places for it.

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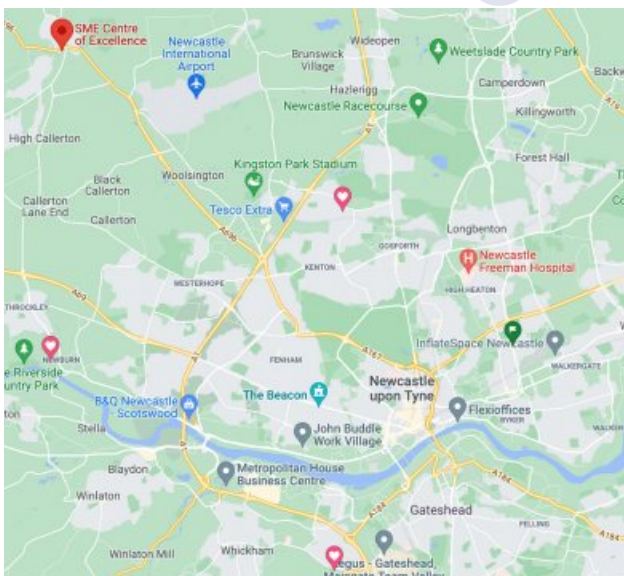


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UK ENERGY MARKET SUMMER OUTLOOK



The energy crisis continues to loom over the British economy. Soaring energy prices underlie the issue of likewise soaring cost of living in the country. An estimated 1.5 million households across the UK will struggle to pay food and energy bills over the next year.

The current state of the energy market in the UK and in Europe can be characterised as “disconnected.”

This is caused by Europe beginning to retract Russian gas from its supply in response to Russia's war in Ukraine. The European market has been further rattled since Ukraine said on 11 May that it will suspend the flow of gas through a transit point that delivers nearly a third of the fuel piped from Russia to Europe through Ukraine. Stopping Russian gas supplies will increase European gas prices even further.

“We are seeing a major disconnect in the global

energy market,” said Latif Faiyaz, Head of Flexible Purchasing at Northern Gas and Power. The UK and European day-ahead prices are no longer linked. For instance, the premium for Dutch gas is almost double that of the UK market, which is why we are seeing strong UK exports to the continent.”

Prices are expected to remain high throughout the year, accounting for the possibility of Russia halting gas supplies to Europe. Even if Russia continues to send gas to Europe, customers may be reluctant to extend long-term contracts given that the European Commission is pushing to move away from Russian energy in the long run.

There are positive outlooks for the UK energy market on the horizon. UK gas storage has returned to the five-year range, returning to storage levels to 2017 and 2021 levels.

“UK storage is very comfortable and on track to be 100 percent full by August. The UK energy market will be in good shape for winter,” Latif Faiyaz said.

It should be noted that, at least soon, fuller gas supplies do not immediately lead to lower prices. The UK can capitalise financially by exporting gas to Europe for a premium price.

Ramnikh Kular, Energy Trader at Northern Gas

and Power, said that the price disconnect has encouraged the UK to export significant volumes to Europe.

“As it stands, the UK has been exporting significant volumes to the Netherlands and Belgium, because of this divergence. The decision to export gas is purely financial, as the UK is currently benefiting from the higher European premium.”

Maintenance in the UK energy infrastructure is at an all-time low, following extensive catch-up last year from the lack of maintenance in 2020.

The gas price premium in the UK market, relative to other parts of the globe, continues to incentivise LNG cargoes to UK terminals. Accordingly, gas sendout during the last few weeks has been robust, despite maintenance at terminals. The arrival of LNG cargoes is providing the short-term gas market with bearish price sentiments and has been a key contributor to the recent decline in prices.

If you have any further questions about the energy market or business energy contracts, contact Northern Gas and Power on +44 (0)3 300 300 800 or email our trading desk via: trading@ngpltd.co.uk

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THE REALITY OF THE MENTALITY

Whilst I applaud the current openness and debate about the real presence of mental health in modern life, a lot of mental health problems are in reality, reasonable people reacting to unreasonable or unique pressures, rather than some pathology.

Entrepreneurial isolation would fit into this category. The term, is used interchangeably with entrepreneurial loneliness (perhaps a more accurate description) and is often raised in general business conversation and also comes up in membership organisations. We know from research within the general population that isolation can have serious physical and mental impacts, ranging from sleep disturbance, reduced enjoyment of life, through to paranoia and depression. There is considerable evidence that loneliness increases morbidity (a person's susceptibility to illness) and can even shorten lifespans.

Loneliness is frequently seen as 'part and parcel' of the entrepreneurial journey, perhaps because it is tacitly accepted as part of the process of aspiring to more where "go-it-alone" is celebrated as a virtue, rather than a counterfactual. Entrepreneurial activity usually takes place in conditions where associations are 'situationally created' by the nature of your business, and you must remain constantly savvy to the calibre and conduct of confederates, colleagues, and competitors. It is an environment wherein even the most collaborative of endeavours are held together with a balance of partnership and caution.

The truth is being an entrepreneur puts you into a relatively rare demographic. Most people are in employment, most people are generally risk averse, whereas entrepreneurial science positively correlates with the success that often comes with greater levels of risk taking. If successful and the risk/reward ratio is high this renders one even more rare in the community. Conversely if unsuccessful you are often left to suffer in splendid isolation.

It is quite interesting over the years that every time I have tried to run workshops on this subject everybody acknowledges it, signs up for it and then late cancellations come in. It is like the elephant in the room that no one wants to admit to applying to them. Sharing ones isolation, the fact that it is difficult to cope sometimes and like any other human being, entrepreneurs are not inured to despair at times is something acknowledged, but rarely explored.

Many Gedanken clients address this in a one to one, but there are many ways to alleviate that sense that you are alone, the buck stops with you and remove the sense that these feelings are something to do with your own personal pathology rather than a social process. Here are a few:

- Acknowledge that during those hard, go it alone times when they present, you are human after all and these are normal;

- Find a friend, colleague, coach, mentor or counsellor to talk about these issues "offline", recognising these dialogues are not just about how you do business but the way you do business;
- Network with groups that can offer more than just business referral, whether it is a business association, a professional grouping etc., putting a bit of time in here can make a difference in terms of increasing a sense of belonging and recognising common experiences;
- Avoid alcohol. Whatever issues you are facing, research shows that alcohol just makes it worse. Alcohol amplifies emotions and if yours are ones of loneliness then you can wind up feeling like you are on a rock somewhere. It messes with your sleep too so there is no escape;
- Re-examine the work-life balance. Celebrate and augment what gives you energy. Share with the people you love rather than maintaining an image of "mover and shaker", "coper", "father of the house", "strong emancipated woman", or whatever. These social masks just give the wrong message to people who could truly support us and we sit in isolation behind them.

In common with all human experience, the entrepreneurial journey is an emotional one, with its highs, lows and consequences on minds and bodies that have been millions of years in evolution. We simply can't dismiss feelings with concepts and buzzy positive mind-sets alone. We need self-awareness, self-compassion and active connection to others to support us on our journey.

My door is always open for those who wish to take the first step.

www.gedanken.co.uk

“

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in the room that no
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SSCL not only looks after its own people but also understands the importance of customer experience and how innovative technology is key to delivering adaptable and effective business services. It understands current tech trends and focuses on predicting what the workplace of the future will look like.

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Keynote Speaker- Sam Conniff
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'GOING GREEN' MISSION AT TYNE TUNNELS SEES FIRST EV

Tyne Tunnels operator, TT2, has announced a raft of new green measures to make the river crossing more sustainable, improve air quality and reduce emissions.

First Electric Vehicle

TT2 has added its first electric vehicle (EV) to its fleet – in a trial that, if successful, will see the full diesel-powered fleet replaced with EVs - reducing yearly carbon emissions by 60 tonnes.

The Vauxhall Vivaro-E Elite EV (pictured) will be

used for escorting tankers and abnormal loads, general operations and security.

Customer Operations Manager, Shaun Simmons said: "This is an exciting first step towards a fully electric fleet, we hope to replace all diesel vehicles with EVs.

"The operations team travel around 60,000 miles a year carrying out escorts and general operational movements, so the switch to electric will support our ambitions to reduce emissions in the local area."

Community Garden

On site employees have introduced a community garden, as part of internal health and wellbeing initiatives. To support this, the team have begun composting for over 150 employees, from coffee machine coffee grounds to lunch leftovers and Fruity Thursdays.

TT2 also have three beehives onsite, as part of their beehive project which was introduced to improve the landscape of the site, help to encourage more bee activity and increase the number of honey bees in the local area.

Tyne Pass

The switch to open road tolling last year saw CO2 emissions slashed by a staggering 90%, which is

equivalent to eliminating the carbon created by 31,200 return flights by passengers to New York, every year.

CO2 emissions are set to further fall when the current roadworks to remove the defunct payment plazas are complete.

Chief Executive at TT2, Philip Smith said: "We are excited to see our first EV on site and it's encouraging to see how enthusiastically our team are getting behind composting waste and our bees, which are boosting insect numbers and flowers.

"Reducing emissions has a positive effect on air quality for those who live and work near the tunnels and we are determined to do everything we can to increase sustainability."

TT2 was certified as carbon neutral by the Carbon Trust in 2020 by ensuring that its emissions from owned or controlled sources are net-zero. This was achieved through a range of measures including installing LED lighting in the tunnels and ensuring all of its electricity is generated from certifiable renewable sources.

For information visit www.tt2.co.uk



Joanne Howe

QUICK WINS FOR RAISING STAFF MORALE

Ask yourself - Is there anything I could be doing to make people feel better about working for me?

The reason to invest in improving morale is because it is the right thing to do and leads to improved business performance. Staff in the main consider leaving a business as they no longer feel valued. Boosting morale goes a long way to keeping a happy workforce.

Coming out of the pandemic and returning to "normal" has seen an increase in mental health issues amongst the workforce. HR management originated from personnel management which originated from welfare management. We've come full circle as businesses now more than ever are actively introducing welfare strategies. We don't need to spend a fortune, but we do need a budget and here's some cost-effective solutions to be getting on with:

1. Minimise uncertainty and communicate openly

Communicate openly, fully and with complete honesty even if the news isn't great. Don't think that if you hide any bad news, it'll go away, or staff will not find out. They will. If they find out and it's not from you, then you've lost them. Communicating just one piece of bad news with staff is hugely influential in gaining their trust. Create opportunities for staff to ask questions and get honest answers. If you can't answer their questions, tell them that you can't answer their questions and explain why.

2. Encourage Sincere Feedback

Inspire managers to make a point of observing

staff doing something good every day. Don't underestimate the power of a simple thank-you or a pat-on-the-back. It's even better if it comes from the level above the current manager (the boss's boss). This is simple to achieve, costs nothing and is hugely beneficial however it must be sincere. Do it in the right way, upbeat, sincere, and positive.

3. Celebrate Success

Celebrate any business success with a bit of a flourish. If you win some new business, retain some business, get invited to pitch for new business, tell your people. Actively encourage staff to get involved in finding and reporting on these positive stories. Let staff have some fun and make one minute masterpiece short video clips that can be posted internally or to your own YouTube channel or company blog. Spend five minutes at your next team meeting updating on the teams' successes (major or minor) over the last month.

4. Introduce Very Low Cost, On-The-Spot Rewards

You could give a £10 voucher to spend in the local supermarket/shop, arrange for a free month's subscription at the gym, pay for an employee and their partner to have a meal at a local restaurant etc. The key is matching the reward to the individual.

5. Fix Trivial Housekeeping Issues

People at work tolerate some stuff because it's

not a big deal. They assume that they can get through their day without having to resolve every single minor problem they encounter. However, these small irritants tend to snowball. The tea and coffee area is a real mess, the toilet doesn't flush properly. All these irritants have a completely disproportional effect on morale (small stuff with big effect) so, get fixing straight away.

6. Team Meetings

Weekly team meetings are your chance as a manager to set the tone for next week's work. Create a buzz by doing things in a different way. If the weather is good, take the meeting outdoors to a local park, especially after all the lockdowns. If you need to be indoors, find a quiet pub or restaurant (happy days). If you absolutely have to stay within your building, go to a different part of the premises (not your normal surroundings) and get everyone a proper coffee and a treat for the meeting.

7. Make It Happen

Just make it happen. Take one of these ideas and just try it out this week. In fact, if reading this has sparked your own idea, then that's even better, use your own idea and make that one happen.

TEAMWORK brings GREAT WORK

Joanne Howe, MD @ Howe Consultancy
www.howeconsultancy.co.uk
07921 256 981

SIGNIFICANT OPPORTUNITIES AND ADVANCES MADE AT LYNEMOUTH POWER STATION



Fiona MacLeod, Managing Director of
Lynemouth Power Station.

Formerly a site of heavy coal-fired industry in an area steeped in generations of mining history, the transformation at Northumberland's Lynemouth Power Station over the last decade plus is nothing short of remarkable.

Now a leading player in the UK's drive towards clean renewable energy use, the plant, which generates 420MW of electricity from biomass wood pellets to power 450,000 homes, has seen significant milestones met and new advances being made, especially over the last 12 to 24 months.

The pandemic, during lockdown, saw the site's 146 key worker staff, international contract partners and regional suppliers work tirelessly and safely together under challenging conditions to maintain constant power supplies under restrictions never seen before.

The launch of the 'Glasgow Declaration on Sustainable Bioenergy' followed in November 2021 at COP26, and saw Lynemouth Power Limited (LPL) placed at the very heart of a global industry's commitment to sustainable growth, supporting key principles including the management of natural resources, transparent carbon accounting and protecting biodiversity.

It marked the start of a major collaboration between the power sector's 'big hitters' on a worldwide scale and one that LPL has fully embraced as part of its own best practices and sustainability criteria.

2021 also saw the power station embark on new, innovative R&D trials of non-wood pellet biomass with encouraging results to build upon later in 2022 with more test periods planned.

LPL also delivered its first feasibility study into the possibility of integrating bioenergy with carbon

capture and storage (BECCS), developed in full dialogue with the UK Government who are keen to explore all avenues within the sector as part of wider climate change ambitions. This has opened up a new development pathway for possible new investment at Lynemouth.

Fiona MacLeod, Managing Director of Lynemouth Power Station, explained, "There is a lot going on at Lynemouth with many projects having the ability to create new long-term opportunities for the site, our employees, the North East region and the UK as a whole. We are constantly looking ahead to the future and this means considering all options available to us as part of a much bigger conversation around renewable energy and the role biomass plays in low carbon electricity generation.

"The launch of the 'Glasgow Declaration on Sustainable Bioenergy' at COP26 was the ideal platform to get our message across, not just as a company but as an industry too. It brought together players from across the whole biomass supply chain and demonstrated our combined commitment to sustainable bioenergy and what can be achieved as part of net zero policy.

"But we need to keep pushing the boundaries of what is possible too. Around 7% of the UK's electricity is currently supplied from bioenergy sources, and with Lynemouth's Contract for Difference (CfD) running until 2027, it is essential that we review every option available to us.

"BECCS is one example of that, with Lynemouth

having a huge window of opportunity to help offset CO2 emissions from hard to decarbonise sectors. This is a major step-change for biomass generation.

"The market has evolved significantly too to a point where since April, higher fossil fuel and carbon prices have exceeded our strike price meaning we will actually be paying back to the Low Carbon Contracts Company (LCCC) over the forthcoming months.

"This is a huge milestone for us and one that means we're not only generating renewable energy and creating lower emissions, but also providing value for money to consumers at a time when it is needed the most."

In 2020-21, Lynemouth Power Station reported that its own emission levels were approximately 43% below the grid average. This year, the site also commenced its first major outage cycle following the plant's full conversion to biomass, providing an opportunity for inspections and surveys to assist with post-2027 optioneering. Development of the project, in parallel with constructive dialogue with the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), is providing a number of opportunities to build upon.

Fiona added, "The Government's Biomass Strategy is due for publication later in the year and this should enable the industry to keep delivering positive results and make a significant contribution to global climate change efforts. Lynemouth is making huge strides forward, reacting to market demands and external forces, as well as integrating innovative new technologies. Our work will help to deliver a long-term vision for the site, enabling the plant to stay at the forefront of the UK's renewable energy transition."

www.lynmouthpower.com



ROYAL QUAYS NEW BUSINESS IS VIRTUALLY A GAME CHANGER

Royal Quays Outlet and Independent Centre has welcomed another new business to join the ever-growing number of visitor attractions on site.

The Arcade Warehouse is a new venue for the whole family containing a wide range of classic arcade games and modern state of the art units. From the classic Pac Man and Space Invaders of

the 80's through to future proof Virtual Reality, the venue offers a new, fresh look at the gaming world.

Unlike other more traditional arcades, the machines are all set to free play and an entrance fee of £8.95 is applied meaning that people can sample all the machines and play constantly through their two-hour time slots. Caton currently employs six staff and is looking to take on more as the businesses grow. The Arcade also includes a café and the whole space is available for private parties and functions.

"We're seeing parents coming in and going straight for the classic games such as Space

Invaders as it reminds them of their teenage years, and we see our younger customers getting competitive in high-definition games or VR. It's been fantastic to see families enjoying spending a few hours together and bonding in a safe, cool environment," said Caton.

Royal Quays Outlet and Independent Centre, manager Matt Dawson believes that the Arcade Warehouse is another step towards making the Centre more than just a good shopping centre but a destination for the whole family.

"The Centre is evolving constantly, and I am always looking at new, fresh ideas to welcome people here to shop, eat and enjoy themselves."

YOUTH STARTS HERE CAMPAIGN IS LAUNCHED BY NORTH EAST YOUTH ALLIANCE

The North East Youth Alliance (NEYA) are proud to announce the launch of their new campaign- 'Youth Starts Here'

For too long there has been a lack of understanding in the media and indeed the general public about youth work. Many wouldn't accredit it to being a career or 'proper' profession and this has led to a problem when it comes to recruitment and investment into the sector.

The NEYA wants to change the perception of youth work and spread the word about what a rich, rewarding and progressive career it can be.

Their new campaign will shine the light on youth work, it will highlight the importance of youth workers, tell their stories and what it feels like to be a youth worker in 2022 whilst trying to educate and inform the public, media and stakeholders.

Their main objectives for the campaign are to grow understanding, increase recruitment and investment and encourage new allies to join the movement so that together we can disseminate positive messages around youth work.

NEYA want to make youth work attractive again and highlight that there is value to the different roles it plays to young people's lives and the contribution it makes within the wider sector.



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EMPLOYERS NEED TO ACT NOW OR FACE THE GREAT ATTRITION

Many employees have had enough and will no longer endure poor working conditions and wrongdoing in the workplace, according to national whistleblowing hotline provider Safecall.

The UK along with countries overseas have witnessed the Great Resignation, with people in a post-pandemic environment choosing not to go back to their old jobs and ways of working.

Sanjay Raja, chief UK economist at Deutsche Bank, has been quoted as saying there are "historically elevated levels of workers leaving the labour market entirely" with the level of resignations being the highest since 2009.

Tim Smith, operations director for Sunderland-based Safecall, said: "A report just prior to the pandemic, from the Film and TV Charity's 'Looking Glass research', suggested 56% of employees believed they had suffered bullying in the previous year.

"When you look at Google search results and see there are 20,000 searches per year for how to cope with 'bullying in the workplace' in the UK.

"So, it's more than possible that some of the Great Resignation results from employees simply not being prepared to go back into those same poor working conditions."

It is no exaggeration to say Covid-19 has changed everything! The enforced isolation also provided a breathing-space for employees to rethink their life. Many have taken a premeditated, thought-through decision to change how they want to live and work. This led to what has been termed the Great Resignation and which has become the Great Attrition.



Tim Smith

Tim Smith added: "The Covid-19 pandemic was the catalyst for employees to re-evaluate their working conditions when they were being asked to return.

"It enabled people to reassess what they wanted from life, and many of them decided they literally did not want to return to their jobs and would either start looking elsewhere for work or drop-out of working life altogether."

It should come as no surprise that smarter senior executives are spending a lot of time and effort providing additional staff benefits, and improving working conditions, to retain employees.

Many employers have beefed up their employee packages by adding both physical and mental health care, social benefits such as gym membership, retail discounts, and additional sick and compassionate care benefits, as well as improving pay and flexibility working hours.

But they are also trying to improve the actual places where the employee works, and that sometimes means preventing or dealing with some rather uncomfortable situations. For that, organisations often require whistleblowing services.

Tim added: "We've seen a significant increase in directors, general counsels, and HR managers approaching us to set up an external whistleblowing hotline.

"That's because an outsourced hotline is quicker and easier to set up and start managing than creating and staffing one in-house.

"We can often have a fully operational whistleblowing hotline up and running for organisations within 24-hours. That is world-wide, with multiple offices or work locations, in nearly every language and dialect.

"Every one of our call handlers is a former police officer, and each has more than 25 years' experience speaking with people from all walks of life in all sorts of situations."

When anonymous whistleblowing services are introduced, staff feel their managers are trying to do what's right by them. Lots of staff research shows the value of being seen to be a good employer in a world where the employee can just walk away and start work elsewhere.

No-one is saying whistleblowing is the solution to employment issues facing businesses across the globally, Europe, the EU, or even just the UK, said Tim, but he believes it should be part of a package of measures that businesses can use to help retain their staff.

www.safecall.co.uk

"To eat well in England, you should have breakfast three times a day." Somerset Maugham

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RICHARD'S LEADING THE WAY FOR YOUNG LEADERS

A Northumberland charity that maximises the potential in young people has appointed one of its first Young Leaders as its Chair of Trustees and celebrated an important anniversary at an emotional and motivational event at Alnwick Gardens.

Bedlington charity Leading Link is celebrating 15 years of providing young people with confidence, resilience and the drive to do well in life and supporting them to identify and achieve their aspirations regardless of their background or location within the North East. Now an established youth provider in the community, they link families, schools and communities through a variety of innovative and diverse projects which are accessible to everyone.

One of their major successes has been the



Young Leader Programme where participants can take ownership of events, planning activities and community work. The programme helps to develop young people's social skills as well as giving them practical experiences that can be used in job and university entrance interviews.

One of the first young leaders from 2007 was Richard Crulley, who now works as a marketing manager. Richard has recently been appointed as Chair of the Trustees for the charity, a role that he

is looking forward to taking part in.

"Some of the skills that I gained from being a Young Leader with Leading Link have helped me in my chosen career path. It's given me a lot of confidence in my abilities and provided skills that I use everyday including decision making and prioritising. I'm delighted to have come full circle by now being the Chair of this wonderful organisation."

NORTHUMBERLAND FREEMASONS COME TO THE RESCUE OF "MA SONIC" THE HEDGEHOG

A nature lover from Alnwick has received a grant from Northumberland Freemasons that will help her to look after one of the UK's most endangered species.

Alnwick based Sandra Shepherd, fosters and adopts severely injured or hedgehogs including those suffering from blindness and amputated limbs. She is currently providing a safe and secure place for 17 animals.

Northumberland Freemasons, through the Richard Henry Holmes Masonic Benevolent Fund, have donated £1000 to Sandra to assist with the



day to day expense of the provision of food and bedding and also to create a number of custom built homes for the creatures.

"The Trustees of the Freemasons Benevolent Fund heard that a number of 'Hedgehog Houses' in Sandra's Garden were coming to the end of their useful lives and were in urgent need of replacement. The Trustees were delighted to grant an award of £1,000 to Sandra to enable her to acquire new 'Houses' for the Hedgehogs and give some financial support towards the cost of feeding them"

Sandra said, "I am very grateful for the support from Northumberland Freemasons. Without the additional help I would be unable to help as many of these endangered animals and I hope that this year might see some successful breeding, which will see more hedgehogs being returned to the wild."

The Benevolent Fund donates around £160,000 annually to local charities and good causes, including food banks, to boost worthwhile and deserving projects throughout Northumberland, Newcastle and North Tyneside

PEOPLE'S KITCHEN VOLUNTEERS CLEAN UP STREETS



Volunteers from Newcastle's People's Kitchen donned high viz vests and grabbed litter pickers to tackle the growing problem of litter on the city's streets. The initiative, supported by Newcastle NE1 was part of Keep Britain Tidy's 2022 Great British Spring Clean which encourages everyone to fill a bag with rubbish.

Jackie Boardman a Trustee at The Kitchen was pleased with the number of volunteers which included several "friends" who regularly use the facilities provided by the charity.

"We were tasked with cleaning up an area in the vicinity of The Kitchen around Bath Lane and Black Friars. We were all given safety briefings and risk assessments before going out to pick up the litter. We rely on our volunteer's time to help run what we do and it was fantastic that some of our

volunteers and friends gave up even more of their time to make the streets of Newcastle cleaner for the benefit of others."

The People's Kitchen runs on voluntary donations and 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 200 meals every session, cooking everything from scratch.

Anyone wishing to donate can do so at www.peopleskitchen.co.uk/donate

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:
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SPORT, RECRUITMENT, AND GRADUATE CV's

Bryony Gibson, Director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, shares advice on how best to prepare a graduate CV and find young people who stand out from the crowd.

As we approach the end of another academic year, very soon, the job market will prepare for an influx of fresh and enthusiastic academics looking for their first career break.

I am already seeing 'Graduate Pending' CVs land regularly in my inbox, along with school leavers too. And, staying mindful that Covid has denied young people the part-time work experience opportunities that usually prove how dependable and responsible they can be, the current crop of up-and-coming job seekers will be presenting to the market with little or no practical experience in the professional world.

Even with the high volume of vacancies we are seeing across the UK right now, it can be extremely hard to stand out and be shortlisted for an interview if there is nothing on your CV to link you to the job you have applied for. So how do you begin to tell new graduates apart?

One of the crucial areas I explore in any CV that helps me to decide whether someone stands out from the crowd is the 'sport and interests' section.

As a recruiter familiar with CVs of all shapes and sizes, my advice if you are preparing a graduate

resume - or helping your children to compose theirs - is that while academics are important, what people look for most is what I call the 'extra bits'. It is the volunteering, the charity work, or the discipline and dedication it takes to reach a certain level in sport.

I believe that the skills young people learn in these pursuits contribute greatly to their overall development. Especially through sport.

Not only does sport instil resilience and improve emotional intelligence, but it also helps to shape values and improve interpersonal and teamwork skills. Offering demonstrable examples of this in your CV is how you can shine as it offers recruiters an insight into the personality of the individual they could be hiring.

Having spent a not-insignificant amount of time volunteering CV advice and hosting mock interviews in schools on behalf of Founders4Schools, I have seen that it is the children who regularly do out of school activities

that have the most to talk about. Often, they are more confident than their peers and, for the most part, are better communicators.

Only last Saturday morning, I was sitting poolside at 7am on the outskirts of Leeds while my son prepared to compete in a regional swim competition. Watching the children interact freely with others from their club and those in neighbouring cities and boroughs reassured me that all the early starts spent poolside are not such a bad idea after all.

Perhaps my weekend spent sweltering on plastic seats amongst the blistering heat of a packed spectator gallery was a reasonable trade if it teaches my son skills that will build his character, shape his outlook toward a challenge, and be incredibly useful when the time comes to join the workplace.

Having recently helped a graduate who competed at a professional level in his chosen sport, not only did his CV shine out to me, but when I spoke with him, he was a long way ahead of others in terms of his attitude, professionalism, maturity, and drive. In many ways, he had seen more of life, and it has helped him immensely. He found a career opportunity very quickly.

Regardless of the activity, competing at an elevated level in anything takes a lot of commitment, discipline, dedication, and time. If you see this on a CV, remember that it also means people have more than likely missed events with friends to ensure they still are dedicated to their training routine and if they can do that, they can go the extra mile in the workplace too.

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



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20TH MAY WAS INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCES DAY. HONESTLY IT WAS!

We love any excuse to celebrate our colleagues and the hard work that they do, so we made sure we celebrated the day - with cake!

But it's also a really great time for us to point out the importance of good HR support for your business, too.

Contrary to popular belief, HR isn't all about disciplinaries and tribunals, bullying and sick leave. There's a really light, nice side to HR that not enough people consider. And that's the side that really helps to develop your people, mould them into star employees, and gives them the tools and skills they need to become more engaged and more motivated. It's about solid training, goal setting, and looking at the best way to reward and recognise a job well done.

This kind of care and attention to your employees



can make them happier. It can make them more productive. And, of course, it will give you a whole new level of loyalty that will help you retain your best people for years to come. Keeping your team happy and valued really has benefits for everyone.

Of course, there is always that compliance side of HR too. The things that come wrapped in red tape and procedure and policy. And, while we would all avoid this side of things if we could, sadly there comes a time when things get a little tricky and you need expert advice and support to keep you on the right side of the law when it comes to

tackling issues. Although stressful, bad situations with employees can be made a lot easier to deal with if you have the right expert team leading the way.

So if there is an HR professional that you'd like to celebrate or thank, we'd love to hear about them! Or perhaps you'd like to use today as an opportunity to get more acquainted with the team at Holgate HR to see how we can help your business? If so, we'd love to talk! Just give us a call.

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UTILITY INDUSTRIES NEED TO STEP UP EFFORTS TO HELP UK BUSINESSES AND HOUSEHOLDS NAVIGATE THE 'COST-OF-LIVING' CRISIS

By Josh Gill, CEO and Founder of Everflow

At present, UK households face the sharpest annual rise in the cost of living in decades, driven predominantly by rising inflation – currently at 7% – including across utilities such as water, gas, and electricity. Inflationary pressures have prompted an overwhelming majority (96%) of UK businesses to call for greater government intervention to tackle the cost-of-living crisis.

Given the precarious financial position many UK businesses and households find themselves in, significant efforts need to be made to support these groups in lowering costs wherever possible.

With Ofgem's announcement that the energy cap could be reviewed every three months, consumer backlash is indicative of the reputational standing of energy companies in this present crisis; with many fearful regular reviews will be taken advantage of to pass higher costs onto consumers, even if wholesale prices do eventually fall. Clearly, there is an opportunity for utility companies to become better consumer advocates and to take a lead on promoting cost-saving measures.

Raising Wider Awareness

Many groups fail to identify cost-saving opportunities within their water bills due to a lack of information about their water usage levels, in part, the result of a lack of smart meters. Only having access to the industry-standard monthly or six-monthly meter reads limits people's ability to identify inefficiency in their water usage. By working with industry bodies and the regulator to make smart metering more accessible and affordable, users can be better positioned to reduce water usage and cut costs.

In addition to raising awareness through smart meters, Everflow recently launched the UK's first free Business Water Efficiency certifications scheme to encourage businesses to reduce their water consumption. Participating business will receive reports showing fully costed and personalised water efficiency recommendations, with calculations of how much water each business could save and its impact on water bills. This has the potential to save between 30-70% for customers, offering businesses crucial financial support.

Ultimately, providers who profit from increased



usage are often disincentivised to support their customers to eliminate waste and make savings. Everflow is set up in a way which ensures we do not profit from increased usage. As an independent retailer, we pass on wholesale charges without mark-up and cover our service with fixed, transparent fees. This gives us the freedom to focus on delivering initiatives to reduce the amount of water entering the wastewater network, improve infrastructure and offer all SME customers practical guides to improve water efficiency.

Supporting Engagement in the Water Retail Market

The deregulation of the water industry in 2017 empowered businesses to switch providers and renegotiate their contracts via utility brokers when they were dissatisfied with the services provided. A driving factor behind creating an open water retail market was to help businesses secure savings on water rates, both by allowing them to switch from default contracts to fixed contracts and by incentivising retailers through competition to offer increasingly attractive rates.

The Consumer Insight Survey (CIS) 2021 showed that nearly two-thirds (62%) of those who switched experienced lower prices, higher quality service or better customer service as a result of switching water providers. The vast majority (86%) indicated they had received benefits that exceeded expectations. Despite these clear

advantages, a general lack of awareness of the retail water market means that engagement is far below other utility markets with only 9% of all customers in the water market had been active in the prior 12-months.

The benefits of this open market – including cost-saving innovation, improvement to services and lower prices – are likely to increase with greater customer engagement. Therefore, greater business engagement with this market is highly recommended to improve the ecosystem and cut costs.

The Overlooked Water Utility Bill

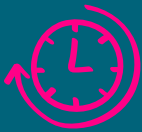
The rising costs of essential utilities have highlighted the need to identify all opportunities to cut business costs, improve efficiency and reduce costly waste. However, the public's focus on the cost-saving options around electricity and gas leaves many overlooking the chances to cut costs on their water utility bills.

By improving wider awareness of their consumption habits and by incentivising their engagement in the water market by providing brokers with the tools to make switching customers as straightforward as possible, the industry has an opportunity to help UK businesses to take the vital steps forward toward saving money and navigating the choppy economic waters ahead.

www.everflowwater.com

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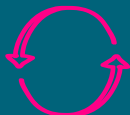
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LOOKING FORWARD TO A STRONGER AND MORE RESILIENT NORTH EAST ECONOMY

By Helen Golightly OBE, Chief Executive Officer of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership

When I think back to the start of the pandemic in 2020, I will always remember that despite the fears and uncertainties we all faced, the rigour, commitment and sheer determination of our team, partners, businesses and communities to do the right thing - and continue to champion our region - did not falter.

As we emerge from the pandemic, I am so proud of the fact that, throughout all the challenges, the North East LEP has continued to make a positive contribution to the North East economy following the impact of COVID-19 and EU Exit.

Throughout this last year we remained delivery focused, despite a national policy vacuum caused by delays to the Levelling Up White Paper and national LEP review. We continue to develop our understanding of the labour market so we can see if our activity is working, or if we need to pivot or accelerate activities to meet changing circumstances and influence partners and government.

The Strategic Economic Plan has defined our direction of travel as we strive to create a stronger, greener and more inclusive economy for the region. During the 2021/22 financial year we published an interim evaluation of the North East Strategic Economic Plan, which assessed its effectiveness and impact, and implementation on

the region's economy. I'm happy to say the Plan is meeting its targets on job creation and better jobs, and moving in the right direction to reduce both the employment gap and the economic activity gap.

The evaluation gave us lots of recommendations to take forward and highlighted two positive points. It showed the North East LEP has excelled in providing leadership, influence, synergy and engagement around the Strategic Economic Plan. And our Local Growth Fund and Enterprise Zone programmes have, to date, indicated good to very good value for money.

Essential to the success of the North East Strategic Economic Plan is our work to drive forward its programmes of delivery. Our Business and Sector Growth team, for example, have provided support, advice and guidance to a large proportion of the region's business community over the past 12 months. In total, the North East Growth Hub delivered 23,987 business interventions in 2021/22, and 96% of businesses surveyed were happy with the help they received, demonstrating the vital role Growth Hubs play in the regional business economy.

Our Skills team played a significant role in the national conversation around skills policy. Michelle Rainbow, Skills Director at the North East LEP, provided representation to the House of Lords Youth and Employment Select Committee, resulting in recommendations from the North East LEP being taken forward in the committee's 'Skills for every young person' report. The North East LEP's Skills team also hosted the launch of the 2022 National Careers Week, the first time the

event has taken place in the North of England.

Key to driving more competitiveness and growth across the region, the Innovation team secured £1.03m in funding to deliver two innovation programs - Innovation Delivery Partnership and Challenge North East.

And investment and funding programmes managed by the North East LEP also made an impact across the region in 2021/22. All £47m awarded to the North East LEP area through the Getting Building Fund has been fully committed against 20 capital projects, and the £10.5m invested from the Local Growth Fund has helped create 1,500 new jobs in the North East.

2021/22 was also a very significant year for me personally as I was awarded an OBE for services to business and the regional economy. I am immensely proud and humbled to have been recognised in this way.

I dedicated this honour to the whole North East LEP team because I feel so incredibly lucky to have people behind me who have commitment, passion and drive like no other - who strive to increase investment and improve skills, job opportunities and purposeful business support across the North East to improve the lives of others, because they want to do the right thing for a region that is so special to us all.

I end this year feeling hopeful, confident and determined.

Read the North East LEP's Annual Review 2021/22 at northeastlep.co.uk



Helen Golightly OBE



ORDINARY PEOPLE DOING EXTRAORDINARY THINGS

Colin Bell, Business and Sector Growth Director at the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), reflects on the recent North East 90 event which celebrated the success of the North East Growth Hub's High Potential Startups programme.

The room was packed to the rafters, people were networking, the air was filled with excitement, you could feel the energy flowing and the anticipation was building. People had gathered to celebrate the achievements of our North East 90 - a group of high-flying startups who graduated from the North East Growth Hub's High Potential Startups programme and all of whom are leading the way. At the very heart of the celebration was the North East's very own Dragon Sara Davies MBE, someone who epitomises entrepreneurial flair, dynamism and presence.

Sara provided a thought provoking and motivating talk, encouraging questions from the audience. Sharing positive energy, as well as golden nuggets of advice and inspiration, it was clear she truly is a force to be reckoned with.

Her talents are clear, Sara is incredibly impressive yet humble and recognises what she's good at and what she's not. A key feature of her talk was her ability to spot talent, to recognise when to ask for help - and with that who's best placed to provide the best advice. While our High Potential Startups programme wasn't around back then, she also reflected how in her early days the

services of Business Link provided a welcome boost, demonstrating the importance of investing in and supporting our entrepreneurial talent.

As if the energy levels weren't high enough, the charismatic and inspirational serial entrepreneur and chair of the North East LEP's Business Growth Board, Ammar Mirza CBE, chaired a panel session with three of the North East 90, Isabella Dryden of Saint Belle, Siddesh Iyer of SportFin and Jo Storie of KnitLab North. Each provided insights into their incredible journeys, sharing the highs and the lows and the different things that contributed to their early success.

Sara made the point that entrepreneurs like herself are ordinary people, the difference being passion and belief. Our corporate successes are ordinary people who are doing and achieving extraordinary things - they are the innovators, the disruptors and the change agents that the new economy demands.

Believe it or not, 54% of the North East's workforce have an aspiration to start their own business, yet only 1% actually step over the line to do it. The reality is that starting a business is the same as having a baby, there is never going to be a right time.



Most of the North East 90 started in the thick of the pandemic and this unique period of time made them reflect on what was important to them. They questioned why they were stuck in the mundane corporate rigmarole and spending their Sunday evenings dreading a Monday morning. For the North East 90 this was no longer an option and they are now making their dreams a reality.

Although starting a business is one of the most challenging things anyone can do, the North East 90 no longer work for a living, they are living their passion (which coincidentally makes them money) - like Sara, they are ordinary people doing extraordinary things.

If you have an entrepreneurial itch, that needs to be scratched we can help. It's what we're here to do! You can contact the North East Growth Hub on to find out what help and support is available to you at www.northeastgrowthhub.co.uk

CHARITY ON VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT DRIVE TO TACKLE LONELINESS ACROSS NEWCASTLE



A leading North East mental health charity, Mental Health Concern, is on a volunteer recruitment drive for their Chain Reaction initiative to tackle loneliness and isolation in older people in Newcastle.

Chain Reaction, a city-wide partnership between Mental Health Concern, Search, and KeyRing, currently offers a range of support for over 200 older people to help them stay active in the community and improve their mental wellbeing. Projects include community group activities like art clubs, walking groups, reading groups, and coffee groups, as well as one-to-one support for those who need it.

Following the COVID-19 lockdown, many of the face-to-face activities provided by Chain Reaction had to be cancelled, and the charity

had to find other ways to help tackle loneliness and isolation in older people. A telephone buddy support system was set up, where volunteers call people who are living alone to chat and offer friendship and company. As Covid restrictions have lifted, many in-person groups and activities have been reintroduced but there is still a need for distanced support for those who cannot go out or feel uncomfortable in crowded places.

Due to the increase in demand for the range of services, Chain Reaction is looking to recruit more 'befriending' volunteers to talk to older people living on their own, and provide friendship, advice, and support in their day-to-day lives. The charity is also looking for volunteers to help facilitate the increasing number of community activities that are back up and running across the city, as well as one-to-one assistance for older people returning home from hospital who live alone and need extra help as they get settled.

Over half of people referred to Chain Reaction's services in 2022 report that loneliness or isolation is impacting their mental health, with the Mental Health Foundation reporting that

nationally, during the COVID-19 lockdowns, loneliness was almost three times that of pre-pandemic levels.

Michelle Ree, Team Lead at Chain Reaction, said: "We are very proud of the range of activities and support we offer older people in Newcastle, but following the pandemic, and a huge increase in loneliness in our older people, it is so important to provide the right support and friendship that our communities need.

"Our volunteers are an incredible group of people who take time to talk to those who use our service, making sure they feel listened to, supported, and connected to their neighbourhood. Volunteering is a truly fulfilling activity, and Chain Reaction can offer a flexible way for people to give back to their communities."

More information about volunteering for Chain Reaction, can be found at www.chainreaction-newcastle.co.uk. Anyone looking to use Chain Reaction's services can call 0300 300 7070 for further details.



Sam Spoons

THE NEED TO SELL WHEN RECRUITING IS MORE IMPORTANT NOW THAN EVER

As we all know, it's tough out there when searching for your new team members. The market is super competitive, it's expensive to recruit, and good candidates are gone in the blink of an eye.

So why do we need to 'sell' to stand out and what types of things will help us sell our opportunity over our competitors who are also recruiting?

Here are some Talenthads tips to consider when putting together your advert to hook and pull that ideal individual in -

1. Ask your current team. There is no better way to understand what will catch a prospective employee's eye than to ask the team who have already been courted and have chosen to join you over anyone else.

Consider what appealed to them about your job opportunity over your competitors. What stood out to them? What should you be telling people about working in your business? Also, ask where they were looking when they were job searching - this will support you in your decision making on where to spend your advertising budget.

2. Explore your Employee Value Proposition and what you want to be known for. Do you have amazing company values or are you on an exciting growth path? Do you offer stability as people stay for years or have you a development

programme better than your competitors?

Nail your company approach to remuneration, benefits, work, career, and culture - and you'll know clearly what you offer and what you stand for.

3. Get into the mindset of your ideal candidate.

If you think like the person you're recruiting you will be able to write an advert that speaks to them directly - rather than to a general mass of many irrelevant job seekers. Think of the demographics, qualifications, and goals and interests of the individual you're seeking and use these to write the advert in a way which screams 'this role is for me!'

Remember that as the struggle for talent continues it's important to look at your business and the opportunity before going out to market so you hit the job boards and social media with something meaningful. After all, do any of us really believe that a general job description posted into an advert template is going to work?

To find out more about standing out in a candidate led market, give Talenthads a shout on 0191 300 8688 or hello@talenthads.co.uk

THE BUSINESS LANDSCAPE HAS CHANGED, BUT ARE YOU STILL STUCK IN A RUT?

It's almost two years since we last spoke to Nevil Tynemouth. COVID-19 had arrived on our shores and was taking hold of our everyday lives. For many businesses it was the beginning of the end.

Fast forward to June 2022 and Nevil's New Results company is thriving.

Why? Simple...because the business landscape has changed and it means Nevil and his team are out there helping businesses small and large to adapt.

Nevil Tynemouth is one of the UK's leading keynote speakers and a highly regarded trainer and coach with one aim; to improve your business development and sales techniques. Let's just say that if your job involves clients or customer sales in any shape or form, you need to hear what Nevil Tynemouth has to say.

So, the first question we wanted to ask Nevil is, what has been the most significant change he's seen in business development and sales techniques.

"The COVID-19 pandemic made all of us change the way we operate," said Nevil. "You could no longer wander into a business and have a chat with someone about a product or a service. Consequently, the biggest change we've seen is how much more everyone places in trust and personalisation. Customers have become used to searching online...they're looking more closely at what they're buying and who they're buying it from. Customer loyalty and retention has always been important but once people start searching online they suddenly discover there is a much wider choice in terms of products, services and prices.

This means that you and your business needs to stand out, and once you start dealing with a customer, ensure that you provide the best possible service. If you provide a good product and efficient service, there is a strong possibility that the customer won't continue to search...they'll go straight back to you. Ask yourself...What does this client want this time?' People are individuals...don't group them together and assume they're all after the same thing."

Another change he's seen is that people are more conscious of time. Most of you reading this will have travelled to a meeting, discussed business over a coffee or some lunch, and then headed back to base. If we're totally honest with ourselves, we could probably have just discussed everything with a ten minute phone call.

“

...We've seen some people really blossom and embrace our courses...

"The explosion in the use of Zoom, Skype, Teams etc has seen customers getting straight down to business. You could probably get full attendance for a group meeting because everyone was working from home. Doing business online became the norm. For example here at New Results we have been working closely with Hampden Bank & Co delivering training for the past twelve months. We've only just in the last week met anyone from the bank in person. The same applies with Brighton based Soircas Consultancy. We've been working with them for nine months. We've had our first face-to-face training session last month."

One of the best ways to check whether your business has changed the way it operates and whether it needs to change, is to simply look at how your own habits in business have changed. It's almost certain that you will have altered how you do business and deal with companies, but has your own business changed? It's easy to fall back into old habits and patterns, but now is a great opportunity to stand back and make sure you are doing the very best for each and every client.

"Confidence is another area where our business development and sales techniques courses have seen a big shift. A lot of people struggle when they have to talk to a room full of people at a networking event for example. However, sitting in the security of their own home and speaking to a group of people on a computer monitor is not so threatening. We've seen some people really blossom and embrace our courses because they have new-found confidence in their ability to do business networking."

In other words, Nevil Tynemouth and the guys at New Results, based on the outskirts of Houghton-le-Spring and operating here in the North East as well as nationally and internationally, are in huge demand. New Result has changed the way it operates by offering online as well as face-to-face training, and they've made their sessions shorter to suit client's changing needs.

They're also doing their bit to help charities who've had a seriously tricky time over the past two years.

"We want to give something back," adds Nevil. "We've got four charity-focussed online webinars coming up. They're totally free. If you work for a charity or know a charity that you think would benefit, please get in touch with us at New Results. The first one is on July 6th and is all about networking. In September will be looking at LinkedIn. December's topic is presentation skills and then in March next year we're concentrating on coaching skills."

So, are you involved in business development or sales? If the answer is yes, you need to speak to Nevil Tynemouth and the team at New Results.

New Results have moved with the times...have you?

**To contact Nevil email him on nevil@newresults.co.uk
You can also connect with him on LinkedIn or visit the website www.newresults.co.uk**





OculusHR



Louise Kennedy

SPOTLIGHT ON WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH

Hot on the heels of Mental Health Awareness Week in May, Oculus HR are this month shining the spotlight on the need to support employees more than ever post-pandemic.

The world of work has changed, and it looks like new working practices are here to stay, but as we move to the new normal, findings show that the mental wellbeing of employees needs to be high on the agenda.

The theme of Mental Health Awareness Week last month centred around loneliness and highlighted how isolation impacts mental health. This is poignant as with new Hybrid Working practices in place, isolation can become prevalent amongst employees.

Louise Kennedy, Managing Director at Oculus HR said, "The move to Hybrid Working is a great leap for many post-pandemic, however it does come with its flaws if not managed and supported correctly by employers. We are seeing more and more employers investing in creating a healthy work environment and they now see it makes good business sense, alongside supporting employees"

Employers have a duty of care to staff, it is therefore vital to have the right mechanisms in place to provide the right support and create a culture that nurtures open communication."

Statutory health and safety duties in the UK include taking reasonable care towards someone with mental health problems. The first thing employers or line managers need to be aware of is how approachable they are, and it should be a key priority to put an effective support system in place.

With Hybrid Working models in place across many businesses and an increase in remote working, ensuring communication channels are open is a key component. It's important to show you care and have time for your staff, so ensuring regular reviews or catch ups may provide opportunities to open up and talk.

If a staff member makes the approach to discuss their mental health, employers and line managers need to avoid making any assumptions and assure the employee of the confidentiality of the discussion and respond in a considerate and caring manner. It may be necessary to seek internal or external advice to ensure the situation is approached in the best way possible, or businesses may be able to make adjustments to an employees working day so that they feel more comfortable in the workplace.

If an employee has been absent from work, it is important to carry out a return-to-work meeting on their return. This shows that as an employer you have staff and their wellbeing at the forefront and provides an opportunity to find out about the absence and if anything can be put in place for support.

While you're not expected to be an expert in mental health, you do need to be aware of how mental health can affect the working day. There are many expert organisations in place if you need guidance or advice surrounding mental health, or you can seek support from HR.

In summary, care, consideration, and communication are key when supporting employees with mental health problems. Oculus HR provide trusted support and advice on how to deal with mental health in the workplace and our employment law expert can also ensure you understand your duties and provide the knowledge to help support the process.

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 or visit www.oculus-hr.co.uk

“

...We are seeing more and more employers investing in creating a healthy work environment...

MY WEEKEND

MARC MILLAR

Financial adviser working with North Wealth Management, an appointed representative of St. James's Place Wealth Management plc.

Based in Sunderland but operating all across the UK, Marc has a wide network of work and social contacts. Here he shares his thoughts on the importance of weekends.

Do you ever have to work weekends?

I value my time with my family so weekends are very important to me, and I try not to make any work appointments during these times. However, I will soon be launching a new Podcast, so I use weekends to do my research and source guests for the Podcast.

Are most weekends the same?

I'm very lucky in that I have a lot of family and friends and I do a lot of activities, so weekends are never the same. They do however appear hectic at times as I'm either with family or committing to friends. I tend to start my weekend on a Friday as I'm lucky that I can plan my workload around my other commitments.

Do you find it hard to switch off?

Quite the opposite, I believe that it's important to keep refreshed for the following week, so in that respect I find it very easy to leave the day job behind for a couple of days.

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

I love to play golf, and, on a Friday, I tend to play a round with my clients, corporate contacts, and friends. My other passion is cycling, and I'll take longer rides on a Saturday or Sunday, which still leaves me a good deal of time for family.

Morning exercise or a recovery lie in?

My preference is an early cycle with enough of the weekend still to enjoy.



Marc Millar

Big night out or a night in the house?

Since Covid, it would be a night in the house with Mrs M either ideally in the garden or our converted shed.

Do you watch or play sport at a weekend?

I do enjoy sport and used to play football at a professional level, so I still enjoy watching the odd football match. Lately I have found myself watching rugby a lot more.

Where do you like to eat out at a weekend?

There is a standing joke in our family in that food holds no real enthusiasm for us and hence why it's not high on our agenda.

How important is the weekend to you?

It is incredibly important as it gives me time to switch off, spend time with my family and enjoy

the company of those closest and trusted.

What's the best thing about weekends?

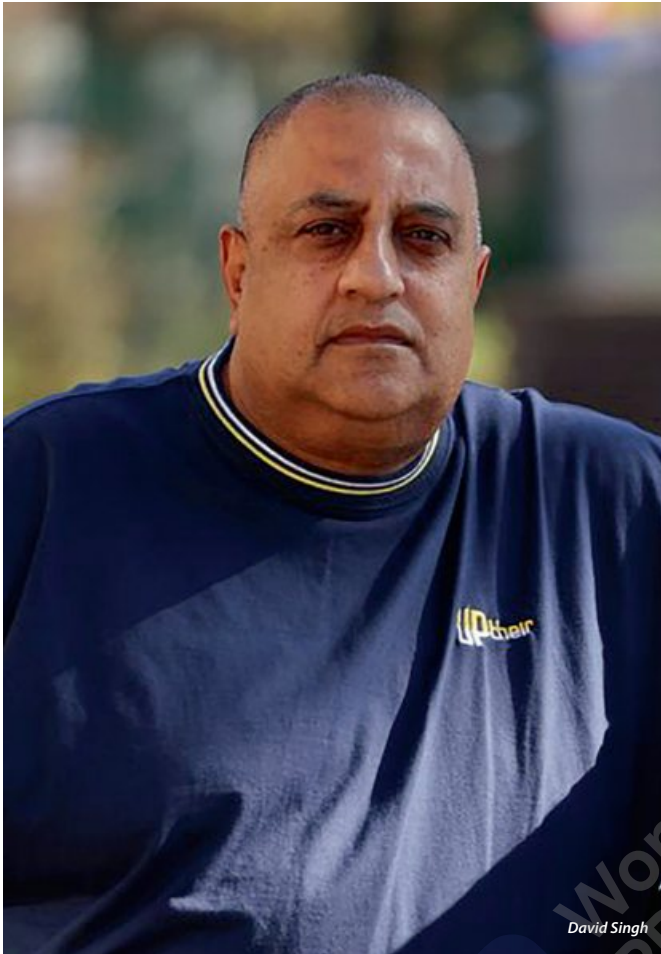
Having that Friday to Sunday to just do as you please including working on my golf handicap. I'm also a member of the national nautical charity the Maritime Volunteer Service and enjoy learning boating skills on the river and then putting them to good use helping at river-based community events such as The Tall Ships Race which is coming to Hartlepool next year.

Of a weekend, you'll usually find me most happy..?

Two putting or less on every hole over 18 holes.

You can contact Marc on 07842628731 or Marc.Millar@sjpp.co.uk

PRIDE IS IN THE NUMBERS AND, SO MUCH MORE



David Singh

When it comes to numbers, quantity isn't everything, but team high volumes of customers with excellent customer services, a loyalty that is second-to-none and a business that holds its community close to its heart, you get a well-respected company called: Noda Taxis.

Carrying over 2M passengers, safely to their destination each year, it's not surprising that Noda are the preferred choice of taxi company in the region.

Covering Newcastle, North Tyneside, Gateshead and the surrounding areas, the company has a fleet of over 600 cabs, making them one of the largest in the region, as well as a huge contributor to the North East's economy.

Working with businesses and individuals alike, Noda prides themselves on the professionalism throughout, whether it's your granny being driven for her local grocery shop, to important business airport pick-ups, the service is the same.

Customer Care Manager David Singh said: "It's an honour to work with Noda Taxis Customer Care Team, as they take such pride in their work and care passionately about good service for their customers. We set out the standards and monitor each and every driver and employee to ensure that these standards are met.

"It's those standards that set us apart from others in the industry. As Richard Branson once said: "If you look after your staff, they'll look after your customers – it's that simple!"

If you'd like your taxi company to have the same morals and ethics as you do in your business, you can set up a competitive business account by emailing info@nodataxis.co.uk. Their helpful Customer Service Care Team would be more than happy to help you through the simple process. All vehicles are tracked by their 24/7 call centre, which never closes – Reliability is literally our middle-name!

Noda Taxis, 0191 222 1888.

THE **RHYTHM**
OF THE **NORTH EAST**

ON DAB IN
NORTH & SOUTH
TYNESIDE

"PLAY FRISK RADIO"

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COUNTY DURHAM – A PLACE TO INVEST AND GROW

Durham County Council attended UKREiF, a national exhibition designed to showcase the scale of development progress across the UK and profile future investment opportunities to investors, developers and commercial occupiers from around the globe.

With £2 billion of investment, planned or underway, and an ambitious ten-year economic strategy, the council are keen to make the point that Durham makes an ideal location for investment and development.

A hotbed of innovation, the county has seen its hi-tech sector go from strength-to-strength, along with growth in the up-and coming UK space sector.

With a top 100 university on the doorstep, and four others in the region, it has one of the largest pools of talent anywhere in the UK.

Key to success is the quality of County Durham's strategic business sites, which provide the facilities and the environment to allow companies to grow and flourish, along with easy access to world-wide markets through excellent connectivity by road, rail, air and sea.

At the event the team from Business Durham, the business support service of Durham County Durham, highlighted the strength of hi-tech companies in the area, with scores of thriving innovative technology businesses County Durham is setting a high bar.

The team showcased why Durham is a great place for businesses to locate – companies like radio frequency (RF) communications specialist Filtronic. The company has ambitious plans to expand at NETPark where, since 2014, continuous innovation has seen the company grow its turnover, staff and footprint.

Marketing manager, Fin Farrelly, explained: "County Durham has a lot to offer, not least in



Filtronic at NETPark

terms of finance such as capital grants, incentives and investment, along with access to a skilled workforce.

"Together with our own investment it has meant we have been able to expand our manufacturing and testing facilities, so we can produce larger quantities enabling us to win work with other companies, accelerating our plans for growth.

Filtronic is one of over 40 companies based at NETPark who together employ over 600 people from university spinouts, start-ups to more established companies.

Durham is also home to a growing number of space sector businesses along with the North East Satellite Applications Centre of Excellence (NESACoE), which has been instrumental in putting the county firmly on the intergalactic map.

Led by Business Durham, NESACoE, based at NETPark, was set up to deliver the region's space strategy and has engaged with more than 700 organisations and helped companies secure more than £10m-worth of funding.

One of those companies is the RHEA Group, an internationally-renowned security and space engineering company, providing services to aerospace, security and defence companies across the world.

RHEA Group Chief Commercial Officer (CCO) and UK Vice President, John Bone said: "It is easier to expand here than in some areas of the UK with the graduate programmes, the room to physically grow the company footprint and access to resources and people.

"There is a very collaborative environment and we work closely with other space industry and hi-tech firms who complement what we do, to make things happen."



John Bone RHEA

County Durham has an ambition to build a successful, sustainable future promising a healthy and fulfilled lifestyle for all of its residents through access to good housing and employment.

To achieve that ambition, £3.4 billion will be invested in creating jobs, attracting inward investment and building new homes.

Bigger projects include £200m for the development of Aykley Heads; £400m at Bishop Auckland; £58m for the NETPark phase 3 expansion; £200m at Riverside, Durham City and £44.5m at Jade Business Park, Murton.

It is expected that the investment will generate 30,000 new jobs by 2035 and see 25,992 new homes built by 2035.

With opportunities for companies already here and new ones looking to relocate or expand the event is an opportunity to shout about all the county has to offer.

To find out more about current and future development as well as the support and advice available from Business Durham visit www.businessdurham.co.uk



Incubation space at NETPark

DRIVING INNOVATION IN COUNTY DURHAM

As the business support service of Durham County Council, Business Durham has a proven track record of helping companies grow, thrive and bring innovation to market.

With the rapidly changing world, it has never been more important to help businesses navigate the challenges they face and Business Durham is committed to supporting businesses to succeed.

In 2021, it launched the Durham Future Innovation Building (DFIB) programme to support innovation in the construction, health and electech sectors across the county.

Since its inception, the programme has provided support to over 20 companies to bring their innovative product, process or service for the future to market.

One of the businesses which has benefited from the DFIB programme is County Durham based deep technology company SEEDS (Sustainable Energy Efficient Designed Structures) Capital Limited. The company specialises in the research



SEEDS Capital Founder Jason Chehal

and development of advanced organic nano-materials to greatly improve the performance of battery and solar technologies.

Founder Jason Chehal says: "We applied to Business Durham's DFIB programme to help us connect with companies who could benefit from our energy harvesting inks."

"The DFIB programme has laid the foundation for building a stronger relationship with Business Durham, helping us to create a local supply chain centred around the cutting-edge technology we are developing to boost the attractiveness of County Durham as a region for advanced technology manufacturing."

Sarah Slaven, Business Durham's managing director, says: "Business Durham has a proven track record of helping innovative companies grow and thrive, and bringing innovation to market."

"The DFIB programme is just one of the ways we are supporting companies during this rapidly-changing time."

The DFIB programme is delivered through a series of events, masterclasses, workshops and practical sessions, designed to help businesses unlock their innovation potential and develop their knowledge and skills. Companies are also able to apply for funding to increase their expertise.

DFIB is a two-and-a-half year programme, funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), for SMEs. It will run until June 2023.

For more details about the programme and eligibility criteria, and to book a place on the online introduction, visit www.businessdurham.co.uk/dfib



CHARITY OF THE MONTH



DAISY CHAIN PROJECT

Why was the charity founded?

Daisy Chain was founded in 2003. Founder, Lesley realised there was a lack of support available and dreamed of a place for autistic children and adults; a place where people could receive personalised support and feel safe to be their authentic selves. Nearly 20 years on, we're growing all the time, expanding services and supporting over 4,500 families.

Which area do you cover?

Our state-of-the-art, therapeutic day centre and farm are based in Norton, Stockton-on-Tees. Many of the children, adults and family services take place on-site, and people travel from across the region to access them. Although our face-to-face services operate in Tees Valley, some of our services reach beyond the local area such as our Autism Support Helpline which supports people across England.

What type of fundraising events do you have?

There are so many ways to support Daisy Chain through fundraising. From our events such as our annual golf day and winter ball, to individual challenges and corporate partnerships. If you're the adventurous type, you can join us for events like the Cleveland 4 Peaks, Great North Run and much more.

The biggest fundraising event in the Daisy Chain calendar is our annual Winter Ball. The theme for 2022 is Viva Las Vegas, and tickets are only £65

each. Tables are filling fast so get in touch with us to secure yours. Think a fun-filled evening of feathers, glitz, glam and fantastic entertainment!

How did you adapt during the Coronavirus pandemic?

Overnight we adapted services to offer telephone support and virtual support services. We created more COVID secure areas, utilising outdoor spaces through funding for a pod village, enabling us to run socially distanced support sessions. We increased our hours of operations and ran our Summer programme of activities after the first lockdown that helped young people be emotionally equipped to return to school. We also introduced wellbeing support, offering counselling to autistic young people.

What is your proudest moment so far?

Introducing outreach support services across the full Tees Valley was a huge win for us. Not all families can utilise our services due to accessibility and finance so being able to reach further afield and support people in all five local authority areas is something we're very proud of.

Who are your main trustees and patrons?

We have nine trustees in total, including our Chair, Duane Hanson, who is also a co-founder. We also have two patrons, one of which, Anna Kennedy, developed Autism's Got Talent which is a live, non-competitive talent show showcasing the diverse talents of children and adults with autism. This year it's in the North East, hosted by Daisy Chain in conjunction with Anna Kennedy Online.

What are you currently working on?

During the last few years, we've suffered financial losses due to the restrictions placed on our social enterprise income, and a halt to fundraising activity. Yet, at the same time, we've seen an



increase in diagnosis and demand for support.

We need to continue raising vital funds for frontline services, to meet a need that continues to grow and find new innovative ways to provide those services; that's why we're looking to open an adult centre to support the growing demand for adult services.

What does the future hold?

2023 marks our 20th year, and we've got some big plans which we can't wait to share. Daisy Chain has proven that we are a small charity that continuously belts above its weight and we know this from the impact that our work has had on a local and national level. Most recently, our Understanding Myself training has been recognised by the UK Government.

2023 gives us the opportunity to support more neurodivergent people and families; we can do that with your support.

How do you get involved?

There are so many events and fundraising activities for you and your teams to get involved in to support us. We also offer the opportunity for you to explore neurodivergent placements in your workplace, thus helping autism talent shine.

To find out more about employability, please email: employability@daisychainproject.co.uk. For general enquires please get in touch: info@daisychainproject.co.uk 01642 531248

POWERING SUPPLY CHAINS

Research Interest Group (RIG), part of Northumbria University's Newcastle Business School, is looking to partner with UK SMEs operating in national or global supply chains, to help reduce inefficiencies and enhance cost-savings, profitability and customer satisfaction.

Here, Dr Alireza Shokri, lead at RIG, explains what the Group can do for SMEs and how the benefit to business productivity and the bottom line can be vast.

The Group has been able to predict £50m in savings, over an eight-year period, for SMEs it has worked with. It is now reaching out to the region's SMEs to assist them.

Can you explain the types of SMEs you are looking to partner with?

We are looking to work with SMEs from all sectors and industries, the precursor simply being that they operate within UK or global supply chains. Every business, despite how well they think they operate, can become more efficient and increase productivity as part of continuous improvement which, ultimately, will have a positive impact on the bottom line with minimum effort and resources.

I hear all the time from businesses that they are selling well but their bottom line does not reflect this. It is time for SMEs to look inwards to identify, via data collection and analysis, the hidden areas for them in which improvements can be made. The results can be vast.

Can you explain the level of investment required, in terms of time and, if any, cost?

RIG has worked with a number of SMEs and time is a most valuable asset that is often in short supply. I am keen to reassure businesses that may be interested in engaging with us that many of the SMEs we have assisted are time poor and we have worked around that to achieve significant results.

In terms of cost, there is none involved with partnering with RIG. The initial step is a simple conversation, where we will ask about the SME's pain points and then we will look at ways to find a solution. In some instances, we can agree a consultancy project or apply for funding



Dr Alireza Shokri

if the solution is more complicated. This is never guaranteed and if the application is not accepted, we will look at the problem laterally and endeavour to find an alternative solution.

What is the benefit for an SME in partnering with a university?

There are a number of reasons why an SME would benefit from collaborating with a university, in this instance Northumbria University's Newcastle Business School. One of the most obvious being that we have a wealth of experience and knowledge, having worked with a multitude of SMEs that face similar problems, helping them to operate in a smarter way.

The business landscape is very challenging and most SMEs are firefighting on a day-to-day basis. When you have RIG's support, which understands operational and supply chain pain points and has the knowledge to come up with practical solutions, a company can continue with business as normal whilst we work on its behalf to improve efficiency, profitability and business productivity.

Newcastle Business School also has a growing SME network and host dedicated events aimed at supporting likeminded SMEs to help network

and grow. Much of this activity is communicated through the 'Why Small Business Matters' podcast that can be listened online or through your podcast app on your smartphone.

Are you looking to establish on-going relationships with the SMEs you assist?

RIG exists to find a sustainable solution for problems that SMEs are facing, so we leave them in a position where they no longer have the problem or can deal with it independently. That being said, we are always keen to keep an open dialogue with those businesses we have partnered with and if any other operational inefficiencies or problems arise, we would encourage them to seek our assistance once again.

How can SMEs contact you to discuss how RIG can help their business?

The easiest way is to contact me directly via email: alireza.shokri@northumbria.ac.uk

A simple chat can be the beginning of a very fruitful relationship and the journey to making a business more profitable and competitive.



David Foster, managing director, Anglo Scottish Asset Finance and Charlotte Enright, business development manager and sustainability lead, Anglo Scottish Asset Finance



ANGLO SCOTTISH DRIVES ELECTRIFICATION IN THE WORKPLACE

Chester-le-Street-based, Anglo Scottish Asset Finance, is partnering with Diode, specialists in electric vehicle (EV) suitability assessments and charge point procurement, to help break down the barriers to EV adoption and drive forward electrification in the workplace.

The partnership has been spearheaded by Charlotte Enright, business development manager and sustainability lead at Anglo Scottish Asset Finance.

Following discussions with Diode, which was established in 2020 in response to the climate change emergency and is a recipient of Innovate UK and Department for Transport grant funding, the two companies are partnering to provide a full circle service for businesses looking to invest in EVs.

Diode, an innovative web-based software platform that provides an all-in-one solution to help businesses, employees and consumers assess their electric vehicle suitability, generate a tailored charge point roll-out plan and purchase charge points through an automated tender process, identified that initial investment for many businesses would require finance and, as such, the relationship between the two companies was agreed.

The partnership coincides with the recent publication of the government's UK Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy. Included, was a £1.6 billion commitment towards achieving a tenfold increase in charge points by 2030, which will accelerate the government's aim to end the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles by 2030 and ensure all new cars and vans are zero-emission by 2035.

With the average driver needing to charge for approximately seven hours per week at a standard 7kW charge point, installing charge points at

workplaces will be a critical component if the target is to be achieved.

Established in 2007 and with headquarters in Chester-le-Street, County Durham, Anglo Scottish is an independent business finance broker, providing a range of financial services across the UK including asset finance, business loans and vendor and dealer finance, as well as personal vehicle solutions and vehicle sourcing.

Dan Eyre, co-founder and COO, Diode, said: "At current petrol and electricity prices, the cost per mile for electric vehicles is about half that of an equivalent petrol vehicle.

"The high upfront costs of the vehicles and charge points can put businesses and drivers off making the switch and is why finance options are so important, because it means our customers can start taking advantage of low-cost electric driving from day one.

"More than 90% of the drivers that complete our Electric Vehicle Readiness Assessment are in the position to make the switch. For some businesses, they may choose to make a full transition then and there, whilst others may wish to go at a slower pace. Diode can help companies that fit in to both of these groups and with Anglo Scottish as our finance partner, customers will quickly reap the benefits, both in terms of cost savings and accelerating their transition to electric vehicles."

Charlotte Enright, sustainability lead, Anglo Scottish

Asset Finance, said: "Recent figures published by The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders highlighted a huge increase in sales of electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles in 2021. In fact, more new battery electric vehicles were registered than over the previous five years combined. Interestingly, there were 190,727 battery electric vehicles and 114,554 plug-in hybrids, meaning 18.5% of all new cars registered in 2021 could be plugged in.

"As part of the UK's transition to electric vehicles, Diode has identified the need for a streamlined, simple, data driven platform that requires very little in terms of time investment. Results are quick and the benefits for businesses that work with the platform are huge.

"Once employees have completed their assessments, and businesses have generated their roll-out plans, those seeking finance are directed to Anglo Scottish, where we will find the best possible finance deals for electric vehicles and charging stations, via our vast panel of lenders.

David Foster, managing director, Anglo Scottish Asset Finance, said: "As we continue to strengthen our sustainable finance offering, with the aim of becoming the leading provider in the UK, we need look no further than the current investment taking place within electrification.

"For many, the journey towards making workplace operations sustainable will be on-going and Anglo Scottish aims to make this transition as smooth as possible, both for existing and new customers."

www.angloscottishfinance.co.uk

IN CONVERSATION WITH...



Carl Moffett

CARL MOFFETT

Chief financial officer at
Samuel Knight International

What is your role at Samuel Knight International?

I am chief financial officer, responsible for managing the financial actions of the company. The role is very varied and can include everything from tracking cash flow and financial planning to analysing the company's financial strengths and weaknesses and proposing corrective actions.

What do you enjoy most about your role?

My work differs from day to day and we are operating in a very exciting market. It

is incredibly fast paced. There are so many opportunities within the US renewable market, as it is in its infancy. Clients need guidance and we have the expertise.

What is your proudest business achievement?

I have so many but to name a few: I joined the company during the middle of securing investment with Gresham House Ventures and helping to play a part in this was a proud moment, as was achieving 81% growth and turnover in year two, the company securing a major client in the US and breaking into the US market in the right and compliant way.

What challenges have you encountered?

The challenge has been getting the right foundation in place for Samuel Knight's growth, being adaptable to changing the business quickly and understanding the US market.

Scaling up the business in the US can be complex, as there are 52 different states all with very different legislations.

How has the industry changed since you began your career?

Renewable energy has massively taken off. Previously, our sector was very much focused on oil and gas but renewable energy is now the backbone of the business.

How do you like to unwind?

I unwind by spending time with my family and friends and I like to do a lot of cycling. My daughter also plays a lot of football, so we often watch her play at a weekend. She plays at county level, for Newcastle United girls and Heaton Hawks Football Club, so that keeps us all busy.

samuel-knight.com



NECTA AWARDS

Promoting service and culinary excellence NECTA aims to improve standards within the North East hospitality industry and raise its profile across the UK. Working closely with colleges to develop better skill sets and with employers to provide recruitment opportunities.

The annual Hospitality Salon is a showcase for young people with talent in the North East of England and the 2022 event, the first in three years was an excellent two days, a time to reunite and relaunch the profession in the North East, as well as promoting and encouraging recruitment, employment and professional training.

Douglas Jordan, from NECTA said: "It was wonderful to see the regional colleges competing with such dedication. With Cookery and Service, Sugar Craft, Floristry, Mixology and Barista we cover all aspects of the skills sector in hospitality and are keen to grow the close partnerships we have already developed with industry leaders and with other professional associations to be able offer improved opportunities for young people.

"Given the success of this year's event it is our task to encourage more participation from both potential competitors and sponsors and we look forward with great excitement to celebrate with everyone in 2023."

North East Chef of the Year '22 winner was Kyle Greenwood from Seaham Hall.

Previous winners include Parichat Somsri-Kirby of Sohe in Jesmond and Andrew Wilkinson from 31, The Quay in North Shields.

For more information go to the website www.nectachef.org



IN CONVERSATION WITH...

HEIDI TURNER

Director of Cheviot HR Ltd,
HR Consultancy



What were your career ambitions growing up?

I've always been interested in the world of business, and what makes people tick, so I really felt that I'd found my calling when I started my career in HR pretty much as soon as I graduated. My dad was a serial entrepreneur and he inspired me greatly to start up on my own. If he was with us today, I'm sure he would have been a mega proud dad.

Tell us about your current role?

I'm lucky to work with some fabulous businesses across the North East, managing their HR function, as well as getting new employers ready to take on their first employees, ensuring all the necessary HR frameworks and processes are in place.

Managing employees and addressing the issues that come with this responsibility can be extremely stressful for business owners and managers. Taking that stress away from them often comes with immense relief, which for me is what I find most satisfying about my job.

What is your proudest business achievement?

Getting my first retained client! I can remember it like it was yesterday! I did a little victory dance in my head whilst trying to maintain my composure as I closed the deal.

I smile to myself every so often at how excited I was back then, on what was a comparatively small deal, but they do say, you always remember your first!

How has your industry changed in the last decade?

Employer branding. Who had heard of employer branding a decade ago? Everyone knows how important brand image is when it comes to

winning market share but companies are now recognising the importance of establishing and communicating who they want to be as an employer.

This goes hand in hand with helping employees obtain a better work-life balance, challenging how, when and where we work, developing employee wellbeing strategies and modernising traditional pay and benefits packages.

It has been a truly revolutionary decade in the world of HR.

What are you currently working on?

I've been working with some fantastic start-ups lately, with big growth plans, to get all their HR policies, procedures, processes and reporting systems in place to take on their first employees. Everything from documentation and benchmarking, to establishing terms and conditions of employment, workforce planning, recruitment, you name it. It's really exciting to get involved from the start, particularly when you see a company grow from a concept to a major household name!

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

Like the Nike slogan, "Just Do It". There is never a "right time" to start a business. If you are waiting for the right time, it will never happen.

Believing in yourself is another one. There are always people in this world who will try to knock you down and give you 100 reasons why you shouldn't do something, but you have to believe in yourself and what you can offer.

What has been your biggest challenge?

Juggling my responsibilities as a mum and

growing my business. That conflict between wanting to give my kids the time they deserve, and wanting my business to do well.

I think most working mums out there will always find this a physical and mental struggle, but we should remind ourselves that we are inspiring our kids to work hard and pursue their dreams.

Who are your heroes inside and outside of business?

Sara Blakely, who owns Spanx, the underwear company. She's the youngest self-made female billionaire from her simple concept after cutting the feet out of tights. She started her business with her life savings of \$5,000 when she was just 27. Did you know that she actually paid people to show up at her promotional events to create a bit of hype?! She is the perfect example of what strong conviction and hard work can achieve.

How do you unwind outside of work?

I love going for walks with the family along our beautiful Northumbrian coast, it really blows away the cobwebs! I love our coastline and the countryside, we really are privileged to live where we do.

Favourite Book and Boxset

I do love a good boxset! Particularly a British crime drama or thriller like *Line of Duty*, *The Bodyguard*, *The Fall*, *The Night Manager* was fantastic years ago, do you remember that one? Too many to mention. What did we do when we just had four TV channels?!!

Get in touch with heidi@cheviotth.co.uk



Eothen Care Homes



'PUTTING THE CARE INTO CAREER'

Our compassionate carers are dedicated to providing the best care to our amazing residents. Can you help us make a difference?

They've looked after us, now let's look after them.



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NEW OFFICE FOR RAZORBLUE

A leading IT Managed Service Provider which works with over 500 companies across the UK has relocated its Teesside office to support its continued rapid growth.

razorblue has grown exponentially over the last few years and now boasts seven offices, a headcount of over 140, a client base which covers the length and breadth of the UK and is on track to hit £13m in turnover this financial year.

The new office is located on the riverside in Stockton, with room for over 100 colleagues - and has been fitted out with razorblue's signature high speed connectivity, Microsoft Teams rooms and recreation areas for staff.

This move supports the company's recruitment drive to support its expansion plans. With several vacancies currently available and the recent launch of its own apprenticeship academy, the company is constantly seeking new staff to drive the business forward as it continues to grow.

CEO, Dan Kitchen said: "Having outgrown our previous Teesside base, we took the opportunity to find a space that offered more to our people, too. Stockton has excellent transport links, has more in the way of venues for social events for our team, is a far larger premises to support growth, and we are lucky to be able to enjoy a beautiful view of the river.

"We are thrilled to have made this move and look forward to spending many years here as our exciting journey continues."

SOFTWARE CONSULTANCY SCOTT LOGIC LAUNCHES NEW HQ AT THE LUMEN IN NEWCASTLE HELIX

Software consultancy Scott Logic recently opened its new Newcastle HQ at a launch party in the Lumen, one of the flagship buildings in Newcastle Helix. It plans to recruit 200 more people in Newcastle as part of ambitious growth plans over the next few years.

Scott Logic employs more than 400 people across its six UK offices, providing a range of technology services to organisations such as the Scottish Government, the Department for Work and Pensions and NatWest Group. Founded in 2005, Scott Logic has always been headquartered in Newcastle and the new HQ supports Scott Logic's long-term growth plans, focus on sustainability and sets the company up for a new era of hybrid working.

"Scott Logic has always been about integrating

with the communities around us and having an influence beyond our core business," said Steve Foreshow-Cain, CEO, Scott Logic. "We are embedded within North East communities and committed to future talent development, from close ties with Newcastle University and Durham University, where we fund scholarships for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, to the continued expansion of our graduate hiring programme in Newcastle."



NORTH EAST BUSINESSES CELEBRATE THE NORTH EAST INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Over 60 visitors recently attended New College Durham to celebrate the work done by the North East Institute of Technology (NEIoT); and to take part in the official opening of the NEIoT facilities at New College Durham by the Mayor of Durham City.

Local businesspeople and representatives from the NEIoT's partner colleges enjoyed talks from a range of speakers including Andy Radcliffe, Chief Executive of Esh Group, Ian Green MBE, Learning Specialist British Volt and Rachel Chambers, Chief Operating Officer, Driving the Electric Revolution Industrialisation Centre North East.

Visitors then had the opportunity to take part in the interactive partner marketplace, try out the Virtual Reality equipment, watch demonstrations of the robotic equipment and take tours of the building.

Andy Broadbent, Principal and CEO at New College Durham said: "This event was the perfect opportunity to celebrate the North East Institute of Technology and raise the profile of IoTs and technical education. We want to showcase the opportunities Institutes of Technologies provide in terms of training, employment and economic growth, as well as network with those involved in the programme from around the North East region."

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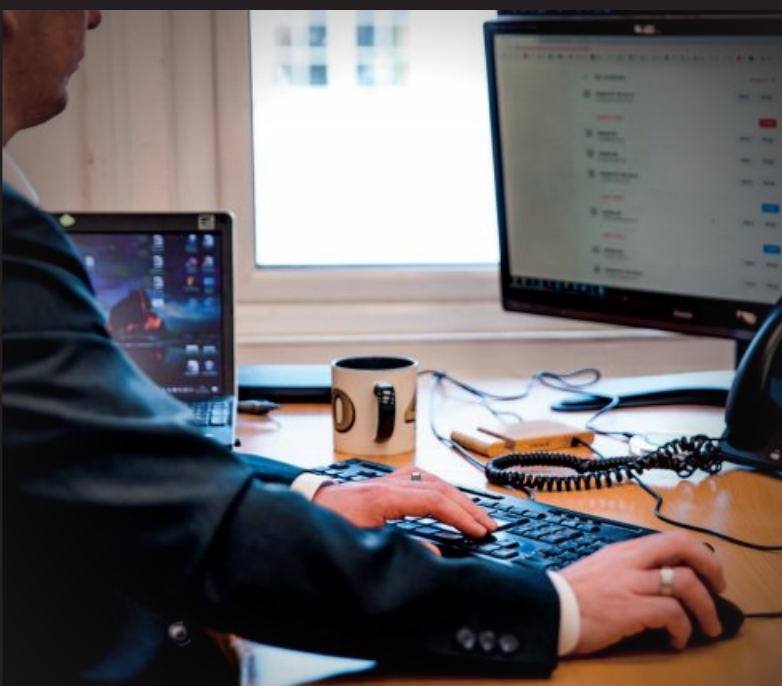
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TALKING TECH AND DIGITAL

In the latest of these popular series of features we talk to...

KELLY SIMKISS

CEO, Perfect Image

Did you always envisage a career in the world of Technology?

No, definitely not. When I was at school, I wanted to be a lawyer (mainly from watching Ally McBeal in the 90's) I fell into a tech career through seeking general management/leadership opportunities that would allow me to move back home to the North West (at the time I was working in the B&Q logistics team in Southampton). Openreach was holding internal and external assessment centres to identify their senior leaders of the future and I was successful in gaining a role. It's the utility-like nature of technology that I love, the fact that the services my business provides are critical to our customers (often more so than traditional utilities nowadays).

What attracted you to your current role?

The people, the products and services we provide to our customers. When I was seeking my next role (12 months ago now) I was fortunate enough to quickly end up in six different processes (five out of six of them were in the Tech industry). The thing that made Pixel Group (the parent company of Perfect Image, Cyphra and now Technique) stand out was the friendliness and technical competency of the people I met through the recruitment process; everyone from the PE House, Chairman, NED and Exec members were all truly passionate about the organisation and the great products and services we provide. Having worked in Technology for over five years prior to joining, the cyber, cloud migration and data & analytics competencies really attracted me as I knew how in demand they were in the market and how valuable they are to our existing and potential customers.

How important has Technology been during the Coronavirus pandemic?

It's been absolutely business critical; and for many businesses the difference between whether they could continue operating or not; and therefore, how impacted (or the size of the opportunity for) their business by the pandemic.

“

...It's the utility-like nature of technology that I love...

What tips would you give to someone looking to work in the industry?

Do it! The industry is a fast growing one, with lots of opportunities and is a great industry to work in if you want to help people and businesses solve their problems. There are also so many different roles (from the truly technical, to more customer centric or central specialist functions) so there is something for everyone in most businesses in this industry.

Tell us the most exciting thing you're currently working on?

A rebrand. With the recent acquisitions we will be joining Perfect Image and Technique together under a new single brand, and rebranding the Group (currently Pixel Group) to tie in.

Tell us about your team.

I have a team of true superstars. As part of the rebrand we have asked a lot of our customers what makes us special to them; and without fail they have all commented on the technical competency, integrity and friendliness of our people.

What's your fondest memory of a career in the industry?

The pandemic provided almost daily opportunities to go above and beyond for customers and the community; whether it was getting the connectivity into a pop-up Nightingale hospital within five days or enabling a 2000 strong workforce to work from home over night there were lots of proud moments at a very difficult time.

What piece of technology would you be lost without?

My iPhone.

Who are your heroes and mentors from a career perspective?

There are too many to mention them all; as I'm extremely fortunate in this space.

My family have been a great source of inspiration all the way from two sets of grandparents who all worked multiple jobs and juggled family life to set their children up to have more opportunity than they had through to having two entrepreneurs (my dad and my cousin) who I got to observe starting up their own businesses, and making them successful, while I was growing up.

I've also been lucky enough to have been mentored and supported by lots of inspirational people throughout my own career – Anna Keep (Founder of Accelerated Change), Jenny Davies (CEO Dovehaven Care Home Group), Tricia Williams (COO Northern Trains) and Paul Pintiliecu (currently starting up his own business whilst performing a full time CTO and a strategy role for two other Tech businesses) to name but a few.

When not working, how do you like to relax?

It's all about the yin and yang for me so I simultaneously love socialising with friends and family (I like to keep up to date with all the new bars and restaurant openings) whilst also enjoying time on my own either reading a book or knitting (badly!)

perfect-image.co.uk



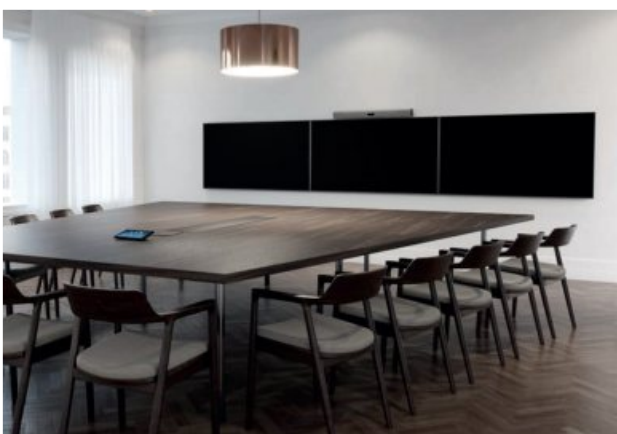


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CLOUD EXPERTS HTG ON EXPANSION TRAIL TO ACHIEVE £30M TURNOVER

Secure cloud expert Howell Technology Group (HTG) is on the expansion trail, doubling the size of its premises to allow it to create at least 20 new jobs in the next year, and accelerate the firm's bid to reach a £30m turnover in the next five years.

The business has also made two key appointments to its senior leadership team, to spearhead the next phase of growth.

Headquartered in Hebburn and with bases in London, Edinburgh and Belfast, HTG holds Advanced Specialist Gold level partnerships with leading industry names including Microsoft, Citrix and VMware. Its UK client base includes global high profile names such as Goldman Sachs, as well as a range of public and private sector organisations with staff numbers ranging from SME level to 150,000 seats.

The new two-storey, 5,000 sq ft premises on Monkton Business Park in Hebburn will have a full refit including the creation of the North East's first Microsoft Centre of Excellence, designed to attract and develop local talent to HTG's workforce, and support its in-house apprenticeship and graduate schemes.



L-R: Sales and Marketing Director George Galloway; Technical Director Alan McBurney; CEO Kevin Howell; Finance Director Sarah Howell; Operations Director Niall Quinn; with the HTG team.

“

...The move and our new appointments put us in the ideal position to expand, create more jobs, and support our customers in their digital journeys...

CEO Kevin Howell said: “This move to a much bigger location comes on the back of a series of contract wins across the UK, thanks to our ability to apply the latest innovative cloud technology to solve business problems for clients in any sector and of any size, all backed up by great customer service.

“Organisations right across the board continue to shift more of their infrastructure to cloud, thanks to its proven ability to support digital business transformation that boosts productivity and improves customer service, and enable the secure remote working that has now become the norm.

“The global cloud market is expected to be worth \$474 billion this year, and our privileged partnerships with Microsoft and other leading

vendors give us a major advantage over our competitors, and we are confident we will achieve our aim to become the leading cloud provider across a number of identified sectors.”

The new appointments see George Galloway join as sales and marketing director, bringing with him a 20-year background in successful senior commercial roles within the North East IT industry. HTG's former programme and operations manager Niall Quinn, who is a certified Project Management Professional (PMP), PRINCE2 holder, and experienced Scrum Master, is promoted to operations director.

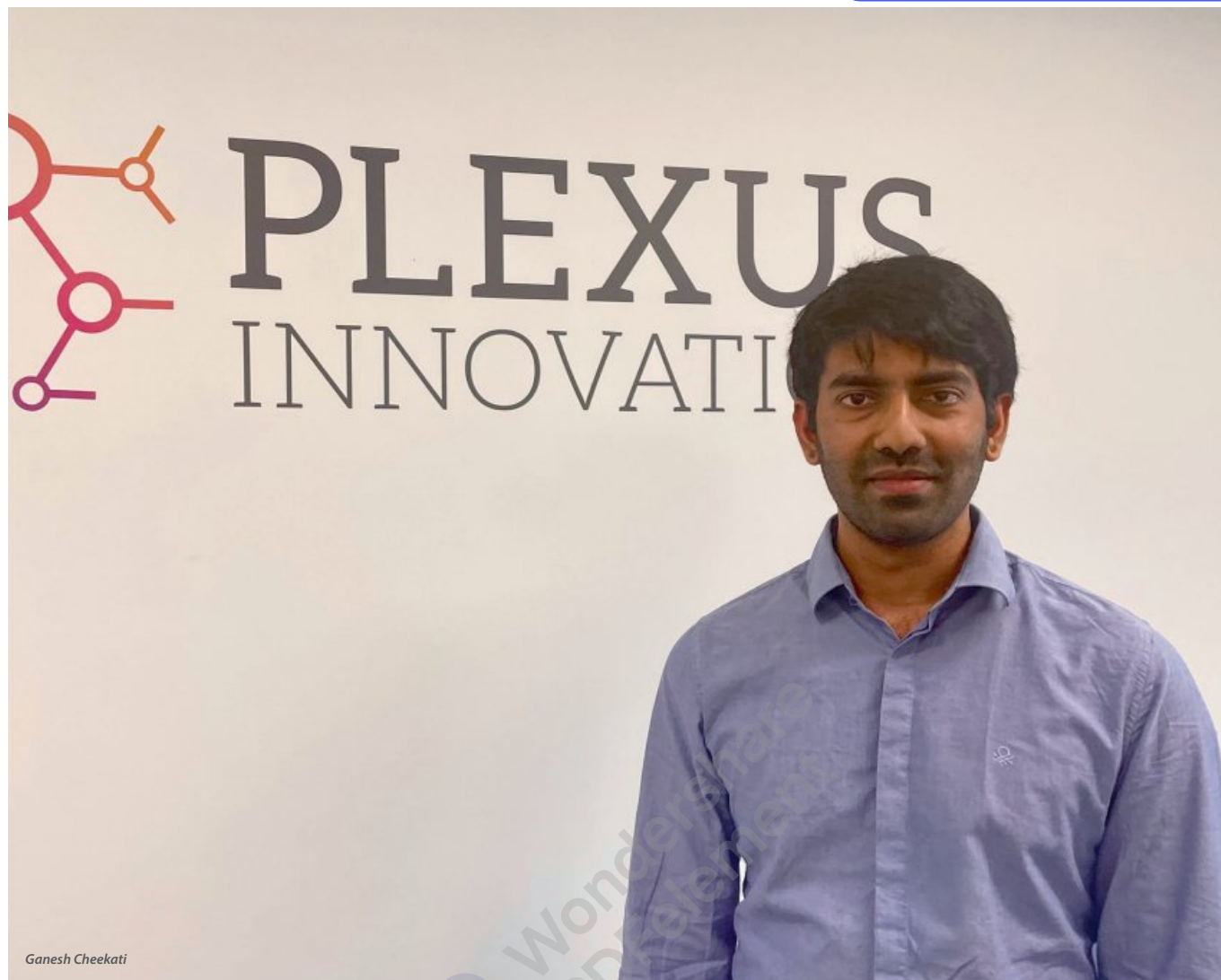
“This is a pivotal moment for HTG, as we restructure and strengthen our senior leadership team to enable our growth. We are very pleased

to have George on board, and to recognise Niall's achievement and ambition with a senior appointment,” added Kevin.

“Attracting and retaining the highest levels of talent is vital to our success. Both George and Niall are highly regarded within the North East business community and will play a key role in leading and shaping our future.

“The move to bigger headquarters and our new appointments put us in the ideal position to expand, create more jobs here in our heartland, and support our customers in their digital journeys. This is a very exciting time for the business.”

www.htg.co.uk



Ganesh Cheekati

SOFTWARE ENGINEER BOOSTS CAPABILITY FOR PLEXUS INNOVATION

The company behind GUARDIAN® remote technology, has grown its team again, to provide extra support with product development, so that the company can achieve its ambitious growth plan.

Joining the team as a software engineer, is Ganesh Cheekati from Newcastle. Ganesh will be working closely with Steve Todd, Technical Director, to develop the technology and broaden its uses and applications across a range of sectors.

Whilst GUARDIAN® remote technology is new to Ganesh, he brings with him six years of under and post graduate studying, having achieved a Masters degree in Computer Science from Northumbria University. He has also spent two years working on IoT projects whilst on work placement in Hyderabad, India.

Ganesh said: "The concept of IoT has always interested me. To get this opportunity that opens up the chance for me to learn more, whilst

bringing my knowledge into the business, is perfect for me. I'm excited to use my experience in a practical way and learn from Steve's enviable experience in the arena. He gives me freedom to explore and learn; and I have some great ideas for next stages of development already!

"The team at Plexus Innovation has been very welcoming, and I am looking forward to both seeing the product installed, in action and to help develop it further. It really is an exciting opportunity to join the company at such a critical growth stage!"

Plexus Innovation is changing the way many sectors monitor and measure essential services that need reliable compliance data. GUARDIAN® remotely monitors and measures temperature,

CO2, humidity and water systems, enabling insight-driven decisions via real time monitoring for compliance reporting and automated alerts to identified health risks or failing assets that otherwise may not be known about.

Steve, who is a co-founder of the innovative business alongside Ian Murray, said: "Ganesh is a welcome addition to the development team. Having him join us right now is instrumental to our future strategic plans, where we will be growing the current customer base, taking feedback, and developing the IoT product to new capacity, as well ensuring current customers get the best possible service and results."

In his personal time 28-year-old Ganesh likes spending time with friends, playing cricket, discussing the future and taking part in debates; and he has a love for watching movies, his favourite being Bollywood style.

He concluded: "I have been looking for a long-term career option and my plan is to stay here at Plexus Innovation, helping deliver an outstanding product and drive further development with Steve. I see this as a solid opportunity and can't wait to grow the role, so I am making a real difference to the company."

More information on GUARDIAN® and Plexus Innovation is available by contacting info@plexus-innovation.com or by visiting www.plexus-innovation.com



SECURITY COMES IN ALL SHAPES AND SIZES

When it comes to hackers, you're likely to imagine a scary figure behind a computer screen; hoodie up, mask on, hiding behind the anonymity of a virtual world. But are all hackers bad?

Ours aren't.

That's right; we have a team of hackers – we call them our cyber security team.

What do hackers do?

Hackers play a critical role in keeping people and companies safe.

Cyber security professionals, consultants, and technical experts use their knowledge and expertise to test the level of cyber security in any given company, and by doing so they identify

potential threats and weaknesses.

Not only that, but many hackers also spend their time looking at the rules and regulations behind information security in order to help organisations better understand their threats, and how to put mitigations and controls in place.

This misrepresented group of individuals work to protect all aspects of the online world many of us have become acquainted with.

What about the bad guys?

An alternate term for someone who commits a crime online is a Cyber Criminal or Cyber Attacker.

Hacking itself is NOT a crime, but the intent behind an individual's reason to hack is what may lead to crime.

An unethical doctor would be called a murderer, an unethical banker a thief, and an unethical entrepreneur a fraudster.

Do I need a hacker?

Every business needs some level of cyber security. Whether it is simply to protect the data you store through multifactor authentication, or more sophisticated systems that ensure your production methods, R&D or even your secret sauce recipe are securely under (virtual) lock and key.



Sarah Cunningham, one of our hackers

So, the next time you think about hackers, just remember we aren't all bad.

Visit our website to find out more about our team of hackers and how they can protect your business

[waterstones.com](https://www.waterstones.com)



Scan here to find out more about our team of hackers and how they can protect your business



ASPIRE POWERS FORMER NEWCASTLE BUILDING SOCIETY FOR SUCCESS

The next phase in the transformation of the former head office of Newcastle Building Society is underway with the provision of revolutionary ultrafast internet connectivity throughout the building. Deployed by Aspire Technology Solutions throughout the North East, the ultrafast dedicated connectivity (UDC) boasts some of the fastest speeds available in the country.

Aspire, who are one of the fastest growing IT managed service and cyber security providers in the UK, has won the contract to provide Portland House - the former city centre offices of Newcastle Building Society for 25 years - with a new fibre cable infrastructure as part of a five-figure investment to upgrade internet services.

Aspire have set ambitious plans for improving business connectivity across the North East after a multi-million-pound investment to build their own full fibre North East network, known as Ultrafast Dedicated Connectivity (UDC).

With UDC, Portland House will provide tenants with easily accessible, reliable and cost effective internet connectivity of up to a phenomenal 100 gigabit per second (Gb/s).

The work is part of an ambitious multi-million-pound refurbishment programme being undertaken by Gateshead office fit out consultancy Ultimate Group, transforming the 1990s built offices into 60,000 sq. ft. of modern workspace across five floors in the heart of the city.

Aspire is working alongside WiredScore, which assesses and improves digital connectivity and smart technology within commercial buildings around the world, to achieve a Platinum accreditation for Portland House.

Oliver Holland, one of the developers of Portland House, said: "We are installing the infrastructure for occupiers to access next generation, low latency (<1ms), fully redundant, multi-network internet service which is scalable up to 100 gigabit per second. This provides the fastest speeds and most reliable service available in the country.

"Having a market leading technology spine with the most advanced connectivity available is a crucial part of our vision for Portland House. We are making

excellent progress on site ahead of the summer completion and we are extremely encouraged by the enquiries from businesses looking for high quality office accommodation."

Shaun Richardson, senior account manager at Aspire, added: "Following our investment in the North East's connectivity infrastructure, we are in the unique position to offer local organisations the fastest connectivity on the market at an affordable price. Portland House is another prestigious project for us. We are proud to be at the forefront of delivering advanced, scalable and high-performance services as part of integrated turnkey solutions to leading organisations, not only in the North East but across the UK."

The redevelopment of Portland House, situated on Blue Square opposite the Laing Art Gallery, is due for completion in July. The scheme is being marketed by joint letting agents, BNP Paribas Real Estate and Sanderson Weatherall.

www.aspirets.com



THREE HIDDEN RISKS OF BUSINESS APPS

By Steve Morland, Specialist Tech Lead, Leighton

Over the last couple of years, as the pandemic spread across the globe, the world of work was forced to change. Many businesses turned to technology to enable remote working, whilst others scrambled to develop online experiences for customers.

Whereas once tech solutions were preferred by early adopters, nowadays they're critical to keep businesses productive. But with the average enterprise business using 175 different applications, it's important to understand the risks, especially when it comes to "off the shelf" solutions.

Risk 1 - Security

As reliance on business apps to support core business functions increases, so does the risk to security. Cyberattacks targeting sensitive private information such as human resources data, personally identifiable information or intellectual property and are commonplace, with 49% of organisations saying they suffered a data breach over the past two years. The costs of a security breach can be critical resulting in lost business, reputational damage, and downtime to business-critical applications. When selecting an application, it's critical you do your due diligence and ensure your data is properly secured and backed-up and that access to confidential information is protected. All apps have multiple stakeholders, each with different requirements. Business stakeholders may desire feature improvements that deliver value to the end users, whereas technical stakeholders may focus more on security and resilience – between them, they should be building a roadmap for the ongoing development and security of the application.



Steve Morland

Risk 2 - Inefficiency

Often, the need for a business application spins out from a spreadsheet that has been outgrown. Businesses are willing to invest in low code type tools but end up with resources tied up looking after these systems. Businesses will often "make do" with existing apps and systems even if they're no longer fit for purpose to cut costs or to avoid the friction of change. This results in inefficiencies which can overcomplicate processes and hamper operations. Other inefficiencies come from using too many apps, lack of integration, missing insights or having difficult to use systems or processes. So, when adding another application into the mix, it's important to carefully consider your business' objectives as well as the functional and technical requirements of the application, keeping in mind potential integrations required as well as scalability.

Risk 3 - Scalability

As a business grows, there are frequent changes to its requirements. Not only do products and services change along the way, but teams also need to adapt to changes in the way a business operates, particularly when a new business application is introduced. With that in mind,

business apps need to be scalable and flexible. Businesses that depend on too many applications may be more at risk when it comes to scaling, particularly if they lack integration. As such, when choosing a business application, you should think about your short-term needs as well as your long-term goals to ensure you can continually optimise performance and increase productivity as the business grows. Your business apps should be able to handle a growing number of customers, clients or users whilst maintaining performance and data consistency. A healthy business application will always need feature enhancement and ongoing maintenance but being able to change with the business needs and maintain performance through the application's lifecycle is a must and often not considered.

In today's landscape, businesses depend on critical applications to remain productive, to better serve customers and to keep up with demand. By addressing the risks involved with a business application early, businesses can grow whilst limiting the risk of damage to the brand, bottom line or compliance procedures.

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AWARD-WINNING CONSULTANCY TO PROJECT MANAGE STATE-OF-THE-ART ENGINEERING BUILDING

Award-winning construction and property consultancy, Summers-Inman, has been appointed at Middlesbrough College to a state-of-the-art £10m Engineering facility that will both enhance student experience and support Teesside in its green energy aims.

Summers-Inman has been appointed following a successful tender win to the proposed state-of-the-art building and will provide Project Management, Quantity Surveying and Principal Designer services to relocate TTE, a leading provider of technical training to the oil and gas, process, manufacturing and engineering sector- which was acquired by Middlesbrough College in 2019.

GEORGE F WHITE STRENGTHENS COMMERCIAL MARKET POSITION

The north's leading property specialist George F White has welcomed Johnson Tucker LLP into its consultancy, as the businesses merge to further strengthen their established commercial service offering

With a significant track record of delivering and achieving projects at scale, this move will see George F White build on the holistic approach it offers clients. The blending of skills and expertise from the Johnson Tucker team will create one of the largest commercial property teams in the North of England, employing over 100 people and operating out of 6 offices across the region.

Established in 2006, Johnson Tucker LLP specialises in chartered surveying and commercial property and is particularly strong in commercial investment and agency and property management. Its integration into George F White will ensure a complementary offering for clients.

Richard Garland, Head of Commercial and Development at George F White, said: "We are delighted to welcome Johnson Tucker into the George F White family. The team prides itself on attention to detail and driving the right deal



through holistic advice. We offer a specialist service comparable to large national firms, whilst maintaining the flexibility of a regional client-focused business. The merger with Johnson Tucker expands our range of specialist services and allows us to apply them to larger projects than ever before."

David Johnson, added: "Much care went into finding the right partner to take the Johnson Tucker consultancy forward; we know this move will benefit both sides considerably, along with creating a bright future for our team, allowing the company to develop within the support and structure of George F White for years to come. We are very grateful for the support of our many longstanding and more recent clients over many years and look forward to continuing to work together."



NAYLORS GAVIN BLACK NAMED MOST ACTIVE INDUSTRIAL AGENT IN NORTH EAST

Independent property consultancy Naylor's Gavin Black has been ranked the most active industrial agent in the North East.

Its topping of the EG Radius league table was achieved thanks to one of the biggest industrial deals so far in 2022.

This involved Naylor's Gavin Black marketing the freehold of a 186,530 sq ft unit at Northumberland Dock Road, Wallsend. It was bought by Northumbrian Water from Akdeniz Chemson for an undisclosed sum.

Naylor's Gavin Black is ahead of its rivals in the North East industrial market by some way, having acted on 428,449 sq ft of deals in the first quarter of the year.

As well as increasing Naylor's Gavin Black's lead in the North East, the Wallsend deal helped the agent move up to fourth place in EG's national industrial agent rankings.

Keith Stewart, a Naylor's Gavin Black partner, said: "It is testament to the hard work and expertise of our staff that we have been recognised as the leader in this prestigious regional ranking.

"Our positions in both the North East and national league tables are a reflection of the high quality of service and care that we provide to our clients that in turn lead to successful deals."

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PRICE GUIDE: OFFERS OVER £1 MILLION

Oakland House, which is perfectly situated on the corner of Moorfield and Lodore Road, offers a rare opportunity to purchase one of Jesmond's most prominent terraced homes. The property, which was purchased by the current owners back in 2011, has an abundance of period charm with stunning open aspect views over Newcastle's Town Moor and has since undergone extensive modernisations. This substantial, immaculately presented, six bedroom family home is ideally located close to the shops, cafes, and amenities of Gosforth High Street whilst also being only a short walk into central Jesmond, Ilford Road Metro Station and outstanding independent and local state schooling. Externally, Oakland House enjoys a lovely town garden which extends to the front and side of the house whilst to the rear is a lovely courtyard/garden with paved patio and gated access out onto the rear service lane.

Contact rare! From Sanderson Young on 0191 223 3500 ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk www.sandersonyoung.co.uk



SANDERSON YOUNG ANNOUNCES NEW WEBSITE LAUNCH



We have always been very proud of the company website which focuses on delivering what people want as quickly as possible and with the greatest of ease. Our focus is to ensure we maximise the value of our clients' homes for sale or rent, using powerful large professional images and comprehensive state of the art sales techniques to give our users the best experience. The new website is our fifth since we launched in 1999, and for many will show little visual change to the old one, however the back office intelligent technology has been completely rewritten making our cross pollination of applicants and clients' information seamless. Our focus has also been in our New Homes Division where we are soon to launch many new projects with exciting Computer Generated Images and Augmented Reality displays. The website has been rewritten to help our New Homes clients gain the best impact from their marketing and increase the sale rates and prices of the varying beautiful properties coming to the market.

SANDERSON YOUNG WILL CONTINUE TO LEAD, INNOVATE AND EXCEED THE EXPECTATIONS OF OUR CLIENTS THROUGH OUR WEBSITE AS WELL AS OUR TEAM OF PROFESSIONAL COLLEAGUES.

Duncan Young, *Chairman*

www.sandersonyoung.co.uk



A JEWEL IN BRITAIN'S CROWN!

The national demand for property throughout the Northumberland region has remained high this year, where there is no sign of activity diminishing as we move into the second half of the year. Families are discovering what fantastic lifestyle opportunities are available to them in our historic towns and villages.

With an expanse of beaches, forests, areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and castles and historical sites all on your doorstep, Northumberland is no doubt one of the jewels in Britain's crown and we have not been surprised by the levels of buyers showing interest in our region from all over the UK. The stunning Northumberland coastline is certainly one of the hotspots, where demand for coastal property is far outstripping the supply.

For many there is still uncertainty, with the economy showing signs of change throughout the country and living costs heading for an all time high. However, we remain positive that the market will continue to flourish as people bed in to greater levels of home and hybrid working and understand the benefits of living in Northumberland when considering a greater work/life balance. Many of our buyers are heading back to Northumberland following time spent working in London or the nation's other large cities, realising that the quality of life and cost of living is actually much more advantageous in this area, whilst being well served by the main east coast rail links from London to Edinburgh, as well as road links via the A1.

With the North East house prices increasing at one of the highest rates in the UK during the early months of 2022, it remains an excellent time to move in our region, with more exciting times ahead.

The experience of myself and my team always strive to provide our clients a highly personal service, catered to your individual needs, and provide unrivalled support throughout the moving process.

We are ready to achieve the best price possible within the time frame that suits your needs. If you require professional advice regarding the sale of your home or purchasing in current market conditions, please contact myself personally and I would be delighted to assist.

**Heather Armstrong, Regional Valuer, T: 01665 600170,
heather.armstrong@sandersonyoung.co.uk**



Heather Armstrong

The continued adventures of...

Ziggy!



Hi everyone. Well all of the puppies have gone and the house is back to normal. We will see two of them again as they have gone to Auntie Lisa and Uncle Dean who are local. We won't be quiet for long as Cousins Lola and Ozzy are coming to stay next weekend – less attention for me!

We are still really busy at work and will soon be doing a bathroom for the lovely owner of this magazine, Uncle Mike. See you soon!

Harry from Whitley Bay asks :

Q: My property has Artex ceilings which look very dated nowadays. I've heard that having them plaster skimmed is messy and expensive and can also look odd because the edges of the coving disappear. Is there an alternative?

A: Artex is a brand of textured paint used to make decorative patterns on plasterboard, or to cover up cracks in old ceilings (although this is rarely successful). Other brands are Wondertex, Suretex and Newtex, but they all tend to get referred to as 'Artex'. The big problem with these textured finishes is that

they may contain asbestos. The Artex brand itself was still being manufactured with chrysotile ("white asbestos") as recently as 1984. So textured finishes should not be drilled or dry-sanded, as the asbestos fibres could be released into the air and inhaled. The amount of chrysotile included in the mix was small, and there is still something of a debate over exactly how dangerous chrysotile might be. Some experts even claim it is chemically identical to talcum powder, and that it has been unfairly tarnished by the "asbestos" label.

However, the view in the construction industry is that any asbestos product should be treated with caution, and the HSE insists that the chrysotile used in textured coatings has the potential to be a human carcinogen. Since the coating binds the asbestos into a solid material, and as long as the material is not damaged, there is little or no danger of the fibres being released into the air, and thence finding their way into occupants' lungs. There is no statutory requirement for such coatings to be removed, and HSE advice is that as long as the coating is in good condition, it is usually safer to leave it undisturbed and in place, rather than risk releasing fibres into the air by removing it.

My advice would be to leave the Artex where it is and overboard it with plaster board and skim it. This will alleviate any danger and encapsulate any asbestos forever. Some people will advise that the Artex can be unbonded and then skimmed, however in my experience this is not always successful as the Artex below pulls off with the additional weight.



Please send me your building queries through facebook - @WDLne, website: wdlnortheast.co.uk or through my Dad's good pal Michael Grahamslaw at Northern Insight on mjgrahamslaw@outlook.com

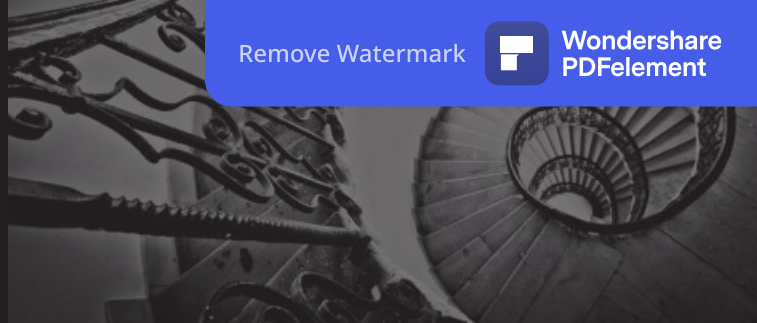
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Within our Land & New Homes department, we have had the pleasure in acting on a multitude of successful developments being located around the region.

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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 chat to our very own Queen of Property...

JAN DALE

Urban BASE - Selling Style

Did you always envisage a career in the industry?

My passion for property has probably been since the very young age of two years old when I had my very own Wendy House (colourful little tent), my own open-plan little property transported to wherever I wanted to live, and behave myself for an hour or two for my devoted parents. In reality my career started life in the fashion industry, but I always had a natural passion for property, and after becoming a mum I decided it was now or never. The Halifax opened their doors, and the rest is now history... many doors opened, many people supported me, and here I am in the wonderful world of property – selling some of the most fashionable homes across the region.

What is your favourite aspect of the job?

Without doubt it is meeting new people. I really enjoy meeting people, new and existing clients, I refer to myself as the social butterfly of Urban BASE. The success of selling homes is a given, an expectation and a joy, but meeting and helping people with moving home is where I get so much joy. It is such an emotive time for all involved, and trust me, I share the emotions and the journey from beginning to end with many of our clients.

What has been your career defining moment?

There was never a defining moment but so many great moments! How long is this article, I could write a book. Again the wonderful people I have met along the way have helped define me and my approach to business, and life. Some have defined my career, and some have defined who I am to progress in my career. The early days at Bryant Homes (Taylor Woodrow / Wimpey) were wonderful times – the company had a genuine approach to staff comradery and work ethics which has resulted in many Bryant colleagues becoming friends for life, and many have progressed within the industry to be on the board of national house builders.

How do you measure success?

Happiness means success for me. There is nothing in life more rewarding than happiness, both at work and at home. Of course health and a great family at home, and a family ethos at work, caring for each other and the wider families of the team – it means a lot to be able to support the team at work, and throughout the last few years this has been so important.

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

There is a genuine shortage of skill in many areas impacting on both the build programme for new homes, and the timelines involved for legal conveyancing. There is a strong need for collaboration between local authorities and legal requirements to speed up the moving process. I hope the biggest changes may lie ahead, and the moving journey can become the joy we strive for.

How has your skillset developed accordingly?

I have never stopped learning. Knowledge is a wonderful gift, and I am continuously seeking to understand different aspects of problem solving, and sharing knowledge to ensure continuous improvement in service levels. Communication is a key aspect, and I believe my communication skills have improved to understand how to manage information sharing and in a very timely manner.

Are you a risk taker by nature or more conservative?

I don't think I am a risk taker, I do take time to research fully the agenda ahead. Perhaps a qualified approach to risk – is this a risk taker? I am prepared to walk through open doors, meet new people, I am very much of the can-do approach, and sometimes this can stretch the diary management. Perhaps I am trying to justify risk here, in hindsight I walked away from a Director position of a national house builder to set up my own business – so I must be a risk taker. I have worked incredibly hard to focus on the business and client needs, and therefore that risk has actually defined my career, and me.

To what would you attribute your success?

My upbringing and being taught to always be respectful and try my best. Some people pass you by, and some you know are genuine friends, I have been gifted with amazing support throughout my career from within the wider industry; accountants, solicitors and industry experts in many disciplines. Jay at Hunter Johnstone Marketing always likes to tell me he has made me look good for over twenty years, and I owe it all to him... apparently.

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

I love this industry so much I genuinely struggle with time management for home versus work - I am truly addicted to every aspect of the property market – it's a wonderful industry and I am passionate about the sales teams within the industry being recognised with the same professionalism and importance as other disciplines. I am very fortunate the family work with me and understand my addiction could be worse – I have only recently found gin and golf (not together I hasten to add) and both can offer some distraction from work – others may say I have found a couple more weaknesses.

How do you remain motivated?

I have a very natural energy and motivation for the property industry and life in general. There is no challenge – it just happens, must be in the genes. Thanks mum and dad!

Would you prefer to be liked or respected?

Liked! I genuinely chose to do business with people I like. I often hear the phrase 'don't take it personally'. I struggle with this phrase – I want to be liked, and I take feedback personally. We should believe we make a difference as individuals. Sometimes tough decisions need to be made and this can impact on likeability, however I have a large heart which can be surrounded by boulders when required to get me through a difficult day.

I'll retire when...

That word again...you may as well ask me my age Mike! I should perhaps consider slowing down, and play golf, drink gin? Most people retire to enjoy life. I love life...at work, at home, life's good! No sign of this girl going anywhere just yet, I've got some fabulous homes to sell!

urban-base.com





Damiano Rea

EEL FISHING AND SWINE HERDING

After a hard day at the coalface, I like to spend twenty minutes watching the evening news. Well, you can't be happy all the time, can you? So, I need a TV Licence. Fair enough. The Solutions Architect and Change Management Lead at the BBC are not going to pay themselves.

Having become thoroughly glum at the state of the world I might decide to take up eel fishing as a little mindful relaxation. But in order to do so, I need a licence. OK, sticking with a rural theme I could learn to herd pigs. The fresh country air, snuffling snouts and a bad joke about bringing home the bacon. No, don't tell me. I would need a licence.

I would also need a licence to tattoo people, train a racehorse or play background music in our family restaurant. It seems, as a nation, we are somewhat licence happy? With one glaring exception involving the largest single purchase most of us will make in our lifetime. Buying a house.

Last year around a million dwellings were sold with a value of around £300 billion, which equates to the GDP of Pakistan. And a licence is not required for the agency administering these transactions. It would appear pigs and eels have more protection.

This is not to say the estate agency sector is the Wild West. The vast majority of agencies self-regulate by joining a professional association, in our case, Propertymark. This provides guides, templates and documents to help us comply with current legislation. It requires that our staffs all hold relevant qualifications and conduct continuous professional development.

We do this because we aim to offer the best professional service to home buyers and home vendors, which is a no-brainer for business success. But it is our choice to do so. If we had a different business model, we could simply save ourselves the aggravation and make it up as we go along.

Which is precisely what a small minority of agents are currently doing. In the words of pioneering computer scientist Rear Admiral Grace Hopper,

"the most dangerous phrase in the English language is 'We've always done it this way'". Yet there is nothing to stop an estate agent operating on rules they invented in nineteen-canteen. Or a week last Thursday.

Existing law is the Estate Agents Act 1979. Yes, the primary legislation in place to protect the biggest financial commitment for most people was written when Gloria Gaynor announced "I will survive". If my limited experience of karaoke is anything to go by, Gloria is having more of an impact on our wellbeing than this fairly toothless act.

The estate agency sector is in dire need of regulation to remove the worst elements from the mix. This has been on the agenda of successive governments going back as far as I can remember. With our associates at Propertymark we will continue to lobby for regulation. Meanwhile my advice to buyers and vendors is twofold. Pick an agency that is a member of a professional association. And don't herd pigs on your way to the eel fishing. They can nick you for it.

www.heatonproperty.com

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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 most dangerous phrase in the English language is 'We've always done it this way...'

IF YOU ONLY KNOW ONE THING ABOUT YOUR COMMERCIAL PROPERTY LEASE – MAKE IT THIS

Emily Seager, Lease Advisory Partner at Knight Frank Newcastle, says if you're a tenant you should find out this one crucial detail about your lease - today.



Emily Seager

The single most important detail you need know, is whether your lease is inside, or outside, of the influential 1954 Landlord & Tenant Act (the Act).

If you rent an office, shop or industrial property, there will come a time close to the end of your lease when you want to negotiate new lease terms – or terminate it altogether. But how easy is that to do? Well. That greatly depends on whether your lease is inside the Act so that you have 'security of tenure'.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic we've seen an increasing trend for leases which have been contracted out of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 (the Act), particularly on retail and leisure properties.

During 2020 and 2021, many 'tenant-friendly' deals for short terms at low/zero rents were agreed by landlords. To help minimise their risk, many made sure the new leases were outside the Act and therefore tenants didn't have 'security of tenure'. This is so they wouldn't be bound by the discounted terms once the leases expired, when hopefully market conditions would have improved.

What is security of tenure?

When entering into a lease, the landlord and tenant will agree whether the lease is 'protected' by or 'contracted out' of the security of tenure provisions contained in the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954. This gives business tenants the right to renew their lease at expiry on the same terms as their existing lease (subject to reasonable modernisation) and to pay a rent in line with market rents.

If a lease is protected by the Act, the landlord can only take the property back if they can prove one of the statutory grounds for refusal.

Security of tenure therefore gives tenants peace of mind knowing they can invest and grow their business, without worrying about losing their property at the end of their lease. They have protection if they can't agree mutually agreeable renewal terms with the landlord.

What rights does a tenant have at expiry of an ex-Act lease?

If the lease is outside the Act the tenant does not have security of tenure. In other words, they don't have a statutory right to remain if a new lease hasn't been agreed. A tenant that remains in occupation at expiry of an ex-Act lease might be a trespasser/tolerated trespasser, a tenant on sufferance; a tenant at will, or a periodic tenant – all of which have different and potentially problematic legal and practical consequences.

What new lease terms can you agree on expiry of an ex-Act lease?

If your lease is contracted out, then the landlord is technically in a stronger position than the tenant, depending on current market conditions. The tenant has no rights to renew, or for renewal terms to be in line with their current lease terms and at a market rent. This could well result in a tenant having to pay a premium rent.

This contrasts with protected leases, where the rent and lease terms will be driven by the existing lease and transactional evidence from the open market. And both parties would be able to refer the matter for resolution by a third party/court, if you can't agree.

In the wake of the pandemic, tenants with recently granted ex-Act leases on manageable terms could find themselves having to agree far less-favourable lease terms, and a higher rent at the end of their leases.

Will the new rent always be higher if renewing an ex-Act lease?

No. The terms agreed very much depend on the nature and location of the property and market conditions at the time. Usually, the strength of the landlord and tenant relationship and the landlord's longer-term plans for the property will also affect the price offered.

How to avoid problems – useful practical tips

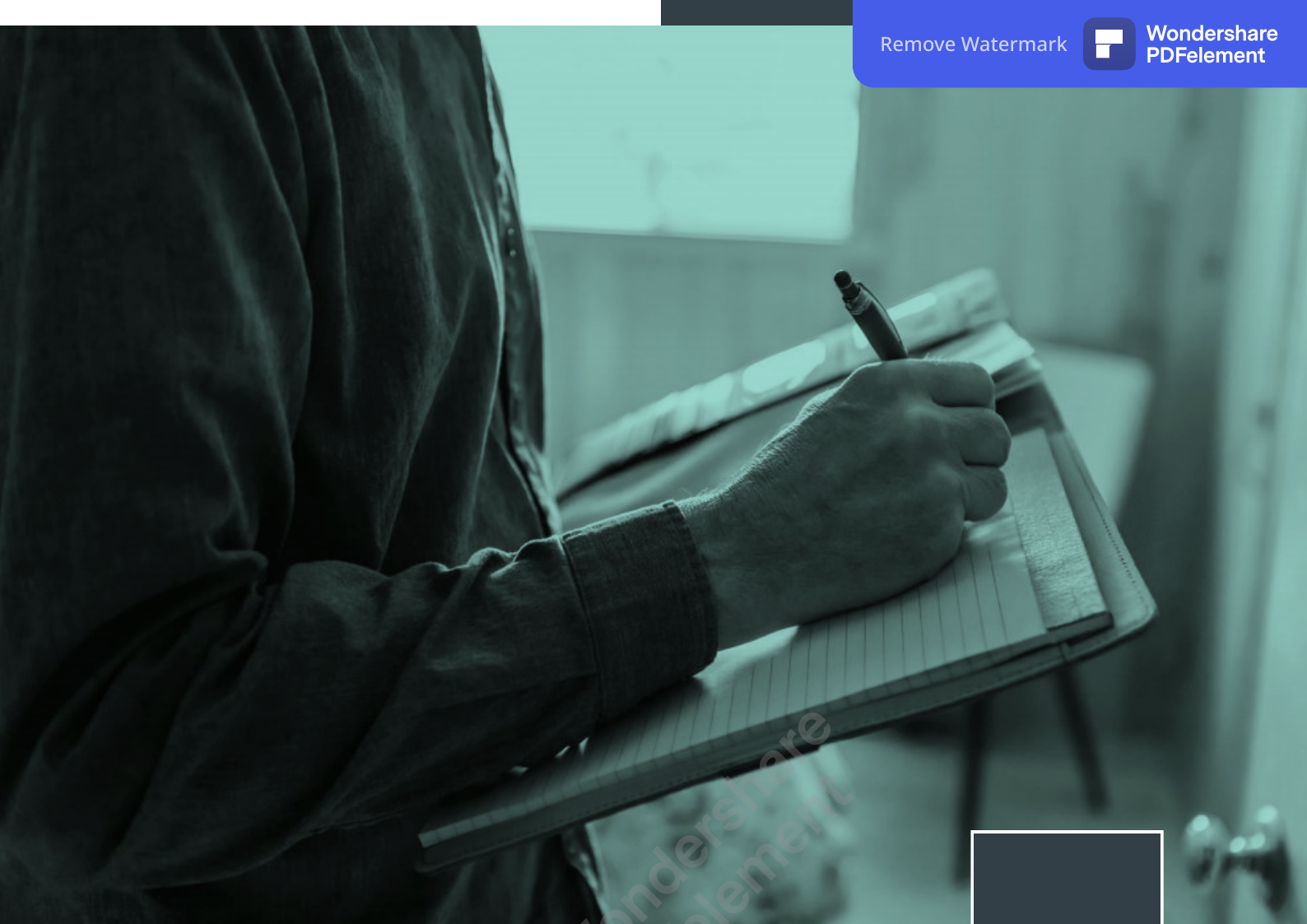
- Check your lease to see if it is inside or outside the 1954 Act. If you're unsure ask a solicitor or surveyor to check for you.
- Make sure you have a system in place to review your property or property portfolio on a regular basis.
- Review your strategy for any properties where the lease is due to expire - at least 12 months and, preferably 18-24 months, in advance.
- Pay particular attention to those where the lease is outside the Act and consider your longer-term plans/alternative options.

If you're a tenant with a contracted-out lease:

- Have early discussions with your landlord to gauge their plans for the property. In most cases they will want you to stay, it's just a case of agreeing suitable terms and a mutually agreeable rent.
- Take advice from a property professional on what the market rent should be for your property. Be prepared to have to agree a rent in excess of this, given you aren't protected by the 1954 Act.
- Allow sufficient time to assess alternative properties and relocation costs.
- Consider appointing an agent to undertake a stay/go exercise for you, with a lease advisory specialist seeking to agree renewal terms with your landlord while their agency colleagues investigate the alternative premises available. This enables you to make a fully-informed commercial decision.

We advise landlords and tenants on leases which are both inside and outside the Act, providing comprehensive stay/go market advice, and negotiating the best possible terms.

Emily Seager can be contacted on 0191 594 5046 or emily.seager@knightfrank.com



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Neil Turner

IMPROVING OUR HISTORIC BUILDINGS

By Neil Turner, Howarth Litchfield

I wrote last month on how we need to improve the performance of new buildings, but of course we already have a huge existing building stock in this country.

Over 37% of our homes were built before 1945 and a further 39% built from 1945 to 1980 - it's frightening to think that it was only 1985 that insulation became mandatory in cavities.

Our country is blessed with a rich pedigree of historic buildings, and they are rightly protected by Historic England with a grading system of 1, 2* and 2. There are approximately 500,000 listed buildings in the country.

One of the principal issues of older buildings is that they tend not to be well insulated, leaky, and prone to higher levels of maintenance.

So, our modern challenge is how to improve their environmental performance without

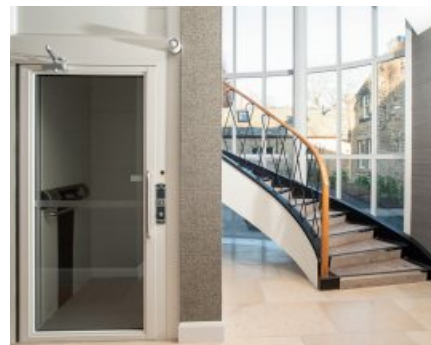
disturbing the very essence and reason for their historic importance and listing. At the same time buildings have always changed and indeed many listed buildings are listed because they have variations and alterations from several periods of time.

I am a conservation architect who specialises in the repair, renovation and upgrading of our historic buildings. I often hear that historic and older buildings can't be altered and improved. They can; and I would like to see authorities more pragmatic in their review of proposed alterations when considering environmental improvements.

A good architect, with the relevant experience, can firstly review a historic building and determine its significance and importance. Improvements can then be suggested. I am still amazed that most planning authorities won't allow double glazed units to be retrospectively added to original sash windows. This simple change would vastly improve the thermal performance of buildings alone.

Historic buildings can also be improved with thermal upgrades including insulation and new heating systems that do not harm the building but aid their continuing use whilst reducing their energy requirements. This is good for the building, the country, and the overall environment.

An older building that has been improved and maintained stands a much greater chance of being used, looked after and therefore preserved for the future. An old building that is cold, damp and uninviting will put off prospective users and owners. This applies equally to houses and commercial buildings.



The retained staircase in the Grade II listed Coach House, an exclusive residential scheme in one of Gosforth's most desirable streets where Howarth Litchfield created eight properties all within a private, gated community and with a central courtyard



Whilst not a listed building in its own right, the proximity of The Boiler House to the main facade of the Grade II listed Armstrong Building at Newcastle University required a sensitive approach to its restoration and refurbishment.



Acklam Hall, the only Grade I listed building in Middlesbrough, is situated on the outskirts of town. Howarth Litchfield developed a scheme for the site which included residential, medical and leisure uses.

The technical challenges of upgrading an older or listed building does require more knowledge, experience and understanding of their construction. The architect must also combine this expertise with knowledge of new materials and technology. The challenge is certainly harder on a historic building but equally more enjoyable.

Sadly, owners of listed buildings still pay 20% VAT on their repairs and improvement (introduced in 2012) and there remains a campaign to have this removed or reduced. The improvements do tend to be more complicated and cost more and I cannot see this changing soon, but the brave people who purchase listed building require all the assistance they can get.

Do not despair if you are sitting in your listed building wondering what and how to upgrade. Find the right professional architect/surveyor and you can soon enjoy your lovely historic building so much more.

Neil Turner can be contacted on 0191 3849470 or email nturner@hlpuk.com www.howarthlitchfield.com

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PROPERTY WEBMASTERS CREATES ITS VERY OWN AGENTPLUS WEBSITE SOLUTION TO SUPPORT CLIENTS ON A GLOBAL SCALE



Pictures: Ian Horrocks.

A digital marketing agency based on Teesside has developed its very own website solution that estate agents are being encouraged to “try before they buy”.

The innovative idea is being rolled out by Hartlepool-based Property Webmasters, which is supporting clients on a global scale.

Its very own custom-built AgentPlus project has been created in-house and allows Property Webmasters to create the most efficient websites for its clients, all tied into high performance.

The website solution has recorded incredible results already, with the latest launch securing an incredible 99 out of 100 score on Google page insights, the leading tool in website performance.



Property Webmasters' CEO Jamie Arthur chatting with Mal Boston

AgentPlus offers estate agents a variety of first-class templates to choose from, with Property Webmasters now offering free ‘mock-ups’ to Estate Agents to show them what a new website would look like with their own branding before they commit to purchasing.

Luke Fleming, the Marketing Manager at Property Webmasters, said: “It’s been amazing to see the response we’ve had so far from estate agents

who’d like to see how their brand could look like on our AgentPlus solution.

“The campaign provides agents with a no obligation full website mock-up for their agency.

“This gives them a unique ‘try before you buy’ experience with no strings attached. We want to prove our website solution is the best out there and this gives us the opportunity to do so.”



Lead designer at Property Webmasters Mal Boston

AgentPlus took more than a year to develop. It constantly evolves and rolls out new features to ensure its users continue to receive the best possible service.

More than 70 clients across 48 different countries are using the multi-tenant system and Property Webmasters has recently delivered for Robinsons Tees Valley, while also boasting clients such as Sotheby's, RE/MAX, Century21 and Knight Frank.

Luke added: "We want to show why it is the best solution out there in this industry. It is alright for us to say it's the best solution but this is our opportunity to prove that.

"There are not many suppliers out there that would give a client this opportunity with no

obligation or commitment from them."

Property Webmasters are confident that users of the demo will then invest in AgentPlus over the longer term. For £250 a month clients sign up for a new website and after 24 months they are entitled to a complete redesign, effectively "you're getting two websites in one", plus regular enhancements and updates that take place during that period.

Luke said: "It has been a great campaign for us because we've been able to tangibly demonstrate to clients how we can help their estate agency grow through innovative web design. We've been really pleased with the number of clients who've then committed to our website afterwards.

“

...It's been amazing to see the response we've had so far...

"We know there are estate agents out there who have websites ten years out of date, or on the other hand have just recently invested in a new website but they're not happy with it.

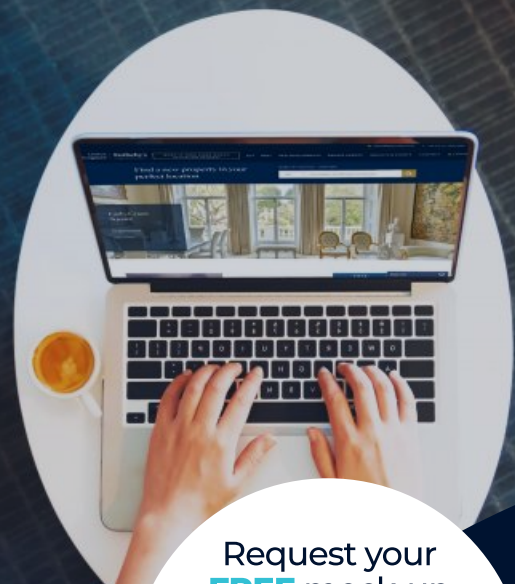
"We want to continue to show estate agents exactly how their branding and colours will look on our designs and then we will deliver from there on in. If they don't want to commit to anything after the mock-up, that's totally fine too.

"Those estate agents who do proceed are assured that AgentPlus has been built for performance. It's not just about it being aesthetically pleasing, it is also about how it performs with site speed, accessibility, online visibility and how well it captures enquiries."

For further information check out www.propertywebmasters.com

Request your **FREE website mock-up** for your Estate Agency

Do you want to see what one of our websites could look like in your own *Estate Agency's colours and branding?*



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WHY INVESTING IN INTERIOR DESIGN IS GOOD FOR (SMALL) BUSINESS



We see you, small business owners; you've got a long to-do list, and interior design may not be on it.

But, you might be missing a trick, says Bethany Walker, head of interior design at Styled, because investing in your interiors can make a big difference to an independent business and provide that extra edge to help you stand out from the crowd.

Financial investment

Whether you are offering a comfortable and productive space for your employees in an office, or creating a beautiful and relaxing coffee shop for your customers, investing in your business and its interiors will often end up paying for itself. The changes you implement don't have to be expensive, for those who may not have a large budget.

It can be difficult to know where to start, or equally where to stop with your venue design. Whilst ensuring your space stands out from the crowd is important, you don't need to go overboard to achieve this. Smart and clever design choices can make a huge impact when executed properly.

If you have limited options to work with, figuring out where to prioritise your budget is key – this is where an interior designer can offer their expertise. Your goal is to reflect your brand and the story of your business into your design, this is vital for you to connect with your customers and stand out against your competitors. Opting for furniture, wall art or even murals that reflect your branding will not only look aesthetically pleasing, but also cement your identity as a business.

Take your time

Investing in your interiors may feel like a big outlay to begin with. The best approach is to ensure you have a clear vision of how you want your space to look from the start. Once you have this, it is best to begin with the shell of your property and work your way inwards towards looser furnishing items once you have your basic fixtures and fittings covered.

If you're working to a tight deadline, you can spread the cost of your design over several months to achieve your desired result in a shorter timeframe. Many interior design companies work closely with leasing companies who can also help release funds for your interior refresh, which is also an option.

Enable innovation

If there are a number of established competitors in your field already, you'll need to be innovative to keep up with them. The best way to do this is to create an environment that encourages new ideas and pushes boundaries, whilst still staying on brand.

For an office workspace, this will likely need to appeal to a wider audience, so prioritise neutral colours and invest in key pieces that your team can use to get their creative juices flowing. Interior design can be used to foster collaboration and innovation by using open-plan areas, comfortable seating, and inspiring spaces to brainstorm.

Having some subtle branding is a great idea for communal or meeting areas to greet clients from the moment they walk in. Take key elements from your brand such as colours or reflect your overall style throughout your design, from the wall colours to the furniture.

And don't forget about focused work either. Having quiet break-out areas where individuals can work undisturbed and without distractions is key to encouraging productivity and a healthy environment for your employees.

Create an experience

For independent restaurants and cafés that need to stand out from big brand noise, the appearance, and the emotions that it provokes, should be a key investment, so be innovative by making interiors part of the experience when visiting your venue.

You should regard your designs as an asset; they are a key part of who you are, after all. Consider the full customer journey from the moment they enter your establishment to the moment they leave. Think about those all-important extra details that you can add to your space that not only reflect your brand, but also will leave a strong lasting impact with your client.

The simplest of things such as your layout and floor plan can make or break your customer's experience with you, regardless of whether you run a small independent café or a retail store. No one wants to feel squeezed into a cluttered space, so think about how customers move around your shop, or how employees will use your office.

The interior and exterior design of your premises will be the first thing a potential customer will see before deciding whether or not to use your business, so creating the right impression is key. Investing in this aspect of your business will ensure you are attracting the right target market, as well as leaving them with a positive lasting impression that can help build your brand awareness and as a result, have a direct impact on your ROI.

Do your interiors need an upgrade, but you haven't got the budget? During June we are running a competition for one small business to win up to £3,500 for an interior design for their premises. Check out the Styled website for more information: www.styledinteriordesign.co.uk/competition

HOW TO FIND YOUR PURPOSE IN BUSINESS

Most businesses are launched with the aim of providing a service or a product. But, should we be aiming higher? argues Dale Smith, Chief Executive of holiday lettings firm Host & Stay,

We set up Host & Stay in December 2018, when it had nine properties on the books. Now, it has over 550 holiday homes under management, and it's this success that has made us rethink our wider purpose.

The holiday home letting service was our first business, and, in 2020, we formed The SDDE Smith Group, which is now a portfolio of complementary companies. Alongside Host & Stay, the group comprises a number of property-related businesses, including legal practice Grey-Smith Legal and construction firm WOODSmith Construction Group.

However, as we continue to grow and develop the group, we have realised that our purpose is no longer just to provide the best possible service to our clients and to create a profitable business that can provide jobs. It now runs much, much deeper than that and we have come to recognise we have a much larger purpose to fulfil.

At the turn of the year, we set a group objective for 2022, which was to embark upon establishing and defining our ESG (Environmental, Social Governance) strategy. This is a big piece of work to undertake but something that is becoming an essential part of business and one that has the potential to have a huge impact on people, communities and the planet.

We identified a consultancy firm to work with us on our ESG journey, and we're now several months into what is a nine-to-12-month programme aimed at establishing our strategy, direction and objectives for the short, medium and long term.



Dale Smith

Prior to embarking on this ESG journey, we had already been thinking about our wider purpose as a group. This was when we realised that we, as a business, can and do have a huge impact on our colleagues and their families, not to mention the communities in which we operate and the economies of those communities.

We are now on the path to delivering our true purpose as a business, which is to make the North East one of the best places to live, to work and to stay.

Host & Stay is a prime example of how we're doing this. Its incredible growth has led to constant reinvestment into the business, driving local North East-based jobs and employment, and developing and training our colleagues so that they can support our continued growth in the months and years ahead.

Wherever possible, we take on people from the region. Local employment and the up-skilling

and development of local people is always high on our agenda as a North East business.

And while we're doing this, we're also driving tourism in the region, bringing in visitors from across the UK and beyond to stay in our villages, visit our attractions and spend in our shops.

In fact, in a recent survey we found that on average, our guests spend £140 per guest per stay, which will equate to a £49m total spend in the local economy in 2022.

Ultimately, our continued growth means we can create better communities for people to live in, through the economic benefits that Host & Stay can bring; better places, environments and businesses for people to work in and improved places to stay, through our high-quality accommodation offering.

hostandstay.co.uk



ADD A DASH OF ORANGE LUXURY TO YOUR GARDEN

Furniture that's designed and made in the North East.

You can't beat a local success story. Someone who's either spotted a gap in the marketplace or hasn't been happy about something and decided to take action.

That's precisely what Jon Cawthorn did when, after hunting around for some quality garden furniture, discovered he couldn't find anything suitable. It was either overpriced or not available.

Granted, there was plenty of furniture which described itself as being top quality...but it plainly wasn't. You'll know the type...after a single winter of it sitting outdoors, you finally get around to enjoying some spring sunshine but fall straight through it.

Jon isn't the sort of person to sit around when an opportunity presents itself.

He founded The Orange Company.

Jon already knows plenty about producing quality materials. He's the driving force behind Jonsigns which designs and manufactures signage which you'll see across the UK at such companies like William Hill, Papa John's, Poundland, Pandora, Pepe's, John Lewis, Cooplands, Tim Hortons, 3 Mobile etc.

"If there's one thing I enjoy doing, it's sitting outside in the garden with family and friends on a sunny afternoon...you can't beat it," says Jon. "When the Covid-19 pandemic forced everyone to work from home, folk didn't have a choice... they had to stay at home. So, rather than sit in the house all day, why not make the most of your garden. That's exactly what happened to me, but I didn't want to order some new garden furniture that I knew was mass-produced, overpriced and probably of inferior quality. At Jonsigns we're used to designing and making bespoke signage for companies. A large proportion of our signs are for outdoor use, so they have to be well made and durable.

Which of course is the same for garden furniture. It needs to be able to stand up to the British weather and should be capable of lasting for several years and still perform and look good. For that to happen, it needs to be well made and manufactured from top quality materials."

You'll find all of The Orange Company is made from a mixture of aluminium, glass and oak. It will be sturdy and, thanks to the modern design, will

be fit seamlessly into the style of your home. It's also manufactured here in the North East so you can guarantee that everything is of a seriously high quality. This is furniture that's made to last... quality is more important than quantity.

You can choose everything from single chairs to a 5-piece garden sofa. There are coffee tables, loungers, glass and wood centrepiece tables. A lot of the furniture has a modular design which allows you to change the formation so that you can have a 3-seat sofa and a 2-seat sofa in an L shape or just a long straight row.

In other words, the way the furniture is designed and manufactured allows you to continually vary the layout.

As you can see from the images, the furniture is über stylish.

The Orange Company also produces breakfast bars, stools, gas fire pits, garden domes (Scape Dome), contemporary lighting, bedside tables, coffee tables etc. They are also registered and approved manufacturers of Corian which is ideal for kitchen countertops, sink surrounds, table tops and any work surfaces. Corian is an ideal surround for bathroom sinks, which The Orange Company also sells.

Ever had some people see your garden furniture and ask... 'Where did you get that?'

You will now.

The Orange Company...for homes that do it all.

If you want further information on the full range of furniture from The Orange Company, the best idea is go onto their website, www.theorangecompany.co.uk You can also contact via email on info@theorangecompany.co.uk

THE
ORANGE
COMPANY





L-R: Jonathan Cawthorn (Managing Director)
and James Stringer (Head of Design)

James and his team work to bring ideas and concepts to life. He believes "it is our responsibility to create long lifecycle products that are functional, reliable and beautifully hand crafted to suit everyone's space".

They keep a minimalistic approach when forming ideas and believe simplicity is key and try to keep abreast new technology and materials when innovating future ranges.

"To create a design that everyone likes can be tricky, we understand every individual is unique and each home requires a solution that works. But returning to the importance of living, relaxation and socialising helps inspire the design process".



BEHIND THE SCENES WITH TURPS FILM

This month we caught up with Turps Film Managing Director, Luke Holland, to talk all things film!

How long have you worked in Video Production?

I started my career in video whilst studying for a degree in TV & Radio Production. I took on freelance work as a camera operator and a junior producer, and soon discovered my unhealthy obsession with the industry.

What appealed to you about the industry?

It's the people I love (as cheesy as it sounds). Video production takes you all over the world meeting people from all walks of life. It's my job to capture the essence of these people and tell their stories in a compelling way that audiences connect with.

Why did you start Turps Film/setup your own video production agency?

I was inspired by a lot of great agencies established within the North East. In my early career I spent the majority of my time freelancing and was impressed by the quality of video production companies within the region. I wanted to contribute to the scene and put my own stamp on the industry.

What's the most exciting film project you've worked on?

In early 2021 we were approached by Museums Northumberland to see if we were interested in producing some content for a digital version of their renowned annual Miners' Picnic celebration. It was to be the 157th Miners' Picnic and the team at Woodhorn Museum wanted something truly special to help people celebrate the significant event.

The team at Museums Northumberland had booked Maximo Park frontman Paul Smith to perform an intimate solo performance of his own songs and



Luke Holland

as well as traditional and contemporary songs connected to the North East's coal mining heritage, set right inside the museum. As a big fan of Paul Smith, and local history nerd, I was like a kid in a sweet shop!

What does the future hold for Turps Film?

We just want to continue to deliver projects that have an impact. We want to use video to benefit our clients. This could be by helping them to secure funding, by helping them engage audiences with a recruitment video, advertising a product or by sharing key messaging with their staff. We have lots of great projects on the horizon as well as some exciting partnership opportunities.

To read the full interview visit: turpsfilm.co.uk/blog



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SMART BY NAME, SMART BY DATA

A fast-growing outdoor advertising business is introducing real-time audience monitoring technology to its portfolio across the UK following a successful trial.

Smart Digital Network (SDN), which brings together a network of screens across the UK, teamed up with data technology business Data Jam last year to become the first out-of-home (OOH) advertising business to trial its mobile device counting technology on live sites.

Initially counting mobile device movements through its privacy first, scrambled data approach on over 100 screens across the U.K, the technology allowed SDN to provide real-time, verified impression data on its screens to customers, marking an industry-first.

The trial has proved such a success that SDN and Data Jam have since agreed a deal to roll out the technology across the business' 300 small format screens across the UK, adding transparency, accountability and real-time impressions for each and every campaign the company oversees.

Julian Carter, commercial director at SDN, said: "The partnership between



Smart and Data Jam means agencies and clients can now power their decisions to include our digital OOH screens into their media mix, reaching huge, verified audiences with full motion video, and even audio capability to reach customers in a high dwell, captive environment.

"We now intend to roll this Data Jam tech across the rest of our network to deliver truly measurable, guaranteed audiences for our clients."



EXCITING TIMES AHEAD FOR RADIO NORTHUMBERLAND

After more than 10 years providing 24/7 broadcast coverage, the team at community radio station, Radio Northumberland are looking forward to a new phase in the station's history.

The Bedlington based station is manned entirely by volunteers and relies on sponsorship and donations to keep it running. With listeners all over the world, the station has a growing popularity and its shows have gained national acclaim from fans of the various musical genres it serves including New Wave, 80's Country and Heavy Metal.

The first stage in the new look Radio Northumberland is a new logo which has been designed by presenter volunteer Karen Goldfinch and a new internet site which launches in June.

The website has been created by Whitley Bay based Elev8 Web Design.

"Chris Judson of Elev8 has done a great job bringing our website up to date. It's fresh and easy to navigate and should help us to attract more listeners," said Radio Northumberland director Keith Newman. "There's been a lot of changes in our station during the time we've been working with Chris, and we appreciate his patience and expertise."

www.radionorthumberland.com

TURNOVER HITS NEW HEIGHTS FOR CREATIVE AGENCY, JUMP

A Newcastle headquartered strategic design and digital agency is celebrating its most successful year to date, with turnover hitting seven figures for the first time and the creation of a number of new roles.

JUMP, based in Milburn House, Dean Street, supports ambitious companies across the UK, delivering brand strategy, design, and digital solutions. After a £150,000 investment from NEL Fund Managers, the company, run by managing director Rob Brown, has gone from strength to strength.

Working across a range of sectors, the creative agency works with clients, including the NHS, 3Dental, St Martins Care, Serios Group, Living North Magazine, and David Summerfield Jewellers and the development of these partnerships has fuelled the company's ongoing success. In 2021, JUMP engaged 360 Growth Partners to support its three-year growth strategy.

As a result, JUMP is currently recruiting three new roles, including a head of design, a designer, and a developer. This adds to the recent promotions of Kris Consadine to technical director, Andy Baxter to creative director and Hannah Fawcett to senior designer. Alana Whenary will complete her Level 3 Digital and Marketing Apprenticeship this summer, with the aim of taking on a new marketing role within the business.

Speaking of JUMP's success, managing director Rob Brown said; "The past two years have undoubtedly been challenging for many businesses, but we



took that challenge head-on. 2021 was the most successful in our 15-year history, and I put that down to the strength of our relationships and creating real clarity for our future growth. We have many long-term partners, who stick with us because we understand their ambitions and they know we deliver excellence time and again. We're on a journey together and it matters to us that they succeed.

"Our growth has catapulted us to new heights and I'm proud that we are able to support the continued development of our existing team, as well as create employment opportunities for emerging talent. I am excited by what the future holds for JUMP."



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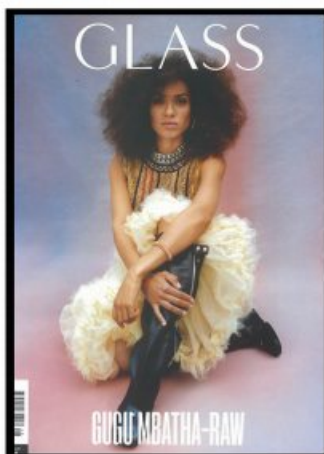
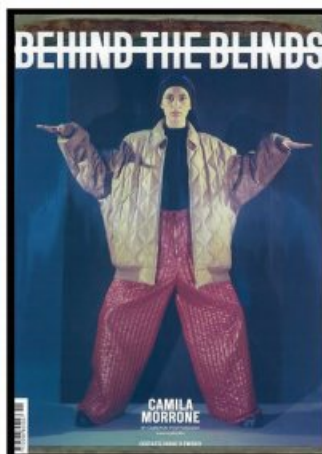
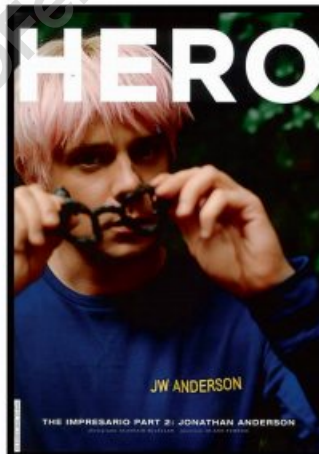
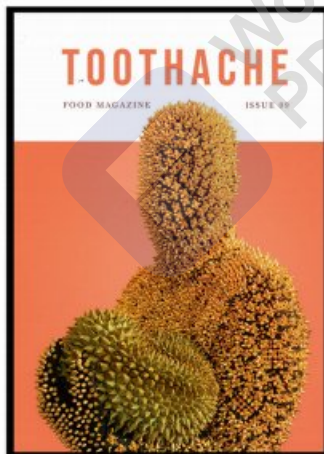
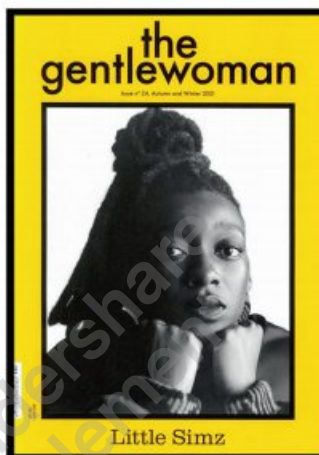
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KEY APPOINTMENTS TO DRIVE DIFFERENT NARRATIVE GROWTH PLANS

Leading end-to-end marketing services partner Different Narrative has hired a new batch of talent to spearhead its expansion plans for 2022.

In February two of the most established creative agencies in the North East - Different Advertising, Design and Marketing and Narrative Integrated Communications - merged to become Different Narrative, the region's largest end-to-end marketing services provider.

And after appointing several highly experienced professionals, the firm is poised for an exciting year of growth. Kieron Goldsborough, founder of Narrative Integrated Communications and now CEO of Different Narrative, said, "Our merger has enabled us to enhance our client delivery, which in turn will allow us to drive new business potential forward. The appointments we are announcing will play an integral role in our plans for the business over the next 12 months and we are bringing together the best of North East talent"

As the team's new Head of PR, Aoife Forbes brings 20 years of experience to the role. Aoife joined the firm in late 2021, with both in-house and agency expertise under her belt. Also joining the PR team is Patrick O'Kane, a PR and Content Manager, who has worked across the journalism and PR sector for more than 10 years.

Kathryn Bradshaw has 30 years of experience as a global marketing services provider, servicing companies across 23 EMEA countries. The opportunity to join Different Narrative gives



Bradshaw a chance to make a difference. As Financial Controller, she will oversee all finance-related operations, and support the management team in streamlining the finance systems of the two previous agencies.

Stephanie Stobbs has worked in the housing marketing sector for five years and joins the client services team alongside client managers Kimberleigh Snyman, Amy Parker, and client partner Matthew Foy.

As the firm's newest designer Beth Richardson brings five years of industry experience after graduating from the University of Sunderland in 2016. Creative Copy Lead Sue Storey returns to the team after two years client-side as UKI brand writer for Sage software, where she won the Grand Prix and Best Use of TikTok at last year's B2B Marketing Awards.

Different Narrative provides an all-encompassing

selection of services, which includes advertising, branding, design, marketing, PR, social media and web design and development.

Ben Quigley, CEO of Different and Executive Chairman of Different Narrative, explained, "As we emerge from the pandemic, we know an independent agency like ourselves has a great opportunity to move into positions once taken by the big corporate firms. The expansion we have undergone through the merger at the beginning of February has led to the need for additional growth of our personnel.

"In bringing together two leading agencies, we have ambitious growth plans and the team of highly-experienced individuals we have hired will enable us to grow on our early successes."

To find out more about Different Narrative visit, differentnarrative.com



INSPIRATIONAL WOMEN SHARE STORIES OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Female entrepreneurs have been sharing their stories at an event to encourage women to start their own businesses.

Make It Your Business, a nationwide initiative to support women into entrepreneurship, recently held an event in Northallerton, North Yorkshire, where guests heard from a number of inspirational speakers.

One of those speaking was Charlotte Nichols, managing director of Darlington-based PR, social media and content marketing agency Harvey & Hugo.

She said: "I originally got involved in Make It Your Business through the Business & IP Centre (BIPC) Tees Valley. Alison Cork, who's the founder of the initiative, is ambassador for the BIPC UK, while I'm an expert in residence at BIPC Tees Valley.

"I was really keen to get involved as it's crucial to encourage entrepreneurship, especially in any group where they don't feel it's possible for them.

"On the day of the event, my second daughter was just nine days old, which is another reason it was so important to me to attend.

"Some women consider their careers over once they've had children and that's totally fine. But for the ones that don't want it to be, it's all about personal preference and it doesn't have to be the case. Sure, it's tough and you need support, but it can be done

Harvey & Hugo creates lovable and memorable brands through its mix of PR, content marketing and social media services, and offers three ways of working – traditional retained contracts, flexible, fixed-fee services with Pay-as-Hugo and its training school, Hugoversity. Its Pay-as-Hugo service was revamped and relaunched last year, offering a range of contract-free services, all of which can be ordered and paid for through its dedicated e-commerce site.

Charlotte added: "Women also have to face many more challenges on a monthly basis as well as deal with diseases which are not taken seriously for years. I'm just a standard woman....by sharing my story and the things I've been through so far hopefully it can inspire other women who have used these things as reasons to keep putting off starting something up.

"If I can inspire one lady to start her own thing then that's brilliant."



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Danielle Barry

MARKETING AND MEDIA MATTERS

In the latest of these popular series of features we talk to...

DANIELLE BARRY

Founder of Click Start Marketing

Did you always envisage a career in the Media industry?

I have always been interested in marketing, business and economics...essentially what drives demand for products and services, however, I studied finance at university and always thought I would end up being an accountant or financial advisor.

What has been your career path so far?

I started out as a Business Analyst for a housing developer back in 2012. I was extremely lucky as the Finance Director of the company thought I'd be better suited to strategic marketing and business development and created a new role for me within the company. I started studying for my Marketing degree on evenings; becoming the Marketing Lead for Prince Bishops Homes in 2014 and was promoted to Digital Marketing Manager in 2016 before moving onto e-Quality Learning's new Group Marketing Manager. I started working on my own business, Click Start Marketing on evenings and weekends in 2016 and decided to make the shift to a freelance Marketing Consultant in 2019 to work around my little girl who arrived in June that year. Now Click Start Marketing has a wide range of clients who I support with everything from website development and branding to strategic marketing.

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

I think the biggest challenge for me was making the shift from employee to self-employed and learning to work with such a wide range of clients. Being a manager within a group structure has definitely helped but I need to remind myself to allocate certain time slots to certain clients to work as efficiently as possible.

Who do you most respect in your industry?

Since starting my consultancy I have found myself working alongside other freelancers to support businesses. I have a newfound respect for 'sales' departments and in particular, my fellow freelancer Nicola Halse who I am constantly learning from. Our two service areas go hand in hand and we have collaborated to deliver business growth for SMEs.

How did you adapt your business during the coronavirus crisis and support clients?

I had a few set backs during the pandemic but that was offset by clients whose businesses started to soar. I also found that there was an increase in demand for website development as businesses wanted to shift their businesses online.

What is your greatest strength?

I enjoy meeting and working with new people. I thrive on finding out how a business' product or service can bring value and creating a brand based on that value. My financial background and courses in digital analytics have given me the ability to use analytics to adjust marketing activities for businesses accordingly to get the best results.

What is your biggest weakness?

Confidence! Unfortunately, I'm a bit of a worrier but working on the sales element of businesses (including my own) has helped to build my confidence. Nine times out of ten, people are lovely and I'm learning to dismiss the ones that aren't.

What has been your proudest achievement?

Not work-related but having my beautiful baby girl Francesca has been my greatest achievement and being able to work around her schedule. I can work full time and still spend special time, taking part in activities with my daughter.

What are your future career aspirations?

At the minute my husband and partner, James is working part-time for Click Start to support the website development arm of the business which has grown substantially. I also have Marketing Executive, Emily supporting me on a freelance basis. My aim is to bring James and Emily into the business as full time employees, relieving some of my time to improve business processes and attract more clients.

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

I think we will see an even bigger requirement for digital marketing and online branding. Getting a brand right is so important and something that businesses of all sizes will need to invest in. That's where we come in. With no overheads and low operational costs, we can offer a cost-effective way of building a brand and getting SMEs online.

How do you like to unwind?

I love hiking with my family and travelling. Hopefully with the easing of restrictions I can get back to adventuring round the globe with my little family.

www.clickstartmarketing.co.uk

“

...Getting a brand right is so important and something that businesses of all sizes will need to invest in...



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WILLIAM JOHNSON

Co Founder, Torro

How did you get into manufacturing?

I've always been entrepreneurial and took an unorthodox route into business. I left School eager to find work and start a career. I worked as a Police Detective for over a decade but realised my passion was for creating brands and products. I was always working on product ideas before finally making a breakthrough with luxury leather cases and covers for mobile devices back in 2013, since we have managed to build a brand (torro.co.uk) around these initial products and aspire to be global leaders in the luxury yet affordable lifestyle accessory market.

Who or what inspires you?

Considered design coupled with premium materials. The penny dropped for me when the Apple renaissance took over the world back in the 00s, starting with the iPod and then into the iPhone etc, I was blown away by how they managed to turn tech products into desirable objects that wouldn't be out of place in a luxury jewellery store. Everything about how they marketed the products impressed me. I drew inspiration from what they did in the TORRO range by taking a traditionally boring product in the form of a basic plastic phone case and introducing premium materials, considered design and focusing on aesthetic. We clearly did something right as the business took off straight away.

What advice would you give to anyone interested in getting into manufacturing?

Our brand ethos is 'the difference is in the detail' focus on the small details and plan for every eventuality. Consider the operational costs of every tiny detail and work out the viability of your product. Most people go wrong by getting carried away with the product concept, invest in the production and creation of the product only to find there is no margin at the point of sale as operational, packaging and sale commission costs hadn't been properly considered.

What is your favourite part of your job?

Creating new products. To think about a use case, or how a new product would be used or would solve a problem. Going through the design stages and then ultimately produce a new product provides unrivalled job satisfaction. To work with the team to collaborate on this design and production journey is an absolute privilege.

What has been your most memorable moment to date relating to your business journey?

When we hit the £5m turnover mark. We started the business with only £500 and haven't taken any external investment or financing, we have simply and very carefully grown the brand in a steady sustainable way.

When we hit this target it was a very surreal milestone. Based on my background and the fact I left a steady modestly paid job with only £500 to embark on a business venture in which I had no experience, just goes to show that it's never too late for anyone to take the leap.



What are your favourite magazines?

I read GQ and Wired as they are intrinsically linked to our business. More recently I discover Monocle, it's a beast of a magazine but really opens my eyes to what's going on around the world and what initiatives all generations and cultures are caring about to ensure I can keep up to date with the industries that impact on TORRO.

What's the future hold for William Johnson?

The best and worst thing about my job is I just don't know. If you'd asked me five years ago where we would be now I'd have laughed you out of the building. I just take each day, decision and product launch as it comes and try to do the best I can. With what's happening in the world today and over recent years I wouldn't fancy second guessing anything so I'll keep my head down, take nothing for granted and keep working to best of my abilities.

www.torro.co.uk
www.uniquemagazines.co.uk





William Johnson



IN CONVERSATION WITH...

JASON KNIGHTS

Managing Director of Blue Kangaroo Design, Gateshead.

Blue Kangaroo are a design agency that works specifically with entertainment character licensing and toy industry clients all over the world. He is also a Northern Powerhouse Export Champion.

What were your career ambitions growing up?

From a very early age I wanted to join the army, my parents had been in the forces and my brother was serving. In 1988 I joined the Royal Corp of Signals as a Junior Leader and then carried on to the regular army."

Tell us about your current role?

I am the MD of a company called Blue Kangaroo Design, we are a Newcastle based design agency and we are lucky enough to work with clients all over the world.

What is your proudest business achievement?

The proudest thing for me has been to build a team of highly talented designers. I see Blue Kangaroo as a family and to have a team surrounding me like we have is a hugely rewarding achievement.

How has your industry changed in the last decade?

Our industry hasn't changed a lot over the past decade, obviously technology changes on a daily basis but the day to day operations of a creative business don't tend to change too much. We have always worked remotely so the past few years haven't been a huge change for us.

What are you currently working on?

We currently have over 100 projects on the go that range from developing a piece of IP, right the way through to designing and building a touring exhibition around the UK.

Tell us about the team you work with?

I am extremely proud of the team we have here at Blue Kangaroo, we have a real mix of people who are at the top of their game as well as a group of new young creatives. As a business we believe in bringing through young people who can learn on the job. The creative side of the business is headed up by Paul Richards who has a wealth of knowledge working with and managing global brands.

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

A mentor called Keith Whisson from Shiremoor Press has given me a huge amount of advice over the years. The main piece that I have always remembered and kept to is pay your bills as soon as you are paid. I have a very open relationship with all of our suppliers, and they get paid as soon as I do. I have found that being honest and doing the right thing has been the back bone of the business.

What has been your biggest challenge?

My biggest challenge has been keeping up with the growth of the business, we have been very fortunate over the years to work with some of the biggest names in our industry, so making sure that I am driving the business in the right direction has had its challenges.

How do you unwind outside of work?

My family are the most important thing to me, I have three grown up kids and wife who all keep me on my toes.

Favourite Book and Boxset?

I'm not a huge book reader but I do like a good audiobook, one of the team gave me "*Let My people Go Surfing*" by Yvon Chouinard a few years ago. He is the founder of the clothing brand Patagonia and a very reluctant business man.

The book is a great listen about how to build a business when really it's not what you feel comfortable doing. Boxset wise there's a few, *Ozark*, *The Sopranos*, and *Band of Brothers* are my favourites.

To find out more about Blue Kangaroo design see www.bluekangaroodesign.co.uk

“
...pay your bills as
soon as you
are paid...”



Jason Knights



...FEELING HOT HOT HOT...

With the warmer weather fast approaching, Keith Newman of Highlights PR asked some of his RADAR clients what is sizzling hot about their business?



At Off the Grid we love summer time! Our BBQs are famous across the region, we work with several specialist butchers who provide us with a range of wild meats from Crocodile, Wild Boar and Squirrel through to some amazingly tasty Halal meats!

We have so many exciting activity days booked in already with a diverse client group at a range of locations around the region. It's going to be our busiest summer ever!

Paul Kirkpatrick

www.offthegrid-adventures.co.uk

As part of a week-long public launch of our business hub, MINT Business Club is hosting a Merry-Go-Round of business support on 8 June at our new MINT Business Hub in Consett. Take part in breakfast networking from 8.30am, then treat yourself to a 15-Minute Business Burst with our team of experts, enjoy lunch and co-working throughout the afternoon and win some amazing prizes on the day too!

The MINT Business Hub has an informal café-style setting with standing areas for networking chat, quiet areas where you can plug in a laptop, or meeting rooms for a full business discussion. As it's a celebration, there'll be cake and prizes to win in our raffle to support our social enterprise, Celebrate Difference, helping vulnerable people stay in meaningful self-employment or gain work.

Tickets for the day are £10 for non-members, and free for our MINT members.

Why not join The Mint Business Club?

Nicola Jayne, Little Mint Business Club
www.mintbusinessclub.co.uk



June is an exciting time for us here at Leading Link. Just as the dust starts to settle from all the Easter events we were involved with and our huge celebration event that took place at Alnwick Garden, we start

to plan for what's next!

We will be supporting some local Jubilee celebration events over the long weekend, with our decorated pop-up bus, costumes, characters, and general fun activities.

Our focus then turns to the Blyth Carnival being held on Sunday 26th June. We will be organising, together with lots of other community organisations, the huge carnival parade at 12pm through the town centre, as well as taking over the market place, with stalls, food outlets and loads of free activities for the kids to enjoy. The carnival this year is in the middle of the two-week Blyth Festival period kicking off with the Blyth Live event on Saturday 18th June featuring Boyzlife.

Chris Johnson Leading Link www.leadinglink.co.uk



Here at Powder Butterfly, we have a range of BBQ accessories all themed on our wonderful North East.

Our products are perfect to use when family and friends get together over the summer season. Our aprons not only look stylish, but they are also super hygienic and protect your food from any germs that might be around. Our beautiful chopping boards feature beautiful and iconic locations in the region and are perfect to use as serving platters. As an extra talking point, our mini boards are a great addition to any home bar, for cutting lemons, limes, and fruit for your favourite cocktails. We also have a wide range of gifts for friends and families wherever they are in the world to remind them of the fantastic place where we live.

Corinne Lewis, Ward Powder Butterfly, www.powderbutterfly.com

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Peter Martin, Marfam Group



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 or call Keith on 07814 397951

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STRATEGY AND PLANNING - WHY, AND HOW?

By Lizzie Turner ACIM

Strategy and planning is a vital part of successful marketing– before you achieve your goals, you need to plot your path towards them! Perhaps you are launching a new product, trying to reach a promising target market, or rebranding entirely– whatever you need from your marketing, Peachy Digital is here to help.

Strategy and planning are usually co-existent in a marketing context. Strategy is a specialised form of assessment: understanding the market and environment that you work in, and deciding where and how the most effective action can be taken.

Planning, however, is resource-focused, and allows you to explore your new strategy in order to decide which actions you need to take to meet your goals. These complimenting concepts are a way to assess your business model, appreciate your potential, and move forward positively.

Outsourcing this to a professional marketing agency can be incredibly helpful. At Peachy Digital, we conduct detailed audits of our clients' businesses, wider industries, and competitors. This allows us to compile a comprehensive view of challenges that you might face, as well as identifying opportunities with a specialised marketing focus. Furthermore, we know all of the

tricks of the trade, meaning that we can help you to negotiate the market in the most efficient and successful way possible.

Research is another part of professional marketing and strategy that can be outsourced, and in doing so, you can benefit from a fresh pair of eyes. We believe that you know your business best, but sometimes stepping back and looking at the wider picture can be challenging from the inside! We can provide a detailed report, and then discuss our findings with you, bringing together your business knowledge and our marketing skills in a recipe for success.

For more information on how the Peaches can help you strategise your way to success, drop us a line – we love to chat!

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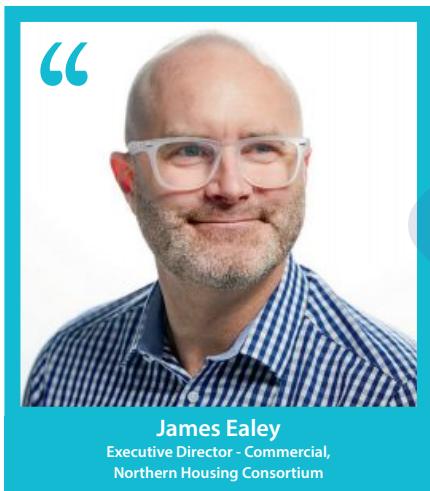
Veronica Swindale

THE ONLY WAY IS UP!

The benefits of staying in touch with our students mean that we see their immediate success when they secure their professional qualifications and the long-term success when they start to land those 'top jobs'.

Veronica Swindale, MD of nesma, recently caught up with a few of them. "I'd noticed that many of my alumni were recently moving into some good top-level posts and thought I'd get in touch to see what we can learn from them."

Our contributors this month are, therefore:



James Ealey
Executive Director - Commercial,
Northern Housing Consortium



Kirsty Ramsey
MD of O.agency and Chairman of
CIM North East Board

We asked them what advice they would give to three different sets of stakeholders:

1. People starting out in their marketing careers.
2. Companies aiming to secure top marketing talent.
3. Your younger self?

1. People starting out in their marketing careers

“Explore the different routes out there to build the career you want. There are so many ways to specialise, explore and understand the bits that get you excited, the bits you enjoy the most and go from there - you have to love it. Speak to people in the industry to understand more about their career journey, how they got to where they are and the skills they needed.

“Stay well networked, marketing is one of the friendliest and most supportive sectors to be part of. You'll make some lifelong friends, pick up ideas and solutions and of course some introductions to your first role (hopefully).

“Listen. Listen a bit more. Then listen again. With time (and age!) you realise how much it is possible to learn with active listening. That means making notes and asking lots of questions. You can always refer to online resources and books but listening and asking questions are the most valuable tools for development.



Claire Riley
Executive Director of Corporate Governance,
communications, and involvement, North East and
North Cumbria Integrated Care Services



Charlie Guthrie
Head of Renewables at
AIS Survivex

“ You must let your work do the talking and always stay connected to your profession by rolling your sleeves up and getting involved regardless of how senior you are. Always invest in your leadership capacity and capability throughout your career - you could be the best practitioner in the world but if you do not have the leadership skills and experience required to lead a team, you will fall short in what you set out to achieve. Whatever you do, do not lose who you are and your personality - your level of seniority doesn't mean you can't have fun!

2. Companies aiming to secure top marketing talent

“ Get your employer branding right. No one looks at an employer brand when considering their next move as much as a marketer. Professional development is vital and often your commitment to this is a key pull for top talent. Alongside a clear development path, often the marketing career path doesn't fit with other internal development paths so is often overlooked.

“ Marketers are by their nature creative, set them free to create great content and campaigns. Always show a route to develop both in knowledge and in careers, marketers love to aspire to the next thing.

“ If you are constantly recruiting people like you (skills mix, background, pedigree, sex, ethnicity, education etc.) I will guarantee you are missing out on a world of talent, alternative ideas, insight, and innovation that could massively enrich your team's outcomes. Throw the net wider and support them on their leadership journey.

“ Use regional and national marketing networks/academies (such as nesma) and approved providers of the CIM qualifications. And always hire on attitude as well as skillset.

3. Your younger self?

“ Point 1 again. I probably should have listened more. But you are never too young/old to learn!

“ Never stop learning. The world of marketing changes every single day. To stop learning, reading, listening, and asking questions for even a week means you're already behind! Be brave always. Have big ideas and don't be afraid to make mistakes, the best marketing campaigns and big results come from those people who take a chance, try something new and go first.

“ I would tell myself to go for the opportunities I hesitated on and missed out on. To push me very slightly beyond my capabilities to take career chances that don't come your way twice.

“ It's ok - you will be fine, meanwhile, plough on and have fun.

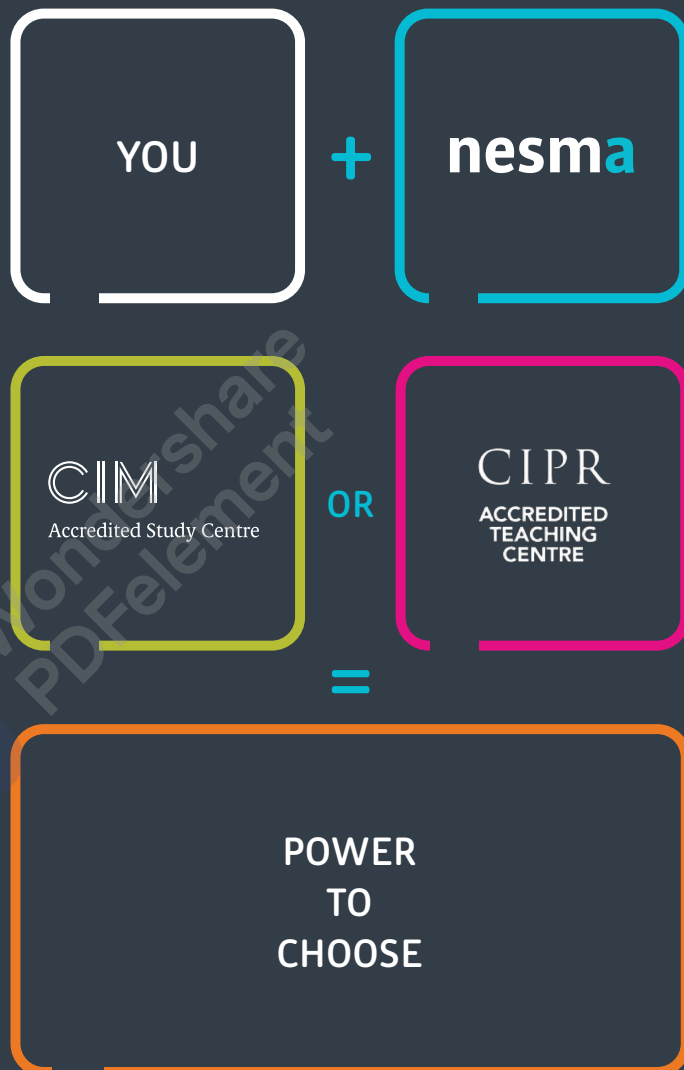
Valuable insights from everyone and, as these are now today's employers, the advice we should definitely take note of as we move along our career journeys.

If you are looking to enhance your current skill set or want to explore a new area of expertise why not look at nesma's qualifications and know-how and do workshops.

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I don't have to tell you things are bad.
Everybody knows things are bad.
It's a depression, everybody's out of work.
Or scared of losing their job.
The dollar buys a nickel's worth.
Banks are going bust.
Shopkeepers keep a gun under the counter.
Punks are running wild in the street and nobody anywhere
seems to know what to do, and there's no end to it.
We know the air is unfit to breathe and our food is unfit to eat.
We sit watching our TVs while some local newscaster tells us that we had
15 homicides and 63 violent crimes, as if that's the way it's supposed to be.
We know things are bad. Worse than bad.
They're crazy.
It's like everything, everywhere is crazy, so we don't go out anymore.
We sit in the house and suddenly the world is getting smaller.
And all we say is please, at least leave us alone in our living rooms.
Let me have my toaster, my TV and steel belted radials and I won't say anything.
Just leave us alone.
Well I'm not going to leave you alone.
I want you to get mad.
I don't want you to protest.
I don't want you to riot.
I don't want you to write to your congressman,
because I don't know what to tell you to write.
I don't know what to do about the depression and the inflation,
and the Russians and the crime in the street.
All I know is that first, you got to get mad.
You got to say, I'm a human being. Damn it, my life has value.
I want you to get up and yell "I'm as mad as hell,
and I'm not going to take this anymore."



Hate it / make it better

Use your fire to fire up your brand



Thoughts from





Different Narrative CEO Kieron Goldsborough and executive chair Ben Quigley give their top tips on brand protection.

BRAND PROTECTION DURING A COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

Delivering on promises is an expectation that marketing and advertising teams have always had to contend with. But as the cost-of-living crisis deepens across the UK and with our economy showing no signs of uplift in the immediate future, brands are finding themselves under increasing scrutiny.

A recent survey found that 63% of consumers said their expectations of brands had increased around product delivery, improving people's lives and their role in society. A time for having the best logo has passed as people crave more from the businesses they spend their money with.

At Different Narrative, branding and advertising are key elements of our end-to-end full service creative agency. CEO Kieron Goldsborough and executive chair Ben Quigley have looked at three top tips to health-checking your brand and navigating the choppy waters of branding in 2022.

Work smarter, not harder

When P&O Ferries hit the headlines in March by sacking 800 employees on the spot without notice, it didn't just become a crisis comms exercise for the British shipping firm, but also for Southampton-based P&O Cruises. It would have

been easy for P&O Cruises to just weather the storm with positive branding exercises and PR stories to halt the swaths of people who were cancelling bookings.

Instead, they were smart. Crisis comms requires fast action and P&O Cruises were on the ball. A swift advertising campaign turned a PR challenge into a PR opportunity. Including the line 'Our names may both begin with P&O. But that's where the similarity ends; not only distanced their business from the crisis at P&O Ferries but served to remind them that their values do not match with the poor treatment of employees.

Be aware of sensitivities

The energy crisis has brought into focus the key players, not only on a national level, but a global scale. While many businesses go bust, BP, Shell, and Centrica are sweeping up their consumers. As Joe Public decides whether to put the heating on or to make a meal instead, BP has been

announcing huge profits. It's led to cries of 'greed' as petrol prices sit at a record high following 50% surges in cost in 2021, but more crucially, there are calls for a windfall tax on the sector that would enable the Government to discount energy and fuel prices for UK residents.

All in all, now's not the time for BP, or other brands in the same position, to be lauding it over the sector. Think about current consumer moods and be mindful of sensitivities.

Find common ground with your audience

Advertising your brand is usually centred on positivity. It might be a product launch, new service line, or a reminder that you're the best at what you do. But there's a time and a place. The most successful brands are the ones that are in-tune their target audience. When Eldon Square approached Different Narrative, it followed the news of INTU's administration. Eldon Square was keen to spread the business-as-usual message for customers of this much-loved shopping centre, and distance themselves from association with the failed INTU corporate giant.

The word 'administration' sparks panic, but with our help, Eldon Square was able to position itself as a shopping centre keen to reconnect with its Geordie roots, recapturing a brand that encapsulates the heart and soul of Newcastle.

To get more tips on branding and marketing, visit the Different Narrative website at www.differentnarrative.com or get in touch with the team at hello@differentnarrative.com

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TEESSIDE CREATIVE AGENCY SHORTLISTED IN NATIONAL AWARDS

A Stockton creative agency has been nominated in The Drum Roses Awards, hosted by global media platform and Europe's biggest marketing website, The Drum.

From over 80 creative organisations from across the UK who made it as finalists, Resolution is one of only two agencies from the North East and the only Teesside agency to be included in the shortlisting.

Dubbed 'The creative awards that look further', The Drum Roses Awards recognise creative outputs from outside Central London showcasing that many of the UK's most talented creatives work within its regions, as opposed to its capital city.

Where other nominations include campaigns for the likes of BBC Sport, EE and National Geographic, Resolution struck the judges' attention with their Premium Vodka packaging design created for small batch craft distiller Revelry Spirits.

Resolution who are a strategic communications agency providing a multitude of PR, marketing and design services have recently focused on developing their design offering by expanding their team to include an additional graphic designer, Oli Walker.

The shortlisting, which falls in the packaging category, is recognition of the creative excellence provided by the design team and Resolution's head of creative, Jenni King stated: "Having studied at Cleveland College of Art and Design, now The Northern School of Art, as well as Teesside University, my roots have always firmly been in Teesside.

"I'm proud of our sector and the region, so to see our work recognised in national awards is proof that the best creative work doesn't just have to come



L-R: Liam Price co-founder Revelry Spirits, Jenni King head of creative Resolution, Katrina Rosser co-founder Revelry Spirits

from the big cities in the UK. It is evidence that you can create a successful career in your home town."

Liam Price, co-founder of Revelry Spirits based in Yarm said: "The Premium Vodka packaging was a blank canvas, we put our trust in Resolution to create direction for our new product and upon seeing the design for the first time, Resolution not only nailed the brief, but exceeded all expectations. The nomination is extremely well-deserved."

The Drum's founder and editor-in-chief, Gordon Young added: "The Drum Roses Awards exist to give a voice to and shine a light on, creative talent and agencies outside of London across the country. These awards celebrate innovative and effective campaigns among some incredible names and creatives built in Britain's regions, emphasising that much of the nation's most remarkable work is created beyond the big cities."

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NEW NAME, NEW IMAGE AND NEW OUTLOOK FOR MULTI-ACADEMY-TRUST

By the end of May, Kenton Schools Academy Trust will become known as Northern Leaders Trust and will proudly display its new strapline 'Achievement, Students and Leaders matter' throughout its schools.

Currently responsible for the management of two schools - Kenton School, one of the largest 11-19 academies in the North of England with 2010 places and Studio West, an enterprise and innovation campus located in the west end of the city with around 600 students - the trust's new name and branding marks a step change in its evolution.

New appointments

The story of this next phase began at the end of 2021 when the trustees appointed Ian Kershaw as CEO, a well-known and highly respected educationist and independent consultant with expertise in leading and supporting complex organisations and improving outcomes for young people.

His appointment was shortly followed by that of Lee Kirtley, who took up the post of executive principal with a brief to 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, joined at the end of February. Prior to this, he led Manor Community Academy in Hartlepool from Requires Improvement to an Ofsted Good judgement.

Time for change

With a new vision and plans for future expansion, the name Kenton Schools Academy Trust was felt to be geographically limiting, as Mr Kershaw explains: "The Board of Trustees decided to change the name of the trust because its current title is associated with only one school, which was of concern when we became sponsor for Studio West. The trustees wanted to project an image that was more open; one that recognises that our schools are unique.

"Our new strapline, Achievement, Students and Leaders matter, indicates where our priorities lie and encompasses the idea everyone is a leader and can be encouraged to develop leadership

skills whether as a student, teacher or member of the support staff. We want our staff to feel proud of their employing organisation as one which invests in its people and future leaders."

Reaching for the stars

Various concepts for the new branding were presented to the trustees, teaching staff and students, with feedback overwhelmingly in favour of one design which included stars, as they were felt to convey the thought that nothing is impossible, and all students can reach for the sky.

Students also liked the idea of belonging to a trust that wants everyone to be a leader, while one trustee sees the rebrand as 'an exciting opportunity to regenerate the organisation and portray the values of the trust to everyone'.

The rebrand comes as Kenton School's current recruitment campaign is proving hugely successful with more confirmed students for the Year 7 September intake than ever before at this stage in the school year. Studio West, which is oversubscribed lower down the school, is also relaunching its Sixth Form, which is making a welcome return following a break of some years.

One Trust Rule

Very soon, if visitors walk around either school, they will be aware of the One Trust Rule, which is visible for all to see on signage in every classroom. Setting out a standard of expectation for every adult and student in the trust, it establishes a clear rule for expected behaviour, which is readily understood by parents and carers.

In the future it is anticipated that the Trust will grow over time with other schools joining, but at a pace where trustees can guarantee the highest quality support for school improvement and strategic leadership. This is something that will happen once Kenton School receives a Good judgement by Ofsted, which the trust expects will occur by Spring 2023. Studio West is already a Good school.

Bright future

Looking ahead, Dr Therese Quincey, chair of the board of trustees, is enjoying seeing the transformation take place so quickly.

"The board is delighted by the progress already being made since Mr Kershaw and Mr Kirtley's arrival.

"We have exciting plans in store for the development of the Trust in the future and see these recent changes, together with our new branding, as the start of the next phase in our journey.

"We are also strengthening the senior leadership team with two new associate principals to assist in the drive to raise achievement alongside new directors of the core subjects of maths, English and science. The future is certainly looking bright for both the Northern Leaders Trust and our ability to deliver the highest standards of teaching and learning for all our students."

www.northernleaderstrust.org



L-R: Executive Principal, Lee Kirtley and Ian Kershaw, CEO of Northern Leaders Trust



LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR YOUR DAUGHTER'S FUTURE SUCCESS

University and internships help prepare us for the world of work, setting us up for career success. School and work experience help prepare us for higher education, equipping us with the tools we need to achieve.

But what prepares us for school?



Kate Gingles is an expert in the education of young children. She has worked in Early Years education for over 19 years, and after working as an Early Years Advisor in County Durham, joined the NHSG Junior School leadership team in September 2021 as EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) Phase Leader. She explains why and how to lay the foundations for success during a child's very first days in School.

To get the most out of any situation, we need to be prepared, curious and excited. But we also need to learn how to channel our natural instincts, skills and attributes; this is where early years education plays a pivotal role.

Educational journeys at Newcastle High School for Girls (NHSG), a member of the Girls' Day School Trust, begin with our School's Nursery and Reception classes, giving girls the best possible start. In these crucial years, our School's youngest pupils are encouraged to explore and flex the many exceptional skills they are born with – and to do it in a way that is fun, social and multi-disciplinary.

The earlier girls start that journey the sooner they will start to benefit from these educational experiences. What many people may not realise is that girls can join NHSG from their third birthday spending up to five transformative and productive terms in Nursery before starting Reception. What's more, if they join in the term they turn three, fees don't become payable until the beginning of the following term.

In our EYFS classes, we focus on learning characteristics such as collaboration, creativity and risk taking. Every learning experience at NHSG provides the opportunity to develop the girls' confidence and to build strong academic foundations that pave the way for more formal learning further down the line.

For us, EYFS learning isn't about pushing children harder; it's about nurturing who they already are and what they already know, and protecting those exceptional skills before they are encouraged to 'un-learn' them by adopting more 'adult' ways of learning in later years.

For example, our expert teaching teams work with the girls to develop skills such as subitising – seeing numbers without counting them. Subitising is something children can do naturally from a young age but, all too often, this skill is stifled if we don't recognise its benefits. Our playful maths curriculum allows girls to be more confident with numbers, to see them as exciting and fun and, importantly, not to fear them. Making arrangements and patterns as well as playing with natural materials and interesting objects are all activities in our Early Years Maths lessons: it's not about dry times tables!

Women are still under-represented in STEM and, at NHSG, we're making a conscious effort in the EYFS to change this in the long term through an ambitious curriculum with a strong focus on exploratory problem-solving. Engagement with technology in a purposeful way is very much part of each day as we help the girls tell stories, record sounds or share what they have learned at home and school through our online learning journal. The key to our approach is striking a good balance between physical play and classroom-based learning.

Early reading also has a high priority at NHSG, and we've invested heavily in a brand new, research based, synthetic phonics programme as well as training for staff on phonological awareness, the building blocks of learning to read. This is supported with progressive reading books and a well-stocked library providing a diverse range of picture books to support learning across the curriculum.

Our provision is very much shaped by our Early Years environment which combines safe and well-resourced classrooms with stunning outdoor facilities. Exploring the natural world is a key element of our curriculum, and girls in Nursery and Reception have their own outdoor classroom area and mud kitchen as well as making regular use of the School's extensive grounds, including our forest school.

Underpinning our Early Years provision is the happiness and wellbeing of our pupils. We want every girl to enjoy her first years of school and we also know that happy girls learn best. By establishing strong relationships between the girls and staff, we quite literally see the girls grow before our eyes. NHSG's vision is to empower girls to be leaders, trailblazers and world shapers; the foundations for this are laid in our Nursery and Reception.

If you would like to meet Kate Gingles and the EYFS team, and learn more about NHSG's unique Early Years provision, please register to attend the School's EYFS Information Morning on Friday 10th June.
www.newcastlehigh.gdst.net



Kate Gingles

ALL ROADS LEAD TO DURHAM

By Kieran McLaughlin,
Headteacher, Durham School

I am writing this month's column from the exotic location of Nairobi airport. I am currently engaged in a "world tour" of the various different institutions which make up the family of Durham International Schools.

Over the last three years we have opened two schools overseas – a 3-18 girls school in Qatar and a coeducational EYFS and primary school in Kenya – and are scheduled to open a third coed school in September of this year in Dubai. It is, even if I say so myself, a remarkable achievement for a school without the "international brand awareness" of schools like Harrow or Westminster.

It has been a long journey to where we are now and one which has had some bumps in the road. It was almost ten years ago when the governors of the school, together with the then headmaster, made the decision to explore options for opening sister schools overseas. There were those at the time who were sceptical of success and some who felt that it provided an unwelcome distraction during challenging times for the sector.

So why did they do it? Of course there are financial benefits, of which more later, but that was not the only reason that the governors were keen to move forward. At the heart of the venture was a sense of ambition and pride in Durham School. They, as are their successors, were rightly proud of the education that we offered at the school. Academic ambition and first-rate pastoral care are combined with a pursuit of co-curricular excellence and they rightly felt that this was an exile for success across the world. From that pride there quickly followed a sense of ambition: governors felt a real sense of mission in providing a Durham experience to youngsters across the world.

We were also part of a broader movement across independent schools to expand overseas. Durham School embodies what many people from outside



Kieran McLaughlin

the UK education system value in it. Whilst our system is far from perfect, in many countries a British education is seen as the gold standard with international currency for entry to the most prestigious universities across the world.

There have been many conversations held with potential investors over the last decade. However, during any first discussions it has been of vital importance to stress that any school carrying the name of Durham had to have at its heart the values of the school here in the UK. We can honestly say that the schools in our family wholeheartedly subscribe to our MARK value system of moral integrity, ambition, responsibility and kindness. Furthermore, there is a genuine sense of collaboration across the schools. This is not a franchise model where a name is sold and traded across the world just for a fee. Staff at the schools communicate frequently and learn from each other, something warmly welcomed during the Covid pandemic.

Returning to the financial aspect of the school partnerships, the revenue we receive is all

invested back into the school in Durham. In particular, the funds raised go towards providing bursary support to those families who would not, in other circumstances, be able to afford the fees. Again, this goes to the heart of the school's charitable purpose. We want to be able to provide the best opportunities for all pupils to benefit from a Durham education, irrespective of their ability to pay. Whilst we are a long way from this target, international revenue forms an important part of this strategy.

So, we have come a long way. By the end of the decade, there will be more than four thousand children in the world attending Durham schools. We are delighted that so many youngsters will enjoy the benefit of a world-class education.

For further information about Durham School, or to arrange a visit, call 0191 731 9270, email admissions@durhamschool.co.uk or visit www.durhamschool.co.uk

Kenton Schools Academy Trust is now Northern Leaders Trust

Proudly representing Kenton School and Studio West, our vision is to place students at the centre of everything we do. Through collaboration, every aspect of our work is of high quality. Our academies deliver an ambitious and inclusive curriculum. This enables all students to have high aspirations and to excel academically and socially.

OUR ETHOS - THE ONE TRUST RULE

LEADERSHIP

Leaders help themselves and others to do the right thing. We firmly believe that all students and staff within our Trust are leaders.

EXCELLENCE

We are a Trust that strives to achieve excellence in academic, sporting and artistic pursuits.

INTEGRITY

We are honest and driven by a clear moral purpose. Acting with integrity means we strive to do the right thing at all times.

KINDNESS

We value being kind to one another, using our manners and being considerate of each other's feelings.

INCLUSIVITY

All students are welcomed into our classrooms and their uniqueness is celebrated. We have high aspirations for all students; no groups or individuals will be left behind.

HUMILITY

We are humble in both success and failure. We acknowledge that our successes are achieved through the hard work of our students, parents, teachers and community.

TOGETHER

We believe that the Trust is stronger together and that collaboration is always more effective than competition.

REFLECTIVENESS

We value reflection as a way to achieve improvement. We believe in inspiring all our learners to question, research, engage and therefore thrive.

Find out more at our new website
www.northernleaderstrust.org

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Simone Niblock

THE PAST IS A FOREIGN COUNTRY; THEY DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY THERE...

In a recent assembly to highlight the upcoming Queen's 70th Jubilee, I discussed some of the major events that have taken place during this period of history, including the fall of the Berlin Wall and the invention of the mobile phone.

Despite what my students may think, I was not alive when the Queen came to the throne, but this reflection on historical events made me consider a few events from my lifetime that teenagers would find difficult to understand.

The Wireless: In our house when I was a child, the radio was always referred to as the 'wireless' and we had a grand wireless/gramophone combo in the hallway. Once I was attempting to explain to a class that I was teaching that a protagonist in a novel written in the 1970s was upset that her wireless was not working. As one, the students were appalled: how could anyone cope without Wi-Fi? I tried to explain that wireless meant the radio and that Wi-Fi did not exist in the 1970s, which led to even great horror and incredulity. How did anyone live their lives without the internet?

Emails: Regarding the internet and all things related, for half of my life I did not have the internet or have any concept of it. When I was doing my PGCE in Cambridge thirty years ago, we were working with a school in Peterborough on an innovative project called 'Electronic Mailing', using the hilarious BBC computers with green screens that gave you a migraine. None of us Luddites on that English PGCE course thought that this would catch on; indeed, I did not send an electronic mail again- or email as became known- until 1996. I bet some of the recipients of the 1000s of emails I have sent since wish I had never started!

Death of Princess Diana: I was not alive when JFK died so, for me, the most prominent 'Where were you when you heard' moment was the death of Princess Diana in August 1997. The images in my head of the tunnel in Paris are still extraordinarily clear, and Earl Spencer's speech at the funeral was like nothing I had ever heard before. The outpouring of public grief on this occasion was unprecedented in the UK, and the mutinous mood music at the time almost precipitated a constitutional crisis.

Smoking: I have never smoked a cigarette in my life but, like many non-smokers in their fifties, my lungs have ingested thousands upon thousands of the things via front rooms of adults chain-smoking and in cars where the combination of combined space and smoke made one's chest heave and eyes smart. Oh, and the lack of seatbelts in use also added to the sense of devil may care!

Fame: It is brilliant that *Strictly* has introduced young people to the delights of dance of various kinds, but for many teenagers of my generation, the only dance show on the box was *Fame*, with its lurid legwarmers, catchy tunes and heart-tugging storylines. Thinking back, I cannot imagine any modern teenager tolerating more than five minutes of the schmaltz. However, if you are a fifty something, this was hugely popular, especially the tagline: You want fame? Well fame costs, and here's where you start paying. In sweat. This adage was years before Malcolm Gladwell's popularisation of the 10,000 hours rule, but it was a lifelong lesson to me about the need for perseverance and persistence, despite the fact I was never destined to be on Broadway or the West End.

Every day is an Open Day at Durham High School. Call 0191 384 3226 or email enquiries@dhsfg.org. uk to find out more or arrange a visit.

“

...fame costs, and here's where you start paying. In sweat...



L-R: Tom Williams, Rachael Houchin, Sarah Sharp and Geoffrey Stanford

CHALLENGING THE STEM BIAS AT RGS, NEWCASTLE

By Geoffrey Stanford, Headmaster.

Recently there was a lot of comment in the press when the Chair of the Social Mobility Commission, who is a Headteacher herself, was asked by the Chair of the House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee about why girls are less likely to study Physics.

She prefaced her response with the caveat: 'from my limited understanding of the subject...'. However, she went on to suggest that the only explanation for this significantly reduced uptake in Physics compared to Biology, Chemistry and Maths was because Physics was: 'just something that girls don't tend to fancy.'

She went on to say: 'there's a lot of hard maths in there that I think they would rather not do.' It was with those few words, that she simultaneously called into question girls' resilience, exhibited gender bias, and reduced Physics, a subject so full of intrigue and elegance, to 'some hard maths'. When pushed by the Chair to explain the reasons behind why girls would not want to do 'hard maths' any more than boys, her justification came in the form of, 'that's what they say'. As soon as the words left her mouth, it was apparent that she regretted saying them and she subsequently wrote an article for the Telegraph, seeking to clarify her comments. However, the question of why girls do not study Physics at A Level is worth reflecting on.

It is a complicated question to try and answer and the Institute of Physics continually leads research into identifying the factors at play. The findings of such research shows that both uptake and outcomes of A Level Physics (and indeed

Maths) by girls tends to be higher in single-sex institutions. When it comes to co-educational settings, research suggests that, in these schools, gender imbalances should be actively tackled from early on, at a high level within school. By doing so, unconscious (and conscious) biases are removed, making Physics more accessible to girls and allowing their confidence in the subject to grow. Crucial to all of this is the presence of outstanding Physics teachers in the classroom. Regardless of a student's gender, race, sexuality or social background, their A Level choices will be driven in no small part by their classroom experiences during their formative years.

At the Royal Grammar School, Newcastle, we are well aware of the lack of diversity in Physics and are actively engaging with the underlying causes. Unlike many schools nationally, we are lucky to have a thriving department of six specialist teachers who are evenly split between male and female teachers and led by a female Head of Department. Their gender diversity allows us to role-model the changes we want to see, while their excellent subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject helps to build subject confidence in our students.

Promoting Physics and Maths is something we continue to work on at the RGS and we also seek to do more to promote Physics and Maths

more widely across the North East through the introduction of both Physics and Mathematics Partnership teachers. The remit of these roles is to provide students in local schools the opportunity to be engaged and challenged in Physics and Maths outside of the classroom setting. Our aim is to help raise aspirations and attainment across the region and, in doing so, change the mindset of students and parents alike by addressing preconceived ideas of Physics and its relevance to career opportunities and industry in the North East. Early statistics are reassuring, with them showing that there is no gender bias in the uptake of these activities and that the interest, capability and resilience of girls in STEM is there to be nurtured.

A second and equally important part of the work of our Partnership teachers comes in the form of supporting staff development and CPD in our Partnership Schools. There are many non-specialist Physics teachers who are doing a fantastic job helping children deepen their understanding of Physics but through supporting them we aim to help many more students than we could as a single school. It is addressing these more nuanced factors that is crucial if we are going to challenge subject stereotypes and increase the uptake of both Physics and Maths at A Level and beyond. At the RGS we whole-heartedly agree with the Chair of the Social Mobility Commission when she says that students should have the freedom to study what they want at A Level, rather than schools striving for a desired demographic. However, students must be able to make those choices free of exposure to bias and misconceptions.

With thanks to Rachael Houchin (RGS Head of Physics) Sarah Sharp (RGS Mathematics Partnerships teacher) and Tom Williams (RGS Physics Partnership teacher) for their insights and contributions.

www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk



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AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO BOARDING AT QUEEN ETHELBURGA'S

North Yorkshire Independent School Queen Ethelburga's Collegiate (QE) is celebrating, as it was announced as the winner of the Boarding Innovation Award at the BSA Supporting Excellence Awards 2022.



Held for the first time in 2018, these national awards are an opportunity to celebrate the achievements, hard work, and dedication in boarding schools. The Boarding Innovation Award celebrates an outstanding example of innovation to deliver better boarding.

The Houseparent Assistant App at QE has been designed and created by a Houseparent at QE to overcome the administrative demands of the role. It integrates school database system iSams with Microsoft Teams, and both the app and its House Monitoring data tracking system run through Microsoft Power Platform, so work on mobile, tablet or desktop. All data (including photos) used or generated by this application is stored exclusively on the school server and is fully compliant with the School's Data Protection Policy. The different modules make every aspect of administration in a residential setting easier, paperless, and quicker.

Daniel Machin, Principal of Queen Ethelburga's Collegiate, said 'We are very proud that the BSA Supporting Excellence Awards recognised our fantastic QE boarding team for their outstanding boarding innovation. At QE, innovation has and always will be of crucial importance, as we continue to ensure that the quality of care we offer for our students meets their evolving needs. Our boarding students at QE benefit from exemplary facilities, exceptional care and invaluable opportunities which ensure they thrive in all aspects of their life.

Lauren Blakeley, Head of Boarding at QE, said 'Our Houseparent App has transformed the job of Houseparent here at QE. It allows more time to be spent with the students, which is vitally important to us. It is a truly unique innovation and has already had a significant impact with the Houseparents, and therefore the students, in all of our boarding houses.'

QE was also a finalist in two other categories: Supporting Junior Boarders Award, and also for the Most Original Activity During National Boarding Week Award.

Queen Ethelburga's welcomes students wishing to Board from Year 3 to Year 13. At the heart of boarding at QE are three central characteristics; opportunity, individuality, and a caring community. Being a boarder at QE gives students opportunities beyond the ordinary. Whether that is in academic studies, in the clubs that they choose, in the trips they attend or in the friends that they make; their experiences here will shape their life. We strive to help our students to develop the life skills they need to be the very best that they can be and to prepare them for their undoubtedly successful futures.

This recent award win follows on from a series of prestigious awards nominations for the Collegiate.

This month, QE has been announced as a finalist in the Boarding School of the Year category in the TES School Awards for 2022.

The most outstanding individuals and institutions that the education sector has to offer have been recognised in the shortlist for these awards.

The Collegiate has also made its mark in the inaugural Muddy Stilettos School Awards, having been announced as a finalist in the Outstanding Pastoral Care category. The judges rank amongst the most highly-respected, senior educators in the UK and have been chosen based on their passions and professional experience across the Awards categories. QE also received five Highly Commended accolades including Happiest Boarding School; Originality in Teaching Music and the Arts; Giving Something Back; Special Sixth Form; and Empowering Young Entrepreneurs.

In addition to the awards finalist announcements, Cyrus Zarrebini, QE's Head Boy for 2021, was finally presented in person with The Lexden Prize for 2021 by Lord Lexden himself, at the start of May in London.

Cyrus, along with QE Principal, Daniel Machin, enjoyed a tour of Parliament, were present for the daily sitting to see the Government being challenged by the Lords and had afternoon tea in the Lords Dining Room. The Lexden Prize is a prestigious accolade awarded by the Independent Schools Association (ISA), for 'the most remarkable sixth form student'.

For more information about studying at QE or to visit us for a private tour, visit qe.org, email admissions@qe.org or telephone 01423 333330.





CALL IT OUT: WHY EDUCATION IS KEY TO TACKLING THE ONLINE ABUSE OF FEMALE GAMERS

North East based educational charity and leader in vocational and technical learning, NCFE, teamed up with the Young Gamers & Gamblers Education Trust (YGAM) to investigate the online abuse of female gamers. Kev Clelland, Director of Programme Engagement at YGAM, explains how we can all play our part in ensuring the next generation treats everyone with respect both on and offline.

Online gaming offers many positives to young people – the chance to keep in touch and have fun with friends and family, as well as the opportunity to make new friends all over the world. A report from the University of Glasgow found that playing video games had a positive effect on player wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic, providing an enjoyable way of staying in touch, relieving stress, keeping minds active, and offering an escape.

However, there can also be a negative side, especially for female gamers. Following an initial discussion with a colleague who shared her online gaming experiences, I was shocked by the level of abuse she often suffered, and soon realised that she wasn't alone. As a charity that focusses on harm prevention, we have a duty to raise awareness, which is why we recently hosted a roundtable discussion with gamers, parents and academics to learn more.

No female should be subjected to online abuse and harassment ever. The fact that 31% of female gamers do not disclose their gender for fear of repercussions is a worry. A recent study of UK gaming attitudes and behaviours from Savanta shows the gender split of gamers is 50/50. It concerns me that girls are receiving requests to share pictures of a sexual nature, being sent pictures of a sexual nature, and are being subjected to sexual harassment both personally and through their in-game character.

Despite the work I am currently in, and despite having worked for over 10 years as a primary teacher, not once have I spoken to my two boys about their attitudes towards girls during in-game chat. Why? Because I mistakenly didn't think I needed to. We have covered lots of other potentially harmful activities, including drugs, alcohol, gambling, social media and general online safety. But now I do bring this into our discussions.

Offline, you can see what's going on in the playground, but many of us are currently sending our kids to a virtual playground and we don't know who is in there or what's being said. That has to stop.

What makes some people believe they can act this way? Why, the moment they realise they are up against a female, do they feel the need to make sexist and misogynistic comments? Why should gender even be an issue? We need to be educating our children, both as teachers in the classroom and parents in the living room, making it clear that this behaviour is unacceptable and encouraging them to 'call it out' if they see or hear others doing it. We must check if they even understand what they are saying and how this may make others feel. If they wouldn't act this way offline, what makes it acceptable online?

We can't change what has been said in the past, but we can all play our part in ensuring the next generation treat everyone with respect. The three recommendations we made in response were the need to:

1. Inform parents of the realities and dangers of online gaming.
2. Educate young people on what constitutes sexual harassment, and that gaming is for everyone.
3. Safeguard girls and women following harassment.

We encourage all parents to visit our Parent

Hub, which provides parents with easy to digest information about gaming and gambling. It includes some useful resources to de-mystify the world of video gaming, and information on how to spot the signs of gaming and gambling harms, how to broach the subject with young people, and where to access help and support.

Education has a crucial role to play in this and we believe this education should be targeted at not just young people, but also parents, teachers, youth workers, staff in HE and FE and health professionals – anyone who can positively influence the wellbeing of young people.

However, we realise that we can't do this alone, and that's why we support campaigns such as NCFE's Call It Out campaign, which is bringing together industry leaders and stakeholders across the education, business and not-for-profit sectors to promote online kindness and identify ways in which we can come together and tackle the growing issue of toxic behaviour online.

For further guidance and information, visit ygam.org. You can also read more about the Call It Out campaign to access further resources at ncfe.org.uk/call-it-out

Kev Clelland is the Director of Programme Engagement at Young Gamers & Gamblers Education Trust, an award-winning charity committed to informing, educating and safeguarding young people against gaming and gambling harms. He is a parent to Wilson (13) and Hughie (9).

NCFE's Call It Out campaign is bringing together industry leaders and stakeholders across the education, business and not-for-profit sectors to promote online kindness and identify ways in which we can come together and tackle the growing issue of toxic behaviour online.

ncfe.org.uk



Kev Clelland

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SUNDERLAND EMPIRE REVEAL LARGE SCALE INNOVATIVE ARTIST INSTALLATION REVIVING HISTORIC LOGO

Sunderland Empire are excited to announce the installation of an impressive artist commission which revives historical theatre logo for modern theatregoers.

The artistic collaboration was commissioned by the Sunderland Empire alongside national agency Arts & Heritage after being granted access to funding from the Cultural Recovery Fund. Sunderland Empire wished to use the funding to celebrate a joyous reopening after the pandemic, creating a memorable piece to be enjoyed by all while simultaneously supporting local artists post-lockdown.

This spectacular piece was devised and created by eco-conscious, Northumbrian artist, Lottie Smith, who specialises in impressive cardboard artwork and sculptures. Lottie was selected from an array of local artists because of the eco-friendly nature of her work and her creative vision, which incorporates Sunderland Empire's rich history, while integrating a contemporary twist for modern audiences.



The reproduction of Sunderland Empire's logo allows patrons to take a step back in time on arrival as the grand piece, situated in Foyer Bar, turns back the clock to the golden era of the theatre's original music hall days.

Lottie's artwork will be accompanied by an array of photographic memories provided by the people of Sunderland themselves. A call out on Sunderland Empire's social media channels for visitors' memorable moments over the years sparked floods of messages, alongside an abundance of theatrical memories at our venue from years gone by, making the artwork a piece created truly for the local community.



WORKING THEIR WAY BACK TO NEWCASTLE THEATRE ROYAL

Oh what a night! The internationally acclaimed stage sensation Jersey Boys will make a popular return to Newcastle Theatre Royal and is set to dazzle audiences between Tue 30 Aug – Sat 10 Sep 2022.

Previous tour alumni Michael Pickering and Lewis Griffiths return as Frankie Valli and Nick Massi respectively, with Blair Gibson as Bob Gaudio and Dalton Wood as Tommy DeVito. Luke Suri will play Frankie Valli at certain performances.

The Tony and Olivier Award-winning smash-hit musical - which proved to be an audience favourite at the Grey Street venue during its previous run in 2018 - goes behind the music and inside the story of Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons.

They were just four guys from New Jersey, until they sang their very first note. They had a sound nobody had ever heard... and the radio just couldn't get enough of. But while their harmonies were perfect onstage, off stage it was a very different story - a story that has made them an international sensation all over again. From the streets of New Jersey to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, this is the musical that's too good to be true.



THE NORTH EAST GETS DIRTY, SEXY AND ICONIC WITH CARTER

Get Carter, the classic 1971 North East set thriller, starring Michael Caine as Jack Carter, sees him returning to his hometown of Newcastle to avenge his brother's death. Now, more than 50 years after its release, a new documentary about the movie is being made which reaches across time and links the past to the present by interviewing its stars, fans, and the new generation of filmmakers who have been influenced by its presence.

Get Carter was directed by Mike Hodges and produced by Michael Klinger. Michael's son, Tony, a renowned film producer himself (The Kids Are Alright, Shout at The Devil, Gold), is working with directors Wayne Roberts and Rob Fairhurst on the documentary entitled "Dirty, Sexy and Totally Iconic."

The team have recently filmed in the region where they visited locations and interviewed fans and others associated with the film. Also involved in the filming was Karen Goldfinch, Chair of the North Tyneside Business Forum.

"It's great that this movie has stood the test of time and it's had a huge impact on inspiring arts, culture, and creative businesses. It brought Newcastle to the rest of the world's attention and to this day influences film and media students living up here now. We are particularly proud that North Tyneside featured in the movie with the iconic scene at Wallsend where the car is driven off the ferry landing site. Tourism is important for North Tyneside and visitors now will see a very different image of the Borough than they saw more than five decades ago," she said.

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ALABAMA'S CIVIL RIGHTS TRAIL

By Stuart Forster

In November 1967, Dr Martin Luther King Jr travelled from America to North East England to receive an honorary doctorate in civil law from Newcastle University. In a moving and widely reported acceptance speech, King labelled racism “the coloured man’s burden and the white man’s shame.” Along with poverty and war, he identified racism as being one of the three great problems facing the world.

The Alabama State Capitol in Montgomery



More than half a century later, many people will be inclined to say little has changed. I reflected on King’s powerful oratory before travelling in the opposite direction to the celebrated civil rights campaigner. During a road trip along the US Civil Rights Trail in Alabama, I called at the small town of Tuskegee and met Fred D. Gray, the attorney who represented King following his 1956 indictment for violating an anti-boycott law during the bus boycott in Montgomery, the state capital. At the age of 91, Gray is the oldest practicing civil rights attorney in the USA.

“Before that case took place, few people knew anything about Dr King. After the case had been tried for four days it was on the front page of the New York Times and other major newspapers,” recalls Gray passionately, identifying Montgomery’s bus boycott as a catalyst for the civil rights movement.

On 1 December 1955 Rosa Parks, a black woman, refused to give up her bus seat to a white man when the driver demanded she do so. That story is vividly brought to life at the Rosa Parks Museum on the campus of Troy University in Montgomery. Following her arrest, activists organised a boycott of the city’s buses by the African-American community. It lasted almost 13 months. Eventually the US Supreme Court would rule racial segregation on buses as unconstitutional.

“I represented Dr King and Mrs Parks...but my first civil rights case was Claudette Colvin, a 15-year-old girl who did the same thing Mrs Rosa Parks did but without the knowledge and

instruction that Mrs Parks had. That was the beginning of my career,” said Gray in the Tuskegee History Center. Information panels outline the story of the town, whose airfield was used to train the African-American fighter pilots during World War Two inspiring the film *Red Tails*.

The centre also tells the shocking story of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study. Conducted between 1932 and 1972, public health officials monitored latent syphilis in just under 400 African-American men without providing effective treatment. The names of all 623 individuals who participated in the study, including the control group, feature on a memorial inside of the centre. Gray represented the victims in a successful class action that culminated with an apology from President Clinton during a 1997 ceremony in the White House in Washington DC.

“As a teenager in Montgomery in the ‘40s and ‘50s I saw racial problems that needed to be solved...I concluded, while I was a student at Alabama State, I was going to become a lawyer in Alabama, pass the bar exam and destroy everything segregated I could find,” recalls Gray. “With the help of a lot of people along the way, I think we’ve been able to solve some of those problems.”

The US Civil Rights Trail highlights locations connected with the lengthy struggle for racial equality. They include Selma’s arching Edmund Pettus Bridge. On 7 March 1965, a day known as Bloody Sunday, demonstrators intent on marching to Montgomery were attacked by police. JoAnn Bland was a child at the time. Leading tours of Selma, she shares memories of that day and what it was like to grow up in a segregated society – that meant being unable to enjoy the simple pleasure of ice cream at the drugstore counter on Broad Street.

Novelist Harper Lee grew up in the quiet town of Monroeville. Her book *To Kill a Mockingbird* conveys elements of the prejudice and injustice that dogged America’s segregated Deep South. The town’s old courthouse was faithfully recreated as a set of the 1962 film version of the story, starring Gregory Peck, and is today a museum.

The trail provides a framework for exploring Alabama and gaining insights into complex issues whose legacies continue to impact American society and echo across the Western world.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

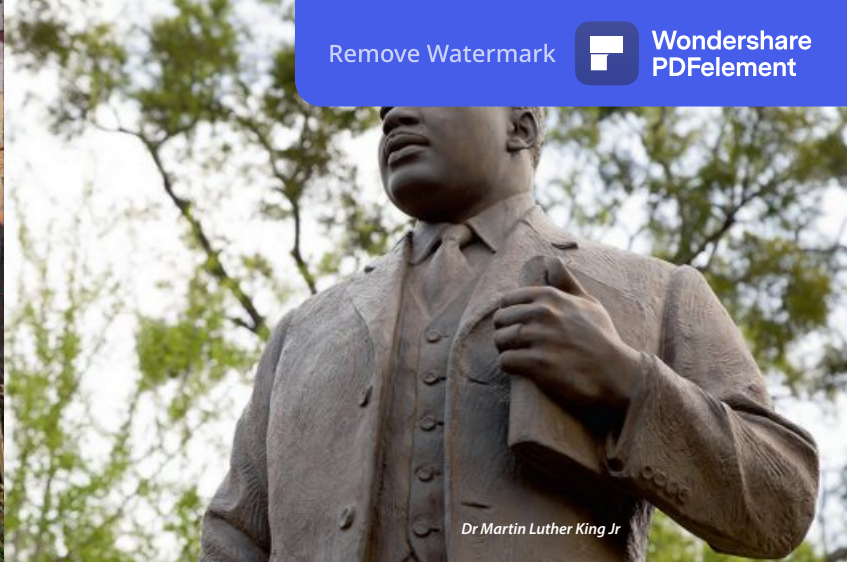
The United States Civil Rights Trail (civilrightstrail.com) is a multi-state trail introducing the movement’s heritage. Along with its civil rights history, beach resorts and sporting heritage count among reasons to visit Alabama (alabama.travel).

Alabama v. King: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Criminal Trial that Launched the Civil Rights Movement by Dan Abrams, Fred D. Gray and David Fisher was published in May 2022.

Flying from Newcastle via Schiphol Amsterdam, KLM offers codeshare flights with Delta Airlines to Atlanta and onward into Alabama. Alternatively, hire a car and drive the two hours 20 minutes to Birmingham.



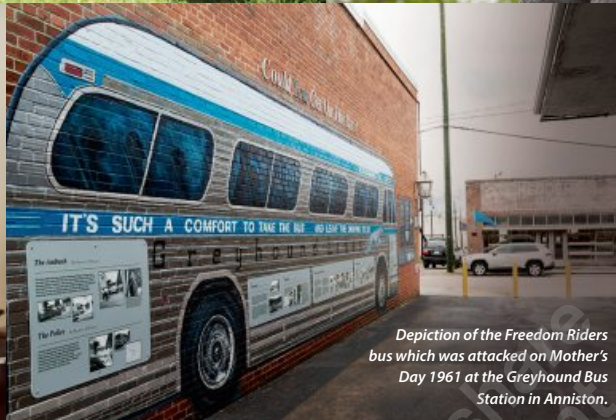
Civil Rights Memorial Mural near the southern end of the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama.



Dr Martin Luther King Jr



Will Ruzic, one of the actors who plays Atticus Finch in To Kill a Mockingbird, at the Old Courthouse Museum in Monroeville, Alabama.



Depiction of the Freedom Riders bus which was attacked on Mother's Day 1961 at the Greyhound Bus Station in Anniston.



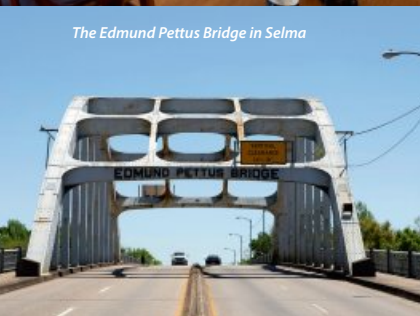
Mural depicting characters and houses from the novel To Kill a Mockingbird in Monroeville, Alabama.



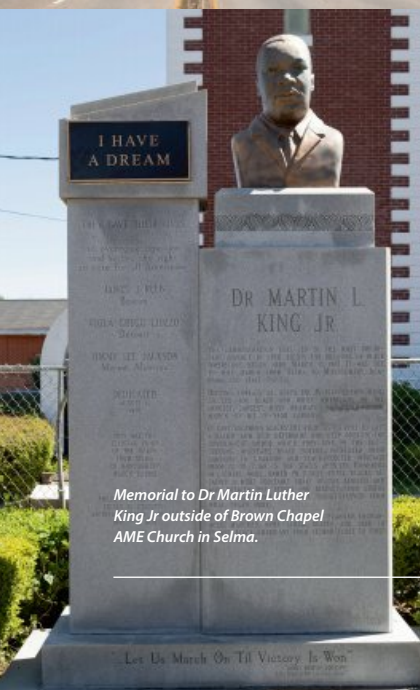
The Old Courthouse Museum in Monroeville, Alabama. Designed by architect Andrew Bryan, the courthouse was built in 1903 and today houses a museum.



The Rosa Parks Library and Museum in Montgomery, Alabama. The museum tells the story of Rosa Parks' arrest for refusing to give up her seat to a white man.



The Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma



Memorial to Dr Martin Luther King Jr outside of Brown Chapel AME Church in Selma.



A historic sign displayed in Montgomery, Alabama.



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NORTH EAST LEISURE GROUP CELEBRATES SECOND ACCOLADE

A North East leisure group is celebrating for the second time in two months – after another of its properties received a top award.

In March The Blackbird at Ponteland, Newcastle won North East Pub of the Year in the North East Tourism Awards.

And now its sister site, The Northumberland Arms at Felton near Alnwick has just been named a winner of the 2022 Tripadvisor Travellers' Choice Awards for the second year in a row – putting the pub with rooms in the top ten per cent of hotels worldwide.

Both properties are part of the Northumberland Pub Company and have both been singled out for their attention to detail, their food offering and the general standards on offer.

The Travellers' Choice Awards are judged on the reviews that travellers left on the Tripadvisor site, based on consistently high standards and a positive experience.

Stuart Young, owner of the Northumberland Pub Company, is thrilled with the latest award.

"It has been a fantastic few months, first being named North East Pub of the Year for The Blackbird and now this amazing Tripadvisor award for The Northumberland Arms," he said.

"Everyone knows what a tough few years it has been for the hospitality industry so we are delighted that the hard work and dedication of our teams have been recognised in such important ways."

Kanika Soni, Chief Commercial Officer at Tripadvisor praised the winners. "The Travellers' Choice Awards recognise the best in tourism and hospitality according to those who matter most – guests," he said. "Ranking among the Travellers' Choice winners is always tough, but never more so this year as we emerge from the pandemic."

"I'm impressed with the steps that have been taken to meet travellers' new demands and how venues have been able to consistently deliver positive experiences."

For further information visit
www.northumberlandarms-felton.co.uk

THE LORD CREWE RAISES OVER £1,500 FOR SEAHOUSES RNLI

The Lord Crewe, Bamburgh, raised over £1,500 in aid of Seahouses RNLI during its Pre-Opening Dinner on Wednesday 4th May.

Guests from the local community were invited for complimentary dinner, in exchange for a generous cash donation to the charity.

The funds raised will go towards The RNLI's search and rescue service, which has been saving lives at sea for nearly 200 years and is primarily powered by donations.

The newly-refurbished The Lord Crewe Restaurant

now specialises in luxurious seafood dishes.

With a strong focus of high-quality ingredients and local produce, dishes include Lindsafarne Oysters, Lobster Thermidor and 28 Day Aged Ribeye.

The Lord Crewe's rooms will reopen in June and will feature seven individually designed boutique bedrooms, with each room offering something different for guests.

The Lord Crewe is just a short walk from Bamburgh Castle and beach and is sure to become one of Northumberland's must-visit destinations.

General Manager Joann Mailer said: "We are thrilled to have raised over £1,500 for Seahouses RNLI, The Lord Crewe's Local Charity of the Year."



RAMSIDE SPA NAMED ONE OF THE BEST IN THE COUNTRY

County Durham's luxurious Ramside Spa has been named one of the best in the UK at the beauty industry's equivalent of the Oscars.

The spa, at Ramside Hall Hotel, Golf and Spa, took 'Highly Commended' in the Large Spa of the Year category at the British Association of Beauty Therapy and Cosmetology (BABTAC) and Confederation of Beauty Therapy and Cosmetology (CIBTAC) awards held recently.

And while the spa – which boasts five pools including one of the UK's largest hydrotherapy pools, a number of treatment rooms, a sleep sanctuary, a beauty pod and an Asian restaurant – may have been pipped at the post for top honours, it still beat many of the most prestigious venues in the industry.

The BABTAC & CIBTAC awards have been a key date in the beauty industry calendar for over a decade, recognising and rewarding excellence both nationally and internationally.

The organisations are at the forefront of the industry and not only train the next generation of

therapists but also ensure they receive the highest standards of education.

Victoria Walker, spa director at Ramside, was delighted to have received the honour.

"These awards are among the most prestigious in the country and it was amazing to be recognised and celebrated" she said.



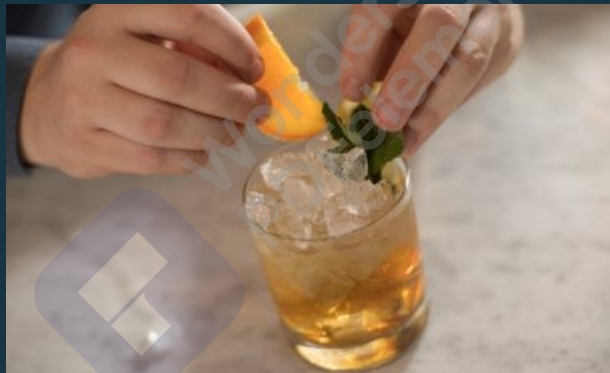
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NORTHUMBERLAND PUB COMPANY GETS OFFICIAL SEALS OF APPROVAL

The Northumberland Pub Company has some of the top venues in the North East – and you don't have to just take the company's own word for it.

After the ever-popular The Blackbird at Ponteland was named the Pub of the Year at the North East Tourism Awards, it's sister venue was arguably in its shadow – but not for long.

Because hot on its heels came the news that The Northumberland Arms at Felton near Alnwick – a stylish pub/restaurant with rooms (and what rooms they are but more of that later) had received an accolade of its own.

The Northumberland Arms was named a winner in the 2002 TripAdvisor Traveller's Choice Awards for the second year in a row, putting the pub in the top ten per cent of hotels worldwide.

These awards are given out on the recommendation of the most important people of all – guests.

They are based on consistently high reviews and as The Northumberland Arms was praised for its food, its service and the general standard across the board, it was an easy choice.

Anyone who has experienced The Blackbird and/or The Northumberland Arms may also now like to try a new venue which Stuart Young, owner of the Northumberland Pub Company, also has a stake in.

The former San Lorenzo restaurant at Washington and has been taken over by Stuart and his two partners in this venture and has now reopened as Novellos. It may be early days but Novellos has also fast gained a great reputation and its authentic style of Italian cuisine has led to a packed restaurant – perhaps a future award winner?

It's attention to detail at every level that has seen the Northumberland Arms and The Blackbird gain so much success, which has also been replicated at the company's artisan bakery and café, Kennedy and Rhind, in Jesmond.

The Northumberland Arms has the added bonus of six stylish rooms so that visitors can really make an occasion of it, each individually designed but all with the same high level of detail and attention.

Stuart Young, owner of the Northumberland Pub Company, is – not surprisingly – delighted that his venues have been recognised.

"After the tough few years that hospitality has had, it's great to be able to now do what we do best – showcase great venues with amazing food and accommodation," he said.

"To have received these two brilliant awards in quick succession is fantastic not just for me but for all of our hardworking team."

For further information visit www.northumberlandarms-felton.co.uk www.theblackbirdponteland.co.uk novellosrestaurant.com





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ON THE DOORSTEP By Jackie Marston

Well, as the title says, this place is actually on my doorstep, and although I go there daily, as I swim at their pool, it never crossed my mind to go for a meal there. They have several fun nights there, tribute acts and such like, and although they've always been great, for some reason, the venue slips through the net when it comes to just eating out. Well, Sunday lunch was calling and as I wasn't feeling too great, we opted to stay local, so The Clarion Hotel it was.

There was a red carpet, and as much as I'd like to think that was for us, sadly it wasn't, there was a christening taking place in one of their function rooms, but we lapped it up anyway! We were warmly greeted by the receptionist and the restaurant manager, who seated us quickly. There was only a couple of other tables dining, but it was a late lunch, so we assumed it had been busy earlier.

I ordered my usual of Yorkshire pudding with gravy to start, being a Yorkshire lass, although it wasn't on the menu, they happily obliged and hubby ordered the smoked haddock and mozzarella fishcakes. Having a teetotal weekend for a change, I was on the soda water, but Rich chose a house red to accompany his meal. He said it was a nice smooth red and very palatable. My Yorky pud came, and it was large, crunchy,

seasoned perfectly and served with lashings of gravy, which was good enough to drink on its own. Richard's fishcake was crunchy, piping hot and the tartar sauce was a good accompaniment. He said it was really lovely and the taste of the smoked fish came through extremely well.

Main course was a choice of chicken, vegetarian option, beef, or pork. We chose a pork and a beef. When they came, the portions were like for a family of four, but eh ho, hubby likes a challenge! Beef was very lean, smothered in gravy and melted in the mouth. Rich said the pork was delicious too and came with a side order of puffed pork crackling, which was new to us. We asked for a doggy bag of the leftovers for our pooch, which they kindly did for us too. The sides were cauliflower cheese, carrots, tender stem broccoli, roast, and mashed potatoes. Roasties were

particularly good, crunchy outside, yet mealy in the middle, just perfect. Mash was creamy and buttery and the cauliflower cheese was al-dente, just how we love it. Nice touches to the main course were homemade apple sauce and the extra gravy, as I like mine swimming.

We sent a lot of the food back, because there was way too much, but hubby gave it as good a go as he could, bless him. Although we were too full for dessert, we picked up the challenge, ordering sticky toffee pudding for myself and honeycomb cheesecake for Rich.

The weather was particularly nice that day, so we asked if it was OK to have them in the courtyard-style garden. Nothing was a problem for them here and when they came, we weren't disappointed. The sticky toffee pudding was incredibly moist, I could taste the dates in it, and it was accompanied with vanilla ice cream. It was delicious. The cheesecake had a lovely raspberry compote with it and Chantilly cream. The honeycomb was subtle in the cheesecake and didn't overpower, and the sharpness of the raspberry compote and Chantilly cream complemented the dish perfectly.

Often the places on your doorstep are forgotten for some reason, but at a cost of just £14.95 for two courses and £17.95 for three, we'll definitely not forget it in the future.

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ONE CITY – TWO STUNNING LOCATIONS



If you're looking for the perfect background for an elegant and intimate wedding, there's nowhere better than these two very special hotels.



Malhotra Group PLC own some of Tyneside most unique and stylish venues, so it makes sense that when you're looking for the perfect place to host your special day that the company would have some ideal locations.

And the good news is that they have two very special hotels which offer a range of wedding packages which can be adapted so that you can put your own personal stamp on the nuptials.

City centre wedding or celebration venues are often a challenge to find – until you look at the Grey Street Hotel.

Right in the heart of Newcastle's most historic street, it's a brilliant location for anyone wanting to create a memorable occasion for the closest family and friends.

The hotel's Monument Suite holds between 25 to 80 guests, so it's the ideal choice for anyone who is looking for that special, intimate day with the wow factor.

And of course with 49 contemporary bedrooms on site, all of your guests can easily be accommodated – and will undoubtedly love the combination of the retained features of this historic building and all of the modern touches. For stressed brides – or grooms for that matter

– the City Retreat beauty salon and day spa is a great way to prepare for the big day and is also one of the hotel's many brilliant features.

Just a mere three miles out of the city centre, you can enjoy the splendours of The Great North Hotel at Gosforth.

This is a fantastic choice for anyone who wants to enjoy a brand new venue, as the hotel has just celebrated its first birthday – and is very eager to showcase its many attributes to those planning a wedding.

Again the function room – the Ouseburn Suite – is perfect for those more intimate gatherings, as it can accommodate between 25 to 80 guests.

Licensed for ceremonies and with its own bar, it's a great choice for anyone who wants everything in one place.

With 64 bedrooms the party can continue long after the formalities are over.

Both hotels have their own wedding packages which are flexible enough for the happy couple to add their own touches to ensure it is personalised for them.

And of course at the heart of any event is the food – and the menus for both venues have something for everyone, with Grey Street Hotel also home to

the award-winning Leila Lily's, which has an AA rosette.

From exquisite versions of classic dishes to delicious canapes featuring flavours from around the globe to evening buffets which even have the option to include a taste of the North with hot stotties with a range of fillings – there is something for every palate.

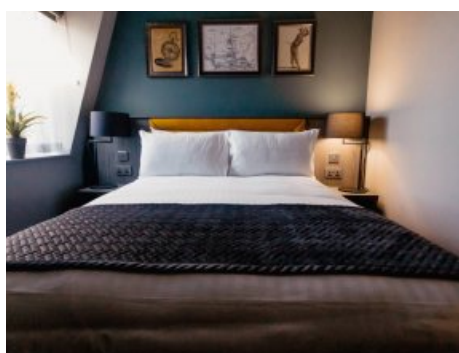
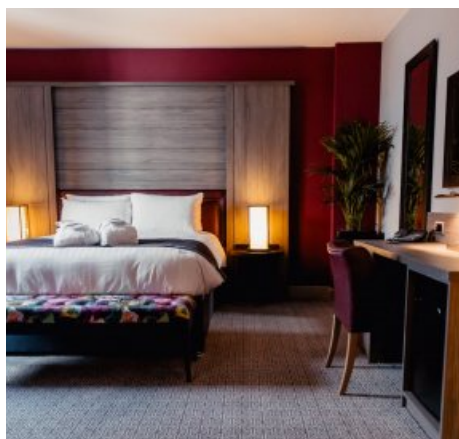
Marcella Swindell, Hotel Operations Manager, said the team were looking forward to showing off both venues.

"We have two very stylish, but very different, hotels which have lots to offer couples," she said.

"Both are perfect for anyone wanting to make their day extra special, with all the personal touches you would expect to make a real impact, and all with an experienced team who can take all of the stresses away.

"We are very excited about showing anyone thinking of getting married what we have to offer and we are sure they'll be delighted when they visit."

For further details or to book a show around contact sales@greatnorthhotel.co.uk or enquiries@greystreethotel.com



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Great North Hotel is the perfect location for visitors to the North East. Located just 3 miles from the city centre, this luxurious 64 bedroom hotel offers stylish and beautifully thought-out accommodations, as well as being modern and superbly equipped - perfect for any staycation, weekend trip, and work visit to Newcastle.

From weddings to conferences and events, the recently opened complex offers an on-site pub, New York style pizza restaurant, coffee shop and free parking - meaning everything you need, is right on your doorstep.

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GREY STREET HOTEL

The boutique Grey Street Hotel offers 49 contemporary en-suite bedrooms, right in the heart of Newcastle city centre. Georgian character is combined with modern finishes to give each room its own unique look and signature colour.

The elegant bedrooms boast high ceilings, original features and large sash windows. Whether it's our Standard Rooms, Deluxe Rooms or one of our Unique Suites, you will have a stay to remember at the Grey Street Hotel.

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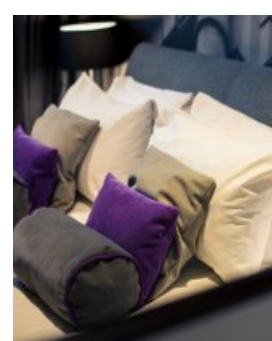
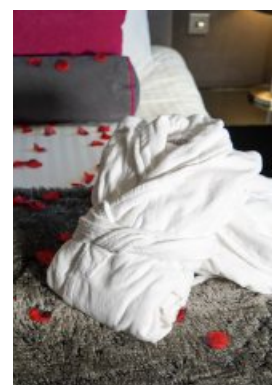
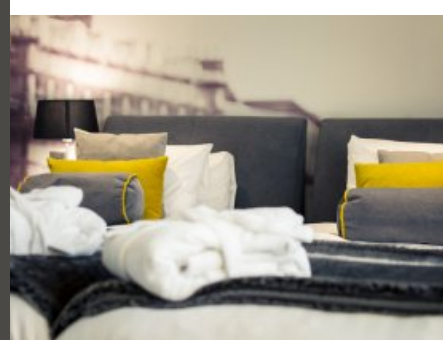
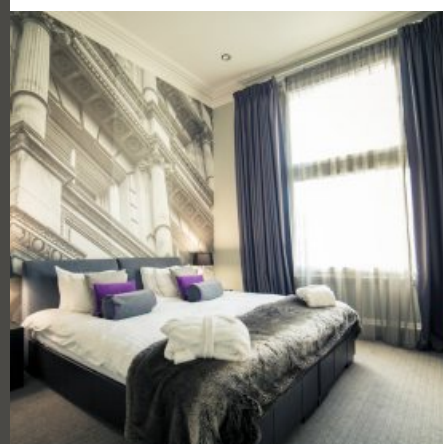
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WE ARE NOT IN THE 90S ANYMORE. THIS IS MODERN HOSPITALITY!

By Andrew Adams, General Manager, Punto Italian Kitchen, Heaton.



Andrew Adams

I'm no stranger to the hospitality industry. Having accrued two decades of experience across several venues. To receive a message in late summer 2021 asking if I knew "anyone who might be interested in a general manager role for a new Italian food venue" was not an unusual occurrence.

It was only when my partner, Martin, suggested "why aren't you applying for this" that I had that lightbulb moment. I had totally missed the subtle hint that they actually wanted me. With curiosity I applied, had an interview with Zeno, the Operations Director and once he explained the plans for the business I was totally on board. I could not wait to start!

Punto Italian Kitchen is a fantastic independent family owned hospitality business. We are here to give the North East a taste of modern Italian cuisine and the experience of Mediterranean

hospitality.

This modern experience of hospitality is key. We are not in the 90s anymore. Robotic customer service is a thing of the past, and as far as I am concerned, it can stay there! People see right through it.

You have to move with the times and the way to deliver a genuinely great experience is to personalise it. Yes, we have a brand, and certain things that we do to make sure you know you're at Punto Italian Kitchen. The front of house team will always welcome you by saying 'Buon giorno, welcome to punto', when feeling brave they may even say 'Benvenuti da Punto', but it is also personalised.

For example, Lydia always says "Buon giorno my lovelies". It is on brand but it is also unequivocally Lydia. This is encouraged.

Punto is all about customer experience. From the moment you walk through the door to the moment you leave. And our 'cameriere' (Italian waiter) training is built around this. One of the first things we ask them to do is wait at the front door. There is no eye contact and they are ignored.

We ask how long they thought they were standing and the reply is always one to two minutes. The reality is actually 25 seconds. The result, none of our customers wait at the front door without attention. Not only that, it highlights how important our guests are from the very start

of the experience. Which has already begun when they walk through the door.

There are many other elements. When asked for a recommendation, don't lie. Only recommend things you have tried and actually like. Keep it honest and sincere. Call guests by their first names, keep it personal. Always speak positively about everything.

We look after our team. Nurturing their skills and maintaining wellbeing. We carry out one on one development and make time for them every day. We give monthly incentives. These also happen to be experience based so the team get a real treat in exchange for their dedication.

Even small things are critical, like letting the team pick anything off the menu for their free on-shift meal. We buy sweets, doughnuts to perk everyone up on a busy weekend, give out gold medals and have 'awards nights'.

I believe we should do whatever we can to support and keep the team engaged, always striving to deliver the best service they can and reward them as the superstars they are. They deliver the experience we have designed and keep customers coming back. After all, the best advert we can have is a loyal customer telling everyone how amazing our business is.

puntoitalian.co.uk

PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST

Phoebe Gollan is a young, Newcastle based artist who has recently been combining acrylic paint and oil pastel to create vibrant interior and still life paintings that draw upon her everyday experience.

The flattened picture space, simplified forms and rich colour of Phoebe's recent paintings reveal the influence of early European modernism, particularly Matisse and Bonnard. Other key influences include later 20th Century artists, like the Scottish painter John Bellamy along with contemporaries, such as Joy Labinjo, whose large-scale paintings were shown at Baltic in 2019, and whose example as much as her work has proved a particular inspiration.

Labinjo gave a guest lecture at Northumbria University, where Phoebe graduated in 2019 with a first in Fine Art, and this gave Phoebe the confidence to return to painting after making extensive use of sound and animation in her degree show.

Like many other students and young artists, Phoebe has taken jobs in pubs and restaurants to support herself and pay the rent. Her most recent job was as a rather unlikely lab support worker at the Covid Lab, processing PCR tests. However, as it has for many others, the experience of Covid and lockdown has prompted a more general revaluation for Phoebe of what she wants to do, and she is now determined to pursue a full-time career as an artist.

Examples of Phoebe's recent paintings and illustration can be seen on Instagram @phoebegollan and at www.phoebegollan.com where both prints and original work can be purchased, and Phoebe can be contacted about commissions.



Phoebe Gollan

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WL DISTILLERY TO MAKE HISTORY AT LONDON'S SCIENCE MUSEUM

A sample of hand sanitiser produced by award-winning County Durham based WL Distillery, which switched production from gin to hand sanitiser at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic has been acquired by the Science Museum Group for its COVID-19 Collecting Project.

WL Distillery was one of the first independent distilleries to switch production to sanitiser to support organisations across the North East including charities and the NHS. The hand sanitiser will join other historic items in the collection to provide insights into the medical and scientific advancements of the last two years, and will help to tell the story of the outbreak for future generations to come.

In order to tell the story of how WL Distillery pivoted to manufacturing hand sanitiser, the Science Museum Group has also acquired the equipment that WL Distillery used to make the sanitiser, along with a recorded interview with WL Distillery's founder and managing director, Scott Wilson-Laing, which will provide the Science Museum with an oral history to enhance the future interpretation of these objects.

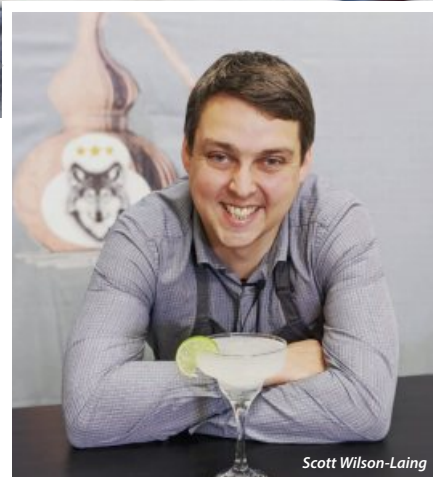
Scott Wilson-Laing, Founder and Managing Director at WL Distillery said: "It's such a great feeling that a national institution as esteemed as the Science Museum Group would want to archive the equipment and sanitiser products

from WL Distillery. I'm glad we were able to support a number of local charities and individuals who were in need of sanitiser at the height of the lockdown and that we made the decision to temporarily halt product.

With my history background I know how important it is to keep artifacts for the future, and as I reflect on the experience of visiting the Science Museum recently to record the interview, it's really humbling to think that years down the line when Covid is being discussed and studied that future generations will be interacting with something that I had a hand in producing."

Through its rapid spread, the COVID-19 pandemic created a public health crisis that impacted everyone's lives and in the height of the pandemic sanitiser was in high demand.

The items from WL Distillery join other objects from across the UK that form the Science Museum Group's COVID-19 Collecting Project, including historic empty vials of the vaccines from the first worldwide mass vaccinations, signage from the Government's daily briefings, COVID-19 testing



Scott Wilson-Laing

kits, and a range of national and international artworks.

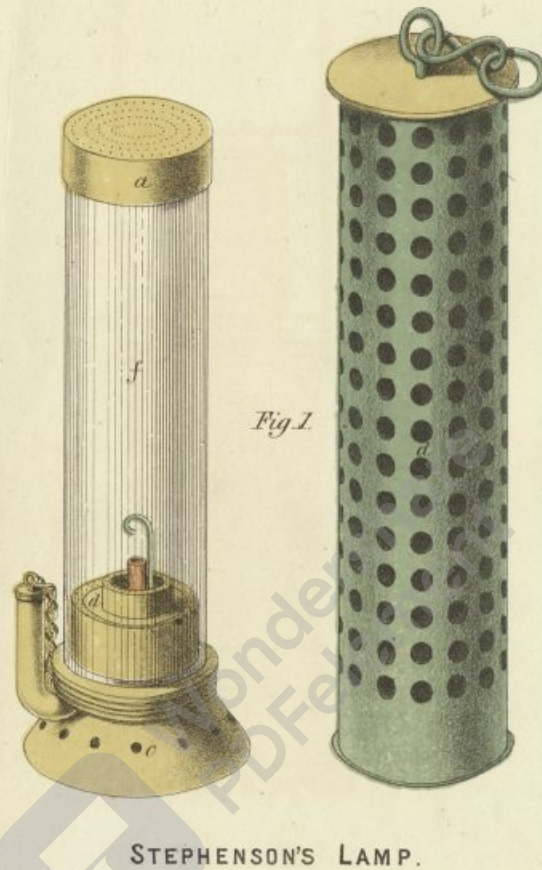
Rupert Cole, Curator of Contemporary Science at the Science Museum, said: "The Science Museum Group's COVID-19 Collecting Project not only explores the important contributions made by the medical and scientific communities during the pandemic, but also the role individuals and businesses played in supporting the fight against coronavirus. We're delighted to have acquired WL Distillery's hand sanitiser as it illustrates the incredible innovative thinking that took place across industries to help the public during an unprecedented time."

The distillery was able to restart gin production later in 2020 and since then has gone from strength to strength with a trio of industry awards now under their wing, including Silver at the prestigious 2021 London Spirits Competition, followed by Gold at The Gin Masters and Design Bronze at The World Gin Awards in 2021.

For more information visit:
www.wldistillery.com

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PEOPLE IN GLASSHOUSES...

By Jack Grahamslaw

Few venues are as impressive as Wynyard Hall. Sir John Hall's sprawling stately pile is an ode to Victorian grandeur – lovingly transformed into one of the region's most impressive country hall & spas.

Initially designed for the Marquess of Londonderry and officially opening in 1846, the hall incorporates French & Italian marble, Spanish mahogany, stone from the family quarry and exquisite stained glass windows.

Despite the hall's grand history, the Wynyard team are a forward-thinking bunch who as custodians of the estate, frequently look to evolve whilst honouring its legacy.

An example of this is the hall's all-new 'Glass House' conservatory restaurant which looks into the next generation with an emphasis on sustainability, estate-grown produce and its 'plot to plate' mentality.

Ingredients at the Glass House are mostly grown on site, combining a modern concern with provenance with the 'estate serving its community' approach of its ancestors.

Rows of fresh vegetables, herbs and spices for instance surround the dining area providing guests a botanical celebration of food in both its design and flavour.

My girlfriend Rosie is vegetarian so this sounded right up her street, so we revved it down the A1 to sample a truly unique horticultural dining experience.

The Glass House is set apart from the main hall and with ample parking on site is set up to be a real foodie haven.

As its name would suggest, this is a lovely bright and airy space with warm oak furnishings, a capacious bar and a laid-back playlist creating a leisurely atmosphere. Plant plots and various rustic bric-a-brac continue the English garden theme whilst exposed brickwork lends a modern edge.

With car in tow, Rosie swerved the booze in favour of a non-alcoholic garden cocktail (misprint surely?) whilst I quaffed an excellent, summery Picpoule de Pinet.

Our starters were a feast for the eyes as well as the tastebuds. Three wisps of smoked sea trout sat atop a fennel and apple emulsion with roast turnip crackers, diced orange shards and edible flowers. Rosie meanwhile chose the caramelised roast carrots with lemon slaw, embellished with sesame seeds and fresh parsley.

Throughout the meal, the service was slick and attentive with a dedicated team on hand to clear the plates and replenish our glasses.

Next up, came the roast belly pork. This was lightly dusted with sesame seeds and fresh chilli and served on a bed of fennel and new potatoes with red wine jus. Rosie opted for a vividly green garden pea gnocchi with chunks of feta, pine nuts and more edible floral goodies.

A sharing pot of scorched crème brûlée with mixed berries made a further compelling case for a garden restaurant figuratively and literally in bloom.

Clearly, with some real culinary pedigree at the helm, Wynyard continues to serve up food befitting of its glorious surroundings. Now is there a higher compliment than that?

For more information, visit www.wynyardhall.co.uk/eat/the-glass-house





GOOD THINGS COME TO THOSE WHO WAIT

South Tyneside Festival is back this summer and organisers are making sure it will have been well worth the wait.

Like most events the festival was hit by the Covid pandemic, but now it makes a dynamic return having undergone a rebrand as This Is South Tyneside Festival, with what promises to be a spectacular carnival and celebrity appearances in the mix.

The festival runs from July to September and is a joyful celebration of summer, packed with events and shows including free concerts at Bents Park by chart toppers including Will Young and Ella Henderson.

On Saturday 2 July, clear your diary and head on down to the not-to-be-missed carnival parade, which is making a sensational return after the two-year hiatus.

Forget Rio, New Orleans and Sydney – the real spirit of carnival is to be found in South Tyneside with the all singing, all dancing carnival parade.

It'll be a spectacle like no other with neon colours, vibrant floats – and perhaps more controversially a display created using empty crisp packets and milk cartons!

All will be revealed on the day, although carnival specialists, Creative Seed, who put the parade together on behalf of South Tyneside Council, have revealed that the discarded packaging will be part of a section of the carnival devoted to recycling.

"We've been collecting all kind of empty packets to use, and the results are going to be spectacular," promised Garner Harris of Creative Seed.

Around 20 groups have been getting their creative juices flowing in preparation for the big day constructing fantastic floats and eye-catching costumes.

"It's fantastic to be back and we are going to make up for lost time with some absolutely amazing costumes and displays," said Garner.

"Big, bold and colourful is what we're working to, and we hope this is going to be the most memorable parade ever."

The parade will kick off at South Shields Town Hall and make its way along a new route via Beach Road and Anderson Street, before continuing along Ocean Road and Sea Road to Bents Park, where there will be a full programme of family-friendly entertainment for the remainder of the afternoon.

Spectators can expect dance performances, an aerial act, live music, interactive walkabout characters, craft stalls, children's crafts, face painting and more.

Councillor Joan Atkinson, Deputy Leader of South Tyneside Council with responsibility for Culture and Leisure, said: "We are incredibly excited to see the iconic Summer Parade returning.

"The event is a festival tradition and is always a real spectacle for both those who get involved and line the route. It brings together so many local groups in a vibrant display of true community spirit and is much loved by residents and visitors alike.

"With carnival inspired costumes, music and dance performances, colourful props and floats, the parade is sure to wow crowds once again."

And it doesn't stop there because the parade programme is also being expanded this year to help create a carnival weekend with artists, including stunning street theatre and an impressive circus show, performing on the Sandhaven promenade on the Sunday (3 July).

The Summer Parade and street theatre is being organised by South Tyneside Council and supported by Arts Council England.

It is part of a packed programme of events throughout the summer which includes the free Sunday concerts featuring Will Young, Ella Henderson, 80s pop sensations Shalamar and retro hitmakers Whigfield, Phats & Small, D:ream, Llorenna and Sonique.

There'll be Music in the Bandstand every Saturday from 23 July to 3 September too at Sunderland's beautiful Victorian bandstand at the seafront park

Other events include Proms in the Park, a range of musical entertainment at the Amphitheatre and a Kids Fun Fest, children's entertainers, and family-friendly plays.

The full programme for the festival can be viewed at www.southtynesidefestival.co.uk. For updates, follow South Tyneside Events on Facebook or STynesideEvents on Twitter.

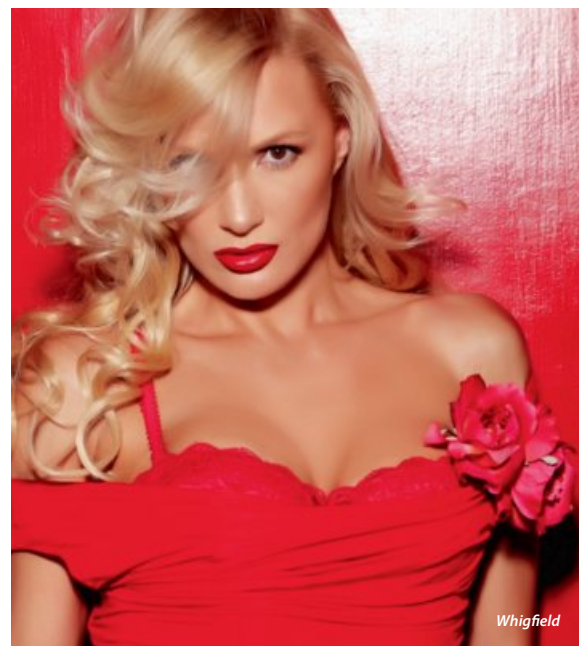
Any groups wanting to take part in the parade should contact the council's events team at South Tyneside Council on 0191 424 7986 or email events@southtyneside.gov.uk



Ella Henderson



Will Young



Whigfield



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HINNIES RESTAURANT

By Michael Gramslaw

You could say it's a fine time to be a Geordie. Eddie's mags back from the brink of relegation, Sam Fender's meteoric rise up the charts. One aspect of North East life perhaps historically underrepresented however is its cuisine – tasty, wholesome and full of spirit.

Hinnies restaurant plugs this gap serving up a rustic, earthy Geordie-influenced menu bang on the seafront in Whitley Bay.

The restaurant is owned by the team from the award-winning Blackfriars Restaurant and Dobson & Parnell in the centre of Newcastle and offers 'Geordie Comfort Food' with dishes and cooking styles inspired from across the North East.

The menu is a delight with dishes like North sea soup, Forager's tart with wild leeks, garlic, mushroom and Northumberland cheese to start. For mains choose from Pan haggerty, summer greens and poached hen's egg, and slow-cooked belly pork, sauerkraut, new season potatoes and brown ale jus – a tribute to head chef Jonny Cairn's talent!

My son Jack and I had the pleasure of visiting one sun-scorched Summer's afternoon and we were pleased to find that the venue is keeping up its impressively high standards from when we last visited around four to five years ago.

In the interlude, the restaurant has clearly amassed a steady stream of punters as the dining area was absolutely bustling upon arrival.

The interior is welcoming, combining coastal colours with warm, natural wood tones and almost everything in the restaurant is recycled including the



fittings, furniture, bar and vintage memorabilia. Earlier this year the restaurant was updated with a new bar and banquette seating making it extremely comfortable to sit and relax whilst looking out to the coast.



0191 447 0500

hinnies.co.uk

HINNIES

RESTAURANT

GEORDIE
COMFORT FOOD

This is a venue which works well all year round – a bright and airy eatery in the Summer months and a cosy beacon of warmth in the colder weather.

With a Friday afternoon thirst brewing, we kicked off with a couple of Moretti schooners before deciding upon an excellent bottle of house white.

Starters arrived shortly thereafter. Jack ordered the decidedly hearty crab & cheddar soufflé, an exquisite opener featuring a grand, pillowy orb of melted cheese blended with crab meat. I meanwhile chose the black pudding scotch egg thick with 'broon' sauce – an old pub classic given a gourmet twist.

Jack – whose tastebuds are still a little 'wonky' following Covid- has been eating a lot more seafood of late so sought solace in the North Shields market fish of the day. The blackened cod did not disappoint in a curried sauce on a bed of chickpeas and new potatoes.

I meanwhile opted for the braised veal shin with polenta mash and a selection of greens – another stunning dish from this March – June seasonal spring menu.

Totally replete, we swerved the dessert menu however did file a mental note to return to try the eponymous 'Singin' Hinnies' – a traditional Northumbrian scone-like griddlecake with Chantilly cream and fruit jam.

The restaurant was voted Best Value Restaurant in the North East by The Journal and it's easy to see why with a 3-course lunch for £19 (or £23 before 7pm on Fridays) – this is a must visit restaurant for businesses located out on the coast and to support local.

For more information, visit www.hinnies.co.uk





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Sunday 21st August 2022

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GOLF AT GREAT NORTH HOTEL

A top Tyneside hotel has 'teed' up a special summer treat for golfers keen to enjoy a sporting leisure break.

The recently opened Great North Hotel, at Gosforth, Newcastle has joined forces with neighbouring High Gosforth Park Golf Club – previously known as Parklands – to create a Stay and Golf package.

Along with a two-night dinner, bed and breakfast stay at the hotel, guests can enjoy a round of golf on the 18-hole course.

Owned by leading North East hospitality operator Malhotra Group plc, the four-star Great North Hotel is the flagship of a £7.5m transformation development which also includes the Three Mile, voted North East Pub and Bar of the Year for Tyne and Wear by the National Pub and Bar Awards 2022.

Purpose built and opened just a year ago the luxurious, 64-bedroom hotel offers easy access to High Gosforth Park Golf Club, which, along with the 18-hole course, has a 28-bay driving range for those looking to sharpen their game.

The Stay and Golf package costs from £159 per person, based on two sharing.

To book, or for more information, visit
www.greatnorthhotel.co.uk/offer/stay-and-golf



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For further details please email Julie Stephenson, Membership Manager on admin@thengc.co.uk or telephone 0191 2362498



The
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thengc.co.uk

The Northumberland Golf Club, High Gosforth Park,
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 5HT

A POSITIVE CHANGE

Through my 26 years as a personal trainer, I have seen weight gain have a profound effect on people's self esteem and confidence. This can lead to negative changes in personality and lead to a false belief that nothing is going to change; this is where you are wrong...

A number of new clients I see take months to build up the courage to contact me, some who are so low that for the first few minutes during the consultation they do not have the confidence to lift their head. This is where I try to instill a self belief and spark a positive change in their mindset, the belief that they can change their lives, they can be the person they used to be or want to be. It's all about taking that first step and thinking in a different positive way, once you start to exercise and eat well, the changes can be instant, dramatic and life changing.

Seeing the positive changes evolve with my clients both physically and mentally, is the best part of my job. There have been some staggering life changing transformations over the years.

What drove them to completely change their lives for good, in a matter of weeks?

- They had finally had enough of the way they looked and felt, their health was also suffering.
- They wanted to live longer for their children and future grandchildren.
- With our help they had a plan and were accountable.
- Their first thought in the morning and the last at night was their weight - this had to stop, it was constantly bringing them down.



David Fairlamb

- They wanted to look and feel normal and buy clothes from a shop, that they could actually fit in to.
- It affected virtually every thought process and decision throughout the day, their weight became their biggest stress.
- Their lives would never change unless they took the responsibility themselves, no one could do it for them.

- After being at such a low point in their lives thinking there was no way out, it only took a matter of weeks to completely transform their bodies and just as importantly their minds.

These clients made a decision and stuck to it through sheer determination with a totally new outlook and attitude.

www.davidfairlambfitness.co.uk

DAVID'S SUMMING UP

You may be reading this thinking you could never do that. No it is not, lives are being changed every day, be inspired and make the decision to change yours.

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THE LAST WORD



Barry Speker

from **BARRY SPEKER...**

We are now in the midst of the joyous Platinum Jubilee celebrations, it having been predicted that more than 10 million people would be attending street parties. No doubt many more will be filling pubs, clubs and restaurants. More than 60,000 communities registered to host Big Jubilee Lunches on June 5.

There will be similar celebrations across the world. All a fitting tribute to Her Majesty the Queen, the longest reigning British monarch and

the longest serving female head of state in the history of the world.

The Jubilee is a deserved celebration for H M and a relief from the grief of bereavement and the tribulations caused by members of the Royal family. This is a time when the Queen can choose which royal duties she feels able to perform - not reading the Queen's speech in Parliament but yes to the Windsor Horse Show (almost in the back garden). It was no sacrifice to send apologies to Albert Square and depute Charles and Camilla to visit the Queen Vic.

The celebrations will give the media and the public some respite from reprisals following Partygate, calls for a windfall tax and the court dramas of Wagatha Christie and Amber with the Pirate of the Caribbean.

Partying will no doubt have an impact upon waistlines. We are getting used to seeing calorie counts on menus as well as supermarket shelves. Banning of Bogof offers was government policy but reversed on the basis that rise in inflation and fuel poverty mean that food banks and bogofs are the only way some can afford to eat.

The latest figures for the UK show that 63.7% of adults are considered overweight (and 29% of those to be obese).

How do we compare with other countries?

Germany 25.7% obese

France 23.2% obese

Italy 22.9% obese

However, by comparison China is 6.6% obese and Japan 4.4% obese.

Perhaps it is to do with metabolism but it is not encouraging to be the fattest country in Europe. Following the festivities the agenda will get back to fitness without fatness, ban the bogof and introduce the 9pm watershed for junk food advertising.

The aforementioned libel cases show that there is little difference between showcase defamation trials on both sides of the Atlantic save for this. In the Depp case, the protagonists are themselves well known for their film careers whereas Rebekah Vardy and Colleen Rooney are famous only from the 'reflected glorify' of being WAGs, married to well known footballers. They

invent their own vainglorious celebrity through the self-aggrandisement of social media.

What a spectacle, with the media packed into the court to comment on the outfits, make up and hairstyles and to mock the unimpressive testimony of the witnesses and the trivia of texts and instagram. At least some lawyers and the judges are making hay while the sun shines.

And coincidentally my judicial career must end imminently due to reaching the designated age - I am told that my 31 years as a Judge beats most in the system. Shall I now apply to be a judge on Strictly, BGT, Dancing on Ice or The Voice? No doubt Masterchef would be more satisfying!

barryspeker@hotmail.com



Sachins

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Owned and operated by Chef Bob Arora, all the food at Sachins is freshly prepared using the finest ingredients to give you an individual experience.

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Bob Arora, Owner, Sachins Restaurant



What the critics say:

"Perfect for a quick bite as well as a long night of indulgence, it's not hard to see why has become a popular fixture over the past four decades."

Sam Wonfor, The Chronicle

"Sachins has established its place as an iconic curry house in Newcastle, and throughout its history has been awarded many accolades, including Love North East's Top Curry of the Year, Chef of the Year in the English Curry Awards as well as North East Curry Restaurant of the Year."

Steph Maguire, ILoveNewcastle.com

"He serves up exotic and creative dishes using the freshest and finest ingredients. No crazy-hot spices or extra colouring make their way into the dishes. The reds come from chillies, the yellows from turmeric."

Jane Hall, The Chronicle



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