

NORTHERN

INSIGHT

JULY 2022

ISSUE 81



GAINFORD GROUP GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

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FOREWORD

Welcome to the July edition of Northern Insight.

With the balmy mid Summer nights upon us we are delighted to bring you another vibrant issue full of business advice, indepth interviews and fabulous features.

Our cover stars are the Gainford Group who have steadily built up an impressive portfolio of hotels, nightclubs and bars and are also a major player in the healthcare industry.

Within a wealth of social event coverage look out for the Construction Excellence North East Awards, a key calendar highlight for the regions built environment.

We also talk to Alison Gittins, CEO of Durham Business Group who reflect on a 40th year in which they have expanded and rebranded.

Look out for our reviews of our visits to Jesmond Dene House and Lumley Castle, two of the jewels in the regions hospitality crown.

We hope everyone finds something to stimulate and enjoy.

Thank you to everyone concerned for the continued support. Until next month...

M.J. Grahamslaw
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FESTIVAL HANDS OUT SANITIZER THANKS TO WENYAN

A student who left her native China to study at Sunderland University, has thanked her loyal customer base for supporting her business supplying protective gloves, tools, and personal protective equipment (PPE) to industry during the pandemic.

Wenyan Sharp fell in love with the North East during her University years and

formed Galaxy Industrial Supplies in Cramlington supplying Personal Protective Equipment and

tools to industries.

"Up until COVID, we sold our PPE and hand tools almost exclusively to wholesalers and distributors but with high street shops closing we had to rethink the way we worked. Crucially for us, what we supplied was in big demand due to the pandemic and we worked hard to ensure that everyone who needed our PPE supplies got them.

"Our customer base suddenly went online, and we found ourselves working directly with small businesses and individuals rather than through wholesalers and distributors. These people kept us busy, and their loyalty was amazing. I'm truly grateful for everyone who used us to help protect them during a very dark period in everyone's life."

Wenyan found that as well as gloves, her biggest sellers were Alcohol Disinfectant Wipes and Hand Sanitizer and as a thank you to her local community she provided these items free of charge to good causes in South East Northumberland. Her first batch went to music fans attending the "Blyth Live" free festival run by Blyth Town Council.

"Our business is all about protecting people with the products that we supply. The "Blyth Live" Festival was a great way for us to show our appreciation to the people who bought our products and any other good causes that may need free small quantities of sanitizer can get in touch with me by email info@gisupplies.co.uk, "said Wenyan.



NADIA RE:EMERGES INTO NEW, GREEN, PARTNERSHIP

One of the region's fastest growing training providers has gone into partnership with regeneration specialist RE:GEN to train people in a

variety of industry sector specialisms and create the right environment for a net zero industry.

RE:geon Training, formerly Geon Training Solutions based in Gateshead's Team Valley has a growing seven figure national portfolio, including contracts with local colleges and national providers. It specialises in fully funded, bespoke training programmes based around its sectors and continuously works with partners and clients to offer its learners local employment opportunities, as well as CV coaching and careers advice.

Now, the new business RE:geon Training has been merged into the RE:GEN Group to give local people a better start on the career ladder and a real commitment to improving the lives of the communities they serve. RE:geon pride themselves on offering first-rate training solutions and successfully placing young people into work. Most notably through their BUILD UP Construction Programme.

MD Nadia Scott of RE: Geon Training is excited to be working closely with RE:GEN. "When I first met with the CEO of RE:GEN, Lee Francis and I saw the company's culture and their mission and values, I knew that like myself, they put people at the forefront of their business. When we first met, we simply supported them with a pre apprenticeship training programme, but this has now blossomed into a full merger which will give young people more opportunities than ever before thanks to the way we have rewritten the funding rule book."

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NORTH EAST FIRM NAMED IN TOP 10 FEMALE-POWERED BUSINESSES IN THE UK

A North East company has been named one of the top 10 female-powered businesses in the UK in a nationwide report.

Darlington-based Resource Management Solutions (RMS) – led by Carole Martin – was ranked third in the 'Top 200 Female-Powered Businesses' report commissioned by J.P. Morgan Private Bank, in partnership with data company Beauhurst.

Nearly 40,000 companies were analysed, revealing 10,647 female-powered businesses founded, led, owned, or managed by women, and ranked the top 200 companies based on growth in sales, headcount and valuation.

Samantha Saperstein, of JPMorgan Chase, said: "Recognising women's resilience and critical role in the community and road to recovery is more important than ever. As the backbone of society, women-owned and led businesses are essential to local and national economies. We know that these businesses distribute wealth more equitably to women, especially considering that women-led businesses are more likely to employ women."

Carole Martin, who founded RMS in 2000, said: "We are not only female-founded but the senior leadership team is 86 per cent female too. We work very hard here in the North East to be the best for our clients and employees. We are incredibly proud that we came in the top 10."

Visit rms-recruitment.co.uk for more.

CENTRE FOR LIFE, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE, WINS INTERNATIONAL AWARD FOR GROUND-BREAKING AUTISM PARTNERSHIP

The Centre for Life (Life) in Newcastle-upon-Tyne has won an international award in recognition of its innovative work with autistic communities. Life received one of only two Mariano Gago Awards at the Ecsite ceremony in Heilbronn, Germany recently. Ecsite is the European network of over 320 science centres and museums. The Mariano Gago awards encourage creative and impactful work within the sector.

Life is the first ever recipient of the Responsible and Responsive Award which was specifically created to reflect the response of Ecsite members to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Award recognises the partnership between Life and the North East Autism Society (NEAS) and their online support to the autistic community during this period. What started as a small Facebook group involving just six families, grew into a mass online programme with an audience of over 13,000.

Life worked with colleagues from NEAS to create short videos showing accessible science demonstrations such as how to make a balloon-



powered mini-car and experiments with chocolate. As interest grew, this developed into a sustained programme of videos and weekly Zoom chats which attracted increasing engagement. David Jones, Community Liaison Manager at Life, received the award at a ceremony attended by over 1,000 people. David said: "By the time the pandemic hit, Life had already forged deep bonds with the local autistic community and this relationship provided much needed structure, support and a sense of community for families during this difficult time."

Linda Conlon, Chief Executive of Life said: "The Mariano Gago awards are the 'Oscars' of the professional science engagement world. It is a massive endorsement from fellow professionals and we're honoured to receive one."



OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

After a Covid enforced gap of two years The Northern Legal Awards Dinner was held at the Hilton Gateshead on 23 June. To a standing ovation, The Outstanding Achievement Award 2022 was made to Barry Speker OBE DL 'for his significant impact to the region and the industry'. The award was sponsored by Trinity Chambers. Simon Goldberg QC introduced the presentation which was made by Eric Elliott QC.

Eric paid tribute to Barry's distinguished and varied 50 year legal career as a solicitor, including 31 years as a Judge (the longest in the country). Unusually Barry achieved an enviable reputation as a specialist in a number of areas of law - employment, crime, family, licensing but above all medical law and ethics and clinical negligence. For over 40 years he was Trust Solicitor of Newcastle Hospitals. In addition Barry has made outstanding contribution by his public work and a leading role in numerous charities including Graingertown, The Children's Foundation, NECA, adoption agencies, Tyne Theatre, the Chinese community.

In accepting the award, Barry described his dedication to his career as a lawyer and the fascination with the law. He emphasised the opportunities it had presented to him to contribute to society and become involved. He encouraged all solicitors to share this aspiration.

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SALES OVER THE SUMMER

Seasonal sales can cause pipeline problems for many businesses. Regardless of industry, as a whole on the B2B side, the summer months can be slow, from the end of June to the first week in September, the world slows down.

Schools, Colleges and Universities break up and many of us take a longer break, embracing the British summertime. It can be a challenging time to organise meetings, move forward your pipeline, convert and close deals. So how can you ensure you keep on top of your performance, individually or as a company?

If the last two years have taught us anything, it is how to adapt our sales practices on a more remote basis. Meetings no longer have to take hours with online often becoming a more efficient option once relationships have been established. Scheduling a timeline for any new deal ahead of the summer and using a CRM system to schedule key dates and activity throughout the period will enable you to stay on top. Develop your customer journey, if you don't already have one, update your own messaging and narrative, asking those prospects and customers around you for feedback as you go. Think differently about how to engage with people. It always surprises me, so few events run throughout the summer, as the ones that do are often so busy with a great chance to network, invite connections, contacts and prospects along to. Host your own summer soiree, organise a social, if the weather is good embrace it, and organise some walking meetings, outside lunches and something different - think 'BBMT' (DM me) and further engage your existing customer base. Ask for referrals, use the time to upskill you and them, host an innovation workshop, a team



Jessica Williams

building session inviting others along a training session and remain active and stay visible!

It has after all taken you a long time, I am guessing, to achieve your current profile, pipeline and overall visibility. Going on the low down over the summer could undo all your hard work. Sales is about consistency – regardless of the warmer weather. You will achieve a better return than many if you maintain this mentality throughout the summer months when many slow down and forget to engage with their customers often leaving them feeling unloved and uncared for.

Last month we had a save the date for The North's first Sales, Service and Success Conference at Teesside University International Business School and by popular demand we are adding the subject of sustainability. With a stellar line up of speakers confirmed and more to come, it's a day not to be missed and presents an ideal opportunity to kick start the last quarter of the year and for many, the busiest one.

The day will present an opportunity to learn, network, create new connections and take time out to embrace your own self development.

We will also be launching our sales forum – an opportunity for sales professionals to come together regularly, attend events, access learning webinars, network and engage with like-minded professionals.

Tickets are available to purchase at www.justwilliamsales.academy

We are looking to create a local supply chain network as part of our conference and have limited spaces available for local businesses looking to exhibit – contact us for more information.

If you are interested to find out more about attending, sponsoring, exhibiting or just intrigued – contact us on JWSA@justwilliamsales.academy. With only 100 tickets available, will sell out quickly

We look forward to welcoming you!

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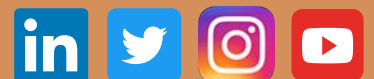
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COVER STORY

GAINFORD GROUP - INSPIRING THE FUTURE

It's four years since we last caught up with Imran Khaliq...Director of the Gainford Group which is one of the biggest investors in the North East, particularly the Newcastle Quayside area.

The company has steadily built an impressive portfolio of hotels, nightclubs and bars. They're also a major player in the healthcare industry being one of the largest healthcare providers in the region.

The article in 2018 ended...'The Gainford Group is fast becoming a force to be reckoned with.'

How true...because the company is going from strength to strength, and as well as continuously developing their current venues, they are also planning for the future. The current workforce of over 2500 will rapidly expand.

Imran is one of those people who never seems to stop working...although he admits that it's largely due to way he was brought up. Both of his parents worked long hours to build Gainford Group and it's plainly rubbed off.

"We are a business that never closes and I have to admit that I find it difficult to switch off. We have created a growth culture and our business model is one of wanting to aspire. We don't want to compete...we want to be different...and we continually look at how we can improve various aspects of the business. It's non-stop and visitors who are returning to any of our venues will see that a lot of refurbishment and alterations have taken place."

The last twelve years has seen a rapid development across the Gainford Group.

It all began when they bought what is the jewel in the Gainford Group crown, The Vermont Hotel in the centre of Newcastle. It is a landmark building which is now one of the leading places to stay in the whole of the UK. The rooftop area of the hotel is home to 'Above' which is a bar and restaurant offering panoramic views of Newcastle. Both the hotel and 'Above' underwent extensive refurbishment during COVID and now ooze luxury and are the go-to place for celebrities visiting the city. It is also an ideal wedding venue. With a fantastic backdrop looking across the city towards the Tyne Bridge, any photos are truly stunning.

“

**...Gainford Group go
from strength
to strength...**

Gainford Group has recently acquired the Moot Hall which is situated directly opposite The Vermont Hotel. The former Newcastle Crown Court will be used for weddings, conferences and seminars.

The company is also the owner of many of Newcastle's leading bars, nightclubs and restaurants. They have properties in other parts of the country too.

Livello, (www.barlivello.co.uk) situated at the lower end of Dean Street, is rated as Newcastle's leading bar and late night venue. It has just seen the completion of a £1.2m makeover.

Drop down onto the Quayside and you'll find Aveika (www.aveika.co.uk) which is a super-stylish Japanese restaurant and bar. There's nothing like it in Newcastle.

Next door is Atomic Blonde, a private members cocktail bar which is restricted to over 25s who are either members or guests staying at The Vermont Aparthotel.

Elsewhere in the company's portfolio there are over a dozen care and residential homes across the region offering in excess of 800 beds specialising in offering short and long term facilities to both the elderly and to those with more complex health issues.

There is also a pair of nurseries in Birtley and Chester le Street offering high quality childcare to children under five years old, with before and after school care for children aged five to 11.

In other words, to say that the Gainford Group development in recently years is hugely impressive, is a massive understatement.

And it doesn't stop there.

"We're always looking for new and exciting opportunities," adds Imran. "In the pipeline we have plans for a 37 storey skyscraper which will be called Gainford Tower. It will be a £50m multi-purpose building in New Bridge Street which will form a stunning gateway to Newcastle's city centre. The Tower will include a 5-star hotel, private apartments, a selection of bars and restaurants, plus a fitness and health club.

We're also opening a super-stylish urban rooftop bar called 'Crescendo'. It's based on The Side which is just around the corner from our Livello nightclub.

As I said at the start of this article...we don't want to compete...we want to inspire people and aspire to be the best of the best in Newcastle, the North East and beyond."

These are hugely exciting times for Imran and the Gainford Group.

With Imran leading from the front, Newcastle can look forward to being an even greater city than it already is. He's proud to call himself a Geordie...and it shows.

**For more details why not check out their website
www.gainfordgroup.com**



Above



The Hudson



The Vermont Hotel



The County Hotel



Aveika

Imran Khaliq



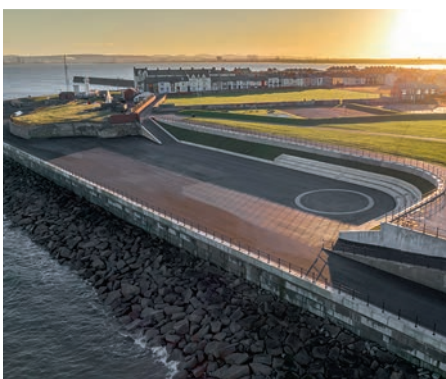
CONSTRUCTING EXCELLENCE NORTH EAST AWARDS 2022

Held at the Grand Hotel Gosforth Park, the Constructing Excellence North East Awards 2022 is a key calendar highlight for the region's built environment.

It is a chance to celebrate the achievements of individuals, projects and organisations and showcase their great work.

Headline sponsor at the awards evening was CDM Recruitment. Category sponsors were Gleeds, GSSArchitecture, McGovern & Co, Kier Construction North East, CIOB North East, Northumbrian Water Group, Faithful+Gould, Muckle LLP and drinks reception sponsor, Turner & Townsend.

On the night, £8,500 was raised for The Sir Bobby Robson Foundation, the designated charity of CDM Recruitment.







Perfect partnership – (from left) Paul Jennings, CEO of North P&I and Jeremy Grose, CEO of Standard Club.

NORTH AND STANDARD PROVE PERFECT PARTNERS FOR CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE

A new chapter is set to be written in the history of one of the North East's most established businesses as Newcastle-based shipping and marine insurer, North P&I, is set to merge with fellow mutual Standard Club.

Members of both organisations voted to approve a merger and, subject to regulatory approval, the combined group – to be called NorthStandard – will start life on 20th February 2023, the date on which shipping owners renew their insurance annually.

NorthStandard will be a major force in what is a globally significant industry – 95% of the world's goods are transported by ship and NorthStandard will be insuring one in every five of these vital commercial vessels.

The newly merged business will operate jointly from the North P&I head office in Newcastle and the Standard Club HQ in London, as well as the two insurers' offices in key locations around the world.

NorthStandard will also have joint CEOs, with Paul Jennings from North P&I and Jeremy Grose from Standard Club sharing the leadership function.

It's no surprise that the tie-up is being called "a merger of equals" and the connections between 162-year-old North P&I and Standard Club don't stop there.

"While we've been based in London since 1884, there is a suggestion that Standard Club actually started out in the North East," explains Jeremy Grose.

"Early records of the club were damaged in a fire during World War One so it is harder to trace its earlier years but we have seen some evidence to suggest it may have started out in Sunderland.

"It is certainly true that the North East has a fantastic maritime heritage – I've met ship owners from around the world who studied naval architecture at Newcastle University and many others who have models of North East-built ships in their boardrooms.

"North P&I has a strong and solid foundation in Newcastle but so does the shipping industry as a whole."

It was this reputation – together with a shared set of values – which led Standard Club to consider a merger with North P&I in 2020 at a time when the Newcastle-based insurer was itself looking at Standard Club as a potential partner.

Paul Jennings from North P&I explains: "Standard Club was very much at the top of our list.

"We feel there is a similar standard of quality of the kind of risks we will insure, the kind of members which we both have and the values which we share as organisations."

Jeremy Grose adds: "There is compatibility between the type of organisations we are and the kind of people who work for us – there are already a lot of people who know each other across North and Standard and I think that's reflective that the two organisations attract similar kinds of people."

The latter point is certainly borne out in the two leaders: both Paul and Jeremy studied law at university, and both admit that a career in marine insurance wasn't something they had initially planned.

However, the variety of the work and people, the international nature of the industry and its ever-changing challenges has meant that both have clocked up more than 30 years in the marine insurance sector.

Their longevity is mirrored by the staff at the two organisations, a number of whom have been in the industry even longer than the two CEOs.

Combining this in-depth experience and expertise is an advantage both leaders see in the planned merger, alongside greater financial resilience and a wider sharing of risk.

"We will have the greatest concentration of talent and expertise in the industry, which will be of great benefit to our members," says Paul.

As mutual organisations, both North P&I and Standard Club needed the support of their members for the merger to go ahead with the vote in May securing a strong mandate.

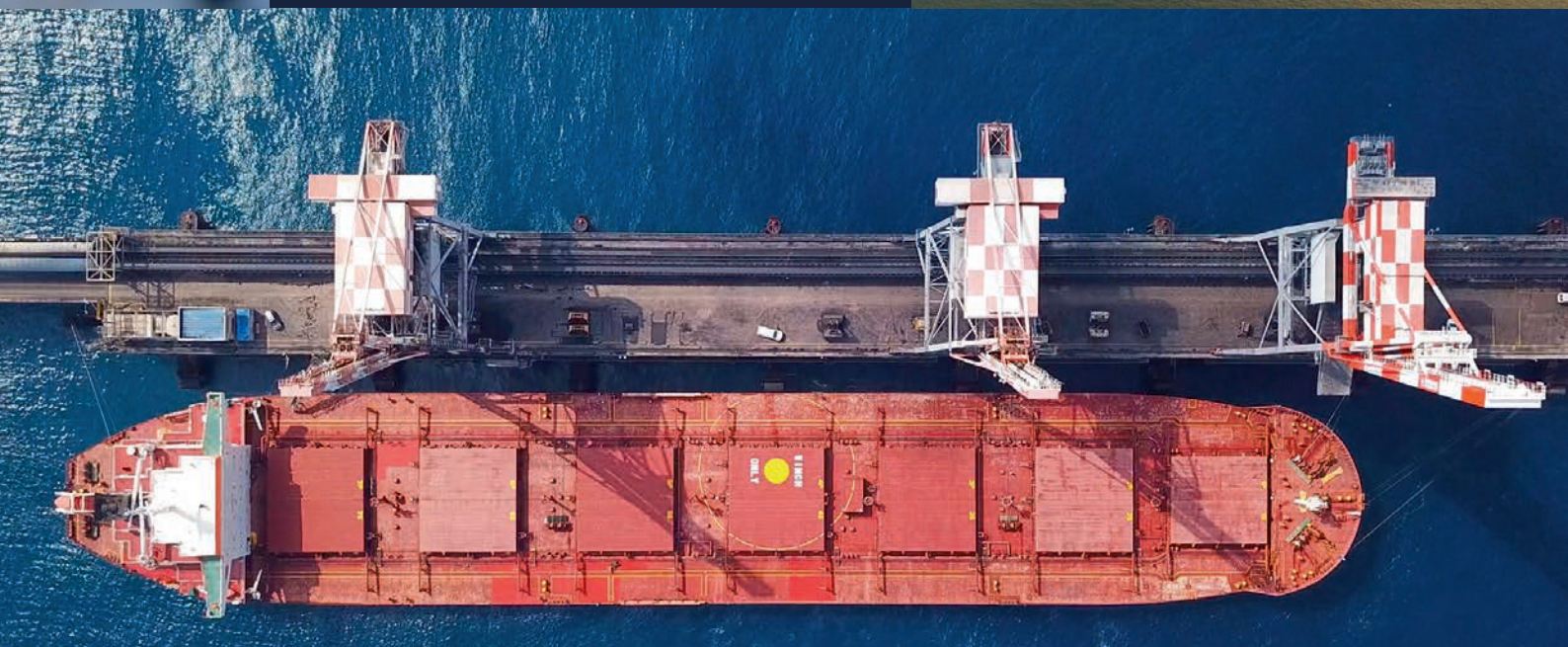
Jeremy says: "We were pleased and humbled by the degree of support which we got – it was a massive ratification of the proposal we are now moving forward with."

Both leaders are now eagerly looking ahead to the future for NorthStandard.

Paul explains: "Our vision is to position the combined operation to assist our members through the challenges they have coming up, of which the largest is decarbonisation – not just in terms of what powers the vessels but also in terms of what they transport.

"We see this as an opportunity with the skillset we have to position ourselves to provide not just what shipping needs now but also in 10, 15, 20 years' time and beyond."

www.nepia.com





Damien Charlton

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

Ward Hadaway's partner Damien Charlton talks about the importance of understanding legal rights and responsibilities and why he volunteers with the IoD North East (North).

As Partner and Head of Commercial at Ward Hadaway LLP, tell us a bit about your role.

I look after a team of lawyers and support staff that provide a diverse range of commercial law services. Part of the team specialises in public sector work – they are a fantastic group of lawyers with a national reputation, who deal with highly specialised work, particularly in relation to PFI contracts, and how to deal with the expiry of those contracts. More generally, the team provides support to clients on contractual issues, a lot of which involves drafting and negotiating agreements of all shapes and sizes. We also

have specialist lawyers that deal with state aid, intellectual property, information technology and data protection. All-in-all, we provide a broad range of services from our hubs in Leeds, Manchester and Newcastle.

What does good governance mean to you?

Any manager or director has to ensure that their organisation is managed effectively and in compliance with the law. Getting corporate governance wrong can have a very detrimental effect on the finances and reputation of a business and those associated with it and can be hugely disruptive to its development and growth. Organisations must therefore have clear reporting lines, and rules and procedures for decision making. There also need to be effective means of managing conflicts of interest and accounting for benefits. Managers and directors need to have a clear understanding of these elements of the governance regime, as well as their wider appreciation of their legal rights and responsibilities. Good governance brings all of these elements together.

How has membership of the IoD helped you in your career?

I've been a member of the IoD for over ten years now and have very much enjoyed the opportunities for both networking and personal development that it offers. All members can benefit from a great mixture of events ranging from site visits that give a real insight into leading local businesses, to more formal dining events that facilitate networking and discussion between senior executives. I've benefitted

greatly from attending local events at which we've heard expert speakers give the benefit of their knowledge on topics of interest to anyone involved in management. For example, we recently explored the topical issue of hybrid working. The great thing about IoD events is that whenever I attend, I nearly always make a connection with another member that I've not met before – and building a network of senior executives has been really valuable in developing my career.

You sit on the IoD North East (North) committee. Why is this important to you?

The promotion of good governance, and the benefits of taking a structured and professional approach to the management of any organisation, help directors operate more effectively – the benefits of which serve the economy and the community as a whole, and are not just a matter of "box ticking" legal compliance. I am therefore very happy to volunteer my time to help the IoD to promote its message to organisations in the region. As a commercial lawyer, there is a lot that I can offer members with regards to insight into the legal framework around governance. The message and values of the IoD are as relevant now as they were when its Royal Charter was granted – perhaps more so in the complex regulatory environment in which so many businesses operate. I'm happy to play my part in putting this agenda forward.

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Steven Foley

IN CONVERSATION WITH...

STEVEN FOLEY

Relationship Development Director for CCBS Group

What were your career ambitions growing up?

Believe it or not I really fancied the idea of being an astronaut. That said I quickly realised that a future in space was never going to happen, and I needed to be more realistic in my career choice.

Tell us about your current role?

My current role is a breath of fresh air. I help and support businesses to obtain funding. Very much working for the client and approaching funders on their behalf.

What is your proudest business achievement?

36 years in the banking sector and the last 22 as a relationship manager is something that I am proud of. Not just the time served but what I managed to achieve during that time and the genuine respect I seemed to have from clients, my colleagues and the wider North East business community. Something I didn't realise when I was there!!

How has your industry changed in the last decade?

One of the biggest changes that I have seen is that once upon a time a business would go to their Bank if they needed anything and specifically funding. However, that is not the case now. That is where CCBS come in and the role that we play not only now but going forward is becoming invaluable as business owners look for help and support to grow and develop their businesses.

What are you currently working on?

Early days (week 4) but one thing that I am currently looking at is the refinance of some existing bank facilities that will give the client significant headroom and comfort that whilst navigating some of the trading headwinds they, and many others, are currently facing.

The good thing is, is that the phone is ringing with new opportunities every day.

Tell us about the team you work with?

First and foremost, I knew the people before I started to work at CCBS and yes, I still joined! That is a huge help for any new starter, even a 54 year old one. That is helped by the fact that we are all in the office so can talk things through face to face and then move things forward quickly. Extremely collaborative, supportive and helpful team who enjoy some very good relationship with the funders that we use to support the requirements that our clients/prospects have.

What does the future hold?

Work wise then I see the next five years being exciting times at CCBS. I know the plans that the business has, and I want to be part of those and to help the business deliver those. We really do have some good clients as well excellent connections in the North East business community that also want to help and support us as they know we deliver what we say.

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

Never say yes when you should say no. None of us likes to say no to a client but sometimes that is exactly what we should be saying. I would always try and do this face to face and I would also take this one step further by always having a Plan B for the client. It would be remiss of me not to mention this sales gem that I learned a few years ago and that is "always sell the sizzle and not the sausage". I will leave that one with your readers.

What has been your biggest challenge?

The biggest challenge for me is learning what funding we have access to. The days of me having one funder i.e., the bank, have gone and I now have access to a number of funders who can be selected depending on the funding requirement that we are looking to meet. It is honestly amazing to see at first-hand what is available.

Who are your heroes inside and outside of business?

In the mid 90's I worked for a chap called John Riddle who was an incredible man. I learned a lot from him. Away from business then I would have to say that Mark Cavendish continues to inspire me. The man is an absolute legend and one of our greatest ever sports people.

How do you unwind outside of work?

Believe or not, I am a very keen cyclist. You won't be able to tell by looking at me, but I like nothing better than jumping on my bike and heading out into the countryside for a few hours for cake and coffee.

Favourite Book and Boxset?

I am slightly embarrassed to say that I am not a great reader, but I am an excellent listener and I do enjoy listening to Podcasts. I regularly listen to The Good, The Bad and The Rugby which really is an excellent show even if you don't like rugby!! In terms of watching then currently Derry Girls is taking up viewing time.

www.ccbsg.co.uk
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 07561 475864

“

*...always sell
the sizzle and
not the sausage...*



Stephen Lancaster

STEPHEN LANCASTER APPOINTED GB BANK'S CEO

Stephen Lancaster has recently been appointed CEO of GB Bank, the purpose-driven specialist bank committed to boosting economic growth and prosperity by providing property development finance in underserved regions of the UK.

A co-founder of the bank, Stephen has played an integral role in establishing GB Bank and its unique cloud-native banking eco-system, which provides a seamless and secure customer experience.

Stephen is the former CEO of Cascade and led the build of its cloud native platform. He has over 30 years' multi-industry and cross sector experience with particular expertise in FinTech. His core strengths lie in building start ups, business strategy, technology and programme delivery. The co-author of GB Bank's regulatory business plan, Stephen's commercial background complements the banking experience in the Executive Team and Board, which is chaired by Monzo and Starling founder Paul Rippon. His excellent track record in leading and managing business change, as well as in driving business and team performance has been clearly visible with the significant progress GB Bank has made through mobilisation as the bank moves closer to launch.

His appointment has now been formally confirmed by the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) with consent from the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).

Developed with co-founders Stephen Black and Emma Black, GB Bank utilises regional knowledge and passion to support, regenerate and build communities in areas which need it most. Delivering bespoke lending products to SMEs and property developers, the bank will offer incentives for sustainable and zero carbon developments and rewards for developers creating local employment opportunities putting GB Bank at the heart of the UK's property development eco-system.

In the new role, Stephen takes responsibility for the strategic leadership and direction of GB Bank and is focused on the bank's mobilisation and fundraising, alongside people, financial and risk management.

GB Bank is currently authorised with restrictions (AWR) by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority

and the Prudential Regulation Authority. This means the bank is not open to trade but is in a period of mobilisation. Stephen and his team are working hard with the regulators to get everything ready to start operating in Q3 when the bank will accept its first customer savings and begin lending for residential and commercial property developments.

Stephen Lancaster, GB Bank's CEO, said: "Having helped develop the concept for GB Bank and worked with the fantastic team here throughout, it's a privilege to formally take up the position of CEO to make our vision a reality.

"We are steadfastly committed to delivering on our purpose which is to take property development finance to where it's needed most and it's great to see this goal gathering traction as we move ever closer to being fully operational."

Paul Rippon, GBB's Non-Executive Chairman, said: "Steve is a visionary, dedicated and well-respected member of the team with a proven track record and whose appointment has been welcomed by us all for the strong leadership, consistency, and values he brings.

"He is passionate about making a tangible difference in the communities we serve and boosting house building and construction at a time where there is a significant undersupply. This really filters down to every member of the team and under his leadership I am confident we will make a huge and positive impact."

For more information, please visit www.thegbb.co.uk

A bank that's building communities.

That's GB Bank

GB Bank is a force for good, committed to boosting economic growth and prosperity across the North East.

Fuelled with regional passion and expertise, GB Bank is spearheading residential and commercial developments with accessible and bespoke property development loans.

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GB BANK

BUILDING COMMUNITIES

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gbbank.co.uk

GB Bank is currently authorised with restrictions (AWR) by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority. AWR means that we are not open to trade and are in a 'mobilisation' phase whilst we get everything ready to start operating as a Bank in Q3 2022.



Jo Robertson

THE 2022 DELOITTE UK TECHNOLOGY FAST 50 AWARDS

By Jo Robertson, director, Deloitte

The Deloitte UK Technology Fast 50 is one of the UK's foremost technology awards programmes. Now in its twenty-fifth year, the awards are an acknowledgement of the 50 fastest-growing technology companies in the UK. The ranking is based on revenue growth over the last four years.

I'm pleased to announce that entries are now open, and I would encourage any companies eligible in the North East to apply. The UK Technology Fast 50 is part of an international programme run by Deloitte. Previous UK winners have been both large and small, and included some of the most dynamic players in all areas of technology, from internet specialists to biotech, digital media technology to life sciences, computers to semiconductors and software to telecommunications.

The North has produced a number of Fast 50-ranked companies in previous years, such as True Potential, Chameleon Technology, SoPost and BigChange.

Since 1998, the Deloitte Technology Fast 50 awards have showcased an increasingly innovative and diverse range of UK-based technology companies. Last year's cohort generated cumulative revenues of £2.92 billion in 2020/21, an impressive average growth rate of 3,337% and employed more than 19,000 people.

In addition to the top 50 ranking, Deloitte's awards also recognise an annual 'Rising Star' in the UK technology sector. The award category recognises the innovation and achievements of UK tech businesses that are leading the way but have not been in operation for four years and therefore cannot yet enter the main awards. The Regional Winners category also recognises the fastest growing business within each region of the UK.

This year we are proud to launch the 'Fast 50 Women in Leadership' award category. This ranking will recognise those companies within the Tech Fast 50 that are either led by a female CEO or have a founding team that is at least 50% women.

Last year's winners

With an impressive three-year growth of 21,569%, last year's winning entrant was payment and banking services provider ClearBank. The top three in last year's competition were FinTech businesses, with FinTech companies making up 24% of the overall Fast 50.

Tyne & Wear-based Inflo was ranked 20th with an average growth of 1,923%. This was Inflo's debut in the Fast 50 and is one of several fast-growth companies offering support to the professional services sector. Inflo's Cloud-based service is now used by more than 1,000 firms across 120 countries.

The Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible the company must have accounts covering a minimum of four years and be headquartered in the UK. The company must be considered a technology company which, for this purpose, is defined as a company that meets at least one of the following four criteria:

- Owns proprietary intellectual property or proprietary technology that contributes to a significant portion of the company's operating revenues;
- Manufactures a technology related product;
- Devotes a significant proportion of operating revenues to research and development of technology;
- Is technology intensive, or uses its own unique technology to solve problems.

The company must not be a subsidiary of a larger group. If there is more than one trading company in a group of companies, the nomination should reflect consolidated revenue and not the revenue of a particular company within the group. And the company must have base-year (year 1) operating revenues of £41,000 (€50,000) and a current year (year 4) operating revenue of at least £835,000 (€1,000,000).

For full eligibility details and the entry form please visit www.fast50.co.uk and I'm really looking forward to seeing more companies from the North East in the rankings.

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USING EMPLOYEE SHARE SCHEMES TO AVOID IMPACTS OF 'THE GREAT RESIGNATION'

By Rachel Warriner, head of corporate tax at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors Ltd

A lot has been written over recent months about a post-pandemic workplace trend dubbed 'The Great Resignation,' which has seen a large proportion of the British workplace deciding that it's time for a change.

Industry research suggests that almost a third of UK workers are planning to look for a new job this year, with sectors including legal, technology, sales, media and marketing being most likely to be affected.

The reasons for people leaving their jobs can of course be many and varied, but regardless of the reason, the impact of losing key staff on a business's operations and performance can be highly significant, especially at a time when many are still struggling to make up ground lost during the pandemic.

With the current job market very definitely being in favour of skilled workers looking for a new challenge, the incentives that they are being offered to encourage them to stay are making a big difference to individuals' workplace commitment.

One area where we are seeing a lot of interest is employee share option schemes, which usually fall into two main categories - approved share option schemes and unapproved share option schemes.

The most common and tax efficient approved scheme is the Enterprise Management Incentive (EMI). This is a tax-advantaged share option scheme designed to help smaller companies attract and retain key staff by enabling them to acquire shares over a period of time at a set price.

The main benefit of EMI schemes is that no income tax arises and no National Insurance contributions (NICs) are charged when the EMI options are granted, and potentially no income tax or NICs are chargeable when the options are exercised.

In addition, EMI option shares which are exercised and ultimately sold may benefit from Business Assets Disposal Relief resulting in a ten per cent tax rate on the disposal of the shares.

Not all industries or employees will qualify for an EMI scheme, so taking professional advice on how they might work for your business is essential, but for those that do, they offer a flexible option which can make a significant difference to your business's short and long-term chances of commercial success.

A company may ultimately decide to grant share options outside of the approved schemes. These unapproved schemes do not benefit from the attractive tax reliefs of the approved schemes and as a result the employee could be subject to income tax and NIC when the options are exercised.

However, despite the tax implications, an unapproved scheme may be better suited to some businesses and still ensures staff commitment to the business.



*Rachel Warriner,
Head of corporate tax
at RMT Accountants
& Business Advisors*

The criteria for the participation in the option scheme and for the eventual exercise of the options must all be determined. Legal advice is required to draw up the option scheme rules and the option agreements and will document what would happen should an employee leave the company before those options are exercised.

As an alternative to using share option schemes, a company may decide to introduce a new class of shares which allow employees to participate in the future growth in value of the company, whilst enabling current shareholders to lock in built up value to date – and if structured correctly, the employee could acquire the shares with minimal tax implications arising.

For further information on employee share option schemes and all aspects of corporate taxation, please contact Rachel Warriner at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors on 0191 256 9500 or visit www.r-m-t.co.uk



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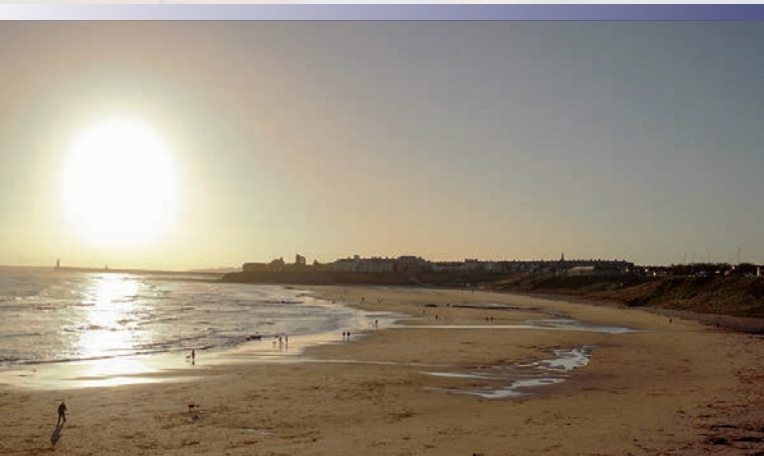
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TIER ONE CAPITAL STRENGTHENS WEALTH MANAGEMENT TEAM WITH NEW INVESTMENT ASSOCIATE

Tier One Capital, one of the North East's leading independent wealth management and fund management specialists, is expanding its financial advice team with the appointment of Emma Hutchinson as Investment Associate.

Emma will support Tier One Capital's highly experienced financial advisers in delivering independent, personal and bespoke financial advice to the firm's expanding client base.

Tier One Capital is also the appointed investment adviser and fund manager for the London Stock Exchange listed Develop North PLC, which provides secured loans to residential and commercial property developments located primarily in the North of England and Scotland.

With a team of 21, Tier One Capital is expected to grow further in the coming months with the business looking to recruit additional financial advisers and business support staff.

Emma's appointment coincides with Tier One Capital moving to a new office at the Newcastle Business Park, offering greater opportunity for hybrid working, improved client parking and access to a refreshed and modern office space for the team and the company's clients and professional partners.

Paul Blight, Head of Wealth Management at Tier One Capital said: "As existing and new client levels grow, we are keen to attract reliable, talented and dedicated individuals into the business, like Emma, who is highly experienced in building longstanding relationships. Emma is a welcome addition to our team, that is experiencing a period of strong growth, as a result of our established reputation for flexible, bespoke and independent advice."

Emma Hutchinson said: "I am really pleased to join the wealth management team at Tier One Capital. It is a highly respected business and I am looking



forward to contributing to the support and advice the team provides to its clients and to working alongside a very professional, credible and welcoming team."

Tier One Capital provides its expertise in financial advice, pension planning, savings and investments and insurance and protection to a predominately North East customer base, which includes senior executives, entrepreneurs, business owners, professional partners and high net-worth individuals.

RGCF TO SUPPORT SIGNIFICANT ACQUISITION STRATEGY

Newcastle-based RG Corporate Finance (RGCF) has been appointed to support a significant acquisition-led growth strategy being delivered by the global market leading decentralised clinical trials specialist Medical Research Network Ltd (MRN).

MRN, which has its UK headquarters in Milton Keynes and offices in the US, Spain, Germany, and Japan works with some of the world's leading pharma, biotech and CRO companies, specialising in conducting clinical trials in

patients' homes as well as supporting clinical trial sites with specialist nursing resources.

The strategy aims to deliver further growth as MRN enhances its operational capabilities, having built market leading positions in North America, Europe and Australasia. MRN's strategic success was celebrated this year, with a Queen's Award for Enterprise – International Trade, adding to the Alantra Pharma Fast 50 recognition in 2021, for being one of the UK's fastest growing healthcare firms.

It currently operates in five of the six key geographies for clinical trials, with community-based trials taking place in more than 42 countries conducting 1,600 visits a month.

This activity has helped MRN increase revenues to £53 million in 2021 and grow its headcount to more than 300.

To develop its offering, further expand clinical services, develop greater digital/e-clinical support and strengthen its geographic and operational footprint, MRN is embarking on a growth strategy with the scope to include mergers, acquisitions, strategic investments, or joint ventures.

RGCF will work alongside MRN to maintain its growth to develop and integrate the range of DCT components that brings together complex solutions to create a more cohesive service for its customers.

Graham Wylie, founder and CEO of MRN, said: "MRN has experienced significant, profitable, organic growth in recent years, and we are now in a position to take the company further forward through an acquisitive strategy that will allow us to diversify and strengthen our existing capabilities in key global markets.

Nick Johnson, Partner at RGCF, said: "MRN is at the forefront of the global decentralised clinical trials sector, which has come under the spotlight following the COVID-19 pandemic, accelerating the development and interest in this area of the wider clinical trials market.



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Steve Plaskitt

FUNDING A MANAGEMENT BUYOUT (MBO)

Management buyouts (MBOs) are a popular option as a succession route.

There are a number of positives a Vendor may see in an MBO over selling to an external buyer:

- potentially better job security for the workforce; continuity for customers and suppliers;
- less disruption overall as the deal requirements are completed with full cooperation and understanding;
- and a greater chance of success and legacy, as the management will already have an in-depth knowledge of the business, its products, services and markets.

Businesses understand the value in this knowledge, which has led to us seeing Employee Ownership Trusts become an increasingly popular variation of the traditional MBO.

It is important with an MBO that preparation time is used positively, providing an opportunity for the advisors to work with the management team to ensure they clearly understand financial information, start to think strategically and line up any funding required for the final transaction.

The specialist team at Azets has seen significant MBO activity in recent years and a key reason for this has been the availability of debt funding and Vendors being prepared to form part of that funding package themselves through deferred consideration.

Financing a buyout through management equity is a potential route but rare - it is a common misconception that the management team needs to fully fund an MBO by itself. Typically, those taking on the business will invest proportionately based on their proposed role and their own financial circumstances, in the knowledge that their personal contributions convince other lenders of a clear commitment to the long-term success of the business.

Deferred consideration is involved in the vast majority of MBOs and is effectively the Vendor acting as a funder. Few transactions, whether 3rd party sales or MBOs involve full consideration being paid immediately due to the significant sums of money involved, the challenges involved in raising funding and a wish to ensure the Vendor is engaged in providing a smooth handover. Third-party lenders may require an element of deferred payment to ensure the vendor is also committed to the transition.

Where there is a difference of opinion on value, payments made after completion may actually be an 'earn-out', where some of the consideration is payable based on the company achieving future trading performance targets. In this case, clear legal definitions of the targets and their measurement is required.

MBO funding is also available through private equity firms with an investor acquiring shares

in the business, often as a minority shareholder. The total finance is often split between a debt and equity elements. The investor is paid interest on the debt element, potentially dividends as a result of the shareholding and will seek to support growth in the business to benefit from capital growth. In general, private investors support businesses where significant capital growth is expected and where they can realise a return through a sale of their shares, commonly in a period of 3-5 years but potentially up to 7/8 years.

Many MBOs still rely on traditional bank finance including loans for the transaction and invoice finance for working capital and the new management team will need a robust financial plan in place to demonstrate it can meet the bank's repayment and security requirements.

Whichever route is chosen, planning ahead is essential for a successful MBO; historic financial information and projections need to be robust, and the management team will need to demonstrate strong knowledge of the business and an ability to replace the Vendor in all aspects of their role. It can be an interesting time as the dynamics move between the parties as the transaction progresses. This is necessary to build the funder's confidence and belief in the management team's ability to successfully continue the business.

If you would like to discuss funding options or for more information about Corporate Finance, please get in touch with Steve Plaskitt, Regional Head of Corporate Finance at Azets on 0191 285 0321 steve.plaskitt@azets.co.uk

SECURITY FIRM SECURES NPIF FUNDING TO SUPPORT NEW CONTRACT WINS



Next Level Security Services (NLSS) is celebrating after securing a significant new contract worth £15million and a six-figure investment from NPIF - FW Capital Debt Finance, managed by FW Capital and part of the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund (NPIF).

Headquartered in Stockton-on-Tees and with offices in Leeds and Paisley, the funding is helping NLSS to fulfil the requirements of the new contract win with the creation of new jobs including local apprenticeships. It also cements further NLSS's position as the one of the top providers of security services in the UK and its plans to drive future growth.

NLSS was established in 2015 and currently employs 184 people. It specialises in the provision of all aspects of security from security guarding, access control, key holding and response, CCTV, close protection operative and consultancy services. NLSS customers also benefit from improve communication services thanks to a unique NLSS Security App.

Derek Laird, Managing Director at Next Level Security Services explained: "We required growth funding to be able to employ additional members of staff to work on this significant new contract secured in the retail sector. This investment boost has also given us the confidence to go out and win further new business and generate significant future revenue for NLSS.

"Since we set up in the business seven years ago, we have gone from strength to strength. We offer the full package for security services and work with a wide range of customers across the UK. Working with Jordan at FW Capital has been fantastic, he has been very supportive, and having the NPIF funding in place is making a real difference to NLSS. We have experienced a massive increase in business and are really going places with the backing of NPIF - FW Capital Debt Finance."

MARK SELECTS NEL FOR INVESTMENT SUPPORT AS NEW ENGINEERING BUSINESS GOES FOR GROWTH

An experienced Tyneside engineer is taking on the next stage of his entrepreneurial journey with the help of a five-figure investment from the North East Small Loan Fund, Supported by The European Regional Development Fund.

Mark Ranft set up Select Works to provide CNC precision components to clients in a range of different industry sectors, predominantly across the North East after previously running his own engineering business and deciding that he wanted to fill the shortfall of high-quality engineering.

He has obtained a £25,000 Small Loan fund investment through regional fund management firm NEL Fund Managers to enable him to bring in the precision CNC cutting equipment required to fulfil customer orders, invest in the latest technologies and support the recruitment of skilled operatives as the business expands.

Up to six new jobs are expected to be created by the South Shields-based firm over the next two years as it expands.

Mark Ranft, who has more than 30 years' engineering industry experience, says: "I'd founded



and led engineering businesses before and found that I missed doing so, so decided to set up Select Works to get back into that role.

"The flexibility and responsiveness we can offer around client requirements, and the range of specialist skills that we can call upon set us apart from the competition, and we're already seeing new contracts coming in as a result.

"At this stage, we're mostly looking at business development opportunities across the North East, but we'll be gradually expanding our focus to look

right across the UK and expect to see new jobs resulting as we grow.

"The investment option offered by NEL fit perfectly with our business's needs and the team were very helpful in guiding us through the application process."

Mike Guellard, senior investment executive at NEL Fund Managers, adds: "Repeat entrepreneurs like Mark are at the heart of the North East economy and he has both the engineering and business knowledge to make Select Works a great success."



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L-R: Robson Laidler's Community Fund group Emma Purvis, Liam Crowe, Gemma Graham, Michelle Cooper (County Durham Community Foundation) Graham Purvis, Emma Thompson, Jack Boke, Ashlynn Pownall together at the Angel of the North to celebrate the launch of the new Robson Laidler Community Fund.

ROBSON LAIDLER ACCOUNTANTS LAUNCH NEW COMMUNITY FUND

Robson Laidler accountants and business advisors has launched its own community Fund for charitable causes across the North East as the firm continues to balance its purpose with profits.

With offices in Newcastle and Chester-le-Street, the firm which celebrates 102 years in business this year continues to stand by its purpose to make a positive difference to people's lives by donating 5% of its profits each year to its own community Fund.

The Fund, in partnership with County Durham Community Foundation, is open to a huge network of community causes that fight poverty and enrich lives. The partnership will run for three years and long-term supporters of the Foundation have put forward match funding to support and welcome Robson Laidler's new fund.

Robson Laidler's managing director Graham Purvis said: "As a purpose-driven firm we strongly believe in putting our profits where our principles are.

"The newly-launched Fund is an evolution of our long tradition of giving to charity and demonstrates how we are still seeking to be progressive and innovative. We're very excited about the new Robson Laidler Fund because we see this as a sustainable way of continually giving and we're delighted to be working with County Durham Community Foundation, which is going to be a massive help to us in terms of ensuring the money goes to the places it can do the most good.

"Our grants will go to those organisations that align with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals – No Poverty (SDG#1), Zero Hunger (SDG#2), Good Health & Well-Being (SDG#3), Quality Education (SDG#4), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG#8), Reduced Inequalities (SDG#10), Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG#11) and Climate Action (SDG#13)."

County Durham Community Foundation identifies good community causes both in County Durham and beyond, which Robson Laidler then considers for funding. This is then match funded by the Foundation, who administers the grants.

The newly launched Fund is a move in line with Robson Laidler becoming the first accredited B Corp in the North East - an international movement aimed at making businesses a force for community good.

Graham continued: "B Corp's are a new kind of business that are no longer purely driven by shareholder primacy. The five pillars of B Corp are showing excellence and value in terms of company governance, people, customers, the environment and supporting the community. You have to make a firm commitment to those priorities and you have to demonstrate your company is living up to them. The new Robson Laidler Fund in conjunction with the Foundation will ensure we're looking after those community commitments long-term."

Chief executive of County Durham Community Foundation Michelle Cooper said: "It's a real privilege to work with Robson Laidler to launch this partnership because they see how serious poverty is in our region and really want to help in a meaningful way.

"By working with us, Robson Laidler can be sure their money stays local, supports incredible projects, and is boosted by the match funding we have."

Donations to Robson Laidler's Community Fund can be made here:
cdcf.enthouse.com/cf/robsonlaidler

For more information or to apply for funding contact Gemma Graham head of marketing at Robson Laidler.

To apply for the Foundation's match funding scheme contact michelle@cdcf.org.uk

VIDEO RECRUITMENT PLATFORM SECURES INVESTMENT FROM FINANCE DURHAM FUND



Shine set to relocate to County Durham and create 19 new jobs following funding injection to fuel the growth of its video interview technology business.

Shine Interview Ltd ("Shine"), a video-based recruitment/HR Tech SaaS platform, has received a £1.3 million funding package. The transaction comprises a £500,000 investment from the Finance Durham Fund, managed by Maven Capital Partners ("Maven"), established by Durham County Council and overseen by Business Durham, and a £500,000 investment from the North East Venture Fund, managed by Mercia Asset Management plc ("Mercia") and supported by the European Regional Development Fund, a £300,000 from Mercia's EIS Funds. The investment will enable the business to embark on a programme of growth to invest in sales and marketing and R&D, and relocate to County Durham, creating 20 new jobs in the area in the next 18 months.

Shine is a fully customisable, highly secure, enterprise level video-based recruitment/HR Tech platform that facilitates a remote first end-to-end recruitment process for enterprises, SMEs, and recruitment firms. It does this primarily through live and pre-recorded video interviewing, alongside a suite of recruitment tools, including scheduling, diary management, video CVs and video-based engagement tools.

The business aims to make the recruitment process easier, whilst improving the candidate and client journey, and the platform has been proven to cut the time and cost of hiring by up to 70%. Shine already supports an impressive client list including Royal Navy, RAF, Reed Specialist Recruitment, Capita Resourcing, University of London, Atom Bank and the NHS, and supports users in 85 countries.

With new hybrid/remote working patterns emerging triggered by the Covid19 pandemic it is estimated that up to 40% of the UK's working population will work this way over the long term, meaning new tools are required to facilitate virtual recruitment processes. Rapid increases in user adoption of video technologies, driven not only by the pandemic but also by the growth of personal video streaming within social media and office environments, mean video interviews have now been normalised by candidates.

The talent management/recruitment software market is well established within the UK, with an estimated market size of £11bn. Within this, one of the fastest growing markets is the talent assessment and hiring software market, with estimates showing a pathway to a £5bn market size over the next three years.

Shine was founded in 2016 by experienced technology executive David Copple, who has over 20 years' experience in the SaaS space and was previously the CTO of EduTech platform The Test Factory, where he helped to successfully scale the business to an exit in 2014. The business also benefits from the strategic input of Chairman Joe Slavin, the former CEO of fish4jobs and MD of Monster.co.uk.

David Nixon, Senior Investment Manager at Maven, said: "Shine has carved out a solid niche in the marketplace with a well-defined position. The business has enjoyed strong growth and is well placed to scale its technology and grow its team following its relocation to County Durham. David and the team have built an impressive business and it's great to work with the North East Fund to provide a finance package that supports the company's ambitious expansion plans."

David Copple, Founder of Shine, said: "The recruitment landscape has changed over the last two years with the war for talent intensifying and hybrid and remote working becoming the norm. As a result, demand for our video based tools has soared and this investment will allow us to accelerate our growth plans significantly whilst bringing further innovations to our already world class platform. I'm hugely excited by this next stage of our journey."

Cllr James Rowlandson, Portfolio holder for resources, investment and assets at Durham County Council, said: "We are delighted to have been able to invest in Shine through Finance Durham, and also to assist the company to move to County Durham. It's fantastic to support this innovative business as it grows into this expanding area of recruitment. We encourage more businesses to follow suit and access the funding opportunities we have available through our Business Durham team to create more and better jobs and contribute towards a strong competitive economy for the future."

mavencp.com

Finance Durham Fund

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HOW TO PLAN FOR INHERITANCE TAX

Inheritance tax is a tax on the value of everything you gift or leave behind when you die. Not everyone is required to pay inheritance tax. You can leave any amount to your spouse or civil partner. But if the amount you leave to others is valued above £325,000, the excess is taxed at 40% when you die. This is known as the 'nil-rate band'.

There's also an additional inheritance tax allowance of £175,000 available. This is called the 'residence nil-rate band' and it can be applied to the main family home. There are other rules that apply to whether or not this allowance can be claimed.

With rising house prices and frozen allowances, very many people have an IHT issue to address. So, understandably, some families want to plan for inheritance tax. Let's look at a few options here.

Gifts

One route available to individuals worried about leaving behind an inheritance tax liability is to gift assets away during their lifetime. This can be an attractive option if you want to see loved ones benefit from your wealth whilst you are alive.

Gifts are a straightforward concept in principle, but the rules around making a gift can be rather complex.



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

Some very small gifts are inheritance tax-free, for example you can gift £3,000 in total each year. But larger gifts typically take seven years to become completely free from inheritance tax (known as potentially exempt transfers). So, if you die within seven years you are unlikely to have been effective in reducing the inheritance tax bill.

Anyone making a gift loses ownership and control of that wealth as soon as the gift is made.

Trust planning

When you put money or property in a trust, that wealth is no longer in your name. In other words, you no longer own the assets. Therefore, you lose access to wealth that is put into trust. It also typically takes seven years for assets to become

completely free from inheritance tax from the point they are settled into trust.

However, one benefit of trusts is you can retain some control over what happens to the assets in the trust. They can be used to ensure wealth is kept in the family over generations.

Business Relief

Business Relief (BR) could be worth considering if you are reluctant to lose access to your wealth and are comfortable with investment risk. It's an investment incentive that encourages you to invest into growing companies while planning for inheritance tax.

Shares in companies that qualify for BR can be

“
...you can
gift £3,000
in total
each year..”

passed on free from inheritance tax if they've been held for at least two years and at the time you die. BR can be an attractive way to reduce an inheritance tax liability as it offers faster tax exemption than putting assets in trusts or making a gift.

Plus, you retain access to your wealth because it's an investment that remains in your name. Remember that any money withdrawn would become liable for inheritance tax if not spent.

BR investments have their own specific risks which an adviser would explain to you.

Life insurance

Taking out insurance doesn't reduce the amount of inheritance tax due on an estate, it is a way to pay a potential inheritance tax bill.

Insurance policies are designed to pay out a lump sum when you die. There are two types of policies that can help with inheritance tax: whole-of-life assurance and term insurance. The former pays out when you die, providing you have kept up policy payments until that date, no matter when the death occurs. Term insurance pays out if you die within a certain period.

Action

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

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

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“

*...you don't
have to
sacrifice
either your
career or
your family...*

Irenna Pietruszka

IN CONVERSATION WITH...

IRENNA PIETRUSZKA

Partner, Head of Conveyancing, Newcastle Office, Sweeney Miller Law.

What were your career ambitions growing up?

When I was little, I wanted to be a librarian because I loved reading. My mum told me that she once caught me reading the dictionary because I'd read everything else! I didn't decide to get into law until I was in my early twenties. I did a day's clerking helping a barrister friend and thoroughly enjoyed it. I found the whole justice system fascinating and knew from then that I wanted to be a part of the legal industry.

Tell us about your current role?

I am a solicitor, and more recently Partner at Sweeney Miller Law. I head up the Residential Conveyancing team at our Newcastle office in Gosforth. Whilst I have my own caseload dealing with a mix of sales, purchases, freehold, leaseholds, new builds, right to buys and more complex property matters, I also supervise the rest of the residential team in Newcastle. This means a lot of answering questions, and generally helping to develop my colleagues, which I find very rewarding.

What is your proudest business achievement?

It's definitely being promoted to Partner. When you qualify as a solicitor, becoming a Partner at a law firm is the ultimate goal for most people. I've never felt like it was something that I would be able to achieve until I worked at Sweeney Miller. The support that I've had to grow my career at the firm has been amazing. There are definitely no 'glass ceilings' at the firm where people are rewarded for the work they put in. A clear example of this is Jess Fenwick and Damien Todd who both started at the firm as paralegals, then after qualifying as solicitors, within a few years they too became Partners.

The firm is very family orientated, with a young family myself, I have always felt there were no limitations on what I could achieve or do at the firm. If I say to them something like, "I need some time to attend a school event or to study, or learn something new", then I know that they'd support me in that.

Something else I am very proud of, is our team being finalists in the 2022 Northern Law Awards for the Residential Property category.

How has your industry changed in the last decade?

Residential conveyancing has become more intense and fast-paced, which the team and I thrive on. In the past, much of the work was done by post, now it is mainly by email. We aim to always exceed our clients' expectations and there is understandably a lot of pressure to proceed with conveyancing transactions as quickly as possible. The team also know how important it is to keep our clients fully up to date about the progress of their sale or purchase or to explain things that they may be unclear on. Sweeney Miller has developed a specialist App that helps speed up communications with clients, enabling them to track the progress of their sale/purchase, provide documentation etc.

Tell us about the team you work with?

Day to day, I work closely with a team who assist with my own caseload, they are absolutely amazing. In addition, I supervise and manage the wider Newcastle Residential Conveyancing team comprising of other

solicitors and fee-earners, each with their own support teams. This is also about to expand as budding members of existing teams break off into their own teams. Due to the heavy focus the firm has on training and development of staff, much of my working day is involved in answering a lot of questions and generally ensuring the professional growth of the whole Newcastle team.

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

Whilst I cannot think of a specific piece of business advice, I know a lot of people say that it's important to enjoy your work, so that it doesn't feel like work. I feel very fortunate to actually be in that position.

Many firms claim to be 'family friendly'; and I've worked at lots of places before that have done their best to achieve this. However, when it comes down to it, they've often missed the mark a bit, because there isn't that flexibility you need when you have small children, and the support structure isn't in place. Sweeney Miller is genuinely family friendly. Managing Partner, Surbhi has a young family herself, so understands the needs outside as well as inside of work.

When I look at what Surbhi has accomplished, it really does show that women, especially those with a family, can achieve anything - you don't have to sacrifice either your career or your family.

What has been your biggest challenge?

My biggest challenge was getting my degree as a first step to entering a career in the law. At 23, I was a mature student when I started at university. I had a full-time job as an assistant manager in a bookmakers, so had to study part time. I studied and went to university on my day off. I worked around 45 hours in the bookmakers, so juggling both was exhausting and there were times when I didn't think I would get here.

How do you unwind outside of work?

I enjoy keeping fit and find running a great way to de-stress. Running is my 'chill out' time when I can just switch off from any stresses and clear my head. I'm taking part in a few half marathons this year, including the Great North Run again.

Your favourite Book/CD/DVD?

I read a lot and always enjoy a good thriller. At the moment, I'm hooked on Peter James' long series about a police officer who solves murders. I'm about nine or ten books in at the minute and I can't put them down!

For further information about Sweeney Miller Law, visit www.sweeneymiller.co.uk, call 0345 900 5401 or email enquiries@sweeneymiller.co.uk



A HAPPY AND GLORIOUS WAY TO CELEBRATE JUBILEE

A South Tyneside voluntary organisation that helps to reduce loneliness and isolation for the elderly is celebrating the Jubilee by taking people back in time with the publication of a new book of treasured memories and historical photographs.

Happy at Home South Tyneside is a voluntary organisation and part of the Churches Together in South Tyneside charity. Their volunteers make regular visits (usually weekly) to lonely, isolated people and share a chat, listen to music together, share a past time or simply reminisce.

With the help of historian and photographer Paul Perry and funding from Art Council England's Let's Create Jubilee

Fund, Happy at Home South Tyneside have published the book "Happy and Glorious." The book shares memories of how different life was for local people in the 1950's and covers a whole host of topics including the difficult post war period, school life, and leisure activities.

Miriam Reay from Happy at Home said: "This project has been fabulous. We've involved many of our members and enjoyed hearing their tales of life back in the day. It was fascinating to learn about life before mobile phones, computers, and the internet. Things seemed to be so much simpler then.

"Reminiscing is good for our mental health, it helps us to escape the humdrum of everyday life and forget our worries, even if it's for just a short time. It also helps to reduce stress and improves the quality of life of our members. We wanted the book to take people back to a different time and relive fond memories and share their experiences with others and it has certainly done that."



HOSPITALITY AND HOPE COOKING UP HEALTHY EATING

A recipe book packed with healthy meal ideas and a slow cooker is included as part of the project, which is being funded by a £3,000 grant from Newcastle Building Society, and the charity is already seeing people who've never cooked before in their lives getting excited about the food they're now able to prepare.

Founded in 2002, Hospitality & Hope supports vulnerable individuals and families across its community to address a range of social, personal and financial difficulties that are impacting on their lives and works to find sustainable ways to improve their situations.

It has its main operations centre on Hampden Street in South Shields, from which it runs the South Tyneside Food Bank, and is supported by a 30-strong team of local volunteers.



STUDENTS COME UP WITH LEVELLING-UP IDEAS

School pupils have been coming up with ideas to help a North East town level up as part of an industry-led project.

Students from Darlington's Carmel College recently competed in The Big Project, organised in partnership with global technical solutions provider Jacobs, which has a base in Stockton, and supported by PR agency Harvey & Hugo, which is based in Darlington.

As part of the careers programme at Carmel, teams are invited to take part in a year-long project, working with mentors from both the school and Jacobs, to create solutions to real issues. This year, the focus was on levelling up Darlington town centre.

At a ceremony at the school earlier this month, judges from Jacobs, Harvey & Hugo, Darlington Borough Council and the school watched the four finalists present their ideas in front of an audience of family and teachers.

Mike Bowen, senior associate director at Jacobs, said: "Each year, we're amazed at the standard of the students' work and this year was no exception.

"The teams all had some fantastic ideas for levelling up the town, from using the Queen Street shopping centre as a cultural space to creating more green spaces across Darlington.

"It was an incredibly hard decision to pick just one winner, but one team stood out for their passion and creativity."

The winning team of four Year 10 girls presented an idea focusing on urban regeneration through farming and energy-producing paving stones.

Judge Sian Ellidge, from Harvey & Hugo, said: "The girls were so passionate about their project and their presentation was phenomenal – they'd even created an app.

"To see the students developing their ideas and their presentation skills across the course of the project is incredibly rewarding and each and every pupil who took part should be very proud."

Melanie Kane, principal of Carmel College, added: "All our students generated brilliant ideas that would genuinely contribute to levelling up their town and as such, it would be great for our young people to continue working with Darlington Borough Council in the future."

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



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Shaun the Sheep

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TYNE
* ART TRAIL *

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St Oswald's Hospice is proud to announce that they will bring a beautiful flock of Shaun the Sheep sculptures to Newcastle for ten weeks in the summer of 2023. In partnership with Wild in Art and Aardman and with the support of Headline Partner Newcastle City Council, this new art trail will connect the region's creative and business sectors with their communities, whilst positively contributing to the economic, cultural and social life of our city...

and you can be part of the adventure!

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We invite your business to be part of a **ewe-nique** ten week marketing and engagement opportunity, by sponsoring a Shaun the Sheep sculpture which will be displayed in a prominent location in Newcastle.

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 - enable employee engagement and **improved staff morale**
 - enjoy a **full year of marketing and communications opportunities** with multiple events and milestones
 - create **additional footfall to business** premises and increased online sales
 - access an excellent engagement tool to help organisations **achieve CSR / B2B / social value objectives** whilst working alongside fellow Shaun the Sheep sponsors
 - enable the **city to benefit** from significant economic, cultural, social and wellbeing benefits
 - have the opportunity to associate your brand with a **high-profile and hugely popular event** and one of the North East's most well-loved charities
- and raise **vital funding for St Oswald's Hospice**, supporting adults and children with life-limiting conditions

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Jane Hogan, Head of Fundraising
janehogan@stoswaldsuk.org | 07801 237250
or visit www.shaunonthetyne.co.uk

St Oswald's Hospice, Regent Avenue, Newcastle, NE3 1EE. Reg Charity No. 503386
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A Wild in Art event in support of St Oswald's Hospice

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NEYA HOST INAUGURAL CONFERENCE TO LAUNCH YOUTH STARTS HERE CAMPAIGN



Jon Niblo

The North East Youth Alliance hosted their first large scale conference recently to bring people together from across the region who work in the youth sector to talk about key challenges and opportunities, and launch their new campaign Youth Starts Here.

Key speakers included Kim McGuinness, Northumbria's Police and Crime Commissioner, Leigh Middleton, Chief Executive, National Youth Agency, Justin Watson, Chief Executive, People's Foundation Trust and Bethia McNeil, Chief Executive, Centre for Youth Impact.

With over 200 youth workers, volunteers, CEO's and trustees the conference room was full of vibrant conversations, opinions and thoughts about the future of the youth sector.

Kim McGuinness commented: "Child poverty is

happening and it's happening worryingly so here in the North-East and this can not be ignored. The Youth Starts Here campaign is here to be bold – to call Government out on the problems and demand for better for our young people. Since 2011 youth services in our region alone have been slashed by £32 million pounds but we are led to believe it's all fine because the Levelling Up paper announced £16 million pounds for youth services. That's for the whole of England and Wales - you do the maths- what an insult to today's young people. And in those 350 pages on Levelling Up child poverty wasn't mentioned by the Government once. It says it all. We're geared up with solutions – opportunities that will inspire young people, mentors that will change lives and the support them and it's all this that ultimately helps prevent people from becoming victims of crime or being drawn into it. This is where we need investment. Today has shown such a strong shared vision demanding action for our young people and it's about time we see some."

Youth Starts Here campaign is all about shining the light back on the youth sector, for too many years the incredible work the sector does has been ignored, funding has been cut and the appeal of a career in the youth sector has dwindled.

The campaign aims to highlight all that is great about the working with young people and what a rewarding career and profession it can be.

Kev Franks, joint CEO of NEYA said: "It was great to have so many committed, motivated and passionate people at the conference to hear about what we are collectively doing to support young people and youth work in our region. We look forward to working in collaboration with other organisations to continue to support the delivery of high quality youth work and raise the profile of youth work over the coming months and years."

NEYA will be rolling out the campaign over the coming year and hope that opinions will change and youth work will once again become an attractive proposition as a profession.

www.neya.org.uk



Justin, Leigh, Gemma



Kim McGuinness

**NORTH EAST
YOUTH ALLIANCE**

#

**YOUTH
STARTS
HERE**

**To find out more about
our new campaign visit:
www.neya.org.uk**

THE CONFLICTS OF CASH FLOW

Despite efforts by the small business minister and others, late payment is raised frequently in business surveys as a matter that materially affects an organisation's growth and stability. Late payment however has a number of connotations that go beyond the simple matter of cash flow.

Late payment, and its stablemate, bad debt, are problems that can debilitate businesses large and small. It can particularly affect businesses that are going for rapid scale up and high-growth who are too 'immature' to secure lines of credit yet are expanding commensurately towards their potential.

The law is unequivocal: there are penalties for organisations that fail to settle invoices within the allotted time. This is typically a defined percentage above the bank base rate. The problem is that for so many businesses, it is not a solution for two reasons. Firstly, it compounds the problem of achieving payment anyway. Secondly despite being a legal entitlement, it can sour the ongoing relationship with customers in the context of lifetime value. Late payment penalties are therefore used rarely if at all.

All behaviour is indicative of attitudes, values, beliefs and practices that occur within organisations. Late payment is no less an indicator. At best, it can indicate poor system priorities, at worst it can indicate a lack of values, poor financial circumstances and low integrity. In many businesses, this neglect can also be accompanied by a somewhat penny-pinching approach to relationships with the supply-side leading to the feelings of a 'one-way' relationship.

Business confidence is materially affected by how a business manages its financial affairs. Outside of due diligence procedures and the inspection of annual accounts, the day-to-day experience of an organisation is in great part gained in the way it manages money in relation to others. Businesses with challenging cash flows, or those in de facto financial difficulty, rather than actively manage these issues, often create an alternative line of credit by effectively displacing their financial deficits into their supply chain so that suppliers', subcontractors et cetera, start carrying the burden. The effect is a chain reaction across businesses where even the most integral business can become fiscally stressed by third parties. The antidote of course is to have very clear terms and conditions and to declare boundaries fairly early on in the contractual process. This is not always as easy as it seems in the Realpolitik of gaining business. Larger companies, for example, will often contract with smaller companies on a 90-day credit cycle, creating an inbuilt cash flow issue for those companies with the only option being they refuse the work, a measure that can preclude contracting with larger entities. Anyone involved in this knows 1001 ways this whole thing can unravel. Worst of all, is where a company unscrupulously simply sees its liabilities as transmissible to its customers and supply chains. This can lead to the scenario where someone "pops" the company, leaving a trail of destruction behind in otherwise successful entities and losing consumer confidence.

Financial integrity within a business and a vigorous approach to both managing cash flow, honouring liabilities and credit control is essential in a modern business environment. It is perhaps time that a cultural shift is affected where it becomes an expectation

that late payment levies are the norm to ensure the necessary rigour of approach amongst organisations and to separate the wheat from the chaff before things become too problematic. No board should leave it to their financial director to understand how the organisation transacts with the outside world. A properly informed approach forms part of the relational space between the organisation and the wider community and the price of failure in this respect is not always instantly recognisable but ultimately high in terms of credibility, brand values and even jobs.

Meantime, there are many things that businesses can do to avoid being caught in the credit chain. Due diligence with suppliers and customers is essential, clear terms and conditions are important, as well as robust debt recovery approaches that makes sure that any amount owed is kept a priority for debtors. Clear contractual frameworks and where necessary, relevant credit insurance may also be a viable option. The important thing is the days of handshakes, especially in a small business world are pretty much a thing of the past for those who want to prosper, rather than just get through and without focused attention on these issues, survival is simply not guaranteed.

I remember being taught that there is no business decision that is not a financial decision, a business mantra that could well benefit many organisations. We live in a world where increasingly some see sound finance as an inconvenient adjunct to the creativity, vision and self-actualisation fostered in upbeat and optimistic business environments. The truth is that bottom line considerations must never be lost sight of and are neglected at the organisation's peril!

www.gedanken.co.uk

“
...there is no
business decision
that is not a
financial decision...”



Dr David Cliff

MY WEEKEND

PHILL CAPEWELL

Chief Executive Officer

Healthwatch Newcastle and Healthwatch Gateshead provide an independent voice for people who use health and social care services in the two local authority areas. Phill Capewell is their interim Chief Executive Officer, and joint founder of Love, Amelia, a children's charity offering support to families experiencing poverty and hardship across Tyne and Wear and County Durham. Here he shares his thoughts on the importance of weekends.

Do you ever have to work weekends?

I always try not to work weekends but there are always exceptions like when there is a report to read or if there's preparation needed for an early Monday morning meeting. But even then, I try to do this in a relaxed way and not put too much pressure on myself.

Are most weekends the same?

A lot of my weekends are spent catching up with the 'life admin' but also spending some time with my soon to be wife and son, and our toy Cockerpoo dog.

Do you find it hard to switch off?

Sometimes it is hard to switch off. Stress affects us all differently and, on those nights, or weekends when I'm finding it hard to switch off, I will often take some notes to unload and help to process everything mentally.



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

Work wise, it'll be organising things for the week ahead. Healthwatch is a busy organisation and like the health and social care services we work with, we aren't always a nine to five organisation.

Family wise, I love just relaxing and spending time with them. We are a family of three, and as myself and my partner are both in management roles in voluntary sector organisations and my two-year-old is in nursery, it's sometimes difficult to find time during the week to do nice things after work but before his bed time.

Morning exercise or a recovery lie in?

Myself and my partner take turns on a weekend to each have a lie in.

Big night out or a night in the house?

Healthy mix of both! We currently have lots of friends and family events, weddings birthdays etc which are nicely spaced out over the year so we can have a good night out seeing friends while also having those nights in with a take away and an easy watch on the tv to just relax.

Do you watch or play sport at a weekend?

Not big into sports, I just don't have time to keep up with everything

Where do you like to eat out at a weekend?

Marina Vista in Roker, Sunderland is our go to place. It's a lovely family run Italian restaurant overlooking the docks and sea.

How important is the weekend to you?

Very important, down time is always welcome.

What's the best thing about weekends?

The opportunity to spend time with family, friends and my dog, or any mixture of the three.

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

Walking through the park with my fiancé, son and dog, followed by a Costa trip for a sit down, coffee and cake.

For more information visit:
www.healthwatchnewcastle.org.uk
www.loveamelia.org.uk



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About Portland House

Located on the popular Belmont Business Park, Portland House is the hub of all Durham Business Group's activity, including our virtual office services, phone answering, registered offices, meeting rooms and more. As the organisation behind Durham Business Club, all the income we generate helps us to continue championing and connecting businesses across the North East.

**Call 0191 375 5700 or email
alison@durhambusinessgroup.co.uk
for more information or to
arrange a viewing.**



Alison Gittins, CEO, Durham Business Group and Bryan Hoare, Chairman, Durham Business Group at Durham Cricket.

DURHAM BUSINESS GROUP - 40th ANNIVERSARY PLUS ONE...AND COUNTING

As we came to the end of our 40th year, in which we rebranded and expanded, it's onwards and upwards for Durham Business Group.



Founded in 1981 as Durham Small Business Club, the present-day Durham Business Group brings together three areas of activity: its virtual office company Durham Office Services; senior directors' network The Executive Group; and Durham Business Club, the popular region-wide networking organisation that continues to be the group's main reason for being.

Alison Gittins, CEO of Durham Business Group said: "Like many of our member businesses, we've had to navigate challenging times, but have plenty of reasons to be optimistic about the future. Our feet haven't touched the ground since in-person events returned last year, we've welcomed 50+ new members and uncovered new venues like Stirr's Italian Steakhouse, Raby Castle and Turtle Bay Durham, while returning to some old favourites in Beamish Museum, Durham Cathedral and our founder members; New College Durham and Durham Cricket, for both our Member Showcase and T20 Summer Social. July will see our club meeting at Crook Hall Gardens as it reopens its doors, after being taken into the care of The National Trust, and we're proud to share this gem with our members on the eve of their opening day."

"Portland House is the hub of all our Club and wider Durham Business Group activity, and we are delighted to have taken over the whole of the building. This would not have been possible without a Business Recovery Grant from Durham County Council and Business Durham, and the support of our landlord and biggest champion, Gurpreet Jagpal of Durham Group Estates. The new conference facilities, with 75 inch interactive screen have proved popular with hybrid events becoming the normal for many clients.

"The ground floor will continue to house our reception, phone answering service, meeting rooms, and a suite of tenanted managed offices. In the new upstairs space, we have created further offices for rent, as well as a series of hot desks that can be hired by the day or for longer periods, and that are already proving popular as more and more North East businesses embrace flexible working practices."

Graham Soult, Durham Business Group vice-chair, added: "As part of our rebrand, our new logo, designed by club member Sarah Greenwell from Stick Marketing, was inspired by the Rose Window at Durham Cathedral – another of our established members – and we are delighted with it. It's an exciting future for Durham Business Group and a rebrand that reflects not just where we've come from, but also our positivity about the future. Our values remain constant - the warmth in how we go about things; the support we offer and foster; the knowledge we share; the trust we help build; and the fantastic relationships we enable.

"We're also proud to introduce Sophia Stovall, Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums, George Fryer of Harlands Accountants, and Gary McLafferty of Ministry of Defence to the board of non-executive directors, who oversee the focus and direction of the organisation, and help provide the expertise needed to run the business successfully."

Due to our current growth we have recently welcomed Marie Nesbit as Client Relations Manager, Marie is a pilates instructor, so along with her business expertise is bringing zen to the office.

Wonder how long it will be before there's a pilates themed networking event!

Alison and her team at Durham Business Group are there to help you and your business. If you would like to find out more, why not get in touch.

**Call 0191 375 5700 or email:
info@durhambusinessgroup.co.uk
www.durhambusinessgroup.co.uk**

“

...It's an exciting future for Durham Business Group and a rebrand that reflects not just where we've come from, but also our positivity about the future...



Andrew Marsh

THE SEVEN PILLARS OF INCLUSION

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

Over the last two months Andrew has looked at the importance of a robust policy and approach for Diversity and Engagement, as it is crucial to get these right, rather than being view them as just a box ticking exercise. This month he looks at 'Inclusion', as the third of the trio, which needs to be fully integrated into a strategy, not only through statements, but also as being demonstrably deliverable.

"In the DEI conversation each are as important as each other, and intricately bound together but for the purpose of this article we are going to look at Inclusion. So, what is Inclusion?"

"The dictionary says: the practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those who have physical or mental disabilities and members of other minority groups.

"But in my opinion, as a strategic team leader and decision maker, it is the importance of ensuring that EVERY employee feels included and a whole member of the team. It means everyone feels part of the workplace community.

"If you are claiming to be truly diverse, you need 'an inclusive approach' in order that those with needs or a slightly different eco-system don't feel that it is created just for them.

"True inclusion is at its best when a wider community and eco-system is created for all. Many purpose lead platforms can point in the right direction for this. And unless you get the internal pieces in the workplace right, the external claims become purely rhetoric as you, as a business, are not living it!

"It is also important to remember that Diversity and Inclusion are intra dependent. Diversity is being open to a mix of different backgrounds and removing recruitment bias to engage wider perspectives. Inclusion is a more conscious effort to drive behaviours to remove barriers without marginalising individuals.

"The Seven Pillars of Inclusion is a broad framework that can provides sport clubs or organisations a starting point to address inclusion and diversity. They can be applied very successfully to corporate, SME, charitable or public sector settings too.

"Pillar One is access: This is not just about physical access, but about everyone feeling welcome and accepted just as they are. It's about changing routines and habits that may not have previously included certain sections of society.

"Pillar Two is attitude: Negativity toward inclusion comes from a place of fear, misconception and ignorance influenced by culture, religion, gender and age. Often these attitudes manifest as behaviour. But remember, positive attitudes mean nothing if not backed up by positive behaviour.

"Pillar Three is choice: Everyone should have options. And the right equipment, modifications or actions should be available to enable that choice. Sport uses the 'inclusion spectrum' –

commerce and business can learn a lot from this, so it is well worth taking a look at.

"Pillar Four is partnerships: Find the right organisations to make joint inclusion commitments with, to ensure a strong outcome. Building in flexibility there allows for longevity, which builds confidence and allows for true inclusion on a whole new level.

"Pillar Five is communication. Internal and external communication about intentions, commitments and action is critical to embedding inclusivity.

"Pillar Six, the obvious need for policy: Your set of policies, rules and guidelines should focus on the long-term goals of inclusion and should be published in a way that is widely accessible, in an appropriate range of languages and methods including braille.

"Finally, Pillar Seven, is opportunity. It is not enough to offer a choice. Those choices need to be ones that can be developed, modified and revisited regularly to create opportunity for all.

"The best advice I can give any organisation with 'Inclusion' on their radar is: "To do inclusion well, you need to understand who your people are. What do they need? Performance reviews, open door policies and accessibility are a good place to start, along with physical adaptations to your building. Make sure everything you put into writing can be translated but most importantly, keep listening. Give everyone a voice and respond accordingly.

"It will be challenging and there may be some things that you can't put into place, that are asked for, straight away. But as long as everything is logged, you are getting there. In actual fact, we have been doing 'Inclusion' for years – use of the words 'team', 'culture' and 'structure' indicate that. The next steps are about bringing everything back to each individual, caring, listening to their voice, and doing what you can with it as an employer.

"To finish off, I'd just like to refer you all to Korn Ferry's Report. Their statement is that "one future of work plan doesn't fit all". According to the report, those who are focusing on inclusion' are making better decisions 87% of the time and are 75% faster at bringing their products to the market. That has to speak volumes!"

Next month Andrew will conclude this series on diversity, engagement and inclusion by exploring how they fit together and the impact they have on ESG efforts.

If you need help infiltrating inclusion throughout your organisation or your board, then do get in touch with Andrew on andrew@marshbusinessstransformation.co.uk

BEN WHITFIELD, NEW DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AT NE1

Since its inception in 2009, NE1 has been set up to serve the needs of Newcastle's business community and was deliberately designed and structured to be fleet of foot.

Employing a small, tight-knit and highly skilled team allows us to be agile and truly responsive to the needs of our 1,400 business members, which was always our intention. Keeping close to our businesses means that we are in a great position to listen and be poised, ready to respond and deliver exactly what is needed to support individual companies and different industry sectors across the city, and all in a timely fashion. It is what keeps us relevant and delivers a return on investment for our levy payers, now more than ever.

During Covid we worked extremely hard, and closely with businesses, to help navigate lockdown, the various constraints placed upon businesses and the wider public and the opportunities that it created for many. In this time, we saw a huge surge in demand for digital content, as businesses turned to online platforms. It was clear that this digital shift was not a temporary phenomenon and so we've used our time wisely ever since, to plan a new focus for our own marketing activities and shifted NE1 resources to capitalise on these new, limitless digital opportunities.

As we emerged from the pandemic, we freed up resource to allow us to change focus and direction. We adjusted our marketing programme and decided to stop producing our much-loved printed magazine. After publishing over 200 successful issues, the last edition went to print in March, knowing that the resource, budget, and effort the magazine required would be better channelled into digital and online media.

Freeing up this resource was quickly followed by the next major adjustment, the appointment of a talented new team. We wanted to bring people on board who have the skills and experience to cater for the changing needs and priorities of the city's business community.

The team has been hand-picked for their skills, specifically for their digital marketing capabilities. Covid accelerated this major shift and we emerged from lockdown with a newly recruited, reformed team capable of delivering a strong digital marketing resource and with a clear focus on the way ahead.

Later in the year, we will also be launching a revamped Get into Newcastle website which will expand our digital capacity and we have already started moving the magazine's previous editorial focus online, increasing the content and frequency of web articles, social media posts and video content. Events, venue launches, things to do and see in the city and stories of new business openings are all being produced quickly and more flexibly for these online platforms. Businesses are already using these additional resources and are approaching us with ideas and requests for feature articles and news stories. With our new team in place, we can respond to these requests and will also be able to reach out to audiences more frequently and directly through email and custom content, as well as adding video content to our arsenal.

All of this has been made possible, by the appointment in the last few months, of an exceptionally strong 4-person team, soon to be five, when our new Digital Marketing Executive is recruited later this month. We have identified and recruited local talent, keeping these people and skills in the North East and putting them to work for the good of Newcastle's business community.

Rachel Barlow joined NE1 earlier this year as Marketing and Events Manager with over 10 years' experience in events management and place-making companies elsewhere in the UK; Northumbria University graduate, Lily Morris has joined as Marketing and Events Executive after gaining a 1st class honours degree in Marketing Management, and spending almost a year with leading local digital agency, MediaWorks. Finally, Daniela Silva moves into the newly created role of Social Media Executive, bringing experience in social media management and a 1st in Journalism from Sunderland University. We are currently recruiting to fill the role of Digital Marketing Executive to add even more digital resource and experience to the team.

In the midst of this recruitment drive, I was promoted to the position of Director of Communications after several years as Head of Marketing and Events.

With our team now in place, we are fully equipped and ready to make the most of these growing digital opportunities and it is full steam ahead for NE1 events and marketing campaigns.

We emerged from the pandemic with a strong mandate to deliver this newly re-formed and strengthened team, equipped with the skills and experience to provide a responsive and hard-working marketing resource that reflects the quality and diversity of the city's business community. I am excited about my new role and working with such a talented group of people, and together we are looking forward to the future and being able to shout about all that's great within Newcastle's business community and what is happening in the city centre.

www.newcastle1ltd.com

“

*...together we are
looking forward to
the future...*



Ben Whitfield



Bryony Gibson

THERE IS MORE TO CONSIDER THAN MONEY WHEN CHANGING JOBS

With a growing number of vacancies, Bryony Gibson, Director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, explores the drawback of making decisions based purely on higher pay.

Almost one in every five workers (18%) believe they are “extremely likely” to change their employer within the next 12 months.

According to a survey of more than 2,000 people from various industries, a further 32% also acknowledged they were “moderately” or “slightly likely” to make a switch, suggesting half of UK employees are actively considering their future.

That is a sobering thought for business leaders at a time when we are witnessing a growing number of new job opportunities together with chronic skills shortages and a lack of candidates with relevant experience.

It is a dangerous mix and one that has been driving fierce competition and applying pressure to the labour market to the point where accomplished people regularly receive multiple job offers and, in a bid to influence their decision, remarkably high starting salaries.

The paradox of an unavoidable market consequence is, however, that in return for continued dedication, existing team members are subject to soaring inflation and cost of living increases that comfortably outstrip their salary growth. So, can we blame them for being tempted by the opportunity to make more money elsewhere in a similar role?

In many ways, a move appears to have no risks, but I would offer a note of caution to anyone

whose main motivation for change is an “increase in pay”.

While salary will always be an influence, in my experience, it will not always help you to make the right decision. Other factors should be considered, factors that if ignored may mean you miss something worth a lot more than money.

Remember why you wanted to change

When faced with a dilemma, take yourself back to the original reasons you began your job search. Amongst the flattery of an offer, these reasons can be overlooked but remain critical to being happy now and in future.

What is the impact on your career?

Before any move, take a step back and think carefully about the big picture. The decision you make will influence your direction of travel and your ability to progress in the future. The best way to do this is to forget about the salary and base your choice on the role, company, and potential for development.

Calculate the real financial impact

If you are fortunate enough to have multiple job offers, keep in mind your current salary, and

calculate the impact any financial increase will bring after tax and over 12 months. Often, the difference is not as large as it seems and may help with your decision.

Will you receive training and support?

To keep evolving you need to keep your skills fresh, but this does not necessarily mean a study support package - although that will factor into your decision-making. Think about day-to-day training. Is there mentor support available? Will your role develop new skills that move you closer to your end goal? And does the company have the resources to support that?

How flexible is the role?

A healthy work-life balance is important and being able to work from home or mix your time between home and the office may be a priority for you. Whatever you prefer, make sure the company matches your favoured working pattern and expectations.

Do your values match?

A pay rise may lure you in but to stay engaged you need to be enthusiastic about the company's vision and purpose, and how your role fits into that. Ask yourself whether you are interested in what the organisation does, whether you align with its purpose, or are simply being tempted by the money.

Ultimately, the choice is yours but whatever you decide, you will be spending a lot of time in this organisation and if you are unhappy, it will have a significant impact on your work and general wellbeing, so be sure you are moving to a place that satisfies the reasons you wanted to move in the long term.

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



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SENIOR AUDIT & ADVISORY MANAGER

Newcastle, £55-65,000pa plus benefits

Family values and a meritocratic approach lie at the heart of this fast-growing practice which boasts a large number of long serving employees. The full service firm delivers high-quality advice to an attractive client base of owner-managed businesses. The culture of the firm fosters an advisory mindset, less transactional and more client relationship focused.

They are seeking a qualified (ACA/ACCA) Senior Manager who can deliver not only statutory audit, but is able to assist clients with fundraising, transactional due diligence, business modelling and liaison with corporate finance on client M&A mandates.

With a clear route to Partnership we are looking for an experienced individual with first-class communication skills who is keen to continue their journey of professional development, dovetailing with the firm's other service lines to provide a holistic service to clients. **Quote Ref: 2039**

CORPORATE TAX MANAGER

Newcastle, £45-55,000pa plus benefits

A highly ambitious accountancy firm with a vibrant and modern feel are looking to appoint an experienced Corporate Tax Manager to support continued growth alongside the tax partner group.

As a qualified Chartered Tax Advisor, either an Assistant or Manager, you must be capable of leading a small team with compliance, responsible for workflow, billing and review of computations. You will be able to support on advisory projects and develop your exposure to various technical advice.

Plenty of opportunity to learn and fast-track your career, particularly appealing to those keen to achieve career progression. **Quote Ref: 2046**

PERSONAL TAX SENIOR

Newcastle, Upto £32,000pa plus benefits

A well established professional accountancy firm with a strong reputation are keen to hear from those currently working in tax compliance with a desire to further develop their skills and exposure to new clients.

You will manage a portfolio of HNWI clients, many who have developed strong relationships with the firm over time. There will be elements of the compliance that bring complexities and some interesting scenarios, testing your knowledge and learning ability. Providing a basic level of advisory to your clients you will be supported with both ATT and CTA. A great opportunity to work alongside Directors and gain exposure to trusts and estate clients at the same time as develop your career. **Quote Ref: 2040**

ACCOUNTS & FINANCE MANAGER

Sunderland, c£30,000pa, plus benefits

A high-end Independent UK retail business looking to embark upon their next stage of growth require a Finance & Accounts Manager to assist the business on this journey.

Working in a standalone role in finance, yet very much part of a collaborative wider team you will be responsible for the financial and management accounting for the business each month alongside financial planning, forecasting and budget preparation.

Applicants will be either qualified by experience or AAT qualified and hold a minimum of five years accounting experience from industry or practice. **Quote Ref: 2044**

For further information please visit www.bryonygibson.com/vacancies or for a confidential discussion, please contact Bryony Gibson, Bryony Gibson Consulting, on 0191 3759983.
www.bryonygibson.com



L-R: Debra De Luen (Amazing Jane), Laura Middleton (The Office Rocks), Claire Goodliff (Amazing Jane)

ROCKS OF SUPPORT FOR AMAZING JANE

Experts in building brands and engaging audiences, Sunderland based content marketers The Office Rocks have cultivated a number of online communities including the Bump, Baby & You brand which has now become a major player nationally and is one of the largest digital communities in the UK mother and baby arena.

With the founder and Managing Director, Laura Middleton at the helm, The Office Rocks creates and delivers successful and highly targeted marketing campaigns to maximise brand exposure, traffic and sales for their clients.

Now the team at The Office Rocks, the parent company behind the sale of e-commerce

business WHAT ABOUT THIS (WAT) are sharing the skills, experience and knowledge from their very own exceptional growth trajectory to support other businesses through their ecommerce consultancy service.

North East based activewear brand Amazing Jane are one of their clients reaping the benefits of this consultancy service. Amazing Jane is owned by Debra De Luen and Claire Goodliff; who met and bonded over their passion for helping women understand how amazing they are (pun totally intended).

Debra De Luen, Co-Founder at Amazing Jane said: "We were working with hundreds of women every week, both in my previously owned ladies only gym Club Zest, and through Claire's thriving community fitness business. We'd see women come to our classes; self-conscious, lacking in confidence, and mostly throwing on anything they could to cover up their body.

There is actually a theory known as enlothed cognition, which describes the influence clothes have on the wearers behaviour. Essentially, if you put something on that makes you feel nice, you're more likely to actually do the activity you are dressed for. We absolutely knew the key to more women being active, and reaping the benefits of it, was to make them understand just how amazing they actually are. Our clothes do just that."

Although the concept of Amazing Jane had been around for a number of years, the company officially relaunched in November 2020 in the

height of the second lockdown. Unfortunately, the company got off to a rocky start due to a number of external factors, which led to serious doubts as to whether or not to persevere with the concept.

Claire Goodliff, Co-Founder at Amazing Jane said: "We knew the concept and ethos was spot on but unfortunately, we received some bad business guidance from previous parties which led us up completely the wrong path. We also had issues with sourcing the right company to produce the activewear range to our specifications on how the clothes needed to fit and we were really close to throwing in the towel so to speak."

Claire added: "We came across The Office Rocks, and from that very first meeting with Laura it's been a total game changer and things have really turned around, with sales hitting as soon as we started to implement her ideas."

Laura Middleton, Managing Director, The Office Rocks said: "Amazing Jane is a really vibrant and passionate company with a strong community ethos at its heart. Unfortunately, they were given some bad advice in the early months, and this really knocked their confidence. They've got a great concept and there are so many opportunities to further build their already amazing community and reach even more people. I look forward to supporting them further on this exciting journey."

To find out more check out:
www.theofficerocks.com
www.amazingjane.com

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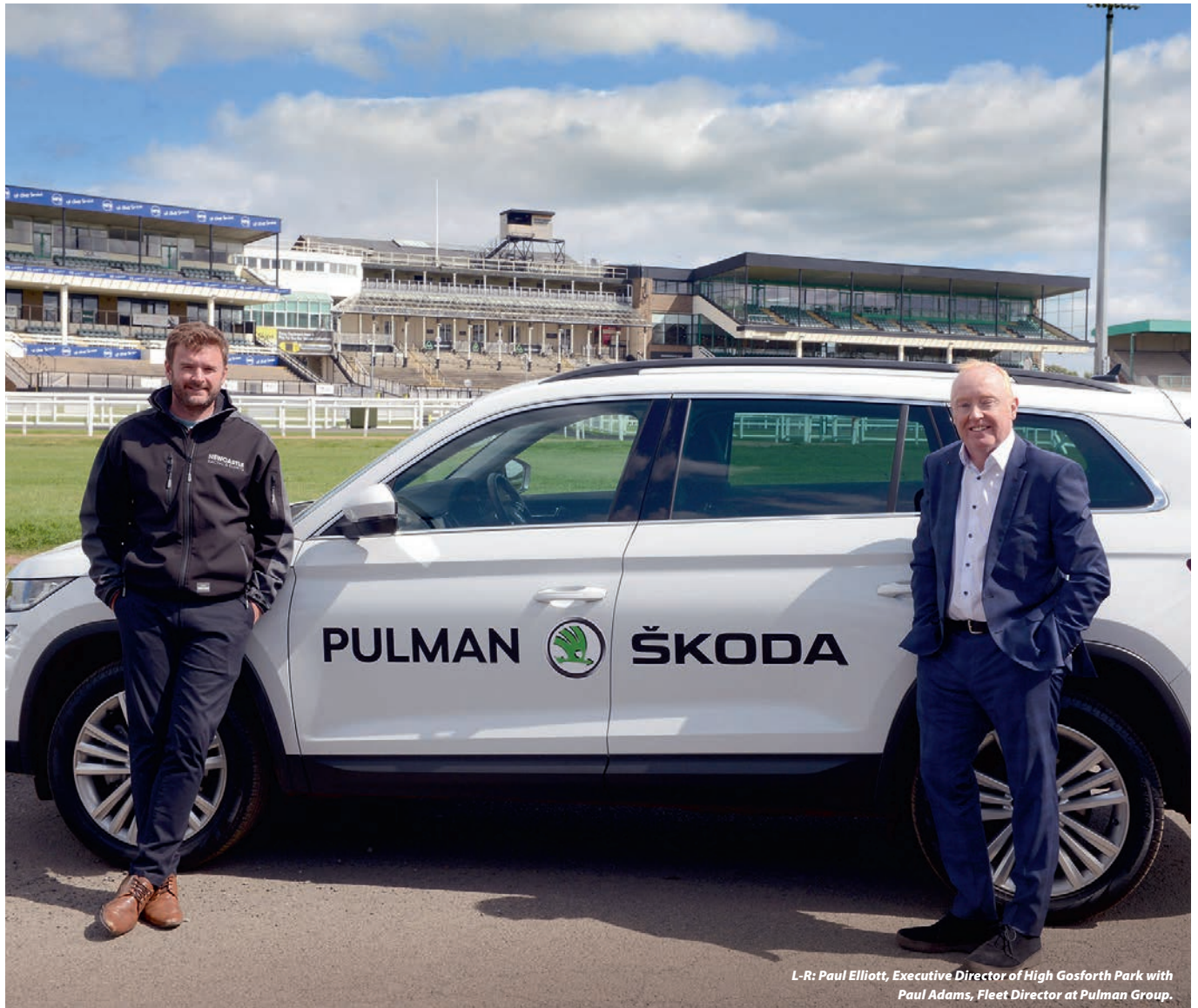


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L-R: Paul Elliott, Executive Director of High Gosforth Park with Paul Adams, Fleet Director at Pulman Group.

PULMAN GETS INTO THE SADDLE WITH NEWCASTLE RACECOURSE

In the build-up to the biggest day in the North East horse racing calendar, Newcastle Racecourse announced that it had saddled-up with leading North East car retailer, Pulman.

Pulman ŠKODA has become the racecourse's main car partner and will showcase cars from its own stable which features Volkswagen, SEAT, ŠKODA and CUPRA brands. The company is also providing Newcastle Racecourse with a pair of ŠKODA Kodiaq SUVs.

The first big event at which Pulman ŠKODA appeared was the three-day Northumberland Plate Festival which got underway on June 25th with the feature race, the Northumberland Plate worth £150,000 to the winner, taking place on Saturday the 27th.

"Home to the historic Northumberland Plate and one of the busiest racecourses in the country, we are excited to announce that we have become Newcastle Racecourse's Official Car Partner. Our North East family owned motor group continues to provide a fantastic customer experience, representing the Volkswagen, SEAT, CUPRA and ŠKODA brands, to customers nationwide," said Paul Adams, Fleet Director at Pulman Group. "Bringing our two businesses together was an opportunity too good to be missed and adds another tier to our sporting partnerships that include; Newcastle United, Newcastle Falcons, South Shields F.C. and Sedgfield Racecourse."

Over the coming months, Pulman ŠKODA will have a strong presence at every race meeting...there are now 66 meetings every year which is more than double the number staged at the course ten years ago. A large part of that success is down to the all-weather track which features a fully floodlit straight mile.

"We are delighted that Pulman have joined us as our Official Car Partner. We are excited to bring

two strong North East brands together with this partnership," adds Paul Elliott, Executive Director of High Gosforth Park. "We are looking forward to the year ahead showcasing the Pulman cars and Branding around the course at all of our fixtures and events."

So, what can we look forward to over the coming months?

July 23rd sees one of the region's top social events; Ladies Day. It's THE glamorous race day of the flat season. Towards the end of the year, one of the most prestigious hurdle races in the horse racing calendar will be staged at Newcastle Racecourse... the Fighting Fifth on November 26th. It's the first major hurdle race of the UK's National Hunt season. Last year saw the first-ever dead heat in the race. In February, if you want to see a potential winner of the 2023 Grand National, go to the track for the Eider Chase. The race features 26 fences and is considered by many to be a trial for the Aintree classic.

And mixed in amongst the racing, Pulman ŠKODA will also be present at some of the many concerts, exhibitions, firework displays and family fun days which are staged at Newcastle Racecourse.

Pulman ŠKODA and Newcastle Racecourse...always clear of the field.

pulmanskoda.co.uk



Kathryn Rodgers
- Newcastle

Founded in 2018, face2faceHR grew out of a desire to help small to medium-sized businesses gain access to HR advice and support at a fraction of the cost of employing a full-time member of staff.

Our intent was to provide personalised, client-focused HR solutions easing the pressures of staff management, leaving clients free to grow their business, with confidence and reassurance their HR operations are legal, appropriate and effective.

Kathryn thrives on really getting to know her clients and shaping her support to suit them. No red tape or corporate politics means she can get the right results for clients, taking the fear out of HR and employment law for small businesses.

As well as finding solutions for clients, Kathryn is also really good at fixing things around the house – give her a power drill or some Polyfilla and she's happy! Kathryn also volunteers as a helpline advisor for Pregnant Then Screwed, has run the Great North Run twice, and has stage-dived at a Skunk Anansie concert!



Kathryn Rodgers

To find out more about how Kathryn can support your business, call 07946 330025 or email kathryn.rodgers@face2faceHR.com



Ammar Mirza CBE

THE YOHLAR MINDSET OF SUCCESS

I have often wondered why do some organisations achieve rapid growth and success whilst others do not?

Is it their location? Their technology? Their business model? Their skills? Their technology? The answer is none of these factors DRIVE success!

What does DRIVE success is MINDSET!

It's the way's that successful people think about themselves, their business and the world that makes the difference. Such difference in thinking can be subtle in nature but transformational in effect.

So, with mindset being the central driver of success, embedding the right mindset must be the primary focus of learning and development programmes – right?

Wrong! The stark reality is that a focus on mindset is often non-existent, with the focus instead being placed on providing people with a knowledge and understanding of what

are often outdated models and theories.

Recognising that such outdated approaches do not adequately release the potential of people I created Yohlar based on over 20 years of practical research!

Based on the belief the everyone can deliver value, Yohlar is a unique, worlds' first and revolutionary approach to learning and development. It's based on rigorous research into what drives the world's most successful organisations and delivers a suite of qualifications that embed the Yohlar Mindset. In addition, Yohlar provides participants with the contemporary toolset and skillset needed to launch new ventures and deliver business model innovation

The Yohlar Mindset of success consists of four interrelated dimensions.

1. People with the Yohlar mindset BELIEVE that: that they can develop and execute scalable business models, they believe that they can rewrite the rules, they believe that opportunities are in abundance and they believe that problems are opportunities in disguise.

2. People with the Yohlar Mindset THINK: 'what if', they think 'just do it', they think that if it isn't broke then break it, they think that failures are opportunities to learn, they think that stretching goals and visions are exciting, they think that they can always be better and they think that they can be better than the competition.

3. The BEHAVIOURS exhibited by people with the Yohlar Mindset are: Proactive, energised and positive, continuously seeking out new problems to solve, ruthless in holding themselves and

others to account, highly disciplined, focused on the vital few things that will deliver the most value and proactive in communicating and reinforcing success.

4. The VALUES held by people with the Yohlar Mindset are: that they and their businesses are here to deliver sustained and increased value to their customers, they value people and their potential, they value the role that technology plays, they value the role enterprise can play in making the world a better place and they place huge value on recognising and rewarding high performance.

Central to Yohlar is a community of people who are all tuned into the Yohlar Mindset. A community committed to supporting one another's journey and success. Being surrounded by people with the Yohlar mindset is infectious, injecting positivity, building self-belief, and raising energy levels through the roof – as a community we can achieve anything that we apply our mindset to!

If you want to succeed, if you want to unlock your true potential, if you want to be surrounded by a group of people with a shared mindset and a commitment to make you the best that you can possibly be then Yohlar is for you?

To find out more please visit www.yohlar.com

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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IN CONVERSATION WITH...

JAN RZEDZIAN

Partner in the specialist construction industry team at Hay & Kilner in Newcastle.

What were your career ambitions growing up?

I actually always wanted to be a lawyer! I grew up in the US and was very active on my school debate team, which was known as 'informal law school'. I enjoyed problem solving and thinking on my feet, and the skills I began to develop there have served me well ever since.

Tell us about your current role?

I lead the specialist construction industry team at Hay & Kilner Law Firm in Newcastle and work with a wide range of clients within and outside the North East on every type of contractual and contentious dispute project. The regional construction sector remains in rude health, despite all the challenges that we've faced in the last two years, and there are some fantastic projects in development.

What is your proudest business achievement?

Trebling the size of our construction team over the last six years, widening the client base and getting involved with more and bigger projects. It's taken a lot of hard work, and there's lots more to do, but the progress we've made and the wider recognition we've gained in this sector has been extremely pleasing.

How has your industry changed in the last decade?

The biggest changes have obviously come over the last two years. People are now far more flexible with how they operate and remote working has become widely accepted, allowing companies to cast their net wider when looking for new business. Being able to provide high-quality services for clients in London while charging North East rates offers them some very attractive cost benefits, as well as considerable new opportunities for us.

What are you currently working on?

A mix of different projects – high-value projects in the London Technology & Construction Court, development-related contractual work and adjudications which will resolve ongoing disputes.



Jan Rzedzian

Tell us about the team you work with?

Hay & Kilner is a full service firm, meaning we have highly experienced specialists in every area of the law who often work together to meet clients' needs. My own specialism dovetails with many different other teams, from insurance and corporate & commercial to dispute resolution and commercial property, and it's a pleasure to work with such impressive practitioners.

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

Just after I joined Hay & Kilner, I was advised to "make yourself indispensable" to both the firm and my clients through the work you do and the way in which you do it. It's a principle that remains just as relevant today and one that I've tried to follow through my career.

What has been your biggest challenge?

Building Hay & Kilner's construction unit to the point we've reached now, where our expertise in this area is widely recognised and we are respected as a strong competitor to our regional rivals.

Who are your heroes inside and outside of business?

Within my profession, they would be Graham Sutton, who taught me everything I know about

construction law, and Martin Soloman, whose work ethic, dynamism and attention to detail remains inspiring. Outside of work, Nimsdai Purja MBE was the first ever Gurkha to join the UK Special Boat Service. After a distinguished military career, he turned his attention to mountaineering and climbed all 14 of the world's 8,000m peaks in a single seven-month season, breaking the previous record of just under eight years!

How do you unwind outside of work?

With the previous answer in mind, my passion for mountaineering and for spending time in very high places probably isn't a surprise. In 2019, I reached the 5,895m summit of Mt Kilimanjaro in Tanzania as part of a fundraising drive for the Tiny Lives Trust and later this year, I'll be taking part in an expedition to the Tian Shan Mountains, which lie on the border between Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and China.

Favourite Book/CD/DVD

My favourite book, John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and my favourite CD, Metallica's *Master Of Puppets*, provide quite the contrast! As far as favourite DVD goes, The Force is still strong with *The Empire Strikes Back* more than four decades after its release.

www.hay-kilner.co.uk

Did you know?

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

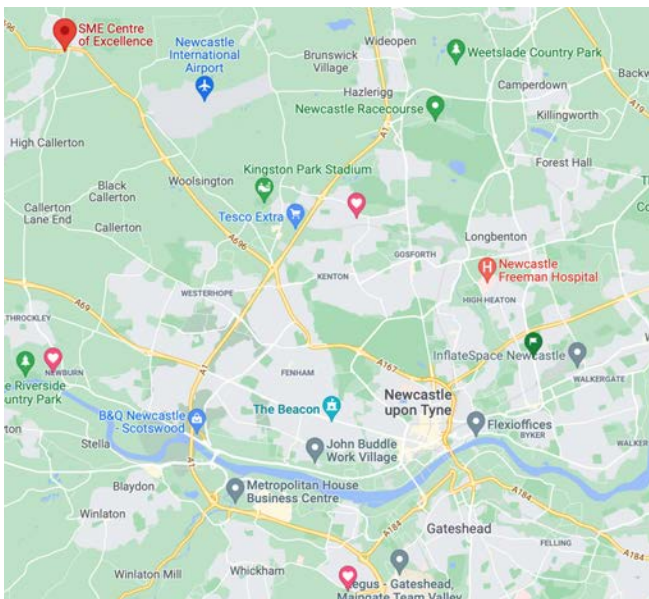


The challenge:

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



SPOTLIGHT ON OCULUS HR

Oculus HR have recently celebrated nine years in business and with the founder and Managing Director Louise Kennedy at the helm the future is looking to get even brighter with further expansion and growth on the horizon.

The Sunderland based HR agency provide innovative and flexible HR solutions to SMEs regionally and nationally through their dedicated and holistic approach. With Louise's background in the automotive and manufacturing sectors, Oculus HR have established an international business reputation working with clients such as the Foundation of Light, NBT Group, Ashford Orthodontics, Aphrodite, Pub Culture and GP practices.

With recent trends showing that HR is becoming

ever more needed with the wide variety of legislative changes in addition to variations in working practices it has proven instrumental for Louise to build a strong and versatile team.

Louise Kennedy, Managing Director at Oculus HR said: "Building and maintaining a strong team is key, the market conditions have been ever changing and it is vital for clients to have up-to-date advice and guidance on hand. The team have a wealth of experience across an array of sectors and our clients have benefited from tailored support.

We love becoming part of the team and this is our USP, even though we are an outsourced provider we pride ourselves on becoming a part of the businesses and a key support mechanism."

The team of five are committed to creating value to businesses, in particular SMEs to invest and develop their HR strategy, and with over 100 years of HR expertise between them clients are in very good hands.

The newest member of the team Claire Dodds has enjoyed getting her teeth into the variety of work that Oculus HR gets involved with. With over 20 years experience in HR Claire has seen first hand the key criteria for effective HR support.

Claire said: "Building relationships is key to success in any role but definitely in HR, you also need to be pragmatic and not just quote procedure and process, alongside being approachable and listening and observing conversations."

Hayley Ramm has been with the team since 2015, her specialisms are the manufacturing, call centre and motor industry. Hayley said: "No one week is the same, different clients, different SME's, different cases, all with new puzzles or projects to solve every week."

Deborah Ebdy has been with the team for nearly seven years and was attracted to HR because of her interest to work with lots of different people.

Deborah said: "Working with new clients can bring so much job satisfaction as you can sense their relief when you are able to help and support them with issues which have been concerning for them."

Another instrumental arm of the business is Oculus Health and Safety. This is headed up by business partner, Eddie Kennedy and was formed in 2021 due to growing demand from their client base for bespoke health and safety support.

Louise added: "We are really excited about how we've entered 2022 and the strong growth trajectory of Oculus HR, we've just settled into our new office space and have a number of developments in the pipeline, so the future is looking very bright indeed."

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

SUMMER ON A BUDGET?

Summer 2022 is set to be a jam-packed season for the North East, with all sorts of events happening across the region these next few months – Budget Taxis, which does what it says on the tin, (keeps you in budget) is here to get you from A to B.

Expected to be the first summer of 'normality' for many - with social distancing and most restrictions finally out the window, the North East's biggest events are returning bigger and better than ever - estimated to attract thousands of new visitors to the region as well as many local residents.

Budget taxis with their team of reliable and local drivers is keen to ensure everybody can get where they need to be as efficiently as possible even during the busiest times this summer. The schedule for July 2022 in the North-East is full, with events taking place every weekend.

Some of the largest include the NE1 Newcastle Motor Show taking place the 8th and 9th of July, on Newcastle city centre's Grey's Street and attracting over 100,000 visitors to browse some of the world's finest cars and dealers. Large crowds

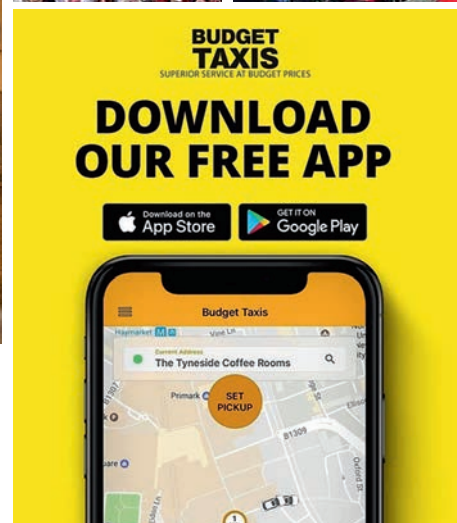


and road closures are to be expected and Budget Taxis will be on hand to ensure that they can get you where you want to be.

Taking place also on Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th July is the Rugby Football League Magic Weekend at Newcastle's St James' Park with the two-day event attracting fans from across the country to watch the fixtures. We advise you pre-book taxis to and from the stadium to ensure people can easily get around the city throughout the weekend.

The Northern Pride festival will return to Newcastle's Town Moor from 22nd to 24th July with tens of thousands of attendees expected to join the parade from all over the country.

In August 2022 NE1's infamous Restaurant Week will also be making its return to Newcastle upon



Tyne with record numbers of restaurants offering deals for lunch and dinner you simply cannot miss; Budget Taxis will be available to ensure you make it there and back home safely - especially if you choose to have a tippie!

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NEW DIRECTION, NEW ROLE BUT SAME OBJECTIVES FOR OUR NORTH EAST

Helen Golightly, Chief Executive of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (North East LEP), outlines how the organisation's role is set to evolve.

I began working for the North East Local Enterprise Partnership 10 years ago and have been the chief executive for the past seven.

When I started, we were a small team of six people and now we are a team of more than 60 people. Every day, I am incredibly proud of the rigour, commitment and sheer determination of our team, partners and communities who come together in the best interests for the North East to achieve amazing things, whatever the circumstances.

People who have more commitment, passion and drive than I've seen before. People who strive to secure 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 believe that what we have achieved has been possible because our strategic direction has always been clear through an evidenced, strategic economic plan to create more and better jobs for our region.

In the past 12 months alone, as we emerged from the pandemic, independent assessors have stated that leadership, influence, synergy and engagement are areas in which the North East LEP has excelled through the delivery of the Strategic Economic Plan. Independent assessment of the Local Growth Fund and Enterprise Zone programmes to date have indicated good to very good value for money in line with national benchmarks for these programmes.

Some highlights over the past 12 months are that we have supported over 23,000 business, with a customer satisfaction rate of 98%. We provided evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on Youth Unemployment and have focused particularly on our primary schools to think about careers advice from an early age. It was also a privilege to host the launch of National Careers Week 2022 here in the North East – the first time outside London – as our good work was recognised.

We are committed to embedding innovation challenges as a way of proactively looking for solutions to global problems and opportunities. We continue to deliver significant capital projects across the region, and this year we will launch a new Commercial Property Investment Fund with FW Capital.

Strategic direction is what keeps our ship steady during times of change. And the next 12 months will undoubtedly bring more change for not just the LEP, but for wider regional governance as our local and combined authorities works towards securing greater devolution powers and funding to the region.

The role of the North East LEP within that process has been made clear to us. Government's Levelling Up White Paper was published in February 2022 and provided details about the outcome of a review of the future role for all Local Enterprise Partnerships. It states that there is a strong role for LEPs moving forward to continue to focus on economic development activities with our partners, and

as greater devolved powers are secured, Government want LEPs to transition into Mayoral Combined Authority and/or County Deal structures to ensure continued regional focus and alignment.

For us this clarification has been welcomed.

The revised role for LEPs is to:

- **Represent the business voice** – collaborating and engaging with, listening to and feeding business views into national and regional policy and investment decision making.
- **Lead strategic economic planning** – taking the regional lead to develop and coordinate research and economic evidence around the North East economy to inform regional strategy and decision making.
- **Improve skills** – working to ensuring North East residents of all ages have the opportunity to develop skills that match the opportunities in the labour market.
- **Grow businesses** – supporting businesses to start, grow and thrive and to create an environment where they can learn from each other to create more and better jobs.
- **Manage funds** – continuing to manage the region's Enterprise Zone funding and other funding streams already secured by us to invest in strategic projects which will grow the regional economy.

Our 2022/23 delivery plan reflects this new remit. But it also captures the added value that our Local Enterprise Partnership offers. The Strategic Economic Plan has been the blueprint for regional economic development for almost a decade. It is a 10-year plan that is due to conclude in 2024 and we are committed to this and to demonstrating the impact that it has made.

We have changes in national funding through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling Up funds to help partners navigate, devolution agendas to support and a Levelling Up agenda to pursue. The North East LEP is exceptionally well placed to play a central role in supporting and guiding partners through this process as we continue to create more and better jobs together for our region and our delivery plan reflects that.

Change can bring challenge but it always brings opportunity. As ever, we remain proud ambassadors for the North East business community and continue with our mission to create more and better jobs, so everyone has the chance to thrive.

Find out more at www.northeastlep.co.uk



Helen Golightly

TRAINING THAT ISN'T FORGOTTEN IN FIVE MINUTES?

Getting training and development programmes right is critical. In my corporate career I experienced some excellent training and development programmes, and I experienced some less than excellent (actually pretty awful) training programmes.

It's a topic we explore with our clients on a regular basis, and I want to share with you what works when it comes to setting up your training programme.

Firstly, it's critical to understand what it is you are trying to achieve. It sounds simple, but we often see organisations miss this piece. Ask yourself some simple but critical questions:

- What do we want to do differently in the future?
- What does good look like at the end of this training and development programme?
- How do we anticipate future needs and requirements of those being trained?
- What would happen if we did nothing?
- How much is this issue or opportunity costing us and how will this change after any training and development?

These starter questions help you focus on your end goal, aspiration, or outcome you need. You need to make sure that this outcome is clearly documented and referred to throughout the training planning process.

Then look at the skills that your trainees will need and the behaviour you want to see at the end of your programme. It's one thing to have the skills, it's another to understand how to fully bring them to life and make them a day-to-day part of trainee's roles. Make sure you consider the behavioural piece and skills piece together. As an example, giving someone the skills to network is very different to helping them become a confident networker.

To really make your training programmes effective, memorable with long lasting impact you need to consider what you do before, during and after training.

Here's what we have learned about these three stages:

Before the training:

- Engage all the stakeholders, understanding their needs and requirements.
- Involve the people you are training in helping to shape the content and level of the training (share the planned training content well before



training delivery).

- Explore what gaps individuals might have – “What are your personal strengths?” and “What are your personal development areas?”
- Create a safe space to highlight any other training needs “What are the teams strengths and what are the teams development areas?” It's amazing how many more development areas appear in this list!
- Get the trainers to interview and meet the trainees before any training takes place. This helps build relationships and promotes better communication when training takes place.
- Position the importance of training and development and investment in time and money this is for the business (we use launch webinars and letters of commitments).

During the training:

- Check that the learning outcomes are being achieved.
- Flex the content both in terms of what is delivered and the level of stretch on the programme.
- Change the order of delivery of content to suit groups specific needs.
- Regularly check in and test the water to make sure everyone is getting what they need and to make sure it's meeting their expectations.
- Make sure you provide additional sources of information and content around the subject for those who want to dive a little deeper.
- Regularly replay and review content to ensure there are solid learning foundations being built

- Ensure everyone has clear actions and commitments documented with owners and timescales.

After the training

- Have a plan! How will this new learning be supported by those who have been trained, your coaches, managers and leaders?
- Ensure new skills can be applied and reinforced as soon as possible.
- Provide coaching and evidential feedback on how individuals are performing.
- Show the distance each learner has come (it's amazing that many people can't see how much they have grown and developed).
- Share regular reflection pieces that put new light and perspective on learning.
- Can the teams present back to the partners, directors or business leaders on what they have learned and how they will apply this?

Getting training right and creating long term impact is key, I hope some of the techniques we have learned over the last 12 years help you and your teams create long term learning that has a really positive impact on your business.

Training that isn't forgotten in five minutes takes a little more effort and planning, but the long-term rewards will be there for you to see.

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



SPOTLIGHT ON SSCL INNOVATION AND ADVISORY SERVICES

Shared Services Connected Limited (SSCL) is a thriving business - providing critical business support services to UK Public Sector and CITB (Construction Industry Training Board).

With a Centre of Excellence based in Newcastle – it is a great success story of a growing business at the heart of digital technology services specialising in critical business support solutions that transform traditional back-office functions into efficient and modern services.

SSCL's vision is to empower the UK Public Sector with digital solutions and innovative services to deliver better outcomes for UK citizens.

Amidst the variety of brilliant service offerings is SSCL Innovation and Advisory Services.

Its focus is to implement modern operating models, business change programme delivery and using data analytics to inform strategy and continual improvement.

This is a fast-growing area. Our experienced management consultants are uniquely steeped in the issues and challenges facing SSCL's public sector clients. Successful projects have given SSCL a reputation of being well-placed as a trusted advisor and consulting partner.

And because it is part of SSCL, it means our consultants have access to SSCL service and technical expertise so they can offer informed, impartial and independent advice, grounded in operational reality. This helps our customers make platform-agnostic decisions for maximum benefit to their business.

Recent SSCL Innovation and Advisory Services successes focused on:

Business Change Management: Embedding process, technical, and organisational changes to deliver intended benefits.

Customer Experience Maturity: Building strategies, measurements and culture to improve the way the customers perceive your services.

Target Operating Model: Choosing the right blend of people, process and technologies to help bridge the gap between strategy and execution.

Continuous Improvement and RPA: Learning, improving, and automating processes resulting in reduced costs while maintaining an excellent service.

Data Management: Reviewing data strategies, analytics and governance to empower informed decisions.

Strategic Workforce Planning: Supporting clients to assess and develop workforce capabilities (resource levels, talent and skills) against strategic objectives.

We're a success story, not just because of our unique offerings and business expertise, but also because of the commitment we have to our employees.

SSCL is ranked in the top 20 of super large organisations as a Great Place to Work and as a Great Place to Work for Wellbeing.

Find out more about SSCL, SSCL Innovation and Advisory Services and working for us at [SSCL.Com](https://sscl.com)

IN CONVERSATION WITH...

STEVE GREHAN

Senior business development manager, HLA Services

HLA Services is the North East's leading air conditioning, climate systems and temperature control specialist.

Can you tell us about your role at HLA services?

Every day is different but it normally involves being out and about and developing our client base. I have been with the company for 16 years, so I have a wealth of contacts that I am constantly communicating with in order to grow the business and maintain our customer service standards.

What is HLA's USP?

Where we differ from our competitors, is that we offer such a broad spectrum of services, all of which are dealt with in-house. This means that it is always HLA personnel attending site as, unlike many of our competitors, we do not subcontract which allows us to offer a far more personal service.

Our clients are very busy with day-to-day operations and they value that they can pick up the phone, day or night, and have access to all of the services we offer. For example, a client may enter in to a maintenance contract with us for their heating systems but this also opens them up to having the option of calling at any time for a different service.

This is a unique offering and one that has helped clients out of tricky situations. I have lost count of the amount of calls we have had for emergency electrical repairs. Most local electricians clock off at 5pm but we provide a 24/7 service and that is something that our clients take comfort in knowing they have access to at all times, even if it is not for the original service they signed up for.

The services our clients can access include mechanical services, commercial heating,

electrical, plumbing, ventilation, air conditioning, refrigeration, fabrication, water hygiene, air filtration services and many more that can be found at HLA Services | Air Conditioning & Refrigeration.

What does the next five years look like for HLA Services?

The business is growing at such a rapid rate that we have recently employed a second business development manager, Matt Chojnacki-Wood, to help me coordinate and streamline our expansion.

The HLA team is large, meaning the size of contracts we are able to take on are significant in value, many in excess of £1m on our project side. We are expanding at optimum rate because we have developed a strategic business model that can cope with rapid growth and we constantly reassess, looking for ways to strengthen our offering, and take great pride in our proactive approach to business development.

Matt, has joined as part of this strategy and will be developing our client base in the Teesside and Yorkshire areas, as well as developing some of our speciality areas.

What is your proudest achievement at HLA?

I've been with the company for 16 years and have witnessed it grow first hand from a small but determined business, in to a mighty and strategic powerhouse, one which has nearly 100% return rate on its maintenance side. Credit has to be given to our directors, Paul Smith and Neil Henry, for their vision and calm heads during difficult times in the economy, and the entire team that has helped us build our trustworthy reputation.

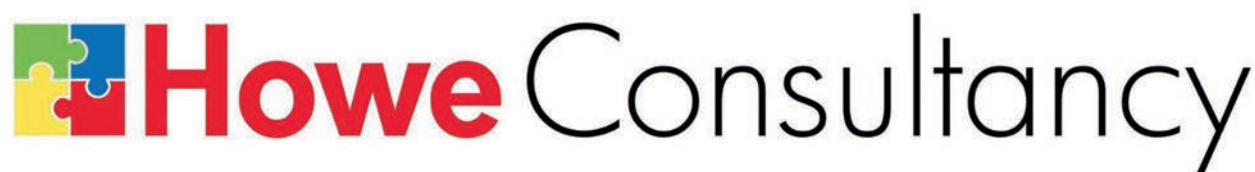
Our client base is, as much as it possibly can be, bombproof. We are back to working at pre-covid levels, if not better, and currently recruiting, which is a clear indicator of the confidence we have in our market position. Working across a number of sectors and industries including health, manufacturing, education and retail, means that we are never too affected by economic shockwaves.

With our strong business model, reputation and team, nothing is left to chance and that is why we are simultaneously able to grow and maintain our existing client base, providing best-in-class service at all times.











hlaservices.co.uk



Steve Grehan



Top 10 Tips for Appraisals

-  Be **PREPARED** and ensure **PRIVACY**
-  Be **ON TIME** and don't cancel
-  Be **POSITIVE**
-  Plan the **VENUE** - can you go off site?
-  Stick **TO THE POINT** and don't discuss "other HR issues"
-  Ensure employee is **COMFORTABLE**
-  Encourage **IDEAS** for improvement
-  Be **FAIR, RELEVANT** and **OBJECTIVE**
-  Be a good **LISTENER**
-  Be **AWARE** of the non-verbal messages (don't click pen etc)



WHY DO APPRAISALS?

Appraisals can be summed up as 'looking back to look forward.' Once a business employs staff then it is important that every employee knows their job role and undertakes this to a very high standard.

If businesses want to grow, then they need to develop their business model along with their staff. Using an appraisal system is a positive process and helps to keep everyone focussed. Each employee's development plan needs to be a live document and not just a paper exercise which is kept in a drawer for next year.

Our top ten tips are above to help you...

You can use appraisals to ensure staff are working to their agreed job description, to measure and reward performance, to hear what other useful skills staff have and to address weak areas in performance.

At we suggest a very simple appraisal form which also asks staff for areas of improvement in the business which then feeds into a 'continuous improvement culture.' Staff will have the answers on where the business is wasting money, where there are gaps in processes, change being implemented and where there is unnecessary duplication.

Following lockdown there are now huge gaps in the labour market and employers are struggling to recruit staff. It is therefore easier and more cost effective to create an HR strategy which retains staff. It is not always about salaries and in this day and age it is more about mental health and well-being. Having a proactive appraisal system where staff are listened to, and improvements are implemented will go a long way to retaining staff.

Remember: Happy staff work harder...

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MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN IN SUNDERLAND AND THE NORTH EAST

People with a passion for making positive change in their communities are being encouraged to take advantage of free support to set up or grow social enterprises in Sunderland.

Organisers or would-be founders of community projects like soup kitchens and skills swaps, community shops and gardens, kids' clothing and toy banks are being encouraged to seek free expert support now from the North East BIC's Innovate for Good Programme.

Support is available for new and existing social enterprises. Applicants need have no experience in business – just a great idea for making a difference in their community.

Chris Nicholas, founder of Sunderland-based Iceguys CIC, a social enterprise which organises weekly sea swimming sessions for men as a means of boosting their mental and physical health, said: "The support of the BIC has been brilliant for us.

"We'd been going for a year before someone suggested we talk to the BIC about becoming a social enterprise. I had no idea what a social enterprise even was at the time, and now, thanks to BIC's support, we've been able to access funding to grow, setting up more swimming groups and adding other activities including running and walking. This means more men can access our activities and enjoy the physical and mental health benefits they bring."

Like traditional businesses, social enterprises aim to make a profit, but they re-invest or donate those profits to create social change. Social enterprises exist in all sectors, operating cafes and cinemas, mental health services,



Katrina Brown, Fit Kat Coaching

community banks and gyms, school uniform hubs and community gardens. They tackle social problems, improve local people's life chances, provide training and employment opportunities, or take on environmental issues.

Now in its 28th year, the BIC is itself one of the region's longest-established social enterprises and known for its expert support for people setting up or expanding enterprises.

To qualify for free support from its experts you need only live in Sunderland, have an idea for a new enterprise which will have a positive social impact, or have plans to expand an existing social enterprise in the city.

Heads Up, a social enterprise which works with schools, communities, and families in helping children and young people to develop emotional wellbeing, benefited from BIC support recently. Co-founder Katy Hannon said: "It's so refreshing to have someone at your side who believes in you and gives you the confidence to grow. The expertise, experience and networking the BIC offers is amazing.

"We've had amazing support recently to help us grow and develop our educational products and to get the word out about what we do, all

of which means we can help more children and families."

Katrina Brown runs Fit Kat Coaching, a community gym for women and girls in Hendon. It aims to make exercise and fitness accessible to all women and girls, regardless of their circumstances.

"The support I've had from the BIC has been invaluable," said Katrina. "At the end of last year, we were ready to grow further to reach more people. Our adviser at the BIC has been amazing in helping us to achieve that and in providing on-going mentoring tailored to us.

"They can help with things like business planning, funding bids, financial forecasting and the like, and the ongoing mentoring I get from them is tailored to what I need. I'm so pleased to have their support – they make everything possible. We've been able to bring women from the Bangladeshi community into the gym, and we're looking to offer our services for men-only classes also, all thanks to the BIC."

Inspired? BIC's experts nurture socialpreneurs as they start their journey and at every step along the way.

The Innovate for Good project is supported by a

package of funding to the value of £1,121,014. The funders are Sunderland City Council, as part of the Community Wealth Building ambitions, CLLD, UK Community Renewal Fund and the North East BIC.

To find out more or to arrange a chat, get in touch via: alex.goodchild@ne-bic.co.uk or call: 0191 516 6138 www.ne-bic.co.uk

“

...The support of the BIC has been brilliant for us...



Heads Up Directors, Katy Hannon and Carol Grimes

THE COST OF LIVING: A CRISIS FOR EMPLOYERS?

By Heidi Turner, Director of Cheviot HR Ltd, HR Consultancy

The world has become a very different place. As we drift away from the pandemic, our concerns are focused on how we can recruit and retain employees whilst being rightfully worried about how such a long-term financial commitment might impact upon future cashflow given heightened economic uncertainty.

During the pandemic, employees re-assessed their priorities and decided to work for “better” employers. Employers who offered more money, better career prospects, better working environments. Consequently, demand for skilled candidates has never been greater.

Here's what I'm advising my clients to help them to address this crisis:

Pay whatever you can afford to secure employees who will help you achieve your business goals. Employees drive your business, without them, your business will fail. This may mean cutting costs elsewhere, but a worthwhile investment. Undertake a salary benchmarking exercise to assess what the “going rate” is, whilst being mindful of internal pay parity.



Heidi Turner

Temporary supplements. If there is a particular skill set you need to pay more for to meet “the going rate”, you can pay a temporary market supplement rather than commit to a permanent uplifted salary. You can also reward your existing employees with a one-off bonus to recognise their commitment and effort.

Offer flexibility over working hours and home working dependent on the employee. Recognise and address individual circumstances. For some, home working will represent an important cost saving due to no travel costs, for others, they may be more concerned about rising energy prices, or simply, prefer to be in the office.

Some employers have introduced the four-day working week, or encourage employees to work at times that suit them, for example around childcare. One size doesn't fit all. Get to know your employees and personalise the solution.

Review your employee benefits package. There are a number of excellent employee benefits and rewards platforms out there that offer a range of employee perks and discounts

which can be used to offset monthly costs such as supermarket shopping or discounted days out, at little or no cost to the employer.

The benefits that you offer can also incorporate information and support for employees on things like debt management and mental wellbeing via an employee assistance programme (EAP).

Career development. Re-assess who you need to recruit. Rather than hire a skilled IT specialist with years of experience, can you offer training and experience to a graduate? You can teach a skill and give experience, but it's difficult to change core behaviours. I'm always a fan of recruiting the right character and cultural fit. Your local university may be able to help you to recruit one of their graduates, some also offer grant funding.

If you would like to discuss any of the themes in this article with Heidi and how you can make positive changes in your business to support your employees, you can get in touch with heidi@cheviothr.co.uk

IN CONVERSATION WITH...



Steven Rawlingson

STEVEN RAWLINGSON

CEO at Samuel Knight International

What is your role at Samuel Knight International?

I am CEO of Samuel Knight International.

The Group consists of Samuel Knight International, Samuel Knight Energy, Samuel Knight Projects Samuel Knight Rail and Samuel Knight Climate-Tech.

Having identified how we differentiate ourselves in the key markets we serve, my main role is building a strong senior management team to ensure our vision, values and core behaviours are embedded in all that we do.

What do you enjoy most about your role?

I'm very blessed that I have a job which is more like a hobby, I work alongside tremendously talented and passionate colleagues. It is my role to support them and to encourage them to do great things.

What is your proudest business achievement?

So many come to mind however the ones that stick out are raising institutional investment with Gresham House Ventures in 2018, breaking into the US market in the middle of the pandemic and achieving record breaking sales and finally completing an MBO.

What challenges have you encountered?

Continuing to scale is always a challenge. We have been adaptable to changing the business as we grow each year. The biggest challenge to date was understanding the complexity of operating within different US states, but we are two years in now and have a fantastic team who understand best practices whilst operating across the USA.

We have also worked to ensure we have a dedicated team that fits the motivation of the business so that both the company and the team mirror each other in terms of vision, values and passion.

How has the industry changed since you began your career?

Renewable energy wasn't high on the agenda 20 years ago. It has evolved massively with

countries globally striving to achieve net zero carbon emissions with private investments and also pension funds financing green growth initiatives.

Renewables is now not just perceived to be a buzz word. Within the UK the governments Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener all sectors of the UK economy are to decarbonise by 2050 with many on track to cut carbon emissions and reach net zero by 2030.

We are seeing people become more aware of what we have done to the world and the increased damage to the environment and change needs to happen.

Do you have a mantra that you like to do business by?

If you want to go fast, go alone! If you want to go far, go together!

How do you like to unwind?

I enjoy getting outdoors, so hiking and climbing mountains with my dog Darla. I'm also into fitness and enjoy spending time with my friends and family.

samuel-knight.com



RECRUITMENT AND DATING... SIMILAR?

A previous colleague of mine used to open every interview with the words 'recruitment is like dating...you both need to be interested to get to second base' and never has that been truer than now.

The last few years has allowed individuals to come off the hamster wheel and to think about what work really means (and needs to be) to them. Many people have become less focused on the pay check and now look for the match for happiness and have the long term in mind.

That sounds similar to dating, doesn't it? Let's explore this further...

- 1.** You need to put your best foot forward to engage – your advert, your social media channels, and your content – even your choice of images will allow a prospective candidate to decide if they want to press that 'interested' button
- 2.** First impressions count! – How you respond to a candidate enquiry, how you thank someone for their application, and how you interview someone all build a picture for a candidate to decide if they are still interested or not. This perception will be carried into their employee status and will ultimately impact how long they stay and how bought in they feel
- 3.** It's all about values – for long term happiness individuals seek businesses (and indeed partners) who have similar value systems. Knitted into every part of your recruitment process; sharing the values of your business will allow people with the same view point to feel a connection and allow you to stand out for something deeper than how much they will earn

- 4.** It's two-way – the market is competitive, and candidate led. Talent now chooses you -opposed to you as the employer - having a huge choice over talent. The word 'ghosting' is now prevalent in recruitment (as in dating) when candidates just go silent. Candidates can (and do!) walk away if they don't feel communicated to, valued, or appreciated.

There are more similarities between looking for your next team member and a future partner than you would firstly expect. When recruiting keep this in mind. Looking for your ideal team member -with matching values and long-term ambitions – will allow your team to be engaged and increase retention. From a candidate's perspective; knowing everything about you as a business, and being able to connect, will allow them to choose you over your competitors or any other business looking for their skills and experience.

To find out more about how to attract and retain talent for the future, give Talenheads a shout on 0191 300 8688 or hello@talentheads.co.uk



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EVERY LITTLE HELPS: HOW THE SMALL VICTORIES CAN HELP US WIN THE BATTLE AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

By Josh Gill, CEO and Founder of Everflow



Josh Gill

When it comes to global warming, reducing fossil fuel dependency often come to mind as the solution to reducing our carbon footprint. And understandably so, burning fossil fuels to make electricity is the biggest source of carbon emissions in the UK.

However, with the climate emergency growing increasingly urgent as we fast approach the very final deadline of 2050, we need to explore other ways to reduce emissions. One source which is often overlooked is water.

However, there is a lack of awareness among the business community around water inefficiencies, especially among the under-served SMEs of the non-household market who often lack the resources of big businesses to improve their carbon footprint and regulate their water usage effectively. Yet it has a vital role to play in helping the UK to achieve net-zero.

The energy needed to move, treat, and use water in the UK for both residential and commercial purposes produces 6% of all carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions in the UK.

One consideration is to reduce water usage and water waste which could not only have an environmental impact on businesses and households, but also save money too!

At Everflow, we pride ourselves on our approach to sustainability in the water retail market, becoming

the UK's first carbon neutral water supplier and committing in our Climate Pledge to achieve net zero emissions before 2040.

We have reduced water usage at our head office to 28 litres per employee per day – nearly half the national average of 50 litres – with a further ambition to reduce that figure permanently to less than 25 litres. We use loggers to monitor daily consumption and detect leaks and have installed a urinal control system to limit flushes daily and reduce even further when offices are closed. We've also fitted flow reducers on washroom and kitchen taps, installed cistern fill delay devices on dual flush toilets, and trialled a new toilet that only uses 1.5 litres per flush rather than the average of 5-7 litres for a dual flush toilet.

But we also want to bring our consumers along the journey with us. That's why we recently launched the nation's first free Business Water Efficiency certification scheme to encourage businesses to save water and reduce their carbon footprint.

The scheme comes at a time when many businesses and their consumers are facing financial pressures and as the climate change debate intensifies with recent record temperatures experienced in Spain, Pakistan and India.

The certification includes a wide range of benefits designed to help businesses reduce their water consumption and carbon emissions. Participating businesses will receive a report showing fully costed and personalised water efficiency recommendations, including calculations of how much water each business could save as well as the associated impact on water bills and carbon emissions. Findings have shown potential savings of between 30% and 70% for customers, offering businesses crucial financial support amid an ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

Successful applicants will receive an award depending on the extent of each business's

response to the scheme - including investment in monitoring water usage to detect leaks quickly, retrofitting water saving technology, and looking into alternative water sources and recycling, among other measures.

Currently, the only industry alternative is Waterwise's Water Efficiency Checkmark, available at a cost per site and exclusively for offices or 'communities'. The independent, not-for-profit campaigning organisation has endorsed the launch of Everflow's Business Water Efficiency certification scheme as an important step in helping more SMEs to engage with water efficiency and conservation.

The nationwide-first scheme will support businesses in better understanding how water usage affects their utility bills and emissions including advice on how to detect and fix leaks and use less water and energy. By making it easier and more affordable to save water, energy, money and carbon, the aim is also to raise awareness among the business community around water inefficiencies.

In the battle against climate change, the odds are stacked against us, and so we have to use every possible tool available – no matter how seemingly insignificant. Every little helps!

That means businesses making carbon efficiencies across the board. And not just large corporations, but also SMEs playing their part. SMEs make up the majority of employees and businesses in the country so have a huge role to play in reducing our carbon footprint. By positively influencing SMEs, we can in turn influence their employees to take action in their homes. If companies can challenge each other and encourage positive behavioural change among employees and consumers, that's half the battle.

www.everflowwater.com

ENERGY INDUSTRY NEEDS SKILLED TALENT

By Paul Verrill, director of energy market data analyst EnAppSys

The energy industry is one of the largest and most important in the world. The recent volatility in international energy markets, and the huge costs that this has imposed upon households and businesses, underlines the extent to which this industry affects the lives of people across the globe.

It's also big business. According to the trade association, Energy UK, the industry generated £27 billion of gross value added (GVA) for the UK economy in 2020. In light of recent events, this figure is likely to be much higher now.

For those who work in the industry, it's an interesting time. The move to a low-carbon future has seen the UK reduce its reliance on fossil fuels and produce a higher proportion of electricity from renewable sources, such as wind and solar. The sector is in a period of substantial technological change, which affects how energy is produced, transmitted, distributed and traded.

This change has also influenced the type of skills needed to work in the industry. Now a passion for green energy and sustainable practices is



Paul Verrill (back row, second left) with members of the EnAppSys team



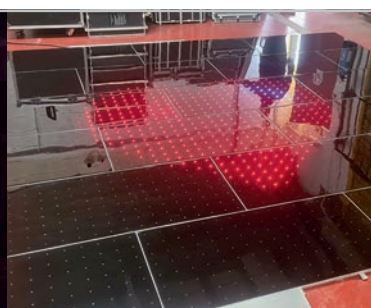
essential, as is an acute awareness of emerging technologies. With so many workers – particularly young professionals – seeking careers in renewables, this has opened up skills gaps in conventional areas of the market. North east universities and industry need to work together to overcome these gaps and promote the wide range of careers that the energy industry has to offer. Only then can we ensure that companies in the sector have a ready-made pipeline of skills to tap into.

Here at EnAppSys, we've been providing data, consultancy and information services to companies in the energy and power generation markets for almost 20 years. In recent years we've adapted and grown considerably, and we're about to embark upon the next phase of our expansion – a growth trajectory that will see us almost triple

staff numbers to more than 100 in the next 2-3 years working around our north east base and other offices around Europe. To achieve this, we'll need to employ people who understand the current and future challenges facing the energy industry, and who'll be able to interpret and analyse data to help our clients better understand the market and maximise the value they're able to extract from it.

In short, EnAppSys and other companies in this vibrant sector will need a continuous stream of talent coming through to underpin the growth of one of the north east's – and the UK's – most important industries.

For more information, visit www.enappsys.com






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WATFORD FC PARTNERS WITH CLEARVUE TO DELIVER ITS NET ZERO PLEDGE

Realising their essential role in the journey towards a zero-carbon future, Watford FC has committed to net zero and begun its transformational journey to do its part in preventing the climate crisis. It has chosen to partner with ClearVUE, a specialist consultancy helping businesses develop comprehensive strategies to achieve their net zero targets.

The club recognises the influential role it plays in the community and wants to lead by example. They are committed to inspiring local businesses and future generations to embrace the net zero agenda.

Watford FC's Head of Procurement and Sustainability, Tarang Panchal, said: "We have the vision, the passion, and commitment to pursue net zero and play our part in reversing the climate emergency. But we realise the road to net zero, without a knowledgeable partner, would be an insurmountable task."

As well as offering technology that provides businesses with a consumption, carbon monitoring and accounting platform, ClearVUE also offers expertise in carbon and energy audits, energy efficiency training, energy management, climate risk assessments, and emissions reporting legislation (ESOS, SECR). ClearVUE's consultancy services also help businesses devise long-term strategies, guiding them on the pathway to realising their net zero and sustainability ambitions.

As part of the partnership with Watford FC, ClearVUE will be conducting a full audit of the club's carbon emissions in both its upstream and downstream supply chains and will help Watford FC develop and implement an end-to-end net zero roadmap to be delivered over the next decade.

Watford FC have ambitions to be market leaders in terms of sustainability and achieving carbon net zero targets. Their vision to integrate sustainable features into its design for Vicarage Road – their home grounds – would put that stadium amongst a growing number of other sporting arenas worldwide that are doing the same.

Watford FC's Tarang Panchal, continued: "It's been hard to find a partner that not only aligns with our sustainability and net zero ambitions, but also has the expertise and knowledge to guide us on the net zero journey. We can't stress enough the importance of finding the right partner, but with ClearVUE, we are confident we have the right partner to help us drive towards our longer-term objectives."



Images used courtesy of Watford FC.

Dan Smith, Director of Energy Services at ClearVUE, said: "At ClearVUE our ambition is to mitigate the damage businesses inflict on our climate – and ultimately reduce their carbon emissions to preserve our planet and create a more sustainable future. Our mission is to provoke and inspire change for the better by enabling businesses through our technology — to understand how their operations and behaviour affect the climate. By enabling businesses to understand exactly how, where, and when they are emitting carbon, they can begin to address their impact on our planet."

Paul O'Brien, Watford FC's Commercial Director, concluded: "We firmly believe that our partnership with ClearVUE will allow us to do our part in tackling the climate crisis, leaving the world a better place for future generations to come."

To get in touch with ClearVUE, please visit: clearvue.business or call +44 (0)3 300 300 200.

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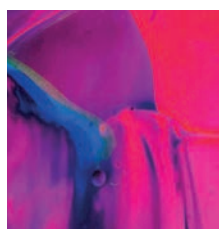
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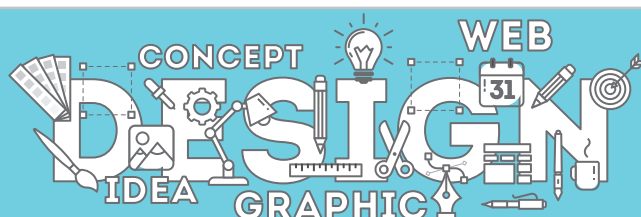
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AZETS PROMOTES CORPORATE FINANCE PARTNER IN THE NORTH

The UK's largest accounting firm and specialist business advisor to SMEs, Azets, has expanded its Corporate Finance team in the North, promoting Lee Humble to the role of Partner.

The promotion further strengthens the North East Corporate Finance team, with Lee's extensive experience gained over 15 years of working in finance. He has worked in a number of roles across banking and corporate finance, both in London and in the North for MHA Tait Walker, which recently became Azets.

Lee works with the Corporate Finance team to provide transactional, strategic, growth and funding solutions to businesses across the region, helping clients through what has been deemed a volatile market.

Looking to the future, Lee said: "My promotion to Partner in such exciting times for the company is one I am delighted with. As Azets, we have the opportunity to continue helping clients work their way through the tricky market that we are presented with currently.

"Azets' national reach has opened up new opportunities for the Corporate Finance team and our clients. We are now surrounded by multiple peers, with an extended influence across all regions, meaning we have like-minded individuals in every corner of the UK."

HAY & KILNER STAFF OVERCOME WILD HELVELLYN WEATHER TO SMASH FOOD BANK FUNDRAISING TARGET

Intrepid staff from a Newcastle law firm have battled through freezing gales and hailstorms to take their fundraising target for a city foodbank to new heights.

A 16-strong team from Hay & Kilner have taken on a sponsored climb of Helvellyn, England's third highest mountain, to raise money for Newcastle West End Food Bank, which has been adopted by staff as their dedicated charity for 2022.

And as a reminder of the project that they're supporting, the Hay & Kilner hikers took five rucksacks filled with tins and packets of food with them to the top of the mountain.

Despite starting in sunshine in the village of



Glenridding, the team encountered worsening weather as they went up the mountain, with temperatures well below zero on the 3,118ft summit and surrounding views shrouded in the fog.

But despite the adverse conditions, the team managed to get up and down the mountain in around six hours and have beaten their original £1,000 fundraising target by more than £500.

The £1,509 raised so far more than doubles the £1,200 that has already been brought in for the Food Bank through activities including bake sales, a raffle, a Grand National sweepstake and a quiz.



PARTNERS IN TYNE

The South Tyneside firm of PGS Law LLP just got stronger with the appointment of Gavin Teasdale as its newest Partner.

Gavin joined PGS Law, South Shields, in 2010 and has continuously delivered first-class customer service and dedication to the success of his clients. His expertise lies in his ability to win cases for his business and private clients in areas of law such as disputes between traders and consumers, building disputes, landlord and tenant, debt recovery, and general contracts. Gavin joins the Partners team at PGS Law alongside Bill Dryden, Carolyne Hargreaves, Tony Ward, Keith Swan, and Ian Farrer.

Gavin, 34, lives in Washington with his partner, Katie, son James, 2½, and are expecting their second child, a girl, in July.

A student of Usworth School in Washington, 6th Form College at St. Roberts, and then graduating with a First-Class Honours Law Degree from the University of Sunderland in 2009, Gavin has earned his stripes by engaging in a variety of jobs within the firm, starting with an unpaid work placement in order to gain the experience he needed.

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SOLICITOR OF THE MONTH

In the latest in these popular series of features Northern Insight talks to...

CLAIRE ROLSTON

Owner, CLR Law

Which area of the law do you work in?

I am a solicitor specialising in employment law.

Did you always envisage a career in the industry?

I always wanted to be a barrister from a very young age and hounded every work experience placement I ever went on to take me to court, but by the time I was finishing up my law degree at Liverpool University, I had decided that I was better suited to being a solicitor. I still applied to Bar School to train to be a barrister (I didn't want to let a friend down!) and fortunately I didn't get a place, hence I went to Law College to train to be a solicitor.

What has been your career path so far?

I started my legal career as a paralegal in a legal aid firm in the East End of London. I quickly secured a training contract at a firm in South London and dipped my toe into the world of employment law, which I loved. My husband and I relocated to Leeds where I took up the role of an employment law and litigation solicitor at a firm in Harrogate. As a newly qualified solicitor, this was a baptism of fire! I later moved to a firm in Leeds where I became a salaried partner, and by that time I was dealing purely with employment law. It had also become the norm for solicitors to undertake marketing and business development, which I really enjoyed. I decided that I wanted to go it alone and I set up CLR Law in 2010, moving the business 'back home' to the North East in 2012. It's been a bumpy road at times, but we're still going strong.

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

Practising employment law is not the sole domain of the legal profession, which means that solicitors are often "competing" with much larger organisations who are not always subject to the same level of regulation as a law firm. With regulation comes higher costs, and this is becoming increasingly more expensive for smaller law firms. We've therefore found a niche so that we aren't trying to compete on costs and instead focus on customer service and value pricing so that individuals and businesses have the best possible experience when they need legal advice. On a personal level, running a business, being a solicitor and being a mum is just about the biggest challenge I have ever faced, as I am constantly juggling everything. I wouldn't have it any other way.

Who do you most respect in your industry?

I really respect all of those solicitors and support staff over the years who took time out of their busy schedules to answer questions and help train me to be a solicitor when they almost certainly had more pressing deadlines than I had no idea about

at the time. The profession relies on people like this to give up their time to train the next generation of lawyers. No matter what stage of my career I've been at, there have always been role models like this who I could turn to for support.

Which fictional lawyer would you most like to meet?

I'd really like to move in the same circles as Diane Lockhart from *The Good Fight*. She's so glamorous and sophisticated. Otherwise it would be Rupert Penry-Jones' characters in *Silk* or *North Square*. I'm a bit of a fan.

What is your greatest strength?

I'm definitely resilient otherwise I wouldn't still be in business on my own after 12 years. I also really care about my clients and achieving the best outcomes for them, which in the world of HR and employment law is not always reason to celebrate as there aren't always winners and losers.

What is your biggest weakness?

Always putting others first and not taking time out for myself.

What are your future career aspirations?

I can't really see myself being anything other than a lawyer, although I still harbour desires to be a professional golfer. I would like to see CLR Law become the firm of choice for the North East's SMEs who are looking for something more from their adviser and a different type of experience.

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

The legal landscape is always changing. More solicitors are becoming consultants under larger national brands, which seems to be precipitated by the increase in agile working and also due to the increased cost of Professional Indemnity Insurance, which is forcing some smaller firms out of business. I hope that smaller firms don't disappear entirely as they play an important part in the accessibility of legal advice and can often deliver services in a more agile way.

How do you like to unwind?

I love going skiing in the Aosta Valley, Italy with my family and basically travelling anywhere abroad, as it's a rare opportunity to switch off. I also play golf and like to squeeze in a round whenever I can. I coach an U10 girls' football team, which can help me unwind depending on how crazy they are!

claire@clrlaw.co.uk
0191 6030061



Claire Rolston

FIVE TOP TIPS FOR OBTAINING (AND KEEPING) A PREMISES LICENCE

There aren't many people who choose to launch a business in the hospitality sector because they are naturally drawn to paperwork and compliance but, if your business is one which requires a premises licence, this is something you will need to get to grips with very quickly.

The legal process of obtaining and maintaining a premises licence is stringent so here are some top tips for navigating this and staying on the right side of the regulations. Getting these things right should mean you can then focus on what you do best: running your business.

1. Know your business

If your business is carrying out "licensable" activities and you fail to obtain a premises licence, you will be in breach of the law, will not be able to operate and could face legal action and/or prosecution. Some licensable activities are more obvious than others. I don't think anyone would be surprised to learn that you need a licence to sell alcohol on your premises, but what about playing live music (or indeed background music) or offering hot food after 11pm? Take time to consider what your business will be offering – as well as the people, services and facilities involved – to ensure that all relevant licences and permissions have been obtained before you start trading.

2. Get your paperwork in order

The application form for a premises licence is very detailed and there is quite a lot of information that you will need to have to hand before you get started, including:-

- Details of your operating schedule (to include proposed opening hours, hours of service and the type and duration of activities that will take place on the premises);
- Proof that you are eligible to work in the UK;
- Proof that you are not subject to any condition

that prevents you from obtaining a premises licence;

- Details of the steps you will take to promote the four licensing objectives (prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, prevention of public nuisance, protection of children from harm);
- Consent of the "designated premises supervisor" (see point 3 below); and
- Detailed plans of the premises.

At this stage, you may wish to consult a specialist Licensing solicitor who can help to guide you through the process and offer advice on the terms of your licence to make sure it works for you and your business.

3. Pick the right Designated Premises Supervisor

If alcohol is being sold as part of your business operations, then, on top of your premises licence, you will also need a "designated premises supervisor" (DPS) holding a personal licence. This person will most likely be the person with control over the day-to-day activities of the business e.g. your manager. However, as the DPS will be the point of contact for all authorities in connection with the licence, including the police, it is important that they have the right skills and attitude to deal with any issues.

4. Prepare for any objections

Once submitted, your licence application will be subject to a 28-day public consultation period. During this time you will need to advertise the application in the local press and members of the public and authorities (e.g. the police) can comment on the application and the licensing authority will consider any objections very

carefully. A decision will then be made on whether to grant, refuse or partially grant the application. The authority may specify restrictions when granting the licence, for example limiting the hours during which you can serve of alcohol or play music.

5. Don't rest on your laurels

The hard work isn't over once your licence is granted. Systems must be put in place immediately to ensure that your business is always operating within the terms of its licence. Some of the ongoing concerns to keep in mind are:-

- If your DPS leaves, replace them straightaway or stop selling alcohol until a new DPS has been appointed. Continuing to sell alcohol with no DPS in place is a criminal offence which can result in a fine and up to six months in prison (or both).
- Any member of your team can put your licence at risk by serving alcohol to someone they shouldn't, so invest in regular training for all staff members.
- You must ensure the "licence summary" is displayed at all times and that the full licence is readily available for inspection at any time
- Be mindful that changes to your business activities, such as introducing new licensable activities or adjusting your opening hours, can render your licence invalid and leave you facing penalties.

If you would like to discuss how you can get a premises licence, or require advice with regard to other licensing matters, please contact Licensing specialist, Gillian Moir, on 0191 384 2441 or email: gm@swinburnemaddison.co.uk



Gillian Moir, Managing Associate at Swinburne Maddison LLP

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FIZZ IN THE CITY

Jesmond-based Mincoffs Solicitors hosted their second Fizz in the City of the year on Friday 10th June at Crowne Plaza Newcastle.

The popular ladies' networking event was held in aid of The Chronicle Sunshine Fund, which supports children with disabilities and their families across the North East and beyond, and attracted a huge turnout.

The team are already hard at work planning their next event in September, which will raise money for Sunderland-based charity, 4Louis - supporting families going through miscarriage, stillbirth and child loss.





AWARD-WINNING SURVEYING PRACTICE CONTINUES TO EXPAND ITS EXPERT WITNESS AND CLAIMS SERVICES

Ashdan Consulting, the award-winning Quantity Surveying business within the Ashdan Group is well known for its wealth of expertise and a client-focused approach to construction projects.

This includes the preparation and submission, or defence, of claims for clients, main contractors, and subcontractors throughout the construction industry.

A perhaps lesser known, but key part of the practice's portfolio of services includes supporting legal firms and insurance companies by providing expert witness services during construction disputes and professional indemnity insurance claims.

Whilst confidentiality constraints prevent disclosure of specific details, the practice has been the 'go-to' QS partner of a major regional and national legal firm for the past five years and works with well-known major insurers on some of the UK's key construction cases.

As Ashdan Consulting's Managing Director, John Johnson explains: "This has been a fundamental part of the success of the business since its formation in 2015, and I am particularly grateful to those clients who have repeatedly valued the services provided by Ashdan Consulting, and with whom I have developed some excellent personal relationships.

Whether it's simply advising construction subcontractors and contractors on their contractual entitlement, or by preparing a full-blown construction claim, the practice is known for its wide range of knowledge and experience across many aspects of construction.

A key element of this is that the senior staff have spent many years working for construction contractors and have therefore been instrumental in delivering construction projects on site. This practical experience, where we have 'seen and



John Johnson

done it', as opposed to simply having a theoretical knowledge, is certainly something that clients value highly, and it has been a major factor in the continued success of the business.

Having personally been appointed to provide Expert Witness services on several legal cases over the past five years, I have been fortunate to have been involved in some very interesting and challenging disputes, including one of the top construction law cases in 2018 of Williams Tarr Construction Ltd. v Anthony Roylance Ltd.

Continuing to expand these services with existing and new clients across the legal profession, insurance sector, and within the construction industry is a key focus of the business in 2022 and beyond, as we believe that our breadth of knowledge and experience can add significant value to construction claims and Expert Witness appointments.

Despite the success of the business in providing support, advice and expertise relating to

construction disputes, I firmly believe that 'prevention is better than cure', so a key goal is to be involved from the outset of projects to provide the necessary knowledge and experience to stop disputes from arising in the first place. Albeit, where this can't happen then we believe that we are well placed to help resolve matters, and encouragingly, our clients appear to have formed the same opinion."

Having recently won the Prestige North of England award for 'Chartered Surveyor of the Year 2021/22', where the judges were specifically impressed by the variety of services offered and the focus on client care and satisfaction, the practice continues to develop its presence in the North-East where it strives to provide a first-class service which adds significant value to all clients.

To contact John Johnson, Managing Director of Ashdan Consulting, email jjohnson@ashdan-consulting.com



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IN CONVERSATION WITH...

DALE LEVER

Solicitor, Lever Law

What were your career ambitions?

I have always been a determined and motivated person. From an early age I knew I wanted a career that I would find both rewarding and fulfilling. I also wanted a career which would challenge me daily and I quickly realised that a career in law would certainly meet all those requirements.

I was the first person in my family to go to university and I knew the subject area of law would not be an easy one. However, being able to call yourself a solicitor at the end of it meant a lot to me and made me determined to achieve that goal.

What is your current role?

My current role is managing director and solicitor at Lever Law, but my day-to-day role in the office encompasses so much more than this. I am the founder of Lever Law and opening my own law firm has been a lifelong dream. I therefore like to get as involved as I can in every aspect of the day to day running of the firm. My main area of legal expertise is commercial law which I really enjoy. However, I also deal with a lot of conveyancing work, this is due to the current high demand at the moment. We are looking to take on a conveyancing solicitor to keep up with this growing demand and our increasing client base.

Your proudest business achievement?

The first day our doors opened as a business. I had always wanted to run my own law firm and to do this at the age of twenty-nine was a significant accomplishment. It is something which I am immensely proud of.

How has your industry changed in the last decade?

I am sure many solicitors will agree that it has changed tremendously. From Brexit to Covid-19 and the stamp duty holidays, there have been many changes to policies, regulations and client demands all of which have had a huge knock-on effect. The challenges we have faced have resulted in large backlogs which is frustrating for everyone involved. However, my team and I have worked tirelessly to ensure we continue to provide the best service possible for all our clients. This will always remain our top priority.

What are you currently working on?

We are currently working on expanding our team, we would like to bring in one or two solicitors who share in our ethos and values.

Tell us about your team...

We are incredibly lucky that the team at Lever Law are all extremely hard working, professional and pragmatic. Despite this we still have a friendly and upbeat office environment. I think this is vital when we are such a small team and given the amount of pressure we are put under, this can really take its toll if not managed correctly. Our small team has an extraordinarily strong core. Grace is our residential conveyancer who started with us from the beginning and she is quickly progressing through her CILEX exams to become a Chartered Legal Executive. Julie is my legal secretary and brings a wealth of legal knowledge. Having worked with me from the first day I qualified as a solicitor, it is safe to say that she knows my way of working which is essential in our fast-paced environment. My sister Jade joined the firm last year as our Office/HR manager to ensure the smooth running of the firm. More recently, we welcomed our first Paralegal in Emily who assists in private client and conveyancing matters. We are growing as a team and are actively recruiting to ensure the firm grows organically.

The Best Advice you've been given?

Surround yourself with intelligent people – learn all you can from them (and their mistakes). Always make sure you never shy away from growth and seek advice as and when needed to make sure you continue to evolve as a person.

Your biggest challenge?

I would have to say the volume of work which we were faced with during COVID-19 and the Stamp Duty holiday. Our work levels doubled, and in some cases tripled. We managed to pull together as a team to help and support each other through the difficult period. Therefore, I would say the biggest challenge was to successfully manage client's expectations – during that period it was terribly difficult to do so.

Who are your heroes inside and outside of business?

Heroes inside of business would have to be my father-in-law, he is a property developer and entrepreneur, he has taught me a lot both directly and indirectly in respect of running a successful business. Outside of business, I would not say I have a 'hero' as such, but I do admire Michael Jordan and what he did on and off the basketball court for the Chicago Bulls.

How do you unwind?

I really enjoy keeping fit and being active, I still manage to get to the gym every morning at 5:00am – it is especially important for a healthy mind. Our office dog Harvey also helps with keeping active, I enjoy nothing more than walking him round the riverbanks of Durham. On a weekend I usually spend my spare time with my wife (when not working) on the stunning beaches in Northumberland. I also love travelling, experiencing other cultures, food and architecture whenever I can.

Do you have a favourite book?

I recently read 'Greenlights' by the actor Matthew McConaughey which was an interesting and thought provoking read. It makes you reflect on you past and the choices to made to get you where you are today. I would highly recommend it!

leverlaw.co.uk

“

...to run my own law firm and to do this at the age of twenty-nine was a significant accomplishment...



Dale Lever



Irenna Pietruszka

WHAT THE LEASEHOLD REFORM (GROUND RENT) ACT MEANS FOR NEWBUILD FLAT AND HOUSE OWNERS

The Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Act bans ground rent charges for newbuild flats and houses in England and Wales, protecting millions of leaseholders from huge increases every year.

There are generally two types of residential property ownership – freehold and leasehold. Freehold means the owner has total ownership of the property including the land that it is on. With leasehold property, the homeowner does not own the land it is on, but instead has a long lease for that land. Ground rent is a charge, often paid annually, that leaseholders pay to the owners of the land that the property is on, the freeholder. Leasehold ownership is common with blocks of flats and many newer housing developments.

Leasehold property reform

The Act was confirmed in the Queen's Speech on 10 May 2022 and the first phase of the reforms came into force on 30 June. It will mean that people who sign up to residential long leases will no longer pay ground rent, other than a fixed 'peppercorn' amount, in turn protecting them from any future escalating charges. A 'peppercorn' amount just means a nominal sum and stems from a legal quirk that to make a contract binding there must be some form of value exchange or 'consideration'. The key point is that ground rent will be abolished on all new leases.

Good news for leaseholders

Currently there are millions of householders who own their homes on a leasehold basis and pay an annual ground rent to the freeholder of the property. Normally this is a low 'peppercorn' charge. However, some developers of flats and newbuild homes include clauses in their leases, allowing them to significantly increase the

ground rent on a regular basis. It's a win-win situation for the freeholder but of no benefit to the leaseholders. Sometimes this leaves people unable to sell their homes as the huge ground rent and the cost of extending the lease can put off potential buyers as well as mortgage providers. The new Act will stop this by making sure that the ground rent is never more than the 'peppercorn' amount.

From July 2022 ground rent will also be scrapped on informal lease extensions – where a leaseholder has entered into informal negotiations with their freeholder, the ground rent cannot be increased for the newly extended term.

For existing leaseholders, the freeholder will not be able to charge ground rent where a lease is extended through a formal lease extension.

There is also good news for people living in retirement properties as landlords will no longer be allowed to charge ground rent. They have been given slightly longer to comply – by April 2023.

What's missing from the reforms?

Although these welcome changes will help new leaseholders, they will not benefit the millions of existing leaseholders. We are waiting to see how the Government plans to help them and make it cheaper for them to extend their leases. As proposals weren't included in the Queen's speech it will mean that current leaseholders will have to wait at least another year to see if the next phase of reforms will be introduced.

Any future reforms?

Although we do not expect any further reforms this year, we hope that proposals will be introduced to allow leaseholders to extend their lease by up to 990 years with no ground rent payable, this would make home ownership more secure for them. At the moment, leaseholders of houses can only extend their lease by 50 years, while leaseholders of flats can extend by 90 years.

Commenting on the reforms, Head of Sweeney Miller's Residential Conveyancing team in Newcastle, Partner Irenna Pietruszka said: "If you're a current leaseholder, you might think you should put off extending your lease and wait for the further reforms. However, there are circumstances where it may be sensible to progress with your lease extension. For example, if you're thinking about selling your home you should be aware that a potential buyer may struggle to get a mortgage if the lease term is too low. Also, if you're going to stay in your home and your lease term is low it may be hard for you to find a competitive mortgage deal or be able to remortgage. In particular, when the lease gets to around 80 years remaining, it becomes a lot more expensive to extend the lease at this point and therefore, it is advisable to act early. There are many implications and so it is important to get specialist advice."

Next steps

All developers, landlords and estate agents should be aware of the new law scrapping ground rent. If you are a current leaseholder considering whether to extend your lease or a new homebuyer entering into a lease, it is important to consider getting specialist legal advice.

To talk you through the implications and explore your options, contact a member of the Residential Conveyancing team at Sweeney Miller Law by emailing enquiries@sweeneymiller.co.uk, call 0345 900 5401 or visit www.sweeneymiller.co.uk

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THE FUTURE OF THE COMMERCIAL PROPERTY MARKET

The world of work has changed over recent years, hastened by the Covid-19 pandemic. Working from home has become commonplace, as employers relish the lack of overheads and employees enjoy a better work-life balance. So, what does this mean for the commercial property sector? asks Dale Smith, founder and director at Grey-Smith Legal.



Dale Smith

The way we use commercial property is changing. With increasing levels of working from home and an increasing shift to online shopping, it may appear that the market is in trouble – however, this is not the case at all.

Much commercial property tends to fall broadly into two main categories: retail and office space, and there are positive signs in both.

Office space

According to Mintel, in 2021, offices accounted for more than a third of all commercial property, and this is obviously one area that the pandemic has had a lasting impact on.

While lockdown forced people across all industries to adapt to home working, since restrictions have eased, life has not returned to normal in this respect.

Home working has benefits for both employers and employees, and in many cases is thought to lead to increased productivity and job satisfaction.

However, many firms and workers are now preferring to take a more hybrid approach, working at home part of the week and in an office the rest of the time. This approach means that office space is still in high demand and many employers keep a base open for staff to hot desk in. There is also a move to the 'hub and spoke' model, with a large centralised base of office space, complemented by smaller regional centres

closer to employees' homes.

However, a significant minority of business owners, especially SMEs, decided to ditch the office altogether, which is where a different model of office property has taken off – the co-working hub.

While working from home has its benefits, many employees miss the human interaction a day in the office brings, and have taken to creating their own. These co-working spaces provide all the benefits of a traditional office, such as desks, WiFi and (most importantly) colleagues, but on a more flexible basis, and it's a trend that has risen in popularity as the isolation of WFH has set in.

Retail space

Retail space had undergone a seismic shift even before the pandemic, with the high street repeatedly declared to be in its death throes thanks to the rise in e-commerce.

The pandemic only added to this; with non-essential stores forced to close for much of 2020, even customers who had traditionally been reluctant were forced to shop online, with many not looking back.

What this means for retail space is that, like its office counterpart, it must adapt to survive.

One way we see this happening is through pop-up shops, which, far from being a passing phase, are now a £1bn dollar industry.

High street stalwart John Lewis had another idea. In late 2020, it announced that it was planning on reducing the size of its flagship Oxford Street store, converting entire floors into offices. Furthermore, it also revealed plans to rent its unused storage facilities to gyms, housing projects, and other sectors that had not been as hard hit by the pandemic.

One area of retail property that has seen growth is the out-of-town shopping park, which is predicted to be the UK's best-performing segment of the UK property market by 2026.

Just one example: availability of space at British Land's, one of the country's biggest landlords, retail parks has shrunk to just 2.6 per cent over the past year.

There are a number of reasons for this, such as cheaper rates, plentiful parking and larger, purpose-built stores which attract a high footfall – all of which make them hugely appealing to retailers.

The commercial property industry had a tough pandemic and has had to pivot and adapt to survive.

However, survive it has, and the early signs are that this will continue as landlords lean in to the new normal.

grey-smithlegal.com



Gavin Teasdale

PARTNERS IN TYNE

The South Tyneside firm of PGS Law LLP just got stronger with the appointment of Gavin Teasdale as its newest Partner.

Gavin joined PGS Law, South Shields, in 2010 and has continuously delivered first-class customer service and dedication to the success of his clients. His expertise lies in his ability to win cases for his business and private clients in areas of law such as disputes between traders and consumers, building disputes, landlord and tenant, debt recovery, and general contracts. Gavin joins the Partners team at PGS Law alongside Bill Dryden, Carolyne Hargreaves, Tony Ward, Keith Swan, and Ian Farrer.

Gavin, 34, lives in Washington with his partner, Katie, son James, 2½, and are expecting their second child, a girl, later this month.

A student of Usworth School in Washington, 6th Form College at St. Roberts, and then graduating with a First-Class Honours Law Degree from the University of Sunderland in 2009, Gavin has earned his stripes by engaging in a variety of jobs within the firm, starting with an

unpaid work placement in order to gain the experience he needed.

Gavin said: "I basically started from scratch at PGS Law and did everything that an office junior would do. I would be archiving files one minute, photocopying the next, and then attending to some DIY work around the office – which is not really within my skillset. However, I'm extremely hands-on and wanted to learn about the practice from the bottom up, and for the firm to recognise me as someone who goes over and above, so I turned my hands to anything!"

Gavin's work-ethic and legal aptitude were recognised in 2012 with the award of a Training Contract. After qualifying as a Solicitor in 2013 and having, by then, worked in several departments within the firm including Personal Injury and Family Law, Gavin has settled in the Litigation Department where he works to this day.

Managing Partner, Bill Dryden, said: "Gavin brings the right blend of knowledge, skills, and experience needed for our firm to grow, and it is a pleasure to welcome him as Partner at PGS Law."

Gavin concluded: "I am looking forward to continuing to grow and learn with PGS Law, in order to deliver an ever-improving service, and also to contributing to the overall success of the firm in the future."

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MUCKLE LLP RECOGNISED FOR ITS OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO NORTH EAST COMMUNITIES

North East commercial law firm Muckle LLP is celebrating after being presented with a number of awards recognising its commitment to the local community.

The firm recently won Heart of the Community Award for the Tyneside and Northumberland region at the North East Business Awards. It has also been recognised for its long-term support of local homeless charity, Oasis Community Housing with the charity's Shared Value Award.

Supporting local communities

These recent awards come as the firm celebrates 20 years of its Muckle Charitable Fund. Every year, it makes a donation of 1% of its annual profits to the fund, which awards grants to a wide variety of charities and community groups that support young people, tackle disadvantage and improve social mobility.

So far, the firm has awarded over £668,000 in grants to nearly 600 charities for the benefit of people across the North East.

One of those charities is Oasis Community Housing who have received support in the form of grants, fundraising and volunteering. Hazel Ditchburn, Corporate Relationships Manager for the charity said: "We treasure our long-standing relationship with Muckle, which goes beyond a typical corporate partnership.

"We could not have managed to continue delivering critical services without the generous support of valued corporate partners like Muckle and the dedicated individuals who work there."

Hugh Welch, Senior Partner at Muckle, said: "Our contribution to the wider North East community is something that matters hugely to all of us at Muckle; it is one of our major passions and drivers.

"Care is one of our core values: care for our community, our people and clients. It's wonderful to win awards and to have this public recognition of what we are doing, but what we're really hoping to achieve is to have a real impact on the community we live and work in and use our voice to highlight the great work that's being carried out."

Making a bigger impact

As the firm celebrates the 20-year anniversary of its fund, it is looking to take its commitment to being a responsible business to the next level. It recently launched its revised ESG strategy, which strives to deepen the firm's impact around helping those who are disadvantaged, becoming Net Zero by 2030 and leading the legal sector with the highest standards.

Hugh said: "Our aim is to further develop our strategic ambition beyond simply ensuring we are not doing harm to developing ways in which our business can be great and create even better social value.

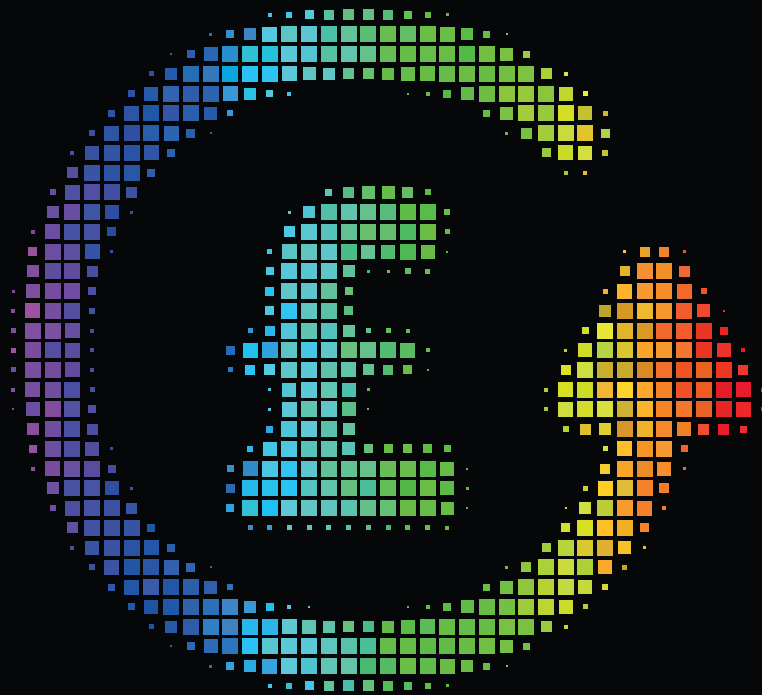
"So whilst we'll continue with all the great work we've been doing over the last 20 years, moving forward we will be looking at other ways to make an impact such as awarding larger, more strategic grants that can help make a measurable difference.

"Achieving B-Corp accreditation is one of our strategic goals for 2022. Becoming an accredited B-Corp would make it crystal clear to everyone in the business and to our clients that Muckle has chosen to put its values right at the heart of its business."

To find out more about our community work, please contact Hugh Welch on (0191) 211 7903 or email hugh.welch@muckle-llp.com



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TIME FOR COMMERCIAL LANDLORDS TO ACT TO AVOID HEAT FROM CHANGING BUILDING PERFORMANCE RULES

By Jennifer Boynton and Inna Ratsebarska, Associate and Paralegal in the Commercial Property Team at Hay & Kilner

Originally introduced in 2007 and made mandatory in the following year, Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) were designed to help improve the energy efficiency of both residential and commercial private rented properties.

Measured on a scale from A (very efficient) to G (inefficient), EPCs reveal how energy efficient a given building is, how costly it will be to heat and light, and what its carbon dioxide emissions are likely to be.

A property is considered to be below the minimum level of energy efficiency, and therefore defined as 'sub-standard', if there is a valid EPC which has a rating of either F or G.

The EPC regime has continued to evolve in light of the ever-stronger focus on environmental and energy-related matters that government, regulators and property owners all have, and there have been some important changes in recent years.

Since 1 April 2018, landlords have no longer been allowed, with certain exemptions, to let any sub-standard non-domestic properties to new tenants, or renew or extend existing tenancy agreements with existing tenants if they have an EPC rating below E.

The rules around renewing or extending an existing tenancy of a sub-standard property are still a bit grey, but we would very much

recommend that an EPC is still put in place regardless.

Similarly, from 1 April 2020, property owners were no longer allowed to continue to let a sub-standard domestic property to existing tenants – and there is now a third important deadline looming on the horizon which is of particular importance to commercial landlords.

From 1 April next year, landlords will no longer be allowed to continue to let a sub-standard commercial property to existing tenants, meaning that they will have to invest whatever is required to bring the property up to the required energy efficiency standards or be forced to end the rental agreement.

Given that they would not be able to rent the building out again without improving its EPC rating anyway, there is a clear imperative for landlords to take action sooner rather than later on such matters.

Given the amount of commercial space available at the moment in what is definitely a buyers' market, tenants may well have multiple other options if their present premises aren't brought up

to the standard they have a right to expect.

On the other hand, the cost of any work required is a one-off investment for the landlord which could provide longer-term benefits in relation to the additional value that might be realised from current and future tenants' occupation of a more desirable property.

Unless they can claim an exemption, commercial landlords must be able to show that, after the forthcoming deadline, sufficient improvements have been made and the property is no longer sub-standard if they wish to continue to let it.

If all of the relevant improvements have been made and the property is still substandard, the landlord must register this on the PRS Exemptions Register and continue to rent it out.

Arranging an EPC assessment and getting the new certificate isn't a time-consuming or costly process, and if everything is in place, it can probably be completed in no more than a couple of weeks.

But even though the deadline for bringing sub-standard commercial properties up to scratch is many months away, any landlords who know that work is required on their buildings would be wise to try to get it done sooner rather than later, if for no other reason that finding people to do the job may be harder than you think.

With the present boom in construction, the consequent high demand for skilled tradespeople and the supply chain issues that are currently impacting on almost every industry, it could be many months before the people you need to get your jobs done are available and able to do so, which could see the 1 April 2023 deadline getting rather too close for comfort.

For further information and advice on managing your Energy Performance Certificate requirements, and on all aspects of commercial property law, please contact Jennifer or Inna on 0191 232 8345.

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LUMANORTH LAUNCHES TO LEAD THE WAY IN LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES

The northeast technology sector shows no signs of slowing as another tech start-up joins the regions thriving cluster.

Specialising in cutting-edge immersive technology development, Lumanorth, located at the Toffee Factory, Newcastle, aims to bring best-in-class blended training and learning experiences to companies wanting to develop their people and practices.

Lumanorth is the latest company to be launched by business partners Richard Coates and Dinesh Kumar, who were both recognised for their entrepreneurial endeavours by Dragon's Den Sarah Willingham at the Nectar Business Awards.

Despite only launching last month, the company is already showing strong signs of growth, following several new client wins, a growing hybrid workforce and plans to double in size by January 2023. Richard Coates, Managing Director, commented, "VR and immersive technology has been around for some time, but over the last four years we've seen demand surge. Our increased use and dependence on technology has been hugely accelerated by the pandemic. We are now much more familiar, comfortable and accepting of new ways of working as a result, which is creating a business climate conducive for this type of digitalisation. Further, when it comes to brand and company culture-fit experiences, there's nothing quite like immersive technology to help create this."

Dinesh Kumar, Chief Technology Officer, said, "We've been fortunate to have worked on pioneering projects that have provided an opportunity and resource for experimentation and exploration, which has included coupling digital twins with virtual reality, integrated with delivery software and hardware to provide a holistic technology suite and best fit solution for client's training requirements. We are confident our solutions will not only change the way our clients train and learn, but open their eyes to what is possible."

STAGE IS SET FOR ENERGY SAVING PERFORMANCE AT THEATRE ROYAL

A Wearside family run renewable energy business is celebrating 10 years in the forefront of their sector by appointing a new Director and installing state of the art solar technology on one of the region's most iconic buildings.

Advanced Renewable Power (AR Power) based in Washington is run by Mark and Maria Dunville who started the business in 2011 from a small office in Newcastle City Centre. The couple have seen their competitors come and go yet the business has grown exponentially with impressive order books, a forecasted tripling of turnover and a current workforce of 28.

The business has also changed its focus from domestic to commercial solar installations particularly with the use of new technology in the form of battery storage which enables properties to capture energy from the sun via the solar panels and then store it until it is needed.

The firm have appointed Chris Balmer to Operations Director and one of his first major projects was the installation of solar systems



at key buildings owned by Newcastle City Council. Chris and his team are responsible for providing a state-of-the-art solar system to one of the most iconic buildings in Newcastle – the Theatre Royal.

"We have installed 31 panels on the roof of the theatre which equates to 11.625kWp of Solar PV power. This means that any electricity used within the building will first come from the solar panels before pulling from the mains electricity grid," said Chris. "We anticipate large savings on their electricity bills."



PROPERTY WEBMASTERS WORKING ON ITS FIRST CRYPTO PORTAL

One of the UK's leading software and digital marketing companies for estate agents is producing its first cryptocurrency portal that will inevitably lead to many more.

The renowned Property Webmasters has been commissioned to produce a website for a leading real estate brand which will accept crypto as a payment method.

It is a sign of the growing number of companies that have embraced digital tokens, with more and more taking such a step.

Property Webmasters, based in Hartlepool, Teesside, is proud to have been given the responsibility to develop the platform and feels it will be merely the first in a long line of crypto portals they will produce.

James Sheldon, Property Webmasters' operations manager, said: "The leading real estate brand we are working with is widening its markets and this move is an innovative path that many are now looking to take."

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From left: Ian Glasson and Michael Taylor

JIGSAW DRIVING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATIONS

More companies are investing in digital transformation strategies to underpin growth and build resilience. This drive is accelerating expansion at North East digital products agency Jigsaw Digital. We spoke to co-founders Ian Glasson (IG) and Michael Taylor (MT) about their growth and ambitions.

How did you both meet?

MT: I was a young freelancer producing websites and met Ian when he responded to one of my adverts promoting my website services. Ian had several businesses at the time – including an energy brokerage and a fresh seafood supplier. I designed and built websites for them. I was doing this in my own time while I worked for a digital agency in Newcastle.

Why did you set up Jigsaw Digital almost four years ago?

IG: After a few years of working together I just suggested to Michael that we should set up our own digital agency.

MT: I wanted to do my own thing. I wanted the freedom to explore my own ideas. Ian and I also had this idea for our own product we wanted to develop, a SaaS model. It's something we've started but it's still very much in the early stages of development.

How do you differ to others in the digital sector?

MT: We're a digital products studio that focuses on CRM and ERP systems. We do multi-platform

apps. One of our strengths is integrating sites into a Shopify ecommerce environment.

IG: We're not afraid to work through collaboration with other web development agencies, as long as there are complimentary skills and a similar approach to doing business.

What is your biggest success to date?

MT: It must be our work for the leading UK manufacturer of electric fires, based in the Midlands. We have helped them transform the way they do business. They have moved from a wall of paper, clipboards and Excel spread sheets to a digital platform, a bespoke CRM/ERP hybrid and ecommerce platform. We're helping the company implement an ambitious digital transformation that will automate a paper-based system while also improving the experience of partners and customers.

IG: It's an ongoing project but already there have been efficiency savings of 80% in certain parts of the business.

What does your customer base look like?

IG: Our customers are very varied, music festivals, manufacturers, theatres, retailers, wholesalers and

home improvement to name a few. Our clients are spread nationally with only around 10% of business being North East based, although we would love to work with more regional clients.

What are your plans in the next 12 months?

IG: Continue to maintain the growth path we're on, developing more digital products. We'd also like to work with more clients across the North East and not just out of region.

MT: We will need to recruit to maintain our growth, probably doubling the workforce in the next 12 months. We need to find skilled React developers.

What are the biggest challenges you face?

MT: Finding and retaining skilled people. There is a real shortage of experienced developers across the region. Finding the right calibre of people is a real problem and one that might hold back the growth of Jigsaw. We really need to find some React developers.

Are you worried about the prospect of a recession?

IG: We're not complacent about a tougher market but we managed to grow through the pandemic. Difficult economic conditions seem to help us. It puts pressure on many companies and organisations to become more efficient and that often puts the focus on a digital transformation requirement and that's where we step in.

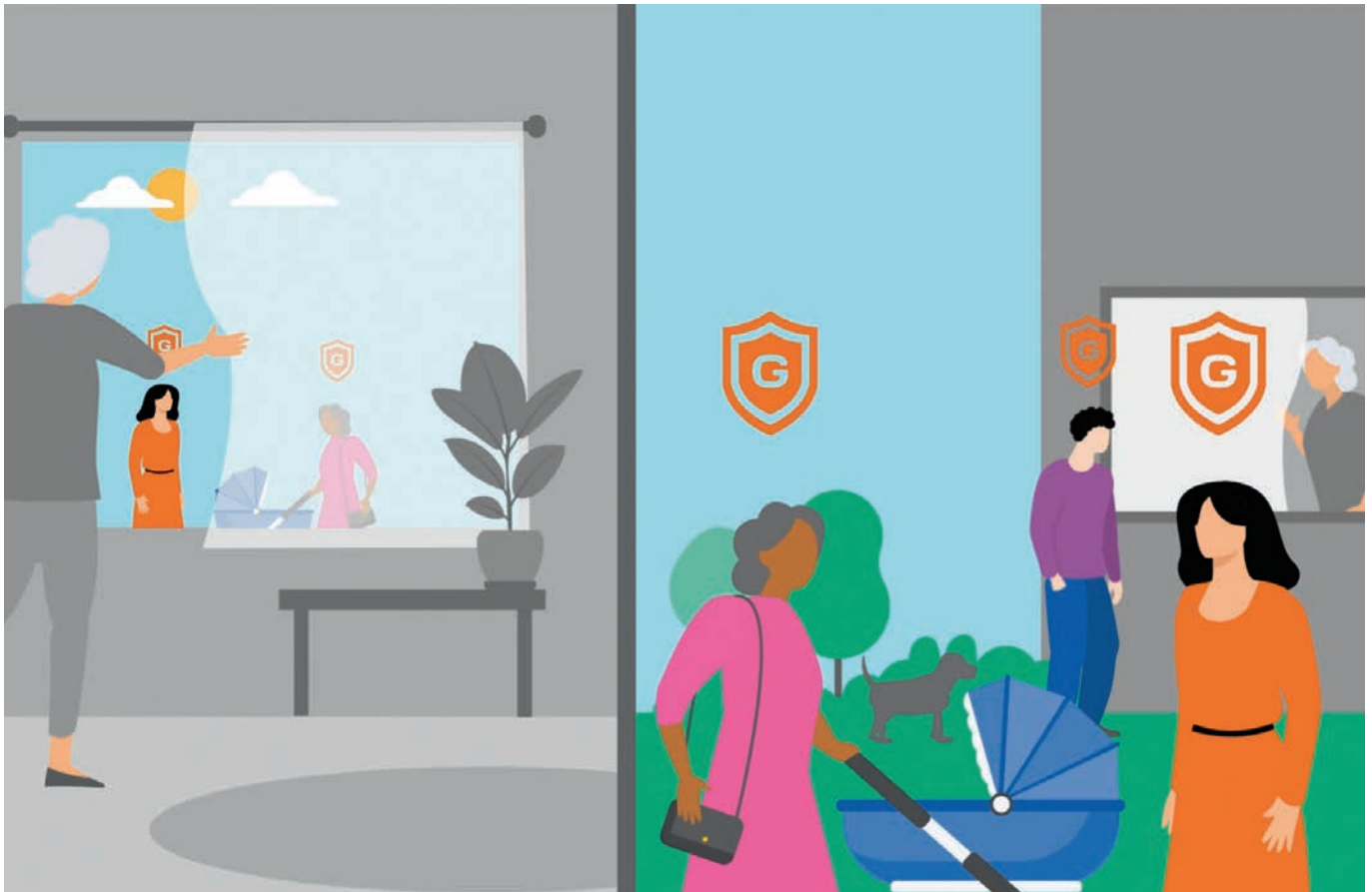
How do you relax away from work?

IG: Travel and entertaining with clients and friends.

MT: Gym, socialising and getting away from the computer!

For more information: www.jigsaw.digital

LOREBURN HOUSING ASSOCIATION SAVES TIME AND MONEY THANKS TO REMOTE TECHNOLOGY



Loreburn Housing Association, a Social Landlord providing more than 2,500 homes across Dumfries and Galloway, recently evaluated GUARDIAN® remote technology via an affordable pilot scheme offered by Durham based Plexus Innovation.

Impressed with the demonstration of manpower and financial savings, Loreburn now plan to implement the technology, designed and manufactured by Plexus Innovation in the UK, a portfolio of 26 of its critical schemes.

Loreburn decided to carry out a serious evaluation of GUARDIAN® remote technology to try and resolve a number of business critical issues it faced:

- It relied heavily on supported property tenants allowing monthly access to personal space to carry out manual temperature checks and flushing. Historically, but magnified throughout the period of Covid 19 restrictions, this was recognised as potentially problematic, leading to possible data loss, lack of compliance readings and wasted manpower.

- The need for the enabling of a more proactive and preventative maintenance programme.

Plexus Innovation installed GUARDIAN® at a supported accommodation site to provide real time, remote measurement of all assets across a 12 week period. As part of this easily affordable program, training was provided to the Loreburn team regarding use of the dashboard, configuring of reports and setting critical alerts that met their specific requirements.

Managing director and co-founder of Plexus Innovation, Ian Murray said: "Providing an affordable means of GUARDIAN® evaluation to potential new clients enables benefits to be demonstrated and a business case developed, without any long term commitment. In the case of Loreburn, it enabled generation of automated, scheduled compliance reports as specified by the Loreburn compliance team. This provided data driven insight, enabling the team to make informed decisions regarding manual flushing requirements and receive alerts highlighting failing assets or critical issues that they wouldn't otherwise know about.

"Following the initial installation, no further access is required. Once again we have demonstrated significant business benefits and addressed the key client challenges. We are delighted that Loreburn is now implementing GUARDIAN® technology across another further 26 sites and our team looks forward to supporting them for a long time to come!"

Pilot results are impressive, with five days per

month in administration manpower saved by Loreburn. A range of alerts were triggered highlighting potential scald risks, caused by failing TMVs and even the discovery of assets incorrectly plumbed.

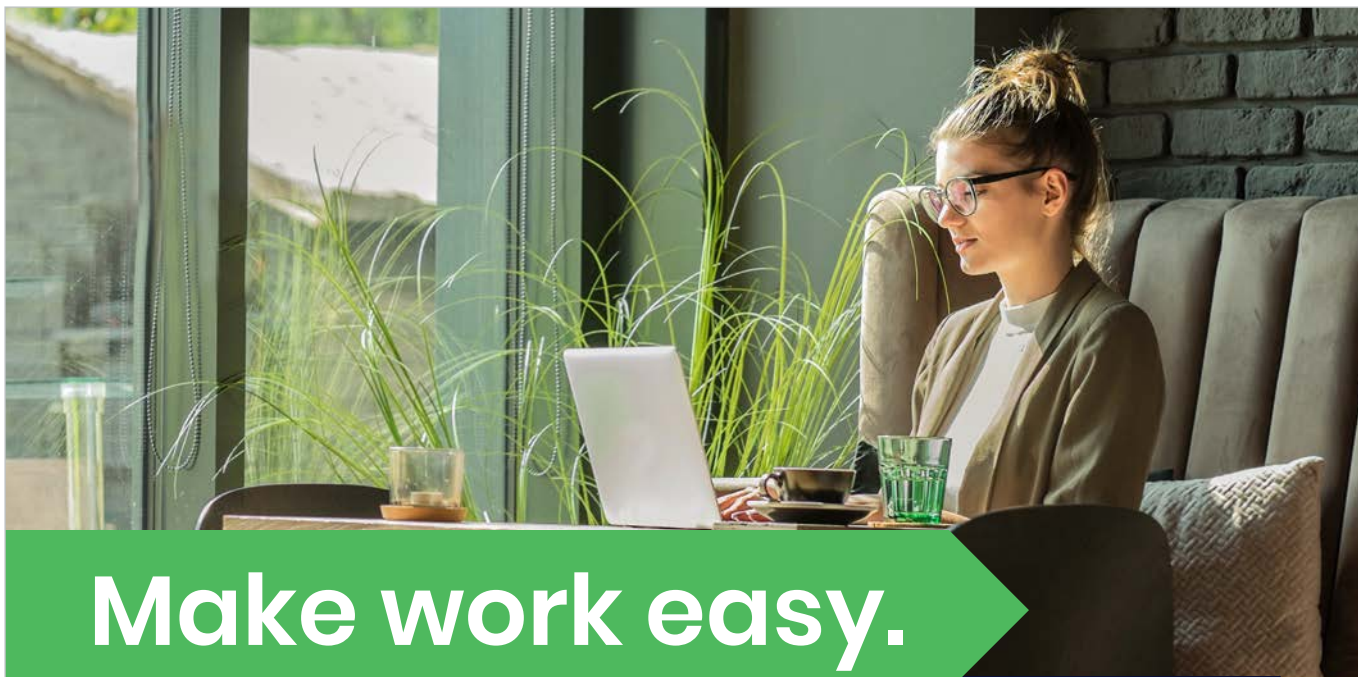
When implemented across the 26 critical sites planned next, 100% improvement in identification of faulty assets will be achieved, enabling insight driven decisions to be made regarding repairs and planned maintenance. Additionally 60 days a year will be saved in administration manpower.

Loreburn plans to implement its Phase 2 GUARDIAN® program during May 2022 which involves installing these devices to all communal area water outlets.

Murron Bisset, team manager for cyclical compliance, said: "We have not only saved team manpower, we have also saved money, by not having to have a third party contractor attend our site monthly for flushing. As well as contributing to our Net Zero focus, this allows us to pass savings onto our customers. Excitingly we have just had our first week with zero need to flush water outlets such as taps within the development as they had been adequately flushed through normal usage!"

Loreburn Housing Association is a registered social landlord providing more than 2,500 homes across Dumfries and Galloway.

More information on GUARDIAN® is available by visiting www.plexus-innovation.com



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Dan Kitchen

ANOTHER YEAR TO REMEMBER FOR RAZORBLUE

From humble beginnings in a bedroom 16 years ago, Managed IT Service Provider razorblue has repeatedly gone from strength to strength, enjoying phenomenal growth, success and winning numerous awards.

Specialising in managed IT, security services, super-fast connectivity, cloud hosting and business software solutions across a broad range of industries, razorblue works with over 500 companies across the UK and has made two acquisitions in the last two years alone, with others in the pipeline.

In its financial year ending June 2022, razorblue has continued this trend with an impressive 48 per cent revenue growth. The company has established its own apprenticeship programme working with Darlington College, created 30 new jobs, acquired a business in Stirling and welcomed multiple 500+ user new customers. It has also moved to larger premises in the North East and Scotland to accommodate its rapid growth.

Dan Kitchen, CEO at razorblue said: "Our continued success is testament to the team we have built and the hard work and dedication they deliver every single day. From our apprentices to middle management, right up to the board, our values and ethos are one of the most integral things in our business and play a large role in giving us the structure to achieve what we are.

"I am incredibly proud of our team; we've enjoyed another record-breaking year with yet more exciting plans which will only see that continue."

Having grown exponentially over the last few years, razorblue boasts seven offices, a headcount of over 150, a client base which covers the length and breadth of the UK and is on track to hit £20million in turnover in its next financial year.

2021 saw the business win numerous awards, including the Service category in the prestigious North East Business Awards, as well as beginning a partnership with Teesside University which sees key members of the razorblue team supporting related syllabus delivery and working to close the digital skills gap.

Dan continued: "Our focus is on taking care of our people, who then take care of our customers. It's a model that has continuously delivered on and beyond our objectives and we pride ourselves on what we believe to be an unbeatable service model. With almost 100 per cent client retention in the last 15 years and a Net Promoter Score that consistently beats the industry average, the numbers speak for themselves!"

See more at www.razorblue.com



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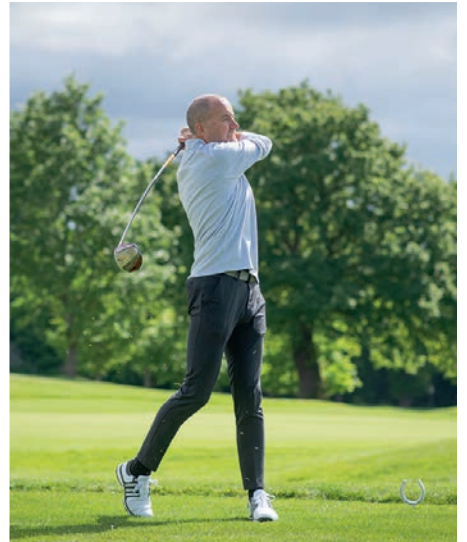




UNIFI GOLF DAY AT CLOSE HOUSE

Gateshead-based Microsoft Dynamics specialists Unifi, excitedly welcomed a number of customers to their first golf day of 2022.

Held at Close House, the event saw customers from around the region learn about how Microsoft Dynamics is empowering organisations to improve sales, financial management and operational excellence. Unifi, part of Synergi, was created to be the leading Microsoft Dynamics partner for SMEs in the North. Unifi customers engaged in some friendly competition and hospitality.





EMPLOYEES FROM LEADING TECH COMPANY, ASPIRE, BACK NORTH EAST WATER SAFETY CAMPAIGN TO SAVE LIVES

Employees at Aspire Technology Solutions have received life-saving waterside responder training delivered by the RNLI and the Tyne & Wear Fire and Rescue Service.

Employing more than 240 people, Aspire is one of the fastest growing IT managed service and cyber security providers in the UK. The company is head quartered at the Pipewell Quay office development, located next to the River Tyne.

Aspire employees have recently taken part in life saving training as part of the RNLI's Waterside Responder Scheme. The scheme is being rolled out to waterside businesses across the North East, with the support of the Tyne & Wear Fire and Rescue Service.

Omar Khaliq, compliance officer at Aspire said: "Being situated directly next the River Tyne, it's important to us that our people receive this vital training. The aim of the training is to raise awareness of drowning prevention and to give practical guidance on how to safely rescue somebody. I'd like to thank the Tyne & Wear Fire and Rescue Service and the RNLI, the training was incredibly worthwhile".

A companywide safety briefing was delivered for all employees at Aspire. This was followed up with practical training sessions on the River Tyne, giving advice on how to prevent drowning.

Following the training, Aspire employees are now equipped and trained in how to use a throw bag. They were also gifted a life-saving throw bag from the RNLI.

Elliot Rogers, water safety coordinator at RNLI said: "If somebody finds themselves in the water, the speed of assistance that is offered is critical in the race to save them. Giving employees at waterside establishments the vital skills to help somebody in the water will increase their chances of survival. Thank you to Aspire employees for taking part. It can quite literally mean the difference between life and death".

Tommy Richardson, firefighter at Tyne & Wear Fire and Rescue Service commented: "Every year in the UK around 400 people drown in the seas and inland waters of the UK. The RNLI and the Tyne & Wear Fire and Rescue Service are seeking to change that.

"RNLI research shows that half the people who drown in the UK around waterside areas didn't intend to enter the water. We are delivering essential training to local businesses across the region. Training includes how to respond in emergency and how to use a throw bag and life ring.

"We are encouraging any local riverside businesses that are interested in the life-saving training to please get in touch".

The scheme was originally trialled in the Tyne and Wear area in 2018. Since that time, five potential drowning victims have been rescued as a result of the training delivered by firefighters and the RNLI.

Any waterside businesses interested in the life-saving training should contact Tyne & Wear Fire and Rescue Service: corporate.communications@twfire.gov.uk





Employees from Aspire Technology Solutions receive training from the Tyne & Wear Fire and Rescue Service and the RNLI.



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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A DATA-DRIVEN ORGANISATION?

Data is everywhere. From what you look at on your phone to your favourite Netflix shows, brands are able to use it to get what you like (or they think you like) in front of your eyes.

But as an organisation, how can you become data-driven? And what does that even mean?

Data isn't simply about technology; cutting edge solutions and predictive models won't achieve anything standing alone – but a data culture throughout the business will.

Data as an asset

Just as revising for exams helped you get the right answers, data helps you pass the test of producing the right products or services, for the right people and marketing them in the right way.

As a core asset, which could be just as critical to growth as your team or equipment, data can facilitate evolution of business models, enabling greater customer understanding, product development and even new revenue streams.

While organisations throughout every sector rely on data, many are not aligning business goals or strategy with data application and, while they

gather and store data, they are subsequently not data driven.

Becoming data driven

It all comes down to one thing: creating a data culture which involves every member of the team.

From the top, senior stakeholders need to be consistently aligning business strategy with data to ensure objectives are measurable and motivated through data. But this data needs to be high quality, accessible and understandable – after all, you wouldn't want your construction team using diggers that weren't serviced, locked in garages with no operation manual, so why should your data be just as difficult to use?

Then get your people onboard. Provide data that can help every individual do more in their roles, and understand the impact they can have on business success through measuring their own contributions.



James Bell

Everyone needs to understand that data has value – but you need to prove that to them by empowering them with the data they produce. Then you need the tech to underpin it.

To find out more about how our team of data and analytics experts can empower your team and help you become a data-driven organisation, get in touch today by emailing james.bell@waterstons.com with the subject 'NI data driven' or visit our website by scanning the code below...





Janet Hopkinson

HERE BE DRAGONS!

There was a time when there was such a thing as 'the perfect season' to put one's property on the market.

There were charmingly simple reasons for this. In May the trees are newly in leaf, the days are warmer and longer, and buyers often like to move in by the summer holidays or before the new school year starts. Yes, spring has always been a perfect time to enter the property market.

Nowadays however, there are many additional and sometimes less charming reasons to trigger a sale and purchase. So why is there no longer a perfect time of year to market your home?

Kyiv might be 1800 miles from Newcastle, but what is going on there and the longer term ramifications of the war with Russia mean the future is uncertain. Energy and food price rises mean we can't predict the future cost of living, and escalating interest rates mean our mortgages will be higher,

but by how much? The way we work is changing. Many employers are eager for workers to get back to the office, so the five-days-a-week work-from-home idyll isn't the given it was. Covid is still a worry.

So we are surrounded by uncertainty, and the property market, like any other market, hates uncertainty.

The only thing we do know is what is happening today. So, if you are sitting on the fence waiting for a sign, let this be the sign. You might not have anywhere to move to yet and, yes, there are few properties for sale. But that is because everyone else is sitting on the same fence. However, it's incredible how things can open up once you have made the first move. One thing is certain though, nothing will ever open up unless you do make a move.

Will we see the buying frenzy of 2022 carry into 2023? Will you kick yourself if next year prices fall back slightly? Will you wish you had bitten the bullet and tested today's top of a bull market? If anything should get you off the fence it's when all the selling stars are aligned - and they are now.

Old charts printed 'Here be dragons' in unexplored waters. In property, if you want some certainty, it's often better not to chase dragons.

Janet Hopkinson, Operations Director at Sanderson Young
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ESTATE AGENCY AWARDED FOR EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE

Browns Estate Agency, which has branches covering Stockton, Norton and Darlington, was named Just View Agents' top firm for delivering exceptional and trusted service to its clients.

The award is based on clients' online review feedback over the last 12 months.

Director Simon Brown said: "It's fantastic to have received this award. We are delighted that our customers know they can trust us to go above and beyond for them.

"As a business, we rely on word of mouth and online reviews from genuine clients, so this is a testament to the work we do here at Browns - providing the best service and advice for vendors and landlords."

Browns was automatically entered into this award by the review agency Just View Agents. By rewarding exceptional customer service, it aims to help build credibility and strengthen businesses' reputations.

Simon added: "Customer service has always been, and always will be, a key priority for us, and we pride ourselves on making sure our customers receive the best service possible.

"With over 40 years of combined experience, the team here have a wealth of knowledge and expertise in the local market, and our agents are all friendly and professional.

"Winning this award emphasises that our key ethos of customer service remains at the forefront of our operations."

SENIOR PROMOTIONS AT LEADING NORTH EAST PROPERTY CONSULTANCY DURING YEAR OF GROWTH

Property specialist George F White has promoted Sally Hart to Managing Director and Caroline Horn to Equity Partner.

Sally Hart has moved into the role of Managing Director at independent property consultancy George F White, leading the company through a major merger deal as one of her first projects.

Her promotion makes her the first female MD in the company's 43-year history, breaking the mould in the sector. She is passionate about driving forward change in the wider industry, playing her part in encouraging more women at all levels to start a career in property.

A second senior promotion sees Partner Caroline Horn appointed to Equity Partner. Caroline becomes the firm's second female Equity Partner alongside Sally, helping to lead strategic direction for the business.

In April Sally navigated George F White's biggest deal to date, a merger welcoming Johnson Tucker LLP into the consultancy practice. The business now employs over 100



people operating out of six offices across the North East, with further growth plans already in development.

With a background in marketing, Sally joined the business in 2014 as Head of Communications before her career took a new path when she was appointed as Operations Director. Sally was then appointed as a Partner in 2018 and headed up the agency and lettings arm of the business alongside her role as Operations Director. Her move to MD came as the business gears up for growth and developments to the team.

BRADLEY HALL ANNOUNCES NEW HEAD OF PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Laura Walker, who started her career with the company as an 18-year-old administration assistant, has once again been rewarded for years of dedicated service and hard work with a major promotion.

Bradley Hall has seen the business soar exponentially over the last five years and has made multiple strategic appointments to the property management team in recent months to meet the growing demand for its services.

Neil Hart, group managing director at Bradley Hall, said: "As the business has grown and needs capacity to support all areas, including our recent expansion into Leeds, it is an appropriate time to promote some of our strongest members of staff to support the business as we continue to evolve.

"Laura joined the firm in 2011 as an administration assistant without much direction of what she wanted to achieve in the

longer term. She is someone that has a natural flair for property and has progressed with great success ever since.

"She is taking the helm in our property management department which continues to grow year-on-year, and I couldn't be more comfortable and confident with her promotion."



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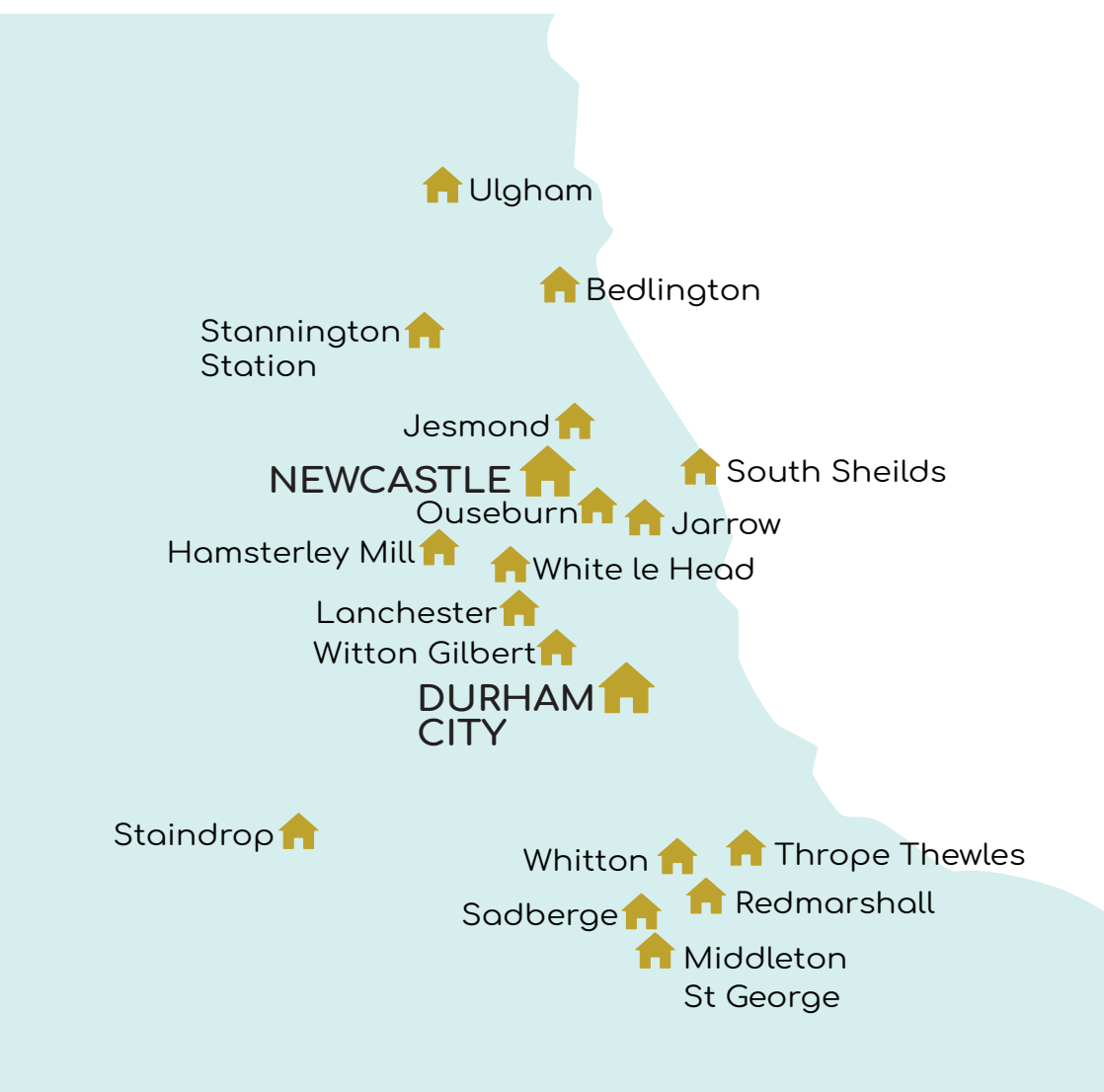


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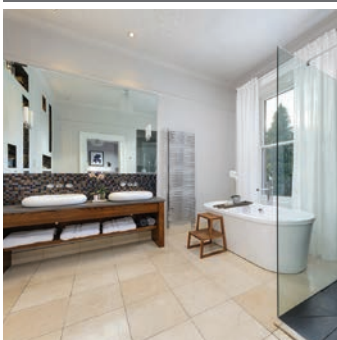


With the desire for period homes with outside space in great demand, **JESMOND SEEMS TO OFFER EVERYTHING THE MARKET IS DESIRING** and *SandersonYoung have enjoyed great success in this area in the last 12 months with prices rising sharply.*

This leafy suburb of Newcastle has seen huge demand, as it is made up of exceptional prime property, often within conservation areas, and sellers remain in pole position to achieve a record price for their property due to the high number of buyers.

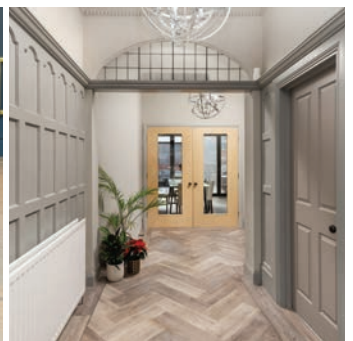
Jesmond offers superb architecture as well as great shopping facilities, cafes and restaurants and is extremely popular with hospital workers, academic staff and business owners as well as young professionals. Easy access to beautiful, green, open spaces, the delightful Jesmond Dene, great transport links and outstanding state and independent schooling makes the area hugely popular with young families.

With many of our properties being sold privately, away from the glare of internet exposure, it is essential to be registered with the right agent if you wish to secure a home in this increasingly desirable and sought after location. On the flip side, if you live in Jesmond and are thinking of selling your home please get in touch to book a free valuation and make the most of this buoyant market.





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Price Guide:

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PROPERTY OF THE MONTH



ROSE COTTAGE, LINDISFARNE ROAD, JESMOND



PRICE GUIDE: OFFERS OVER £1.25 MILLION

Rose Cottage, perfectly situated within the delightful Jesmond Dene Conservation Area, occupies a prime site within this highly desirable and prestigious area of Jesmond. Ideally located on the corner of Lindisfarne Road and Adderstone Crescent, this very pretty home was named from its stunning gardens, which have become a focal point in Jesmond, and enjoys excellent accessibility into fantastic neighbourhood facilities. The gardens, placed principally to the south and east, provide stunning colour to compliment the architectural design and style of this beautiful, detached cottage. Rose Cottage also enjoys beautiful, private, west facing lawned gardens to the side of the property which are adjacent to a detached swimming pool room which could be incorporated into the main house, subject to the necessary planning and building consents. Tenure: Freehold. Council Tax: G. EPC: D

Contact rare! From Sanderson Young on 0191 223 3500 ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk www.sandersonyoung.co.uk



REGIONAL CENTRE FOR SANDERSON YOUNG NEW HOMES



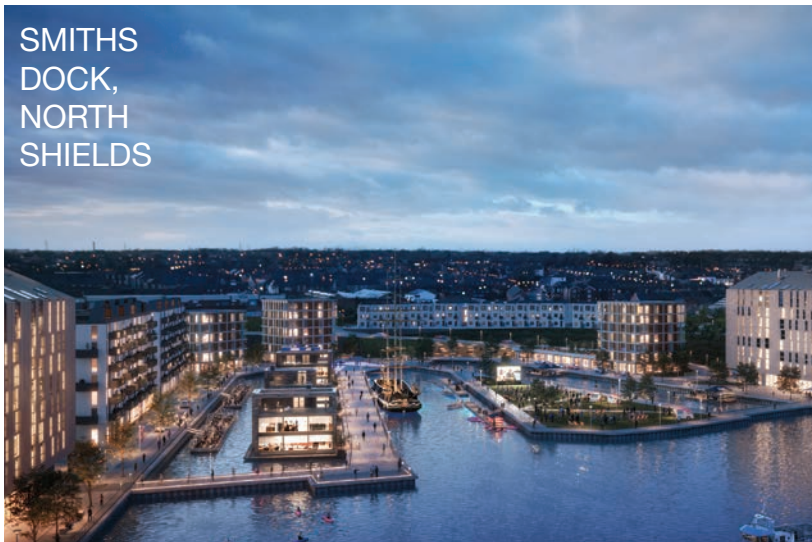
The very exciting and long awaited refurbishment of 3 Hawthorn Road in Gosforth will create an adjoining building to our Rare! and Regional office for the company.

This building is to be the principal focus of our New Homes Department, due to open in late summer 2022, and will incorporate ground floor revolutionary virtual and augmented reality walk through experiences for those buyers looking to purchase New Homes within the North East of England. The excellent positioning on the High Street enjoys convenient car parking for our guests in front of the

building and at the rear. The state of the art show room, with its minimalist industrial look, will have a very impressive display of leading new homes sites throughout the region.

At first floor level, the accommodation will give prospective developers and builders the opportunity to fit out rooms as potential kitchens, bathrooms, and living areas, of the properties they are designing and where onsite marketing suites, show homes, and cabins are not possible. This is particularly relevant to apartment living and city centre developments that are space restricted, and where Construction Managers do not have the ability, due to health and safety, to have any of their prospective buyers inspecting their new home before it is complete.

The ground floor show room will have large windows,



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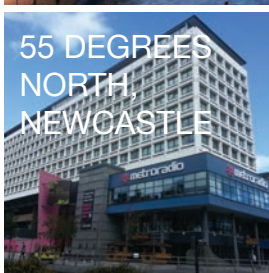
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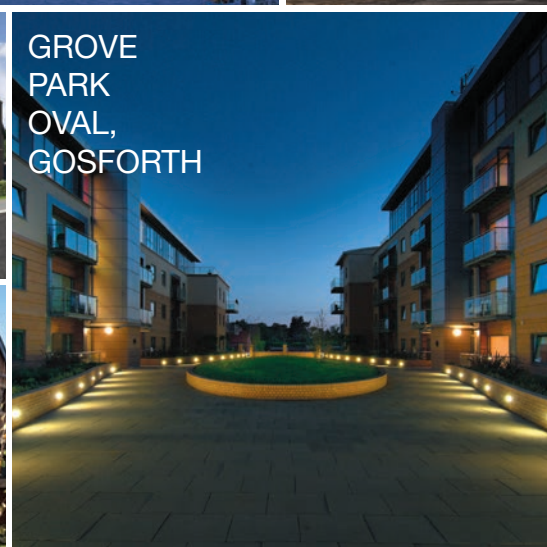
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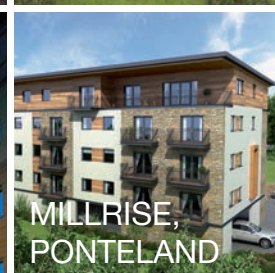
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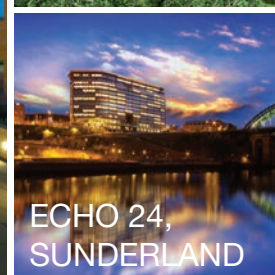
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ECHO 24,
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overhead projector screens which will give virtual walk throughs, computer generated images, and state of the art augmented reality opportunities, to enable the buyer to see and walk through the plans of new developments. This modern way of selling will hopefully provide security and peace of mind to all types of builders looking to presell early homes to prospective buyers.

Sanderson Young is well known for their new leading edge technology on new homes and during the last housing boom, in the late 1990s and 2000s, we ran a very successful office on the Quayside which had a similar application for developers and worked extremely successfully. This ground breaking scheme in Gosforth will create a fabulous array of contrasting homes with large family detached, convenient apartments in town, ground breaking schemes on the river frontage, as well as homes in market towns throughout the region.

“ THE SANDERSON YOUNG CONCEPT

Marc Hardy - Space I.D.

Offering our clients the best service always means researching their different needs. Sanderson Young came to us with the broad concept of a virtual reality (VR) environment for their new New Homes Office in Gosforth. Their brief was for them to have the ability to show the customer their new home before construction has commenced and for them to see how the different finishes will look before committing to a purchase.

There is an architectural application of VR that fitted in perfectly with Sanderson Young where it's possible to digitally create an entire building and actively immerse the client into that environment as an avatar, exploring the space as they wish and allowing real time changes and interaction. You can turn on lights, televisions, change fabric choices on furniture; with simple hand motions you can change the floor and kitchen finishes. Specifically created for Sanderson Young, Space VR and Space ID have looked to enhance the experience with a dedicated space where you can actually walk within your home coupled with a real environment of physical spaces for a more tactile approach.



SANDERSON
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FOR INFORMATION ON NEW HOMES, OR IF YOU ARE A DEVELOPER WHO NEEDS HELP WITH THE MARKETING OF YOUR DEVELOPMENT, PLEASE CONTACT DUNCAN YOUNG OR AMY BRICE ON 0191 223 3500, OR EMAIL: DUNCAN.YOUNG@SANDERSONYOUNG.CO.UK WWW.SANDERSONYOUNG.CO.UK



Damiano Rea

PROBLEMS?... LET'S HEAD TO PUNTO!

Most of us can be proud of our generation tag. Baby Boomers got to see all the good bands. Generation X raved the night away in a muddy field. Generation Y gave us much of our technology. So why does journalist India Knight describe Generation Z as "Generation Mummy's Little Sausage"?

Harsh judgement on an entire generation and as ever, I suspect a small minority is responsible. Mostly Generation Z are perfectly sensible and self-assured. But it is the expectations of the minority that dominate discussion among those of us in the service and retail sectors.

Consumer rights are enshrined in law and like any responsible business we have a complaints structure. This comes in three phases. One, get the kettle on and we sit down with a cup of tea and resolve the issue. If that does not work, the

matter is addressed at Director level and this involves a visit to our friends at Punto Italian Kitchen, next door to our office for one of their fantastic coffees! The next level escalates the issue to the Property Ombudsman who will deliver impartial judgement.

We're rightly proud of our ability to avoid escalation beyond the cup of tea or Punto visit stage. But we have found a change in the nature of complaints. We operate a 24 – 7 call out service for emergencies. The smell of gas, a burst water pipe or structural damage to the property

can all fairly be described as an emergency.

A lightbulb popping or the internet going on the blink is an issue we will address, but not at 3.00am. The 3.00am internet issue happened recently and when we advised we would be out the next day, led to a full-on footy stamp on social media. Apparently, we are Attila the Hun on a bad hair day.

The answer to this emerging issue is not to unfairly lambast an entire generation. The answer lies in communication and outlining precisely what our customer care package can reasonably be expected to offer. In that way, we can manage customer expectations and any issues can be resolved swiftly. Common sense and the threat of good Italian coffee will usually be enough to ensure that both sides of a dispute can walk away satisfied.

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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.



WHY GOOD DESIGN IS CRUCIAL TO THE SUCCESS OF YOUR BUY-TO-LET PROPERTY

Have you recently purchased a property and are intending to rent it out? Or do you already own one that is currently between tenants? If you've answered yes to either question, now might be a good time to upgrade your interiors.

For Bethany Walker, head of interior design at Styled, the design of a property is a crucial aspect of any buy-to-let property. Design can make all the difference to its market appeal, rental yield and long-term rental prospects.

Attracting renters

With the average cost buying a house close to reaching record highs, renting continues to be a popular and necessary option for many.

In the United Kingdom, approximately 34 per cent of households currently rent, equating to over eight million people. This means competition for rental properties is high, and there is a strong demand for quality housing from tenants - which is great news for landlords!

Whether you are planning to rent your property furnished or unfurnished, there are a number of design considerations you should implement to maximise the potential of your home.

Target the right people

When it comes to designing your buy-to-let property, one of the most important things to consider is your target tenant. Put yourself in their position and consider how they will use the space as well as any key features or selling points they might be looking for.

If you plan to rent to young professionals, consider creating a dedicated workspace, or perhaps turning a spare bedroom into a home office, as well as places to socialise. Older couples may prioritise

spaces for relaxation and easy access, while open living spaces and plenty of storage will appeal to families.

Considering who you are targeting at the early stages of your design will help inform your initial design direction to ensure you aren't excluding your ideal customer with poor choices or misuse of space. By prioritising these features, you'll ensure your property stands out from the crowd and attracts your perfect customer so that you can maximise your rental return.

First impressions count

Creating a strong and positive first impression when putting your property to market is key to the success of your buy-to-let property.

In some properties, particularly smaller ones, the space you enter can sometimes feel dark and uninviting, especially if there is a lack of natural light. However, you can create the illusion of a bigger and brighter space with some clever and impactful design tactics.

Hanging mirrors on the walls will not only help to bounce light around the room, making it feel lighter and brighter, but it will also create the illusion of depth and make the space appear bigger than it is. Lighting is another factor that can make a huge impact in a small space; if your property is undergoing construction work, consider adding dimmable spotlights, to ensure the space is bright and well-lit throughout.

You could also build strip LED lights into your

cabinets or shelving to draw the eye upwards and elongate the space. Hanging pendant lighting is a great idea for properties with high ceilings too - paired with other lighting such as wall lights and floor lamps to create ambiance and zoning within the space.

Don't forget the exterior of the property, either. Kerb appeal is a huge selling point of a property and will add to that all-important first impression. Ensure the property is well-kept and adding planting or can help to really draw your tenants in.

Keep it simple

Interior design doesn't have to be complicated. In fact, the simpler you can make it, the easier it will be to maintain and repair.

Keeping your walls a neutral shade will not only appeal to the wider market, but will also allow tenants to visualise their own belongings in the space a lot easier, and make it easier for them to add their own stamp once they are in the space.

You should also consider the upkeep of your property, as this will impact your overall revenue. While features such as small, intricate tiles in a bathroom may look amazing, the grout will be a lot harder to keep clean over time. Opting for wall and floor panels in a buy-to-let property is often the best choice, as they still look stylish and modern without being too hard to keep clean.

If you are renting out a furnished property, you should invest in sofas that have a stain-guard fabric to prevent any permanent damage. Whilst opting for stain-guard protection is often a slightly bigger expense to begin with, it is often far more cost-effective in the long-run - as you won't need to pay for replacement parts or a full new sofa each time any damage or spillages occur.

Designing your buy-to-let property doesn't have to be a headache. By keeping your potential renters in mind and futureproofing fixtures and fittings, you can create a stylish and inviting home for someone to enjoy for years to come - whilst ensuring you are getting the best possible return on your investment.

If you've got a buy-to-let property and are looking to design or upgrade it, visit www.styledinteriordesign.co.uk



70 YEARS GONE – 70 YEARS AHEAD

As everybody reads this, we are recovering from the parties that have been held up and down the country in celebration of Her Majesty's 70 years on the throne. 70 years gone have seen major changes in fashions, and not just in clothes. What does the next 70 years hold?

HOMES

70 years ago, not every home in the UK had running water, a lot only had an outside toilet, and heating was almost entirely by coal fires. Central heating was a luxury few had and many hadn't even heard of. Jumping forward to 2022, coal fires and outside toilets are rarities. Running water in houses is absolutely standard and very few houses have only an outside toilet. We still in the UK use brick and tile for a lot of our housing construction; but in the future I think the most dramatic change we are likely to see will be in energy efficiencies. With governments throughout the world keen to press on with "green" energy policies, we will see more use of ground source heating and solar power; I think traditional solar panels as are added to roofs nowadays will be supplanted by panels incorporated into the main construction. We will see more use of ground source heating. There will be demand for bigger kitchens for more

equipment (how many houses had a fridge in 1952? – how many homes in 2022 don't have a microwave?) – and how many microwaves are being supplanted by air fryers?

OFFICES

Office work is course a hotbed of discussion at the moment as some people claim to work more effectively from home, whereas some employers believe people should be back behind desks. Offices now revolve around vast amounts of IT (in 1980 when I started work, the national firm of surveyors I worked for had one computer serving the whole of the business, and in 1982 they employed a specialist "secretarial" type person who was the "word processor operator". Compare that to now – and what will we see in the next 70 years?

FACTORIES

A traditional old image that one might expect to see on a "Carry On" film or a kitchen sink drama typically based in the Northwest with men in cloth caps and their wives at home wearing a scarf around their hair as they scrub steps. It is a major contrast to the factories that now exist on the Team Valley, but of course when the estate was first built and up until the times of the Queen's succession, these "Northlight" style factories were the norm. As the UK has moved so far away from heavy engineering and heavy manufacturing, factories are a whole lot cleaner than they ever were. In the future we are going to see even more mechanisation within them – which will change their architecture in the future.

LEISURE

What is different about this pub in the picture compared to one on Osborne Road nowadays? I like a good local e.g. the Cross Keys in Esh Village Durham, the Stags Head in Byker or the Tynemouth Lodge in Tynemouth, and we do now have "super pubs" – so much more than pints of beer and a jukebox. Pubs are definitely looking at having to provide more of an experience, as are restaurants as we get more exotic in our tastes and more demanding. The problem for the trade is that whereas the public have become more demanding they are not willing to increase their expenditure in line with their demands. Is this going to see a major change in the next 70 years where restaurants go back to being more of a preserve of the middle classes? (if that doesn't sound too snobby).

I have been in this property game for 42 years so I have seen a lot of the changes at first hand. However, there are others that have been around nearly as long as me (and even a few who have been around longer) – what do you think? What do the young people think?

If you disagree, tell me! If you agree, tell me! I also write on my LinkedIn profile every Wednesday morning at about 8.30 – follow me at [linkedin.com/in/philipbowe](https://www.linkedin.com/in/philipbowe).

www.bivbowes.co.uk Tel: 0191 462 6 264





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PLANNING AMONGST OUR NEIGHBOURS

By Neil Turner, Howarth Litchfield

A recent announcement from the government on planning has been proposed by Michael Gove, Levelling Up Secretary, in which neighbours could be allowed to vote on whether planning permission should be given for developments - such as house extensions - on their street.



Neil Turner

The "street votes" would be an alternative to traditional forms of planning permission. I had to read the news again when I first saw it, as I had never heard of something so fraught with issues and problems.

The background is the new homes target of 300,000 made at the 2019 general election. The previous communities secretary, Robert Jenrick, wanted to push through housing in designated areas. This wasn't popular at all, with Theresa May calling it 'ill conceived.'

So, the new 'Levelling up and Regeneration Bill', replacing Mr Jenrick's proposals, is intended to assist the process by creating design codes to help set rules about new layouts, a new infrastructure levy and upgrading the planning system online.

Part of this logic is that not enough housing is being built so we need more flexibility around how we change our current housing stock. The Policy Exchange Thinktank has advocated for the "densification" of urban areas, in part to reduce pressure to build on open fields - by suggesting existing towns and urban areas expand, rather than encouraging new, greenfield developments.

I don't think this is the entire answer and we do need to find ways of building good quality new housing across the country in parallel to sensible

alteration to our current housing stock in towns and villages.

I have written recently about the problems in the planning system; the lack of investment causing lengthy delays and the lack of planning officers to undertake the sheer volume of the current workload.

We have a planning system that should have the ability to be the decision maker; based on national and local planning policies, local knowledge, experience and design quality.

The idea of allowing residents in a street to be able to determine planning applications is simply not going to help improve neighbourhoods or increase the affordability or availability of new homes. Why would we hand over planning approvals to residents in a street? Can you imagine the chaos that this could cause? If neighbours vote for/against a proposal this will cause potential animosity for those with a different view and it could destroy the very meaning of being 'neighbourly.'

How does a neighbour get his approval? Does he campaign in the street or hope for the best? It is not uncommon to have an 'odd character' in a street who could block any potential development.

Then the potential for legal actions will grow

when over development or under development is blocked. The winner will be the one with biggest investment in legal costs. I have seen this before in certain areas where an estate committee exists, and this can cause considerable conflict.

The answer for all applications must be quality and appropriateness. Neighbours get the opportunity to comment on current applications now and that should always be maintained. But I don't think a neighbour should get the final say!

I advocate to see more 'design panels' within the planning system; consisting of experienced professionals to help improve design solutions (and inform planners) across planning, urban design, landscape and architecture. These professionals are better placed to assess design codes in an area and on an individual application. This would also help inform councillors who ultimately vote on applications and give them impartial, balanced views on quality.

Planning is a complex area with national, local, economic and political influences at play. So, let's not cause more chaos within an already struggling system.

Neil Turner can be contacted on 0191 3849470 or email nturner@hlpuk.com www.howarthlitchfield.com

CREATING VALUE THROUGH DEVELOPMENT LAND OPPORTUNITIES

North East-based Hamilton Willis secures land deals for landowners and housebuilders, achieving best value for both parties to feed the demand for residential housing land. We spoke to co-founder and director Calum Willis about his role and future ambitions.

What was the inspiration for starting Hamilton Willis?

We believed there was a gap in the market where we could use our national housebuilder experience and skillsets – promoting and acquiring residential development land. I also had a 6-month-old child and wanted to work on my own terms. It was partly a family and life-based decision. I wanted more flexibility.

How did you and fellow director Aidan Hamilton meet?

We met at Bellway North East more than 10 years ago. We were both working in the land team. We always had a good working relationship and even after we went our separate ways, to other builders, we kept in contact socially and professionally.

How do you differ to land agents and others in the sector?

Our key strength lies in our housebuilder background. Buying sites for large developers gave both of us a solid foundation and in-depth understanding of the process and how to mitigate risk to deliver developments. This first-hand experience sets us apart from competitors and agents.

What have been the biggest challenges so far?

Being versatile and nimble enough to respond to covid-19. The end of our first year coincided with the pandemic and the first lockdown. The transactional side of our business changed overnight in terms of uncertainty and our consultancy business could no longer operate in person.



Calum Willis

We had to adapt to the requirements of clients in uncertain times, be it acting for developers that were looking for more flexibility in deals or ensuring a landowner was protected and not taking all of the risk. The initial uncertainty of the pandemic delayed a lot of decision making the impacts of which are still being seen in deals today.

Your biggest success to date?

Our last year of trading – completing deals on 13 sites across the North East, with potential to deliver more than 1,750 residential units. Six of these sites were unconditional transactions. And doing all this through a pandemic.

How do you plan to grow the business?

We will build on our successes to date while looking at areas to extend our services. We also intend to expand our geographical locations across the North and also source more off-market land opportunities on a national scale. We currently have opportunities in Scotland, Wales, Surrey and Manchester to name a few other areas.

What is your greatest strength?

I genuinely believe we think differently. We see different commercial angles from both sides of

the negotiating table. As a result, we're able to bring value to both sides when involved in a land deal between a landowner and a developer.

We really understand the pressure some landowners are under to produce meaningful income from their land, especially farmers. Our experience allows us to maximise this income whilst minimising their risk.

What business lessons have you learned?

You don't know it all. It's impossible to know it all and do it all, so don't be afraid to seek and take good advice. We tap into the knowledge and expertise of a network of professional partners – from architects and solicitors through to engineers and PR and marketing consultancies.

How do you relax?

It's not easy with a four-year-old. I used to do a lot of winter climbing but these days it's spending time with the family, watching rugby and trying to persuade myself to go on a health kick on a Monday.

For more information:
www.hamiltonwillis.co.uk

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Photo supplied courtesy of Newcastle United Foundation.

BERWICK YOUNGSTERS' FOOTBALL SCHEME NETS MORE BERNICIA BACKING

A hugely popular football project in Berwick led by the Newcastle United Foundation will continue for at least another year thanks to renewed funding from Bernicia.

The North East housing association has extended its backing of the Berwick Kicks sessions with £11,500 worth of support from its Community Investment Fund.

The grant will ensure the Friday night football sessions – led by coaches from the Newcastle

United Foundation – will continue throughout the 2022-23 season.

Premier League Kicks sessions in Berwick regularly attract more than 130 youngsters aged eight to 18, who are put through their paces by top coaches on pitches at the town's Swan Centre.

They are designed to channel young people's time and energy into constructive training, diverting them away from anti-social behaviour.

While the theme of the sessions is very much football and the benefits of sporting exercise, the FA Level 1 accredited coaches are all trained to deal with issues which they may identify or be made aware of during the sessions, including children's safeguarding, sexual exploitation, hate crime and 'County Lines' drugs dealing.

All the sessions are free – removing any financial barrier to local young people taking part.

Participants include Joey Nisbet, aged eight, whose mum said had struggled with anxiety issues when the Covid pandemic hit.

Since starting the Berwick Kicks sessions, Joey has made lots of new friends and coaches are thrilled to see his confidence grow massively as he mixes with other youngsters, transforming him once again into a happy boy.

Sixteen-year-old Shaun Ferguson has been attending the Berwick Kicks project since it first started. He has transformed from a shy child into a confident young man, willing to help the coaches in any way he can.

He now volunteers to referee games and organises youngsters into groups, helping quieter children overcome confidence issues.

Mark Pae, Bernicia Customer Engagement Officer, said: "Bernicia has a long-standing partnership with the Newcastle United Foundation and we are delighted to continue our support of the Kicks programme.

"Engaging with over 130 young people on a regular basis clearly demonstrates the need for the programme and the positive impact it has in our communities."

Sarah Burn, Newcastle United Foundation Premier League Kicks Coordinator, said: "We are very proud to support and inspire young people in Berwick to play, learn and grow through football at our free Kicks sessions every Friday evening.

"We are incredibly grateful to Bernicia for their constant support of our charity work and thanks to their renewed funding, we can continue working together to create brighter futures for children and teenagers in Berwick."

Bernicia's Community Investment Fund supports projects promoting social, economic and environmental inclusion in communities where Bernicia tenants and customers live.

For more information, contact the Customer Engagement Team via email on: Customer.Engagement@Bernicia.com or telephone 0344 800 3800.



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Kim Harrison

THE RISING NORTH!

Kim Harrison, Head of Residential, talks us through the continuing demand in the North of England property market.

“The North of England has, in our mind, always been the jewel in the crown. With the contrast of rolling hills and miles of sandy beach and its proximity to efficient transport links to outlying cities and the capital it makes for the ideal country living location.

We have seen major press coverage for the region in the past few months and the secret is now well and truly out. Country Living named Hexham as the Happiest Place to Live, in April the Times & Sunday Times placed both Tynemouth and Morpeth as some of the Best Places to live in the UK and Rightmove named Alnwick in the top 10 of their Hotspot League Table.

The average price of a property coming to market in the UK rose again in April and is now at its highest ever level, according to Rightmove. The latest monthly snapshot of the UK housing market shows that

asking prices for properties coming to market were 4.7% higher than a year ago, the fourth consecutive monthly record. The average house price in Northumberland alone rose by 10.6% in the year to March, according to latest figures from the Office for National Statistics.

Rental yields are also on the rise with landlords in the North East of England experiencing an average yield of 6.2%, one of the highest in the country according to further research by Rightmove. The data shows a 10% year on year increase with average rental asking prices reaching £732pcm, a 2% increase on last quarter. Yorkshire regions show a slightly higher year on year increase of 11.2% to £848pcm and an average yield of 5.7%. Both regions offering good returns for investors who want to get in now.

Overall, we are finding that despite the current economic uncertainty, created by the cost-of-living crisis and the war in Ukraine being at the forefront of people's minds, the North of England is likely to see a continued strong property market throughout 2022.”

Kim is a qualified member of the National Association of Estate Agents (NAEA). She is an experienced estate agent having worked for youngsRPS for over 10 years, starting out as a sales negotiator before progressing to Head of Residential.

[youngsrps.com](https://www.youngsrps.com)



WESTBURN

CAUSEY HILL | HEXHAM

Westburn is a substantial Grade II listed Georgian and Victorian property occupying a generous plot extending to circa 1.32 acres within the popular market town of Hexham.

Guide Price £1,500,000

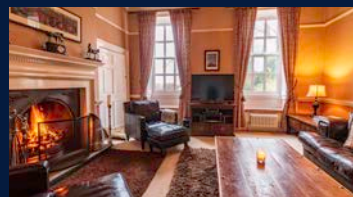


LOW SHIELD

DIPTON MILL ROAD | HEXHAM

Low Shield is a five bedroom, traditional Northumbrian Farmhouse occupying a generous plot extending to circa 0.5 acres, pleasantly situated on the outskirts of the popular market town of Hexham.

Guide Price £795,000



NEWTON LOW HALL

NEWTON ON THE MOOR | MORPETH

The property offers extensive living accommodation with an abundance of character and charm. The hall has been lovingly maintained over the years by its current owners.

Guide Price £1,300,000



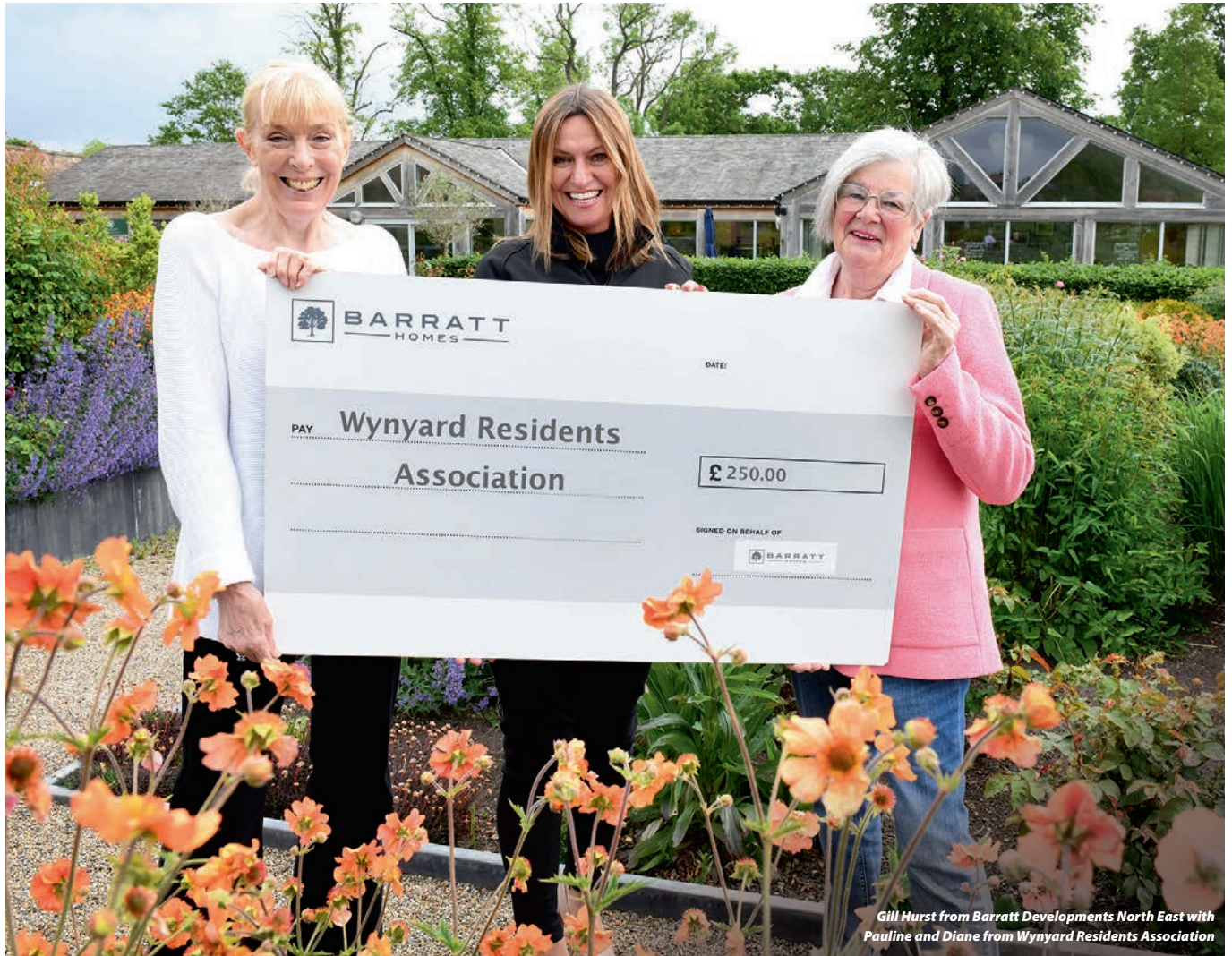
LYNDALE

BEECH HILL | HEXHAM

Lyndale is a fantastic four bedroom detached house pleasantly situated on the popular Beech Hill in the West end of Hexham within walking distance of all the local schools, facilities and amenities.

Guide Price £550,000

WYNYARD QUEEN'S JUBILEE EVENT A HUGE SUCCESS THANKS TO SUPPORT FROM LEADING HOUSEBUILDER



Wynyard residents gathered at Wynyard Hall to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee as part of an event which was supported by five star homebuilder, Barratt Developments North East.

The Wynyard Residents Association hosted an event for the local community on Saturday 4th June in celebration of the Queen's Jubilee. Taking place at the picturesque Wynyard Hall, the day was split into two separate events for local residents and visitors to enjoy. The first event was an outdoor picnic for families, which included stalls, competitions, and children's activities. The second event, which ran in the evening for adults, saw the Queen's Jubilee concert broadcast live from London on a large outdoor screen.

To continue to support the communities in which it builds, Barratt Developments North East was an official sponsor of the event and donated £250 to the Wynyard Residents Association Queen's Jubilee for the outdoor screen. This allowed all evening attendees to watch a live stream of the Queen's Jubilee Concert.

Pauline Winter, Treasurer at Wynyard Residents Association said: "We're grateful to Barratt Developments North East for sponsoring our event and making a donation, which allowed us to rent a large outdoor screen to live stream

the Queen's Jubilee Concert as part of the Jubilee celebrations. The event was fantastic and almost 500 people attended the picnic, with a further 350 people in the evening, so it was great to see such a large turn out. Myself and the residents of Wynyard couldn't thank Barratt enough for contributing to its success!"

Gill Hurst, Sales Manager at Barratt Developments North East said: "Wynyard is a fantastic place to live and the event organised by the Wynyard Residents Association goes an extremely long way to demonstrate this. We're always keen to support the communities in which we build and as we have developments in and near to Wynyard, it was a pleasure to support the event organised by the Wynyard Residents Association and see it all come together."

To further celebrate the 70th anniversary of The Queen's reign, Barratt Homes and David Wilson Homes has planted over 1,500 trees in communities across Britain. The Jubilee Big Tree Plant sees the country's largest housebuilder plant trees to recognise the Queen's wish to create a legacy for future generations. Barratt Homes has also become a long-term partner of the Royal Horticultural Society, whose patron is the Queen. Barratt Homes, which was named Sustainable House Builder of the Year, will sponsor the water feature within the show-shopping Paradise Garden at RHS Bridgewater in Salford, the first urban garden created by the RHS.

Barratt Developments North East is building a collection of high quality new homes across the North East. To find out more please visit: www.barratthomes.co.uk and www.dwh.co.uk



Image includes optional upgrades at additional cost



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For more information, please visit:
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Neil Hart

NORTH EAST 'BEST PLACED TO BENEFIT' AS HOME WORKING NUMBERS SLIDE

A rise in the number of hybrid workers could provide a major boost to the North East commercial property market, according to a leading property agent.

The latest figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has revealed that the number of UK workers embracing hybrid working almost doubled from February to May, while the number of people working from home has more than halved.

The research also found that 84% of those who switched to home working due to the coronavirus pandemic now plan to move to hybrid working full-time.

And this change in working habits appears to have already had a positive impact on the region's commercial property market, according to one of the region's leading full-service property agents.

Bradley Hall saw commercial deals more than double in the five months up until May when compared to the same period last year and the agency is confident that the resurgence of the office will provide a major boost to the region's property market.

Neil Hart, group managing director at Bradley Hall, said: "We have seen a clear increase in demand for workspace in the region over recent months and this latest research around hybrid working can only be a positive indicator of what lies ahead for the region's property market.

"To see more and more people returning to offices is a clear sign that the future of work will not be remote, but will instead be a hybrid mix of office

and home working, with the majority of employees spitting their time between home and the office, and the North East is more than ready to welcome businesses looking to embrace the new way of working.

"Whether it's city centre offices in Durham, Newcastle or Sunderland or out-of-town business parks in Alnwick or Team Valley, there are so many fantastic developments that have either recently hit the market or are due to be unveiled over the coming months, that it is no surprise so many businesses are now turning their attention to the North East."

Hybrid working has risen to prominence post-pandemic and is a type of flexible working where employees are granted the freedom to split their time between the workplace and remote working.

"The North East is the ideal place for businesses looking to invest in commercial property," Hart added. "The cost of commercial space is lower here than many other areas of the country meaning companies can significantly save on their overheads.

"There are also great benefits for staff here in the North East too, meaning companies can benefit from a happier and more productive workforce. The region has a lower cost of living than many other areas of the country; house prices are the lowest in the country and commutes are much cheaper too.

"Add to that the incredible countryside, abundance of green space and our numerous blue-flag beaches and there really isn't anywhere else where employers can enjoy such a high quality of life."

For more information on Bradley Hall, visit: www.bradleyhall.co.uk or follow www.linkedin.com/company/bradley-hall





Regional business figure, Ammar Mirza CBE, with Mike Clark, Director of Tynexe Commercial Ltd, the development company behind AirView Park

NEW INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION TAKES SHAPE AT AIRVIEW PARK

Work is now forging ahead on the first of two new commercial office buildings being constructed by Tynexe Commercial Limited as part of Phase Two at AirView Park.

Regional business figure and entrepreneur, Ammar Mirza CBE, is behind the new 10,200 sq ft 'International Space Station' (ISS), a centre of excellence facility being built specifically to help regional SMEs launch, scale-up and take advantage of global trade and export opportunities via neighbouring Newcastle International Airport.

It will not only support in-bound trade, but also project and showcase North East-based companies to international business communities, enabling occupiers to gain greater access to worldwide markets. This includes India, Turkey, the Middle East, Pakistan and the Netherlands via a collaborative business model offering world-class expertise, professional support and international connectivity through trusted partners.

The ISS is also being seen as a significant opportunity to drive growth and enhance the region's economic recovery, creating new jobs and attracting further inward investment.

The digitally-enabled, shared workspace building will offer hot-desks, office suites and conference facilities, and accommodate over 100 desk spaces when ready to occupy at the end of the year.

Ammar Mirza CBE, explained, "As a passionate ambassador and advocate of the North East, the opportunity to create a bespoke, dedicated and global business hub that will support and better connect local companies with far-reaching

markets is absolutely fantastic. It is very much needed for the region's recovering economy.

"The North East is home to many innovative, forward-thinking organisations delivering world-class products and services. Therefore, if we can provide direct access to new overseas trade links using three key growth enablers – innovation, internationalisation and digital transformation – from a dedicated workspace building, we can help attract more inward investment opportunities, and ultimately, jobs for the area.

"Many SMEs experience barriers to exporting, whether it be a lack of knowledge and understanding of the markets, or uncertainty as to navigating different countries' regulations. Furthermore, for potential inward investors, the UK is often seen as being a very 'mixed' or confusing business landscape, especially in different regions. A lot of overseas business is driven with a London-first or London-focused approach, and therefore the North East is often not on the radar as a strategic UK base.

"By working collaboratively with regional stakeholders, the International Space Station will be a first of its kind 'soft landing and launch pad' for businesses. It's been in the making for some time. If we can better connect both sides of the equation, bringing the global export community much closer together to SMEs on a regional level, we can open up a wealth of opportunity and

make the centre of excellence at AirView Park a prime business location."

The International Space Station is one of two new buildings currently coming out of the ground at AirView Park. Phase Two will offer 20,000 sq ft of modern office space within the 175,000 sq ft site, building upon the success of Phase One which attracted national homebuilder, Bellway plc, and its national headquarters.

Mike Clark, Director of Tynexe Commercial Limited, developers of AirView Park, added, "This will be another fantastic addition to the site and we're delighted with the progress being made. We've worked very closely with Ammar to develop a scheme that will deliver the very best results for potential occupiers accessing its facilities.

"This is the first of two buildings within Phase Two, both of which will be in-keeping with the market and mindful of new and changing operational needs that companies now have. Work on the second building – Denyer Court – has also started, and once complete, will offer multiple leased office units or a single occupancy HQ building for sale or to let. It's a great example of how AirView Park can work closely with local, national and global occupiers to deliver bespoke build opportunities, especially in emerging industries."

AirView Park is located at Wooslington, only minutes from Newcastle International Airport. Phase Two, and the announcement of the International Space Station, establishes the site as one of the region's most active and important commercial property developments.

The project received £994,000 from the Government's Get Building Fund via the North East Local Enterprise Partnership.

For more details regarding commercial property opportunities, please contact Angus White at Naylors Gavin Black on t: 0191 211 1551, e: angus@naylorsgavinblack.co.uk or go to www.airviewpark.co.uk



MINCOFFS SOLICITORS' PROPERTY DRINKS EVENT

Mincoffs Solicitors was delighted to host the return of its popular Property Drinks networking event at Newcastle's Hibou Blanc on Thursday 16th June.

The event was hosted by the firm's large property team, which includes experts in commercial property, residential conveyancing and property litigation.

Providing an opportunity to meet other property professionals over canapes and a drink or two, the firm welcomed property agents, developers and investors in the sector, among others.





HORIZON WORKS ANNOUNCES CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP OF NOF

B2B marketing company Horizon Works has further embedded its presence in the energy sector, thanks to a new sponsorship agreement.

Horizon Works, which is based at Quorum Business Park in Newcastle, has announced that it has become a corporate sponsor of NOF, the UK business development organisation which helps to make connections between businesses in the global energy sector.

The sponsorship agreement will see Horizon Works increase its engagement with NOF and its membership community, and Horizon Works will also be a sponsor the Offshore Wind North East (OWNE) Conference and Exhibition on November 9 and 10, 2022, and the event's associated networking dinner.

Horizon Works supports innovators in complex industries and offers a wide range of integrated marketing services across strategy, PR, design and digital.

The company has a long track record of working in the energy sector, and supports organisations operating across renewables and oil and gas.

Horizon Works recently supported economic regeneration company Advance Northumberland, fellow Corporate Sponsor of NOF, with a PR campaign to promote the Northumberland Energy Park development site in Blyth.



The company has also provided marketing content for Energy Central, a partnership between Advance Northumberland, Port of Blyth, Northumberland County Council and the Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) Catapult, which is a deep water base for businesses working across renewable energy, offshore wind, subsea engineering, decommissioning, battery manufacturing and energy storage.

Samantha Vassallo, managing director of Horizon Works, said: "We're very excited to be taking our involvement with NOF to the next level as a corporate sponsor."



STUDENT-LED CREATIVE AGENCY DEVELOPING TALENT OF TOMORROW

An exciting new creative agency is harnessing University of Sunderland student talent to supercharge the comms output of businesses across the North East.

Sunderland Creatives Agency is a student-led business set up by the University of Sunderland in partnership with Creo Comms, a Sunderland-based communications consultancy that is overseeing students' work and providing authentic work experience.

The agency offers creative services to businesses across the region, supporting with everything from brand development, design and videography to social media management, public relations and podcast content.

Delivered by a gifted roster of students, the agency not only provides those at the start of their careers with valuable, paid work experience, but offers affordable creative services to businesses, with the confidence that the work has been checked and sometimes guided by industry professionals.

Louise Bradford, managing director of Creo Comms, who also studied at Sunderland and was an academic tutor at the university before launching her own business in 2014, said: "As a student, it was really during work placements that everything clicked and I connected the theory with the practice of comms, so it's brilliant to be able to support students to gain experience and build their confidence, while also helping businesses to develop really polished content and materials."



HEALTHY TONIC FOR MHW

Leading Newcastle-based communications consultancy MHW PR has been re-engaged by Hull-based care organisation HICA Group to undertake a broad media relations campaign.

HICA Group, a 'not for profit' organisation that specialises in care and support for older people and people with learning disabilities, operates 17 care homes, two retirement villages and homecare services across Humberside, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and Lancashire.

HICA, which employs a 1,500-strong workforce, is undergoing a significant period of growth and change and wants to communicate this to different stakeholders

MHW owner and director Wayne Halton said: "We are delighted to be working again with HICA Group. We were first introduced to the organisation more than six years ago when we were engaged to help promote an improvement programme across their care homes. This was successful and our involvement came to a natural conclusion.

"On the basis of our past work, it was a huge compliment to reconnect with the company and be asked to help with the current communication requirements."

The focus of this work will again be securing positive regional media relations, with related opportunities in more general and specialist media areas. Content development activities will be expanded across a wide range of specialist titles, news and media platforms.

MHW already works with Northumberland-based homecare organisation, Helping Hands Community Care.



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BLU MILK OFFER £25000 WORTH OF CONSULTANCY SERVICES

A North East marketing agency are generously offering more than £25,000 worth of consultancy services for free to help support the region's local air ambulance service.

Blumilk, a full-service creative consultancy based in Newcastle, have been providing support to the Great North Air Ambulance Service (GNAAS), who are one of the many charities that have suffered a loss in funds due to covid.

They first started working with GNAAS during the first half of 2020, after they launched the 'Blumilk £50k North East Business Rebuild Fund' to help businesses who were in financial difficulty during the pandemic.

Blumilk provided 60 hours of free work as part of the fund, which could be used towards marketing, design, business growth and strategy, employee communication or digital projects.

Lauren St Hilaire, Client Director at Blumilk, said: "From the first phone call with the team at GNAAS, we were absolutely captivated with the amazing work they do. We couldn't get our heads around how such a vital part of saving lives was a charity and not part of NHS funding and we desperately wanted to do anything we could to support them.

"We knew the most valuable asset of all we could offer was the ability to spread the GNAAS



message far and wide to help encourage as much support and as many donations as possible and therefore we set to work in helping to achieve that."

After the initial offer of 60 hours, the company have agreed to provide an additional 260 hours this year, which works out at £25,600 worth of time.

Ms St Hilaire added: "We generally support a charity that is most close to our hearts per year and for as long as our business is thriving, we want the people who we know we can help to

be thriving too. This is the largest time (equating to cash) donation we have given thus far and it's all because we want to be proud to make a difference with the incredible team at GNAAS."

GNAAS celebrates its 20th anniversary as a registered charity this year and during this time their team have provided pre-hospital care to more than 23,500 people across the region.

To mark the occasion Blumilk have been creating materials focused around the anniversary which GNAAS can use throughout the year, as well as working on several other projects with them.



AUBERGINE SERVES UP TASTY FILIPPO BERIO WIN

Aubergine has been appointed as the PR and social media agency for world-leading olive oil brand Filippo Berio.

Aubergine has been tasked with the full gamut of PR for the brand; launching the brand's latest sustainability report to the media, as well as managing its busy press office, organising press and influencer trips and delivering support to their in-house social media team.

Verity Clarke, Aubergine's co-founder and director, went on a full immersion tour of the Filippo Berio Villa and olive oil factory in Tuscany in May. Co-founder Emma Gardner also joined Verity at a recent charity event hosted by Filippo Berio at Buon Apps restaurant in Otley (pictured), which raised nearly £2,000 for a community defibrillator.

Verity commented: "Filippo Berio olive oil is a household name, so to win this as a boutique agency is big news for us. I absolutely loved getting under the skin

of the brand in beautiful Tuscany - it was a delight to get to know the wonderful marketing team and learn about how their products are made. It was also very insightful to get a behind the scenes look of their incredible sustainability drive. We'll be revealing more about this to the media very soon."

Lisa Mullins, marketing manager, Filippo Berio said: "What attracted us to Aubergine was the experience of its founders and the fact that, being a boutique agency, they will work directly on our brand. Verity and Emma both come from a journalism background which means that their approach is very journalist-led. It's already clear to us how much they value the brand and how hard they will work to get us results - we're very excited to see what the future holds."

Aubergine is a virtual agency founded by former BBC and Channel 4 News journalist Emma Gardner and experienced PR practitioner, Verity Clarke.

The pair work with a crack team of specialist freelancers to deliver work for its raft of food, drink, health and tech clients.

Print advertising is dead.

Erm, which muppet said that?



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Douglas Dinwiddie

MARKETING AND MEDIA MATTERS

In the latest of these popular series of features we talk to...

DOUGLAS DINWIDDIE

Founder and Managing Director of web design and marketing agency White Digital.

We caught up with Douglas to find out more about his life in the media industry – and why he realised the life of a windsurfing instructor was not for him.

Did you always envisage a career in the Media industry?

No, my career path went from golf caddying to working in a web agency and building my own agency. It was a natural progression for me coming out of the sports world and entering the business world.

What has been your career path so far?

I left school early without any A-Levels and became a sailing and windsurfing instructor, whilst running a pub from the age of 18 to 20.

From there, I moved onto a Sport Coaching degree in Leeds but I was still not sure what I wanted to do with my life.

My brother was a golfer on the Challenge Tour at the time and asked me to caddy for him, which I did for a year. I looked at the older caddies and knew that wasn't someone I wanted to become, so I took a sabbatical and joined a web agency.

I learned a lot there, so I left the agency to set up on my own with only five months' worth of money to get started, but I went bust and was back pulling pints to pay rent.

I went back to caddying and did the two jobs together, realising that on the European Tour, I was ahead of UK time, so I could fit two working days into one, selling websites in the afternoon; this was the start of the White Digital journey.

I continued this until 2018 when we won some big clients and became a fully functioning business. And the rest is history.

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

Growing a business in a busy marketplace is incredibly hard. There are so many agencies around and trying to operate in a marketplace with so much competition is tough.

You must really separate yourself from competitors: I've found very few agencies that are a direct comparison of us, as we all offer different things.

Who do you most respect in your industry?

It's easy to look at companies like Visualsoft and Mediaworks, as they're the biggest digital agencies in the area and there's a lot to look up to, like managing the culture of a business that size.

There are also people outside the industry like Ross Tompkins, and the people we have a good working relationship with, such as Matt Burton and Richard Bendelow of Aero Commerce. There are also other agencies which we have relationships with, such as Different Narrative, Mira Marketing and Harvey & Hugo, who are all doing different things.

How did you adapt your business during the coronavirus crisis and support clients?

We were lucky during Covid, as we were much smaller then, with a team of around 10, and we already worked virtually.

Those first few days of lockdown were like the TV show Take Me Out, with our marketing clients turning their lights off, but within a month or two, everyone was turning them back on realising just how important the web was.

What is your greatest strength?

My ability to be able to think on my feet, because then there are very few situations that I can't get out of. I think being able to solve problems as you go gives you the confidence to do almost anything, as you know you'll be able to figure it out if you fall on tough times.

What is your biggest weakness?

I'm very much about the "bigger picture"; I'm not too great at detail and I move quickly. My brain moves fast, and I want everything to move quickly, and sometimes I need to realise that the world doesn't always move at the same speed.

What has been your proudest achievement?

Getting the business to where it is now. We've got 22 members of staff and it's the little things, like doing everyone's payroll at the end of the month, that I find cool.

What are your future career aspirations?

We're on a steady road to growth. One of our main goals is to massively increase turnover by February 2025, so we're looking at what that entails, with an expectation of circa 150 members of staff and three or four offices around the North East.

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

We're in the technological revolution at the moment and that's only going to go in one direction.

I think there's a lot in Blockchain and Web 3.0 that might drastically change what people do: are websites going to look the same, are there going to be 3D e-commerce platforms, are people going to interact differently?

How do you like to unwind?

A good bottle of wine, exercise, playing a bit of squash and golf, taking the dogs for a walk, reading a book and spending time with friends and family.

Website: white.digital

“
...being able to
solve problems as
you go gives you
the confidence to do
almost anything...”



Jon Dudgeon

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JON DUDGEON

Co-Founder and CFO, Blusky

How did you get in to accountancy?

I started as a trainee auditor with a big four accountancy practice called Arthur Andersen in 1998, a year after I completed a degree in Business Economics. The role was attractive as it allowed me to study to become chartered accountant, whilst working on some big plc clients out of the Leeds office. The salary of £16.5k was pretty decent as well.

Who or what inspires you?

I am inspired by positive people who want to grow themselves, those around them, whilst doing the right thing.

What advice would you give to anyone interested in getting into accountancy?

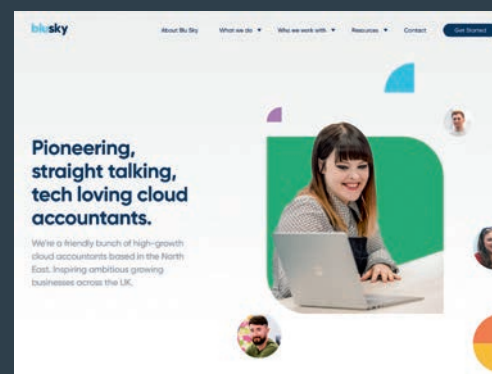
Go for it with your eyes open! The profession is a great place to learn the practical and commercial skills that are key to building a career in business. Its not about being good at maths though, in fact technology does all of that for you. My view it is all about a combination of problem solving, interpreting data, to help make business decisions to day and into the future. You have to be a great people person as well.

What is your favourite part of your job?

Seeing and helping my team and my clients grow and support them to the best of my ability in whatever it is they have set out todo.

What has been your most memorable moment todate relating to your business journey?

There are so many!! What really sticks out in my mind though is when I made the decision to leave my last role as an employee and start the journey of starting a partnership to build an accountancy practice, Blu Sky, from the ground up. It was a massive and daunting decision at the time. 100% the right one though.



What are your favourite magazines?

Cyclist, Mojo, National Geographic and Time magazine.

What's the future hold for Jon Dudgeon?

Striving to maintain the right balance between my family, Blu Sky and my own development. In other words watch this space.

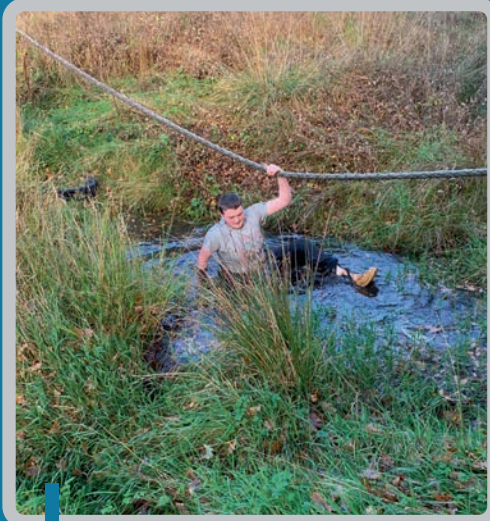
blusky.co.uk

“

...go for it with your eyes wide open...

...A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO WORK...

July 1st is International Tell a Joke Day. Keith Newman of Highlights PR asked some of his RADAR clients what was the funniest thing that happened to them at work?



Our Young Leaders went to Whithaugh Park for a leadership training camp.

One of our them, Aidan had been there before and decided to show the rest how to cross a river on a rope bridge. However, he slipped and fell in and was soaked from head to toe!

Despite attending before, he hadn't brought any spare clothes so poor Chris had to drive 120 miles to his home to pick up some new ones. Everyone keeps learning including our young leaders!

Lyn Horton
www.leadinglink.co.uk



I've worked in many situations and heard a lot of people say things that they haven't realised are funny. My favourites are, "I see Jimmy got arrested last night, mind those policemen don't take prisoners," and "Isn't it strange that when we are working nightshift and there isn't as many people here that the car park is emptier!" Perhaps the daftest was when a lady said that the wind turbines had stopped as they weren't plugged in.

Keith Newman Highlights PR
www.highlightspr.co.uk



I'm lucky that I love my work and always try to make sure everyone else enjoys it too so there's always plenty laughs to be had - around the work obviously too!

A funny memory that sticks with me was from many years back, sitting in a staff canteen, deep in conversation with a friend of mine who happened to be fiddling with a sachet of tartare sauce.

Let's just say he didn't know his own strength, squeezed a bit too hard and yes, I ended up covered in tartare sauce! My hair, face, jacket, everything above the table basically! Who knew those little sachets held so much!! Who also knew that the vinegar smell lingered for so long!!

Neither of us knew how to react, which was possibly the funniest part. The shock on his face, what was I going to do, was this the end of a good friendship? Well almost 30 years on, we're still good friends with plenty more laughs over the years so that tells you something, and no I don't sit opposite him going out for food now!

Karen Goldfinch
www.facebook.com/yourbusinesspilot



I'm not sure if it is funny, but this made my day and made me smile a lot. The legend that is Vera (Brenda Blethyn) retweeted my Tweet about my Teapots.

Corinne Lewis, Ward Powder Butterfly
www.powderbutterfly.com



At Off the Grid we are all about leaning and laughing together. We have many funny moments every time we take groups of young people or adults out on trips. My favourite funny moments have always been the strange statements or complaints we often get though.

My all-time funniest five would be:

"It's very dark in the woods, you never told me it gets dark on a night!"

"Where is the switch to turn the camp fire on?"

"Why is the water really wet in this river? You never told me I would get wet swimming!"

"Are those stars in the sky real?"

I thought the sun and the moon were the same thing, so how come both are in the sky together at the same time in this place?

Every day is a school day for someone as they say! We are always happy to talk adventures if you are keen on the great outdoors please get in touch.

Paul Kirkpatrick, www.offthegrid-adventures.co.uk



My funniest moment is probably going to work dressed as a fried egg. This was when I was teaching, each year we'd have a charity day with a fancy-dress theme. That particular year the theme was 'Best of British', I happened to be six months pregnant at the time. Our whole department dressed collectively as an English breakfast and naturally I had to be the fried egg, with my pregnant tummy as the yolk!

Eleanor Baggaley, Author
www.eleanorbaggaley.com

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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YOUR EYE ON THE REGION

KEITH NEWMAN

Highlights PR



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

I'm a very proud Geordie born within the sound of the platers and riveters on the Tyne's shipyards. During my early years I lived in Percy Main in a flat with an outside toilet before moving to Cramlington New Town (as it was then) into a brand-new house with two inside toilets! I then moved to Forest Hall until I was in my twenties. Now I live in a little village just outside Morpeth and can't ever see me leaving the area.

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

The North East is a great place to do business and the fact that it is relatively small means that everybody seems to know everybody. It's a great business community with good networking groups, innovative businesses, and a lot of inspirational people. I feel very privileged that my PR company gets to highlight and showcase the work of some of these businesses on a regional and national level.

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

I love the fact that we have such a varied landscape from glorious beaches to the Cheviot Hills and castles to cities and we have it all within an hour's drive of Newcastle.

Do you have a favourite hotspot for a business meeting?

I'm very lucky that my office is a boat and as such, the views I get from my office can change every day. My favourite place to berth the boat is at the Newcastle City Marina right under the Tyne Bridge. My clients love the fact that they are meeting on a boat with such fantastic views. When I'm not there, I can be found working at St Peter's Marina which is Newcastle's best kept secret with a lovely café, a pub and great views of the boats.

Where do you like to eat out in the region?

I have very simple tastes in food so a nice pizza or a steak would be my choice. One place I go most weeks though is The Harbour View Fish and Chip Restaurant in Seaton Sluice. Their cod is also known as 'the whale' due to its size and the taste is amazing.

Where do you like to unwind within the North East?

I love music and I am a volunteer presenter on community radio station, Radio Northumberland. Once I'm in the studio, I lose track of time and it's a great way to unwind. I also enjoy going to Tynemouth Market on a Saturday to pick up a bargain and catch up with friends.

Are the people really friendlier?

I can only go by what visitors to the region tell me and that is a definite yes!

What do you think is the best view in the North East?

The River Tyne is in my blood so it has to be the bridges at Newcastle and the entrance to the river at Tynemouth with the piers, Collingwood's Monument and the Priory.

Do you think living and working in the North East offers the same opportunities as elsewhere in the UK?

I've only ever lived in the North East so it's hard for me to gauge. What I would say is that you sometimes make your own opportunities so in that case it doesn't matter where you live.

Have you had any experience of working elsewhere and how did it compare?

I've never worked elsewhere as a job, but I have travelled to Italy and the USA for work. They were great experiences, but you can't beat the North East for me.

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“
...I have very
simple tastes in
food so a nice
pizza or a steak
would be my choice...



Keith Newman

NORTH EAST BUSINESSWOMEN JOIN FORCES TO TACKLE ECO-ANXIETY



L-R: Andrew Young, Co-Founder and Director of The Pulse Rooms; Claire Thew, Director of Venture Zero; Clare Blunt, Director of Venture Zero; Harvey Trent, Co-Founder and Director of The Pulse Rooms.

Two businesswomen from the North East have combined their expertise to help organisations create more socially and environmentally connected workplaces.

Clare Blunt and Claire Thew, both from Tynemouth, have launched Venture Zero – a brand dedicated to highlighting how the areas of mental wellbeing and environmental sustainability are related. With many organisations moving to hybrid working and emphasising carbon reduction, the pair believe it's more important than ever to put the right support structures in place for staff.

Recent studies have found that the climate crisis is taking a growing toll on people's mental health, with 'eco-anxiety' rising across all age groups. More time spent working from home also increases the risk of staff feeling lonely and isolated. Venture Zero engages with people to demonstrate that there are ways to minimise these negative effects and improve physical and mental health, whilst reducing the environmental impact.

Ms Blunt, who has more than 25 years' experience working in the mental health sector, including delivering mental health training and

coaching, said: "We know that mental health is firmly on everyone's agenda now, particularly coming out of the pandemic. Many, but sadly not all, workplaces are taking proactive steps to support the wellbeing of their employees.

"However, the new landscape of hybrid working requires a different level of engagement, with the need for a deeper understanding of the current mental health issues facing the workforce. These issues, coupled with the ever-increasing concern for the planet, are significantly impacting how people want to live their lives in both professional and personal environments."

Ms Thew, who has worked in the environmental sector for nearly 20 years delivering public communication campaigns, added: "Now, more than ever, we need to engage with organisations on climate change so they understand the effect this will have on their business and surrounding communities. There needs to be a top-down, bottom-up approach if we are to reach the goals set out in the Paris Agreement. Everyone has a part to play, and we believe in encouraging people to make those small changes that will ultimately lead to bigger, more positive impacts."

Through Venture Zero, they partner with organisations to help them find sustainable ways of positively impacting their team's wellbeing and engaging staff in the decisions relating to the 'Net Zero' agenda. They are currently working cross-sector with clients to deliver employee engagement programmes, training and

workshops, and purpose-driven away days. They also offer accredited training in Mental Health First Aid and Carbon Literacy.

Ms Blunt added: "With the growing awareness around mental health and climate change, it makes good business sense to listen to people's thoughts and feelings about these issues. If organisations want to thrive, they need to create environments where people feel listened to, valued, and supported. The way to achieve this is to take action to improve their triple bottom line. This means they need to invest in and take care of their people, the planet, and their profit."

In developing the Venture Zero brand, the pair worked with The Pulse Rooms – an award-winning growth agency in North Shields. The agency helped them to clearly define their vision and value proposition. They also created the brand's full visual identity.

Speaking about the partnership, Ms Blunt said: "When working with The Pulse Rooms, you get so much more than you expect. We thought we needed a logo and a website, but what we actually got was a clear vision and value proposition for the business, which has allowed us to move forward with confidence and clarity."

Venture Zero is now in the process of developing its website, which will launch in the coming months. To find out more information about their services, email: info@venturezero.co.uk



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"We are extremely proud of our work in partnership with the CIPR. We love working with our students from many different organisations and countries worldwide. It makes it such an enriching experience for students and tutors alike."

Veronica Swindale - MD of nesma



Veronica Swindale



CARINE NIEUWELING

European Commission

Carine is an Information and Communication Officer for the European Commission based in The Netherlands. She was one of our first international students to complete the Master's CIPR Professional PR Diploma (L7). As her career developed, she wanted to gain more advanced skills and knowledge and has confirmed that studying with us has increased her confidence at work.

We asked Carine what she enjoyed and what she now does differently.

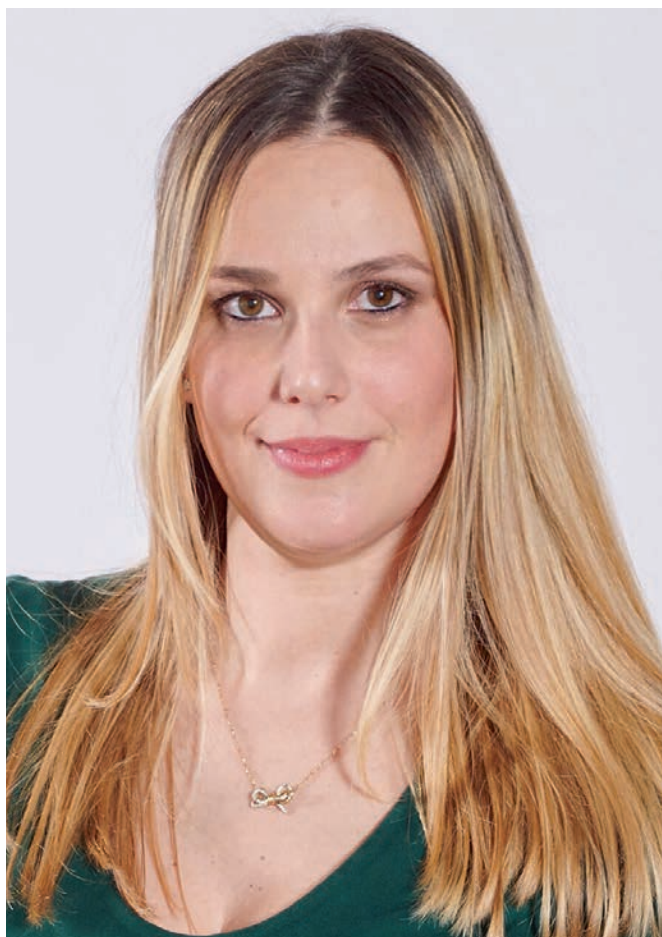
'I thoroughly enjoyed the classes and the exchanges with other students. I genuinely feel my leadership skills woke up because of this course, and I have already re-arranged my team around me to be more effective. It empowered me to stand up for what I think communication should be in my organisation and say loud and clear what resources we need to carry out the PR and communication activities required.'

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International students are also choosing some of the CIPR specialist qualifications we offer.

Daniela is the Group Organisation & Internal Comms Director, and she has graduated with a CIPR Specialist Diploma – Internal Communications (L7). Daniela studied with us from Italy and was, in fact, our first international alumni!

Internal Communications is a crucial enabler for company success and has become more vital than ever to inform, engage and retain people and talents. We asked Daniela why she selected this course and explain the impact it has had.



DANIELA MINIACE

Prysmian Group

'I wanted a qualification in Internal Communications (IC) and selecting a course from CIPR was a natural choice. I wanted to learn the theory and practice to help boost employee engagement through internal comms. During my studies, I got promoted! I am now responsible for internal communication in my company. This course helped me deliver some practical outcomes; I've already launched an IC audit and realigned the analytics to focus on outcomes rather than just outputs giving more relevance to the employee voice. I have also established a global town hall for all employees to strengthen senior management communications. Studying has benefited my approach to analytics, developing IC campaigns, shaping Employee Voice programmes, and utilising Storytelling!'

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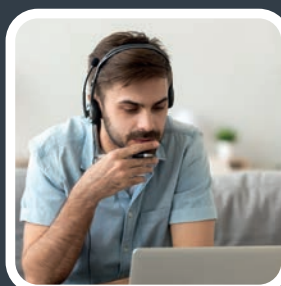
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Stuart Landreth

CRYPTOCURRENCY PAYMENTS FOR ADVERTISING

A promising North East radio station has become the first in the UK to accept Cryptocurrency payments for airtime and sponsorship.

The tech-savvy owners of Frisk Radio, which broadcasts on DAB across Tyneside, made the move to open up a broader range of payment options to potential advertisers.

Many are familiar with Bitcoin, the first and original Cryptocurrency, but Frisk also accepts payments in Ethereum and Cardano, known as "Altcoins," in the industry.

Rather than converting from a pound sterling amount, Frisk has fixed the payment amount in the above Cryptocurrencies.

With Bitcoin, and other Cryptocurrencies having experienced a huge crash recently, this allows advertisers can lock-in a year's worth of sponsorship and airtime at a very competitive rate.

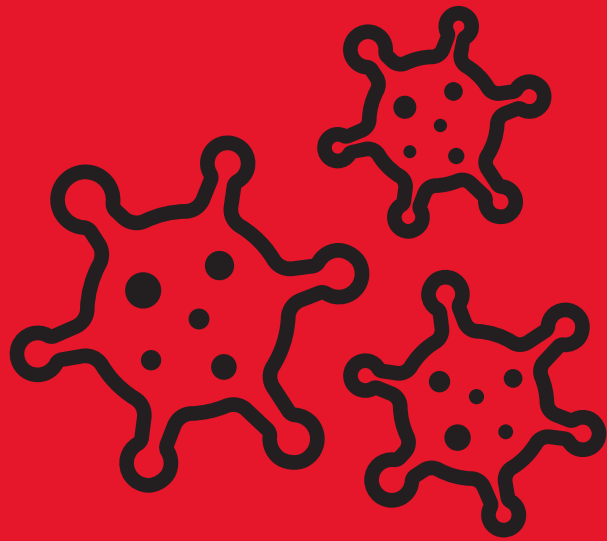
Frisk's technical director Stuart Landreth said he had no concerns about the value of cryptocurrencies falling further: "Despite the recent market panic, the fundamentals behind Bitcoin, Ethereum and Cardano are stronger than ever. We'll continue to hold the value of the sponsorship and airtime contracts in the remitted currency.

It would be a massive step forward for the industry if other players in the supply chain embraced and used Cryptocurrencies. Frisk is leading the way, and we'll be here when they are ready!"

Payment is very simple; Once an agreement has been reached, the advertiser simply transfers the correct amount of their chosen Cryptocurrency into the stations' wallet. Full instructions are provided, and the remittance process takes just a few minutes.

Frisk Radio can be found on the Tynemouth & South Shields SS-DAB Multiplex, online at www.friskradio.com and through the smart speaker command "Play Frisk Radio."

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REVENUE GROWTH SPECIALIST REVOLUTION, IS ON TRACK TO ACHIEVE ITS OWN GROWTH TARGET

Following significant new client wins, revenue growth specialist Revolution is set to reach its goal of doubling revenue and generating more digital marketing jobs across the North East and the North West by the end of 2022.

The award-winning revenue growth agency, headquartered in Gateshead and with a second office in Manchester, has continued to see increasing demand for its services. As a result of attracting 12 major new clients in the past six months, the team at Revolution is on track to hit 40% year on year growth in 2022. With both existing and new clients bringing exciting new projects, the team is committed to expanding in line with the increasing workload.

The most recent experts to join the team are Jess Wardell and Madison Lowes; both completed their higher education in Newcastle and have gained significant experience in previous roles across the region. Having started at the beginning of June, 26-year-old Jess joins the Development Team as a UX/UI Designer and 25-year-old Content Strategist, Madison adds her experience to the Growth Team.

Madison said, "It is clear that the team at Revolution is passionate about delivering excellence and is determined to work together to drive accelerated growth for our clients. Everyone has been welcoming and supportive. It's an exciting time to join the company, and I look forward to being a part of the continued expansion."

The addition of Jess and Madison is the latest in a string of new hires since January 2022 which has seen the Revolution team increase by almost 50%, and the business intends to continue its growth trajectory. Whilst leading its client through successful digital transformations, Revolution anticipates onboarding a further ten recruits in the North East this year.

“

...We are proud to be fulfilling our commitment to creating new jobs in the North East as part of our 2022 growth strategy...

Jess commented, "I'm excited to be a part of the Revolution team, it's a brilliant opportunity, and I have loved my time here so far. I'm already working on some inspiring projects for clients across the UK and will continue to learn and develop my career further."

In January this year, Revolution launched its new brand, firmly positioning itself as a specialist in revenue growth. Revolution helps high-performing ambitious businesses grow faster and better through its Digital Transformation, Growth Consultancy, Demand Generation, Customer Conversion and Customer Retention service offer.

Gill Burgess, who founded Revolution in 2003, recently moved to the role of Strategic Board Advisor with Adam Blenkinsop, formerly the Digital Director, becoming CEO, supported by a newly appointed Leadership Team.

Adam commented, "Jess and Madison have both made a fantastic start and are already demonstrating the significant value they are adding to their respective teams. Their technical expertise enables us to continue to deliver outstanding growth services to our rapidly growing client base whilst contributing to our collective personality of being honest, transparent and hard-working. We are proud to be fulfilling our commitment to creating new jobs in the North East as part of our 2022 growth strategy."

Chief Growth Officer (CGO) Josh Tulip, who joined the agency in 2021, heads up the Growth Team.

Josh said, "Since the turn of the year, we've entered into a high-growth phase, and I'm delighted that Madison and Jess have chosen Revolution to further their careers at what is an exciting time for us. We are averaging +68% growth in key metrics across all client accounts (vs pre-pandemic performance), and Madison and Jess are already supporting their new teams with fresh thinking and experience across various demand generation and digital transformation projects to nurture audiences, build brand equity, and drive revenue."

Achieving accelerated growth and demonstrating numerous client success stories, it is clear that Revolution has no plans to slow the pace.

If you are an ambitious business looking to grow your revenue or want to learn more about how Revolution can lead your digital transformation, contact growth@revolutiongrowth.co.uk to speak to one of their experts.



L-R: Jess Wardell and Madison Lowes

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TWELVE-YEAR PARTNERSHIP MAKES GOOD BUSINESS SENSE

Northumbria University's Newcastle Business School is a champion of Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs). An example of this is the successful partnership between the Business School and the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS).

Here, Dr Matt Sutherland, associate professor of marketing at Newcastle Business School and Colin Allen, TASS national operations lead, SportsAid, talk about how important the partnership is to their respective organisations and how collaboration is a key cornerstone of success.



Dr Matt Sutherland, associate professor of marketing at Newcastle Business School.

DR MATT SUTHERLAND

Northumbria University is a powerhouse made up of some of the UK's finest researchers and academics. Over the years, we really have been fortunate in our scope to create impact within the business community and beyond. This is due to the standard of the research we undertake capturing the attention of many organisations in the UK and globally.

One being TASS, a SportsAid funded partnership between talented athletes, delivery sites and national governing bodies of sport, who we formed a strategic knowledge transfer partnership with funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

As part of its work, TASS is keen to ensure that talented athletes have access to a dual career path, balancing training for the sport they love with further education or training, including personal development.

Working with TASS, the Business School has been able to provide further education for a number of talented athletes, with the aim to ensure that should anything cut their careers short, they will have a standard of further education or training to allow a good career path, whether it be within sport leadership, business or elsewhere.

For those looking to hear more about why KTPs are so powerful, including for SMEs, Newcastle Business School has a 'Why Small Business Matters' podcast. The June episode features Colin Allen and Baroness Tanni Grey-Cooper, Chancellor of Northumbria University and 11-time gold medal winner at the Paralympic Games, who, in 2017, filed an Independent Report to Government regarding duty of care in sport, and myself.

The podcast can be listened online or through your podcast app on your smartphone.



Colin Allen, TASS national operations lead, SportsAid.

COLIN ALLEN

TASS is dedicated to ensuring the physical and mental health of its athletes. We are able to do this by working with educational bodies, such as Newcastle Business School.

It is testament to the impact of KTPs that we have collaborated for twelve years.

Within sport, lack of focus, or even contemplation, of dual career opportunities for talented athletes has been endemic within the industry for decades. It is, in part, through collaboration with educational bodies, such as Newcastle Business School, that we have been able to shine a light on this issue and highlight why continuing with personal development, be it education or something else, often leads to improved performance.

It is pleasing to see that collaborative research in this area is starting to have impact upon how sporting bodies are viewing the mental health of athletes and duty of care, which runs far deeper than physical health. However, whilst this necessary conversation is gaining attention, it is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of lasting progression and I look forward to continuing the work we do in partnership with the Business School, to help push it higher up the agenda for the sporting industry.

That is the power of KTPs. Change can be achieved when working alone but lasting impact is created far quicker when organisations work together.

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) are an Innovate UK programme, designed to enable collaboration between academia and industry, facilitating the transfer of knowledge and technology to increase competitiveness and to promote an innovation culture.



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THE FUTURE OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: HOW TO ATTRACT, DEVELOP AND SUSTAIN A THRIVING WORKFORCE



How organisations choose to invest their time and resources is critical to their competitiveness, productivity and performance, and a key focus for business owners or senior leadership teams.

But investment in people – their training, development, and wellbeing – can often fall down the agenda for time poor or cash strapped managers with deadlines and targets to hit.

We spoke to experts from Northumbria University about the value of workforce development and the benefits of supporting, upskilling and empowering people to fulfil their workplace potential.

Dr Gosia Ciesielska, Associate Professor in Organisation Studies at Northumbria University, has a particularly unique perspective on employee development and retention, through her role leading the Restorative Just Culture programme at the University.

A transformative learning programme, it teaches managers how to create a workplace culture of trust, learning and accountability. Initially developed through a partnership with the Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust, the pioneering course provides transferrable skills that improve people management and increase morale.

Gosia said: “The programme provides contemporary people management skills that would benefit anyone in a leadership or line management role, no matter what the sector.

“Rather than disciplining or criticising staff when something goes wrong, this approach is about ensuring lessons are learned in an open, supportive, and proactive way. It’s an effective tool to increase accountability, build trust and

can significantly improve staff retention and wellbeing – helping to drive productivity and save a business money in the long term.

Gosia concluded: “Northumbria University is a fast-growing university with international reach but is very much embedded within regional and national business networks. We have expertise in executive education and in partnering with external organisations to provide the best combination of academic, challenging input and practical, ‘real world’ focussed learning.

“The Restorative Just Culture programme is just one example of how we can help businesses to improve workplace wellbeing, build new skills, increase productivity and reduce costs.”

Alongside a wide range of leadership and management training and CPD courses, Northumbria University also has a strong track record in delivering Higher and Degree Apprenticeships as a route to developing technical skills within the workforce.

By offering learners the best of both worlds, combining university study with workplace learning, Northumbria University is recognised as a leading provider, ranking top 10 in the UK for Higher and Degree Apprenticeships (The Times Good University Guide, 2022) as well as being one of the first UK institutions to offer government-supported apprenticeship programmes.

Dr Charlotte Paterson, Workplace Coach for the Civil Engineer Degree Apprenticeship programme, said: “With an ever-growing portfolio, Northumbria

NEW KNOWLEDGE.



Gosia Ciesielska



Charlotte Paterson

offers a diverse range of apprenticeships across many sectors. Whether businesses have taken on a new recruit or have an employee they would like to upskill or see progress further in the organisation, apprenticeships can be an effective way to develop and retain your workforce, whilst employees gain a degree-level qualification.”

Charlotte continued: “By accessing levy payments or government funding, businesses can provide their employees with a recognised and relevant qualification, often at little extra cost to the organisation.

“Perhaps most importantly, we offer more than a learning programme; we develop a true partnership. We work with organisations to shape and tailor courses that directly meet the demands of their business and sector, and provide the technical skills, knowledge and ‘real world’ experience necessary to get the job done.”

To find out more about the ways in which Northumbria University can help you to train, develop and support your workforce to fulfil their potential, visit: www.northumbria.ac.uk/business-services/education-and-training/



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NAVIGATING TRANSITIONS AT RGS



As we come to the end of the academic year at Newcastle Royal Grammar School, many will be looking forward to a good rest over the summer. Younger year groups may attend children's camps, while others may be taking advantage of adventurous, outdoor opportunities such as Duke of Edinburgh expeditions or perhaps cadet training courses.

Older pupils should be looking to gain work experience or make use of volunteering opportunities; these do not have to be glamorous internships, in many ways what is most important is that young people are proactive in finding a constructive way to use their time. They can learn important lessons outside school that may influence their choice of courses, that they can reflect on in a university application and that will serve them well as they progress towards the workplace.

Approaching the holidays, Year 11 and 13 students are likely to be anxious upon receiving the first set of examined public exam results since the pandemic struck. With a significant amount riding on the outcomes there is an additional element of uncertainty for those who were not able to sit examined GCSEs. Universities are still anticipating a high level of applicants achieving their required grades, which are expected somewhere between the level

of 2021 Teacher Assessed Grades and previous 2019 examined results, though candidates this year have been receiving fewer offers than typical and less Clearing places are anticipated. Applying to university purely based on predicted grades has always had its uncertainties but the recent consultation by the former Education Secretary about possible changes to a post qualification exam system have been quietly shelved. This means that, for the foreseeable future, prospective university students will only receive final confirmation of their university place when they obtain their actual A-Level results in August. Particularly for those people who do not receive the grades needed for their first choice of university, this can mean last-minute decisions on choice of university, course and even just practical logistical details such as finding accommodation. Something which prospective students also need to consider is the higher cost of student loans following the recent Augar review. In that competitive context, the degree apprenticeship

option which entails studying while undertaking paid work looks increasingly attractive, especially with the additional real-world experience they develop along the way.

For those children not yet at the point of leaving school, there will nonetheless be significant changes to navigate after the summer as they go into the new academic year, whether it be moving from Junior School to Senior School, perhaps starting GCSE or A-Level courses, or even just the prospect of meeting a new set of teachers. Knowing what to anticipate coming back for the new school year can be challenging, particularly for those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities who most benefit from routine and structure. This can be especially true when, over a long stretch of unstructured time during the summer holiday, knowledge and skills that have been patiently built up across the preceding year may be diminished. Similarly, the return to PE and school sport in the autumn can be a shock for those who are not sufficiently active at home. To that end it is worth encouraging children to maintain a suitable balance of daily exercise, regular reading and, ideally also a few Maths or English exercises each week to keep them ticking over. However, it is also important that pupils take the time to decompress after a busy year and consciously enjoy spending time with family. I hope that both children and teachers enjoy their well-deserved break!

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LESSONS LEARNED

We finish term on 8 July, and I write this, I am considering what I would like to say to our pupils at our final assembly. I should particularly like to thank them for their collective good-humour, resilience, diligence, and sense of fair play, amidst yet another extraordinary school year.

I remember writing this column this time last year and, optimist that I am, I was looking forward to a September that would allow us to start getting back to normal.

Well, as we all know, this is far from what happened, and I am reminded of an old proverb - *'there's many a slip 'twixt cup and lip'* - which I thought was a Northern English saying but has been attributed to 17th century Robert Burton in his work *The Anatomy of Melancholy* - a fitting book for the period in which we have been living. Anyway, a year on, this is what I learned during this academic year.

Cancelling big events at the last minute can severely upset people

We had to cancel Speech Day and our Carol Service at the end of term and the genuine disappointment from pupils as well as parents indicated how crucial such events are for a school community and for community engagement. All are now again in the calendar for the academic year of 2022-23, so fingers crossed that there are no glitches now!

The whole point of a 3-18 school is so that there can be interaction between the different year groups

One of the many virtues of our fabulous school is that the Sixth Form girls assist in the after-school care of the 'littluns' but we were still unable to do this last September as we remained concerned about spreading infection across year groups. Again, this was met with much disappointment all round, and we were all mightily relieved when we were able to reinstate this service again.

Hybrid learning is a wonderful innovation and is here to stay, but it cannot be a substitute for face-to-face teaching

We have learned a great deal about educational technology during the last two and a half years, and it is clear that 'Snow Days' in the future will not mean a day

off from learning. However, after the exhausting half in, half out scenarios that played out during the first two terms, our pupils were heartily glad to be back in the classroom, and our staff were heard to say that, after what has happened, society at large has realised that teachers are vital to the life force of the country.

Nothing helps one's ability to speed read and assimilate information at a rate of knots like a governmental missive late in the evening

This happened many times, with messages needing to be given out to all stakeholders ASAP. I had always thought that I was adept at comprehending complex material quickly, but nothing had prepared me for the ability to make sense of pages of quasi-medical advice in record time, so that parents, staff and pupils could make sense of it in the morning.

The job of Headteacher is one of Jack of all trades

During the last academic year, Heads have been disease control operators, diagnosticians, interpreters of gobbledegook, hoarders of precious PPE and test kits, and major cheerleader when everyone is about to drop with exhaustion.

Here's to 202-23. I am not making any grand prognostications; I just wish us all to have a healthy and happy start to the new year and to be able to do things that you would expect a school to be able to do.

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.

“

...The job of Headteacher is one of Jack of all trades...



Simone Niblock



EXAMINING THE COST OF CARING IN 2022

By Craig Wade Sector Manager for Health, Science and Social Care at NCFE

Did you know that nationally, one in seven adults in the UK workforce are also juggling the provision of unpaid care for a family member or friend due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction?

This translates to a huge number of hours of unpaid work and means that unpaid carers provide social care worth £132 billion a year, according to Carers UK.

If we look at this on a more local level for context, Newcastle upon Tyne has a population of 279,100 people, with 25,644 of them registered as providing unpaid care and support to family, friends and neighbours. Further to this, more than 7,000 of these 25,000 carers are providing more than 50 hours of unpaid care every week (Census 2011, ONS).

The impacts on carers

We also know from the ONS' census analysis that people living in more deprived areas are more likely to spend higher numbers of hours per week providing unpaid care. This correlates with the risk of further deprivation and increases the risk of self-neglect, as carers are much less likely to seek medical help when needed than someone

without this responsibility. (Report for the National Co-ordinating Centre for NHS Service Delivery and Organisation R & D (NCCSDO), 2003).

In fact, across the UK, carers providing unpaid care for more than 50 hours a week were twice as likely to be in poor health as non-carers in 2001 and, according to Carers UK's latest analysis, "13.2% of carers caring for over 50 hours a week were in 'bad' or 'very bad' health. This compares to 5.3% of people without caring responsibilities."

As well as the risk to carers' health and wellbeing, caring can also have a detrimental effect on the future career prospects of those who take time out. Six hundred people give up working every day to support an older or disabled relative and, at £67.60, the Carer's Allowance is the lowest benefit of its kind.

Taking into account that half of working-age carers live in a household where no one is in paid work (often through illness), it's not difficult to understand how 1.2 million carers are in poverty in the UK. Sadly, 39% of carers described their financial situation as "struggling to make ends meet" in Carers UK's State of Caring Survey (2019).

Returner support

Local Authorities, as part of their statutory duty to offer support to unpaid carers, also usually offer support to 'returners' (those whose caring responsibilities have ended and who may be looking to go back to work). This is to help them find a job or work opportunity, often working with independent charities to offer a fuller support package.

Advice and support to access benefits and local funding or seek help with debt and access any local funding are standard parts of this service, but many organisations also offer social groups and activities for carers and support with the emotional impact of providing care.

Returner support might also include support to access bereavement counselling (a carer's responsibilities coming to an end is not always a cause for celebration) or benefits and housing advice and employability support.

Seeking support for carers

Caring can be lonely and overwhelming, and many people don't want to talk about it with others. This might be because it's hard to admit that things are tough, or because people worry about hurting the feelings of the person that they're caring for by talking about how difficult things feel.

It can also be difficult for carers to see their caring role as distinct from their general relationship with the person that they're caring for. The 'commissioning for carers' section of the NHS website tells us that it takes an average of two years for people to acknowledge their role as a carer.

At a recent sharing event in Newcastle, young carers talked about their experiences so that professionals such as teachers, social care workers and social workers could better understand how they might be able to help those with caring roles. This might be through offering support with the care itself, or it could be as simple as asking how someone is rather than asking why they're late. But all of these interventions rely on carers being identified, in order for reasonable adjustments and support to be put in place.

Further resources

Carers UK's 'Let your GP know' campaign aims to help with this. There's special support available from primary care teams for those with caring responsibilities, including better access to appointment and home visits. This also gives better visibility of carers to other service providers and could act as a referral mechanism for more support.

If you're a carer, or think you might be a carer but don't know how to access support, your local authority should be able to point you in the right direction – but there's also help available online (if you'd prefer not to talk to anyone) through Carers UK's Upfront Guide to Caring, which uses a short quiz to signpost to individual information about benefits, entitlements and support.

If you'd like to consider a career in caring, NCFE offers over 80 qualifications in the sector and you can find more information at [ncfe.org.uk](https://www.ncfe.org.uk)



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ROCK LEGEND LAUNCHES MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP AT TEESSIDE UNIVERSITY



Teesside University has announced a new scholarship with rock royalty Paul Rodgers to support the next generation of gifted music makers.

Paul Rodgers is a singer, songwriter and founding member of iconic rock bands Free and Bad Company. Together with Led Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page, they formed top grossing band The Firm, and he is also famed for his time performing with Queen.

Paul is now giving back to the next generation by launching his inaugural scholarship at Teesside University.

The 72-year-old rock legend and his wife, Cynthia Kereluk, have pledged £10,000 to support two undergraduates entering onto the BSc (Hons) Music Technology course within Teesside University's School of Arts & Creative Industries in Autumn 2022.

Through the Paul Rodgers Scholarship, successful applicants will benefit from financial support of £5,000 each, which will be distributed throughout the three-year course.

The scholarship aims to help aspiring music professionals to achieve their potential by

providing financial support as they work towards a higher education qualification.

Paul Rodgers has forged a hugely successful career in the music industry and was highlighted as one of the top 100 singers of all time in a Rolling Stone magazine feature. He is eager to support others at the beginning of their professional journeys.

"A formal education was not a viable financial option for me," explained Paul.

"I felt that I had no one to believe in me except me. I hope this scholarship supports someone who believes in themselves despite all the odds."

The Middlesbrough-born musician is also thrilled to give back to Teesside University, having been awarded a Doctor of Letters in 2009.

Paul's wife, Cynthia Kereluk, is a graduate in education from Canada's Simon Fraser University. For 15 years she was the host and writer of the number one internationally syndicated TV fitness show, 'The Everyday Workout' - helping millions to achieve a healthier lifestyle.

The author, artist, and a former Miss Canada, added: "Having lost both of my parents early, putting myself through University was a financial struggle, so hopefully this scholarship will afford someone an easier educational journey."

The Paul Rodgers Scholarship sits alongside Teesside University's other exciting new opportunities developed by famous faces for the



next academic year, including the Franc Roddam Scholarship in film and television and the Beth Mead Scholarship for elite athletes.

Laura Sillars, Dean of the School of Arts & Creative Industries, commented: "Teesside University works tirelessly to develop new opportunities for students, and our scholarships play a vital role in boosting access and participation within higher education.

"The generosity of benefactors like Paul and Cynthia is hugely important in opening new doors for our talented undergraduates, and their support is much appreciated.

"We are proud to introduce the Paul Rodgers Scholarship as part of our fantastic catalogue of offerings, and we look forward to awarding it to two successful applicants later this year."

The deadline for application to the Paul Rodgers Scholarship is 31 August, 2022.

More about the Paul Rodgers Scholarships and how to apply - www.tees.ac.uk/sections/fulltime/scholarships_paul_rogers.cfm



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I, ROBOT

By Kieran McLaughlin,
Headteacher, Durham School

If you ever worry about feeling sleepy when you need to stay awake, you could do worse than google “Boston Dynamics” and settle down to watch some of their videos – they are genuinely terrifying.

If you have never come across them before, let me explain. Boston Dynamics is a robotics company which has spent the last few years developing increasingly Terminator-like robots to perform functions which seem almost specifically designed to allow them to become our new overlords. Actions such as getting up off the floor after being knocked down, opening doors and running at high speeds, though mercifully not yet after their puny human creators, take on a rather sinister turn when performed by a robot which, without looking human, displays sufficiently anthropomorphic behaviour to provide an involuntary shudder.

Like it or not, robots and the cerebral equivalent, artificial intelligence, will take on an increased role in our lives. The rise of Siri and Alexa, as well as the increase in the Internet of things in the home and the gradual replacement by robots of humans in mundane repetitive occupations are as certain as night following day; to pretend otherwise is an error of Canute-like proportion. But what about the world of education? Will the classrooms of the future be taught by robots?

There are plenty of futurologists out there who will tell you that the future of education is just that. Personalised learning – youngsters sat in front of computers with videos, quizzes and tutorials which respond to the individual needs of each student – sounds marvellous. No need for teachers, who are hard to recruit and come with human foibles and frailties, when we have the infinite capacity of the Internet, coupled with sophisticated software which learns about the student the more they interact; it is hugely seductive as a learning concept. And, there are plenty of snake oil salesmen and women out there who are only too keen to persuade you that

their particular learning environment or virtual classroom is exactly what you are looking for.

I have to say I am sceptical. For all of the advantages this brave new world promises, it can't evade some simple home truths about children and schools. For me, expecting a virtual classroom to sufficiently educate a teenager, let alone a younger child, is the technological equivalent of issuing them with a textbook at the beginning of the year and telling them to go away, read the textbook and answer all the questions. It's fine in theory, and fundamentally there is nothing intrinsically different between most online resources and a good textbook, but in reality it won't work.

At the heart of teaching is the relationship between the pupil and the teacher. The teacher needs to know the pupil, have an awareness of their abilities and limitations and, crucially, be able to interact with the pupil in a way that a machine simply can't. At the simplest level, kids need to be told what to do and stopped when they veer off task, but it is more than that too. In my subject,

physics, the online world can provide some excellent simulations and videos, but it can't cope with a pupil who says, “But I just don't understand.” Watching a video over and over is the equivalent just shouting louder when trying to order in a French restaurant: if they didn't get you the first time, saying it over and over again isn't going to work.

I'm not a luddite and the implications for education in less economically developed countries where teachers simply aren't available could be genuinely transformational. But, for us luckily enough to be in a country which has a highly educated, professional and genuinely caring body of teachers, I don't expect the robots to take over just yet.

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



Kieran McLaughlin

The continued adventures of...

Ziggy!



Hi everyone,

Summer is here and I've been getting lots of walks. We have been really busy with work, jobs varying from Holy Island, Seahouses, Durham, and all over the North East so plenty of travelling.

We have had visits from Cousin Dexter and Cali's daughter Kinnie, along with my daughter Maisie. Auntie Lola and Uncle Ozzie have been round for sleepovers.

But most of all Uncle Alexander has got a new dog called Teddy (who Dad calls a ball of fluff) and I see him every day so we always seem to have a house full of dogs.

Anyway, back to work.

Lisa from Tynemouth asks:

Q: I am considering having cavity wall insulation and would like your opinion as to the best materials for the job.

A: Cavity walls were first built in exposed coastal areas in order to keep out wind-driven rain. Filling the cavity with insulation will always hold the risk that moisture will be able to find its way across to the inside, whatever insulation material is used.

There is also the possibility that the insulation will be less than perfect, leaving unfilled air pockets – these will leave 'cold spots' on the inside walls which will attract moisture.

Another problem concerns wall-tie corrosion; cavity insulation makes the outer brick leaf colder, and therefore wetter, which can accelerate rusting of the wall ties. And if the ties have to be replaced, there is no satisfactory wall of refilling the holes in the insulation, whatever the material.

The cavity insulation industry denies the existence of these problems, but in my experience they are quite common.

I do not think cavity wall insulation is a good idea.



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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STEELEYE SPAN BRING 50TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR TO NEWCASTLE'S TYNE THEATRE

Tyne Theatre and Opera House have recently announced that folk-rock pioneers Steeleye Span will be bringing their 50th Anniversary tour to the stage in Newcastle on Wednesday 5th October 2022.

Steeleye Span has been one of the most influential names in British roots music. Pioneers of folk-rock, Steeleye Span changed the face of folk music forever, taking it out of small clubs and into the world of gold discs and international tours. Members have come and gone over the years, but Steeleye has always remained at the forefront of the genre they helped to define, and, 38 years later the band has become an institution in British music.



SMASH HIT COMES TO SUNDERLAND

Producers, Michael Harrison and David Ian are delighted to announce that the award-winning international smash hit musical *The Bodyguard* will tour the UK and Ireland arriving at Sunderland Empire on Monday 13 February 2023. Tour schedule attached with casting to be announced soon.

Former Secret Service agent turned bodyguard, Frank Farmer, is hired to protect superstar Rachel Marron from an unknown stalker. Each expects to be in charge; what they don't expect is to fall in love. A romantic thriller, *The Bodyguard* features a host of irresistible classics including *Queen of the Night*, *So Emotional*, *One Moment in Time*, *Saving All My Love*, *Run to You*, *I Have Nothing*, *I Wanna Dance with Somebody* and one of the biggest hit songs of all time – *I Will Always Love You*.

The show will hit Sunderland Empire's stage from Monday 13 February – Saturday 18 February 2023. Tickets ON SALE NOW.



NORTH EAST SCREEN DECLARES THE REGION 'OPEN FOR BUSINESS' FOR THE TV AND FILM INDUSTRY

Following industry investment of at least £37 million, North East Screen (formerly Northern Film + Media), the screen industries development agency for the North East of England, has launched its new name, brand and programme of events.

The agency is now gearing up to meet the challenge of increasing activity by creating new partnerships, rebranding their successful business model, and creating vibrant industry sector communities. This will enhance and develop the skills that make the North East the place to create excellence in the world of TV and film.

Alison Gwynn, North East Screen, Chief Executive continues; "With a new name and ambition for growing the sector, real investment and broadcaster partners, we are strongly putting the message out that the North East is open for business. We have the skills, the passion and the knowledge, not to mention the incredible locations. By increasing our networks and connecting people, skills and companies we want to provide a pathway for regional talent, to encourage companies to set up in the beautiful North East and to say to any native North Easterners working in the industry elsewhere in the UK to come back home!

"The unique partnership created last year by the BBC with all 12 local authorities and three combined authorities across the North East region will help us achieve our vision. We will be delivering a programme of events and skills activity to provide a pathway for students, to attract visiting productions, to keep industry talent in the region and increase the visibility of the region nationally and internationally. By working together we hope to strengthen our position to attract the very best of TV and Film production and talent"

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- MON 11 JULY** FARIDA AMADOU AND JERUSALEM IN MY HEART (4.5h)
- THU 14 JULY** THE DELINES + OUR MAN IN THE FIELD JUMPIN' HOT CLUB
- SAT 16 JULY** CHRIS DIFFORD McWishyWishy Presents
- SAT 13 AUG** EMMA RUTH RUNDLE PLUS SUPPORT FROM JO QUAIL (4.5h)
- WED 24 AUG** EFTERKLANG (4.5h)
- MON 29 AUG** JOSHUA RAY WALKER PLUS SUPPORT JUMPIN' HOT CLUB
- THU 1 SEP** THE WEATHER STATION (4.5h)
- THU 8 SEP** URAL THOMAS & THE PAIN + SMOOVE DJ SET JUMPIN' HOT CLUB
- SAT 17 SEP** VOICES OF VIRTUE GOSPEL CHOIR
- SAT 24 SEP** BEYOND THE MOOR FESTIVAL
- THU 13 OCT** KATHRYN ROBERTS (4.5h)
- FRI 4 NOV** POLLY PAULUSMA
- THU 10 NOV** AN EVENING WITH RILEY DOWNING JUMPIN' HOT CLUB
(PART OF JUMPIN HOT 37TH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION)
- SAT 12 NOV** DAVID LEWIS GEDGE - TALES FROM THE WEDDING PRESENT
- MON 14 NOV** JEFFREY FOUCAULT (WITH ERIC HEYWOOD)+ DIETRICH STRAUSE JUMPIN' HOT CLUB
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A SUMMER OF ENTERTAINMENT AT PLAYHOUSE WHITLEY BAY

The Playhouse, one of the region's hidden gems when it comes to live events, is once again looking forward to hosting the biggest variety of shows this Summer!

The historical state-of-the art 638 seater auditorium, located in the beautiful coastal resort of Whitley Bay prides itself on not only the number of events each year, but the vast assortment of productions that entertain the thousands of happy faces that come through the doors. Northern Insight picks out some of the forthcoming Summer attractions.

A VISION OF ELVIS

Thurs 14th July 2022 • 7.30pm

You've seen the epic Baz Luhrmann film now it is time to witness one of the world's biggest tribute acts to the King! Star of the show Rob Kingsley, winner of The National Tribute Music Awards "Official Elvis Show" and "No.1 Male Tribute", is internationally renowned as the best Elvis Presley tribute concert, touring the world today. Officially endorsed by Elvis Presley Enterprises and Mr Ed Bonja – Elvis's former Photographer and Road Manager!

HOUSEWIVES ON HOLIDAY

Tues 19th July 2022 • 7.30pm

From the writers & producers of Hormonal Housewives & Girls Just Wanna Have Fun, it's time to get away from it all and join the Housewives on Holiday! The brand-new comedy stars the Legendary Nolan Sister Maureen Nolan, with Josephine Partridge and Sarah Dearlove. What's better than letting your hair down with the girls? Letting your hair down with the girls on HOLIDAY! Holidays, like women, come in all shapes & sizes. From wild partying to wild swimming. From Club 18-30 to Club 80-130. Join the ladies as they romp through a tapas selection of Holiday Heaven, Holiday Hell but most of all Holiday Hilarity!

Bring your passports & bikinis because we're off on our holiobobs. From the Costa del Sol to the Costa del Clacton there's no sucking in your belly on our beach. You're among friends. Slap on the Fun Factor 50 & let it all hang out! Cabin Crew, prepare for take-off because the Housewives are on Holiday.

CLINTON BAPTISTE Vs RAMONE

Friday 14th October 2022

As featured in Peter Kay's Phoenix Nights...it's Clinton Baptiste - and his arch psychic enemy Ramone from the massively popular Clinton Baptiste's Paranormal Podcast. Communicating with the Afterlife? What could be more mind expanding?! The public are rightly hypnotised by mere mortals with extra-sensoryability and Britain is honoured to have spawned two of the most gifted mystics in the world, the coiffured titans of the Unknown - Clinton Baptiste and Ramone Tamine.

IRELAND: THE SHOW

Tues 9th August 2022 • 7.30pm

Now seen by a live audience of over 250,000 to nightly standing ovations and rave reviews, join the fun in 'Ireland: The Show'! Featuring an all-star cast of the Emerald Isle's most talented singers and performers, accompanied by the fabulous Keltic Storm Band and world champion Gael Force Irish dancers from Kerry, Mayo and Clare. This unmissable show will take you on a journey through the decades of a globally loved culture.

www.playhousewhitleybay.co.uk



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Beauty AND THE BEAST



"Panto Gold" North East Theatre Guide

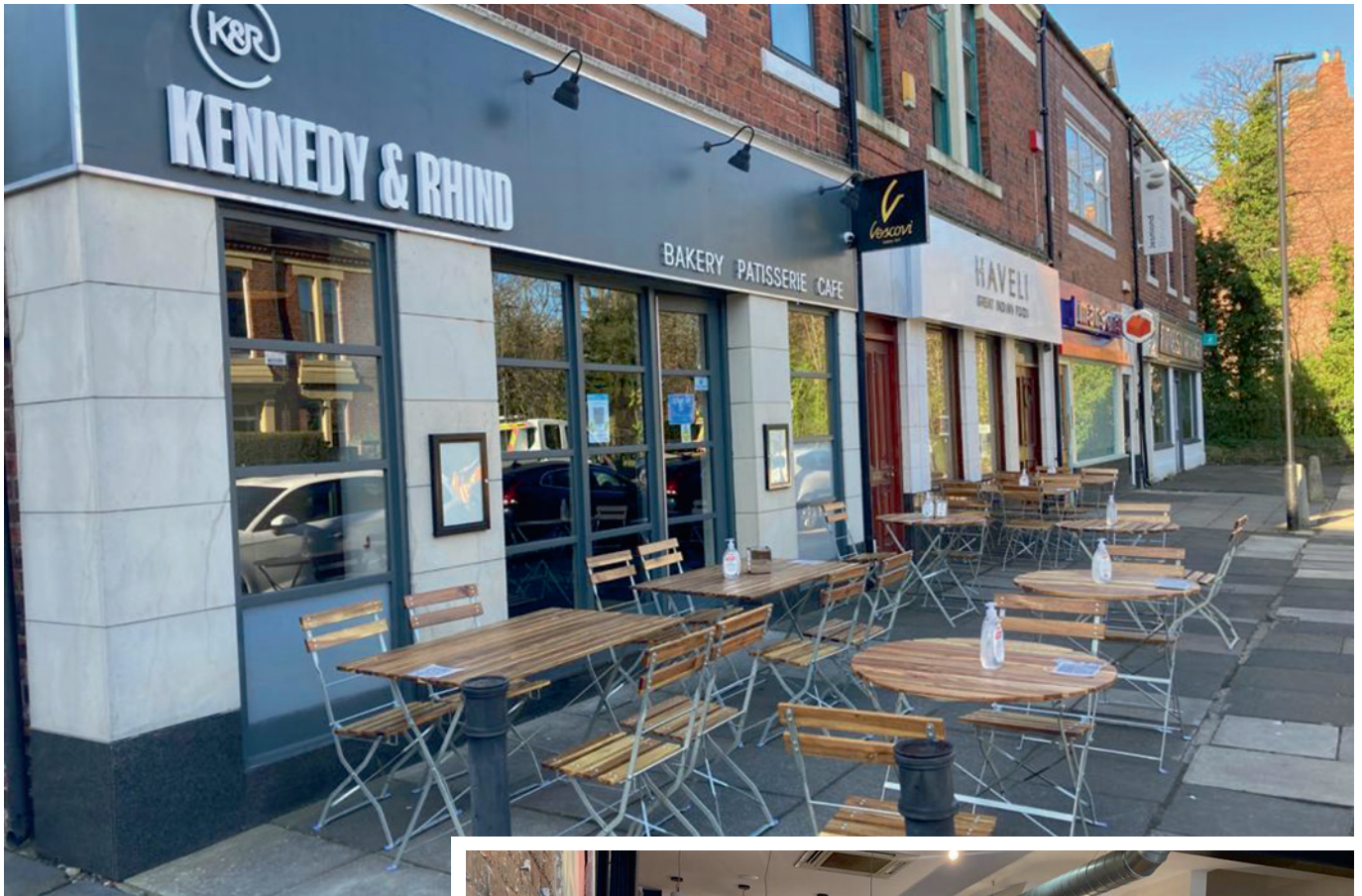


SCAN TO BOOK

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3rd - 7th AUGUST 2022
PlayhouseWhitleyBay.co.uk





SALES ARE RISING LIKE A CAKE

The artisan bakes at a top Jesmond venue are selling like, well, hot cakes, sparking the launch of a new, customer-centric initiative.

It is a frequent complaint in the business world that there aren't enough hours in the day – and Kennedy & Rhind at Holly Avenue West know that better than most.

From the day they opened their bakery and café, demand for the hand-crafted pastries and savouries lovingly made by David Kennedy and Murray Rhind has been high – and it shows no signs of slowing down.

And, now the hard working pair have decided to not only extend their opening hours but also to introduce an evening service – to ensure no customer goes away empty handed.

As well as selling freshly baked goods on a daily basis and at a number of pop-ups – including Jesmond Food Market and regularly at the award-winning Blackbird pub At Ponteland – Kennedy & Rhind's café has become a firm fixture on the Jesmond dining scene.

And with that in mind, the café has now extended its opening hours on Fridays and Saturdays until



8pm, offering a new and expanded menu but with all of the usual favourites still on offer.

From Sundays through to Thursday the café will be opening until 5pm, again in response to the demand by customers.

The new menu includes light bites featuring dishes such as carpaccio of beef with a rocket, tomato and parmesan salad, whipped cod roe, fennel, dill and watercress salad served with sourdough and a vegan soba noodle salad with crispy tofu and soy and sesame dressing.

Big bites include spatchcock harissa and lemon chicken with souk roast root veg and a confit and herb salad, a blackened roast salmon, black beans and Mediterranean vegetables with an avocado and mango salsa, along with a vegan curry option.

There will also be a selection of boards available to share, including meat, fish and a vegetarian option.

The desserts include a burnt Basque cheesecake, iced Ferrero semifreddo and a strawberry frangipane pudding and custard.



"From day one we've always had a plan to make Kennedy & Rhind an all-day location as well as offering the retail side," said David.

"And now we're well on the way to do that. People tell us that we're a great spot for good food in a friendly and casual atmosphere, which is exactly what we wanted to achieve."

But the plans don't stop there, with the aim of introducing a Sunday lunch service in the next few weeks.

For further information visit
www.kennedyandrhind.co.uk

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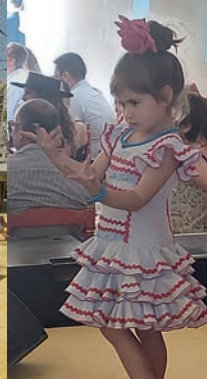


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JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA – THE CITY AND FESTIVAL OF THE HORSE

By Caroline Preston

I've always loved horses, so much so, at thirteen my parents finally caved into our requests and bought us one. We were lucky yes, but spoilt no, it was indeed made 'crystal clear' that this horse was 'our responsibility' and so bicycle journeys to the stables ensued to look after our beautiful Blaze (his name).



Some years later as education studies and other interests took over, we agreed 'Blaze' would be sold and 30 years later here I am, still thinking about him.

So imagine my excitement when some pre-trip research revealed the 'Feria de Caballo Jerez' (Festival of the Horse, Jerez) would be making its post Covid return...and a mere two hour drive from our hotel base in Spain.

Finding out the mechanics of this feria was not the easiest task. It's not really an international tourist event and both recent and historical online information was lacking somewhat, so after many a fruitless effort, we decided to 'wing it'.

So why a festival to celebrate horses? Horses have been part of Jerez since early as 720 BC. It began with the "Berber" horse breed from North Africa which was gradually refined with other breeds. Finally it was the monks of Jerez that succeeded in the breeding of the pure Andalusian horses, called "Pura Raza Española". The purity of the breed is strictly managed so as not to dilute its unique aesthetics, talents and of course, their ability to dance.

Yes, these horses actually dance and it all began at the Royal Andalusian School of Equestrian Art Foundation, in Jerez. According to the Foundation it was in May 1973 when King Juan Carlos I awarded Don Alvaro Domecq Romero the 'Caballo de Oro' (Golden Horse) trophy in Jerez. A most prestigious annual trophy in recognition of dedication and work carried out in favour of the horse. In return it's said that Alvaro presented the show "How the Andalusian Horses Dance" for the first time, and this marked the origin of the school.

To this day this show continues to flourish but the foundation is also known for activities of equal importance including the promotion of equestrian heritage, the selection of horses, training of high-quality riders, and much more.
www.realescuela.org

Arriving in Jerez mid-morning we check into Hotel Dona Blanca, an attractive Spanish building with magnificent, shuttered windows keeping the 40-degree heat at bay. With handy underground parking and central old town location, its walking distance to everything.

It is too early for the feria, so we head into the centre and amongst old and new, horses and sherry are highlighted everywhere. From sculptures to fountains, it is clearly a city dedicated to the two. We head to the Alcazar de Jerez, a strong 11-12th century fortress and mosque with stunning Islamic gardens and a 17-18th century baroque palace with spectacular views of Jerez. www.andalucia.org

I'm excited, it's time to check-out what we came for and thankfully it's easier to find than expected, we simply follow locals in traditional and flamenco inspired outfits! We are definitely under-dressed. It's quite a walk to the purpose-built González Hontoria fairground so we negotiate a reasonable fare in a horse-drawn taxi, what a way to arrive.

The Feria de Caballo spans a week, starting at 1 pm each day and entry to the main site is free. In addition to the fair itself there are also ticketed events. The feria is vast, street-like lines of festival structures resemble origins of an older festival where 'Casitas' (small house/cabins) would have been. Each casita offers either food, music, drinks or a combination of all three. The colours, culture, dress and refreshments are a feast for the senses,

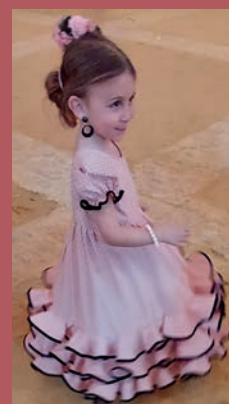
We head to Casita Buena Gente, organised by Spanish group Pena Flamenca Buena Gente (meaning: Good Flamenco, Good People). With a large bar and fans it provides relief from the temperature outside. Puzzled as to what happens here, we soon learn of impending live Flamenco and using Google Translate and our mediocre Spanish we chat to locals and almost immediately are welcomed like family.

As conversation and ice-cold Tio-Pepe dry-white sherry flows, the casita fills in anticipation of the music. We share plates of Jamon (cured ham) and Manchego cheese with our new friends. Excitement builds and the atmosphere is electric, even children fully embrace their heritage, the future Flamenco stars I think...

As musicians take to the stage, the guitarist, a younger Antonio Banderas type does a quick sound test, and music soon thunders into life. The singing, clapping, stamping and guitar rhythms make for feeling so alive. Flamenco's roots are widely disputed but notes of Arabian, Moorish, Romany and Latin are all present and we dance, drink and eat with Jerez's finest.

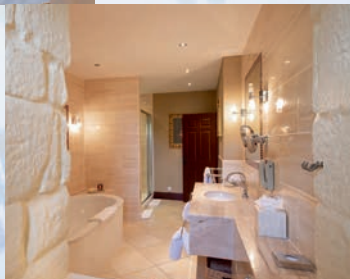
It's already midnight and we step outside to a dazzling display of Moorish style lights, it's the feria at night, we're craving sustenance and head for carb heaven, roast pork loin rolls, delicious. More drinks, dancing and obligatory group selfies follow...a night to remember and one of the best, not bad for 'winging-it'. Jerez we love you.

www.thejarvisjotter.co.uk



Travel Notes:

Caroline travelled with TUI airways to Malaga staying at Hotel Globales Cortijo Blanco with car hire from www.recordrentacar.com and one night stay in Jerez at www.hoteldonablanca.com

A collage of three images. The top left shows a person in a white dress. The top right shows a wedding ceremony. The bottom right shows a wedding reception. The text 'Step into Summer...' is overlaid in a white script font.

Step
into Summer...







A KNIGHT TO REMEMBER

By Michael Grahamslaw

Being my wife Lisa's birthday, I wanted somewhere which would really pull out all the stops so decided upon Lumley Castle – County Durham's magnificent 14th century castle cum luxury hotel.

The venue is an old, old favourite of ours dating back to the 90s where I first visited for staff Christmas parties and private dining. In the intervening years (and a few grey hairs later), we have visited sporadically including for a particularly good Afternoon Tea experience a few years ago.

A full overnight stay review then was clearly in order. Positioned between Newcastle and Durham, the hotel is a perfect basecamp to explore either of the cities, not to mention the region's other headline attractions including Hadrian's Wall, Durham Cricket Club, The Angel of the North and Beamish Museum.

Uniquely, the castle evokes the spirit of a bygone era with four poster beds, suits of armour and pelmeted drapes combining to create an atmosphere of all of its own. The castle is also famously haunted with many 'sightings' reported over the years whilst the hotel has featured on ghost story documentaries a number of times.

Such a unique setting then lends itself nicely to a number of occasions be it a wedding, romantic couple's retreat or leisure break with the family.

Thankfully, there would be no such apparitions on this occasion. We were allocated one of the slightly more modern courtyard bedrooms which – as the original stable block – is annexed to the castle itself. These rooms have been stylishly converted whilst retaining the stables' heritage with sloping eaves and exposed beams. This was a sumptuous place to relax on a sleepy Sunday with the papers whilst drinking in our fond memories of the hotel over a glass of fizz.

In the award-winning 'Knights' restaurant, the hotel has the dining to match the majesty of its surroundings. The restaurant offers classical dishes with many an inventive twist with a focus on high-quality freshly prepared food. The dining area is very atmospheric with subtle lighting and lavish furnishings and definitely a good place to kick back with a goblet or two of the good stuff.

The restaurant has an extensive fine wine selection with many signposted on the menu as the perfect accompaniment to the dishes on its a la carte menu. Lisa followed suit, pairing an excellent Sardinian Vermentino with a starter of castle cured salmon, spiced potato pancake and celeriac and crab remoulade. I meanwhile paired a light white rioja with scorched soused mackerel, cucumber gel and horseradish snow.

Main courses were of similar impressive fayre. I chose the obligatory 8oz fillet steak with all the trimmings whilst Lisa enjoyed the pot-roasted rump of Northumbrian lamb with wild garlic and Jersey royals. Naturally, this was washed down with a bottle of Saint Emilion's finest.

Service was sharp and attentive throughout. Our waitress had been at the castle for 25 years and was a font of knowledge, educating us on the castle's rich history and making menu recommendations where appropriate.

As a real nice touch to end the evening, they brought out a cake unannounced for Lisa's Birthday. Now that is what we call stellar customer service.

This is a venue which has stood proud for over 600 years and with hospitality as good as this is certainly set to flourish for a little while longer yet.

For more information, visit www.lumleycastle.com





THE OUTLOOK IS SUNNY FOR THE UK HOLIDAY MARKET – EVEN IF THE WEATHER ISN'T!

After a bumper two years for staycations during the coronavirus crisis, the market is changing once again. Here, Dale Smith, chief executive of holiday lettings management company Host & Stay, shares his predictions for the UK holiday market this year.

What a difference a year makes

Last year, and the year before, were excellent for the UK holiday market, as foreign travel was heavily restricted and, for a while, banned outright.

This year, while the market remains healthy, circumstances are quite different, and we're seeing the effects of this in the way in which people book holidays.

Spreading their wings

Firstly, we cannot ignore the fact that people are able to travel internationally again and so there is a high degree of pent-up demand.

In real terms, what this means for UK rentals is they need to be competitive when it comes to rates, as, unlike the past few years, it's a buyers' market once again. In 2020 and 2021, as demand for UK breaks rocketed due to holidaymakers' desperation to escape their four walls, prices rocketed commensurately.

Now, the competition with a two-week package in the Med is back on, which means I'm certain we will see nightly rates ease below the highs of last summer.

Cost of living

We are entering into an unprecedented cost-of-living crisis, with energy bills soaring, inflation rising and salaries in many sectors stagnating.

This means that many families are cutting back on luxuries, and early reports suggest that short breaks in some of the UK's most popular destinations, such as the Lake District, are one of the early victims of belt-tightening.

However, it remains to be seen what this means for holidaymakers' main summer breaks; whether people will forgo their longer break altogether or opt for the easier option of a week-long stay in one of the UK's stunning destinations, such as Northumberland or North Yorkshire.

Late bookings

One trend that has remained the same, but for very different reasons, is the increasing number of late bookings we are seeing.

At Host & Stay, in the first months of the year we have seen between 60 and 90 per cent of homes being booked extremely late – often in the same month as the break – compared to historical standards.

This is similar to the previous two years, although the trend over this period has an obvious explanation in the changing travel restrictions. In 2020, pent-up demand led to a last-minute explosion in bookings once restrictions were eased, while 2021 was dominated by varying rules and regulations. With these changing rapidly, in some cases in a matter of days, many holidaymakers held out hope for a foreign break until the very last minute.

This led to a high level of late demand as plans were scuppered or rules were changed and nervous passengers decided a UK staycation was the safer alternative.

Now, although the market is in a very different place, we're seeing a similar pattern.

As CEO of Host & Stay, I sit on the board of the Short Term Accommodation Association with CEOs from Sykes, Under The Doormat, and ALTIDO, among others. We all agree that these late booking surges makes sense given the cost-of-living crisis, and guests are waiting until the last minute (or even after pay day) to decide if they can afford to go on holiday or not.

The outlook overall

Despite some uncertainties, the UK holiday market looks healthy and I am confident it will remain buoyant over coming months, especially if the trend for last-minute bookings continues.

While foreign holidays may seem like a novelty after two years of limited travel, the staycation market should not be seen as a second choice.

Holidaymakers have had a taste of what the UK can offer. It may have been born of necessity in the first instance, but I believe that many travellers will continue to lean into the staycation experience, enjoying the logistical and environmental benefits of staying local.

hostandstay.co.uk



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HOLIDAY LETTINGS FIRM WINS BIG AT AWARDS

Host & Stay, which is based in Saltburn, North Yorkshire, won the prize for best leisure property management company at the recent Short Term Rentalz Shortyz awards – one of only two UK-based companies in the category.

The property management firm, which was set up by Dale Smith in 2018, has enjoyed rapid growth over the past two years, and now has more than 600 holiday properties on its books.

The category judges were looking for entrants that could demonstrate their growth, as well as proactive and effective marketing, staff development and tangible benefits to clients.

Dale, who was also shortlisted in the Rising

Star category, said: "For the submission we documented our growth, our processes and also shared our team video, which went down really well with the judging panel."

"At Host & Stay, we pride ourselves on doing things differently, for both our clients and our team."

"For our clients, we offer full management of properties thanks to our growing in-house team. From the styling and photographs of the property, to marketing it and handling bookings, we give owners a full end-to-end service."

"We also recognise that our team are integral to our ongoing success, and wherever possible we employ people from the local area, in order to continue to support our communities."

Host & Stay is part of The SDDE Smith Group, a portfolio of property-based companies operating in a variety of fields, including legal services, construction and interior design.



BRITAIN'S BEST TAKEAWAY OPENS SUNDERLAND RESTAURANT

A team of restaurateurs who recently tasted success on a popular BBC cooking show are now serving up a new offering for Sunderland city centre.

Newcastle's My Delhi has opened a second restaurant, in Sunderland, after it was triumphant on 'Britain's Top Takeaway' hosted by Sara Cox earlier this month.

The restaurant opened its first outlet on Newcastle's Clayton Street in May 2019 serving an array of authentic Indian street food dishes inspired by the 'streets and markets of Delhi'.

However, having proved a huge hit among diners prior to the pandemic, the restaurant – like thousands across the UK – was forced to adjust its business model to serve up takeaways and continue trading during the crisis.

The transition proved such a hit however that the restaurant was invited to compete on the BBC2 show to go head-to-head with some of the nation's top Indian eateries and it beat off stiff competition to come out on top. The eatery was also crowned best street food restaurant of the year at the Asian Curry Awards.

Elahi said: "We had a vision to create a new kind of Indian dining experience, bringing the true flavours and atmosphere of dining in Delhi to central Newcastle."

"When we set up, we knew we had to create an experience that people really bought into. There are so many fantastic Indian restaurants in the North East and we knew it had to be something that was going to take people on a journey."

Following their early success in Newcastle, the owners – brothers Shah and Elahi Amin, Gaurav Dayal and Husband and wife Garry and Neha Goyal – set about expanding their concept and the search for a second venue got underway.

After receiving a tour of Sunderland city centre by Sunderland BID and the business investment team at Sunderland City Council, the founders were shown around the former Funky Indian and Café 420 site adjacent to the Winter Gardens and immediately made their decision.

Since signing the lease in January, the venue has already been trading as a takeaway and officially opened its doors to the public early June.



NEW LOOK VENUE LAUNCHES EVENTS PROGRAMME

One of the North East's largest event spaces has unveiled a new programme of events to go with its new look.

The former Lancastrian Suite at Dunston, Gateshead, was recently renamed The Fed after it underwent a £250,000 facelift.

And it has now announced a whole host of exciting entertainment, with everything from renowned DJs to live bands, tribute nights and stand-up comedy.

Among the big names lined up to appear are Martin Kemp, who will be bringing his 90s DJ production to The Fed on September 16 and Bad Manners, who will be appearing on 11 December.

But before that there are lots of other reasons to head to The Fed across the entire year.

The 1000 capacity venue is running its own Best of British - Jubilee Tea Party with afternoon tea on 2 June and an IBFA British Bodybuilding Competition on 12 June.

Fighting fans will also not want to miss an appearance by Tyson Fury on 7 July when he arrives for Fury Fest – the Official After Party Tour.

For those who like their entertainment of the more nostalgic variety, then the New Jersey Tones will be bringing their tribute to The Jersey Boys on 15 July.

The venue continues to be extremely popular for private events covering everything from sports presentation night to charity balls – with the added bonus of now having some of the best facilities in the region.



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OUT AND ABOUT - APPLEBY



At just 3,000 in population, Appleby is a small town which is much smaller than my home Co. Durham pit village. It boasts greater antiquity, though, since the Norman keep of the Castle dates from 1092, which is easily found at the top of the hill known as Boroughgate. The Castle is now a comfortable 12 room hotel with three self-contained cottages and, although the rooms are separate from the Keep, it has a growing reputation for cuisine including a five-course tasting menu which I enjoyed during my one-night stay.

I travelled from home via Carlisle on the Tyne Valley Line and after a short break there for a coffee at the long-established Caffeine Rush trike which is permanently parked on Carlisle station proceeded south on the Settle and Carlisle railway to Appleby in Westmoreland station. It has to be admitted that the most scenic parts of the S&C are further south at higher altitude, but the journey by Northern Railway climbing through the Eden Valley is pleasant enough. The station is on the east side of the town, about ten minutes' walk down Clifford Terrace (Clifford being a name you hear a lot hereabouts) and down an ideally positioned footpath to the only vehicle bridge over the River Eden. This is where the horses are washed during the Horse Fair at the start of June. You therefore come into Appleby at the bottom of Boroughgate.

You'll find The Cupboard Under The Stairs, Appleby's newest retail addition, which enchants residents and visitors alike with its licensed Harry Potter merchandise. Close by is the lovely named Crown and Cushion, one of Appleby's popular pubs which has no problem in dividing itself into both pub and afternoon tea café. The rest of the shopping offer can probably be visited in ten minutes, but a useful diversion off the town centre is to St. Lawrence church which is the burial place of Lady Anne Clifford, a black marble monument in the North aisle. The church was badly damaged twice during Scottish raids, but was restored in 1654.

Walk up the hill and you will find one of the most enchanting features of the town, more cute even than the Harry Potter shop. On the left near the top is St. Anne's Hospital, a mid seventeenth century attempt at sheltered housing, for eleven poor sisters and a Mother who led the community, and founded by Lady Anne Clifford in 1651. By 1961 the place was ready for refurbishment. I visited their little chapel and found various versions of the rules of the hospital, which we would now term almshouses, and saw the ladies there resident, but it would have been a breach of the rules to look inside their little cottages, since gentlemen callers are strictly forbidden.

And so to the top of the hill to Appleby Castle, with its the Norman keep, which I enjoyed a tour of on the morning of my departure following a good breakfast. If you like to stay in ancient buildings more like a grand home than an hotel, consider Appleby. Good riverside walks, fishing for guests, even an art deco town swimming pool, pleasant hostleries and historically the seat of the ancient county of Westmoreland, now Cumbria. I recommend the four poster bed of the Clifford Bedroom, overlooking the courtyard. There was a ghost hunt on the night of my visit, but I was tucked up in bed and saw none of the apparitions, and ghost-hunters were not to be seen at breakfast in the Great Hall, built 1454.

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PROSECCO, PARTIES AND PRIVATE HIRE AT PONTELAND'S FAVOURITE HANG-OUT

It's the summer of celebration – where private parties and group festivities are in abundance at Ponteland's favourite bar and eatery.

YOLO Ponteland (situated in the heart of the village) has welcomed a surge in private party bookings for all occasions, as customers get back to revelling in their social circles, making the stylish venue a lively hub for those looking to celebrate their special day or event.

And all the fun can be found on YOLO's Mezzanine area. Following the venue's expansion in 2017 - the Mezzanine was designed as the perfect space to host private parties and exclusive events, complete with a separate bar and capacity of up to 50 guests.

Customers looking to book this space can also enjoy unrivalled service, with a dedicated sales team on hand to organise every inch of the booking process, including a varied selection of buffet options. Choose between light nibbles, specific pizza or fish & chip cone selection – or go for the popular full finger buffet, providing your guests with a mix of hot and cold food.

The Mezzanine area can be hired with a starting 'room only' deposit of £150, this includes up to 50 guests. Should a main buffet option be selected, the deposit will be used towards the final food total – making the whole process fuss free for all.

If private parties aren't your cup of tea, why not look to celebrate with a close knit group, enjoying YOLO Ponteland's 'Bottomless Bubbles & Bites' offer instead? Perfect for a late brunch or early evening feast, diners can enjoy 90 minutes

of bottomless delights. Pick your way through the bestselling and versatile small plate dishes, before washing it all down with a bottle or two of Prosecco.

Make your way through succulent panko coated king prawns and halloumi fries covered in mint yoghurt, parsley and pomegranates before moving onto the menu's selection of loaded fries – all of which is included in the Bottomless Bubbles and Bites offer of £25 per person. Groups of up to eight people can take advantage of the deal, with bookings available Monday through to Thursday from 12noon to 5:30pm, and during the day on Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 12noon to 3:30pm.

The offers don't stop there, in the fight against the rising cost of living YOLO Ponteland have recently introduced two incredible food and drink offers throughout Sunday to Friday – grab two of their thin and crispy pizzas for only £10 and wash them down with a cocktail, which are also on offer at two for £10*. That's mid-week dates and catch ups with mates sorted without breaking the bank.

To find out more information, book your Bubbles & Bites or function space, please visit: www.yolo.uk.com

*Two for £10 cocktails available Sunday – Friday.
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A 'SAUCY' HISTORY OF ITALY

By Zeno Meynell-Rea, Operations Director, Punto Italian Kitchen, Heaton.

Italy, as we know it now, is a very young country. It was unified in 1861 and as a result there is still a very strong regional identity as you move around the country.

This is particularly true when it comes to cuisine but don't worry, I'll save the history lesson for another time and just continue with the foodie facts.

There are certain dishes that you will find all over the country that can be easily recognised despite the regional variations. Ragù is one such dish and as a staple of any Italian kitchen, the variations may be more familiar than you realise.

While ragù seems as Italian as pasta itself the origins are actually French where 'ragoût' refers to any stewed meat in a sauce with vegetables. It reached the Emilia-Romagna region at some point during the 16th Century and was well known amongst aristocrats during the Renaissance, served as a second course but not with pasta.



Zeno Meynell-Rea

The pairing of pasta with ragù didn't happen until towards the end of the 18th Century. Prior to this it was common for pasta or 'maccheroni', the general term for any fresh or dried pasta, to be served with some sort of meat broth. The meat was typically removed and eaten as part of a later course.

Pasta with a ragù became more common place in the early to mid-1800s normally eaten on a Sunday, as a first course to top some pasta and then in a later course on its own. In the early 20th Century pasta became cheaper to produce thanks to industrialisation and as a result became more widespread.

Ragù made the perfect sauce as it was typically made using cheaper and tougher cuts of meat; as with many meat stews around the world. Cuts such as shin, shoulder, chuck, skirt, tail would all be cooked for a period of hours to form rich flavourful sauce.

In Bari, a coastal town in the region of Puglia, it is common to use horse meat that is tenderised, rolled and stuffed with garlic and herbs. A dish known as 'Braciolo di Cavallo alla Barese' or sometimes 'ragù alla Barese'. The braciolo is

usually taken out of the pan after cooking and served on top of the pasta dish, or if it's Sunday, as part of another course.

Arguably the most famous of these sauces is of course Ragù alla Bolognese, which to non-Italians, is a tomato based sauce with minced meat of some description that is most commonly paired with...Tagliatelle. Yes, that's right! Not Spaghetti. Traditionally it also contains no minced meat; in Italy the use of minced meat for Bolognese is a fairly modern concept, the norm would have been to use some finely cut beef, perhaps with some fatty pork added in for flavour.

While both types of Bolognese are delicious there is something very special about ragù prepared with a good quality chunk of well sourced meat 'alla Napoletana'. At Punto, we use salt aged heritage breed beef shin from Block & Bottle on Heaton Road, cooked low and slow over a 12 hour period.

However you prefer your ragù, it's undoubtedly a firm favourite all round.

puntoitalian.co.uk



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DOWN AT THE DENE By Holly Grahamslaw

With my partner Josh's birthday around the corner, Jesmond Dene House provided the perfect place to celebrate.



Nestled within the valley of the Dene, the independently-owned luxury hotel boasts a unique location, promoting a traditional, country escape feel whilst still within walking distance of Jesmond's shops and residential area, and only ten minutes from Newcastle's lively city centre.

The Grade II-listed hotel has a rich architectural history. Bought in 1871 by Captain Andrew Noble, the house has expanded greatly over the years and was converted into a hotel in 2005. The boutique hotel has retained many of these period features, with ornate paneling, stone carvings and stained glass contributing to the venue's traditional character.

Boasting 40 rooms, guests can choose classic, superior or deluxe spaces, as well as some under-the-eaves extra large suites. During our stay, we were delighted to stay in a junior suite in the New House. With its own exclusive entrance, guests in the suites can enjoy that extra bit of space and privacy, with even bigger beds and large, comfortable seating areas.

Our room was equipped with various amenities, including high-speed Wi-Fi, a large flat screen TV and complimentary tea and coffee facilities. With large windows and high ceilings, the room maintained a light and airy feel, whilst showcasing some fantastic views of the leafy Dene. Each of the rooms have their own personalized touch and some offer stylish window seats or private patios. The standout feature of our room, however, was the lavish bathroom, equipped with modern tiling, his/her sinks, a large bath and a walk-in power shower. Wow!

After a relaxing afternoon, we headed to the hotel's restaurant, the recently rebranded Fern Dining Room & Bar. Designed by hospitality design specialist Karen Walker, the space fuses its period features with a modern twist. Fern aims to bring the garden into the restaurant, featuring floral-patterned wall coverings and vibrant shades, which combine to make this a natural and contemporary setting.

The restaurant offers a premium dining experience, with emphasis on creating flavoursome food largely using local produce. Catering for both hotel guests and non-resident diners, the restaurant is led by

Head Chef Danny Parker and operates at an AA Rosette standard. The first-class food is also complemented by excellent hospitality, with friendly staff who were attentive to all our needs.

To start, I enjoyed the grilled English Asparagus salad, a nutritious dish comprising of leafy greens and a crispy hen's egg, whilst Josh sampled the steamed Shetland mussels. Served with a tangy coconut, coriander and chilli sauce, this offered a unique twist to the dish, and paired nicely with a delicious glass of pinot from the hotel's extensive wine list.

Following up, customers can enjoy both classic dishes and seasonal mains, which change continually and focus on local, quality produce. Here, I tried the tasty corn-fed chicken breast, served with herby potatoes, steamed greens and an exquisite red wine jus. Josh meanwhile devoured the braised feather blade of beef, accompanied by chunky chips and tender stem broccoli. With delicious flavours and large, hearty portions, this proved to be dining at its absolute finest.

Feeling replete, we swerved desserts in favour of coffees and liqueurs, although customers can enjoy various sweet treats, including the sticky ginger pudding and luscious chocolate & orange delicé.

Following a restful night's sleep, the following morning we returned to the restaurant for a spot of breakfast. The restaurant serves a range of cooked items and continental classics, including buttery pastries, cold meats and fruit, and various juices and hot drinks. This all sounded delightful so we tucked in with gusto before leaving the hotel after a thoroughly enjoyable and relaxing stay.

All in all, Jesmond Dene House offers all the benefits of a local hotel, whilst also feeling far enough away to escape the pressures of daily life. With its fantastic location, luxurious rooms and quality food, the hotel really ticks all the boxes.

Jesmond Dene House can be found at Jesmond Dene Road, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE2 2EY. For more information, call 0191 212 3000, or visit their website jesmonddenehouse.co.uk





BRING A TIN TO WORK!

Poverty just doesn't influence one area of a person's life. It affects their whole life; the affects last a lifetime, potentially affecting one generation after another.

It affects all of directly, it affects the economy and our businesses, but our businesses could make a difference!

Over 15 million people are living in deprivation in the UK today, with the cost of living raising daily, unfortunately more people, every day, are unable to meet their basic needs.

Access to healthy nutritional meals are basic needs many take for granted. Food poverty has multiple negative impacts on a person's health and wellbeing.

In April, 7.3 million adults and 2.6 million children suffered from food insecurity. You know those stories about Nurses on minimum wage depending on Food Banks to feed their family, they aren't a myth. It is the reality we face today but a reality we can change.

At the cold face of the food poverty crisis are the food banks. There are more than 1,400 food banks in the Trussell Trust's network alone, there are many more independent facilities in every town and city throughout the UK. In May, the Trust seen a usage rise of 81% across their network, for independents the increase was over 100%.

I'm ashamed that food banks are a normal presence in the UK today, considering the wealth we host as a country.

Deprived communities depend on these, now, essential services to survive. In Newcastle there are 14 food banks that serve the people who are living in poverty in our city.

Local to me is Kenton Food Bank, set up by Loree Moran-Wilson, Founder of Make Your Way CIC. Make Your Way initially provided furniture and support to those in need. On delivery of the furniture, Loree realised that the people she helped didn't just need furniture but also food and clothing and support beyond the initial re-homing process. Kenton Food Bank has seen their need grow considerably in recent months, currently demand outweighs donations.

The foodbank relies on the community for donations and whilst Kenton, a suburb of Newcastle, hosts some of the wealthiest families in our city, the donations are primarily gifted from the disadvantaged community in the local area. These families are now in need of the food bank themselves, their low incomes inadequate

in relation to the cost of living and unfortunately, they are no longer able to donate. Loree created Make Your Way from a place of experience and understanding. The volunteers face their own adversities but everyday they are there, making a difference, helping others, being kind to protect people.

It's a food bank that supports the individual to gain help and support immediately. There can be issues tied up in red tape with food banks unfortunately, but through Make Your Way they can meet the need of the person in the moment.

Since I begun volunteering with the team at Kenton, we've been working on building support from local businesses and partnering with other initiatives that help people, recently we supported the I'm Not Ok mental health event; food insecurity plays a major part in mental illness, mental wellbeing, and suicide.

It is vital that we keep resources above the levels of demand. Newcastle has an abundance of large businesses and offices; you may be sat in one now. If your office took part in an initiative called 'Bring a tin Tuesday' and donated the collection to Kenton Food Bank, you would be ensuring a local family to you could eat that week.

It's simple isn't it!

All you need to do is bring a tin to work.

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MEET THE HEAD CHEF

In the first of a brand new series of features we talk to...

GARETH RAYNER

Executive Head Chef at Wynyard Hall.

Did you always envisage a career as a chef?

Yes, from a young age I never really saw myself doing anything else other than being a Chef. I attended Kirby College which is where my culinary journey started and from there, worked in various local pubs and restaurants to gain experience and broaden my skillset. I've been really lucky to work with some amazingly talented Chefs who've inspired me and taught me along the way.

What favourite dishes linger from childhood?

Sunday Lunch. I always loved this from a food perspective as a child, but now as a family man, I appreciate and love the fact that it brings all my family together around the table. I love seeing my grandchildren and it's the one day of the week (when I'm not working) that we all come together and enjoy each others company and good food. Sunday Lunch is arguably the most important meal of the week, so if I am working a Sunday, I'll always do a 'Mid-week Sunday Lunch' so we never miss out!

How would you describe the cuisine at The Glass House?

The dishes in the Glass House can be described in many ways but definitely multicultural sums it up well. Ultimately, it's quintessentially British. We use a lot of produce from the Edible Garden, local ingredients and produce but we give it a bit of a twist. English cuisine with a nod to European influences. We have recently introduced small plates to our menu which has been such a hit with our diners but this is taken from the likes of Greek Meze, Spanish Tapas and French Hors d'oeuvres. So far the small plates include Chickpea Chips, Monkfish Cheeks, Marinated Feta, Grilled Tender stem Broccoli and Fried Parmesan Arancini.

Who are your culinary heroes?

Gordon Ramsay will always be a culinary hero to me. He's always kept his offering relevant and has from a business perspective, created something so special by catering to all budgets and palettes.

Which current industry trends do you find most exciting?

Small plates. While there's always going to be a place in the industry for fine dining, I just find the concept of small plates so exciting. It's changing



Gareth Rayner

the way we think about food and the way we eat out. In my opinion, dining out is becoming much more casual and while small plates reflect this in terms of being the perfect dining experience to share with friends and family in a social setting, the product, produce and quality remains extremely high. It's something we're really proud to have achieved in the Glass House.

Tell us about your most memorable meal?

I was in Avignon, France, where we went to a Michelin Star restaurant, unknowingly! It was almost underground so I was really lucky to have stumbled across it. We had a sample menu for lunch and it was delicious, combined with the cool surroundings, it was such a good atmosphere. I speak no French and the staff there didn't speak English so it was through the Sommelier that we were able to place our order and he became almost a guide for us! One really cool dish we had was an apple sphere which melted as soon as you put it in your mouth! I'd love to go back if I could find it again!

How do you accommodate different dietary requirements?

Most of the dishes we serve in the Glass House are largely gluten free and dairy free which is a good start, we really try to make our dishes as inclusive as possible to be able to cater for everyone without having to change or substitute anything on the menu but because we use exceptional produce and ingredients, it's quite easy for us to



be able to adapt to dietary requirements. I work with a very strong team of Chef's who are all confident in their skills.

I'm dining at The Glass House. I would order... (starter, main course, dessert)

This is so hard to pick just three dishes, I don't think I can! My choices would be, Chickpea Chips, Monkfish Cheeks followed by Korean Fried Chicken Burger and absolutely ANY of the desserts, I love sweet things so it's impossible for me to pick just one!

www.wynyardhall.co.uk

THE PREMIUM NORTH EAST WEDDING VENUE...AND THEN THERE WERE TWO

Ellingham Hall in Northumberland has been a leading venue for weddings for almost 15 years. If you want to see how well recommended it is, go onto Trip Advisor.



Anthony Hunter



Okay a lot of folk take Trip Advisor with a pinch of salt but, read between the lines and you'll soon realise how well regarded Ellingham Hall is. To say that it receives glowing praise is an understatement.

The only problem is that when it comes to weddings and major events, Ellingham is extremely busy and you may struggle to secure a booking. They're already booked well into 2024!

However, we have news.

There is another premium wedding venue in Northumberland and it is of the same high standards for which Ellingham Hall is renowned. Why? Because the team behind Ellingham Hall are launching Lemmington Hall.

Ellingham Hall is a Victorian mansion house, and it has now joined by its sister venue Lemmington Hall which is a restored Georgian mansion set in 14 acres of its own grounds. Lemmington Hall is the home of Ellingham Hall's owners.

Lemmington Hall started hosting events over 15 years ago, and whilst the team at Ellingham have staged various single events there, the decision was made around 2019 to develop Lemmington into a similar but smaller venue as Ellingham.

"When COVID-19 arrived, any opportunity to renovate the building and bring it up to the sort of standards our guests would expect, were put on hold. However, we're up and running and work is almost complete," said Group Director, Anthony Hunter.

And as you can see from the pictures...wow...it looks fabulous and, you have to say, very different to any other wedding venue you could compare it to.

"The central part of Lemmington Hall features a 15th Century pele tower," adds Anthony. "When we were looking through some old sketches of the last renovation done by Sir Stephen Aitchison around 1913-16 we came across a sketch of a tree that was growing out of a fireplace in the Hall. This was the spark to reimagine the Tower as an overgrown and abandoned ballroom, a magical setting, and a complete juxtaposition from the classic Georgian house. We call it the 'Forgotten Tower'...the land that time forgot."

It looks amazing.

No surprise to find that Anthony is a busy guy...but he's not stopping with the addition of Lemmington Hall to what is now part of a group

because he's also just received the keys for the Highlander pub in Ponteland.

"It needs a lot of work to bring it up to speed, but we will be updating the pub to make it into a place where guests will want to go for good food and good drinks...and good hospitality."

Both Ellingham and Lemmington offer a similar two-day experience which goes above and beyond what most wedding venues offer. The vast majority are a case of arrive - wedding - one night - depart.

At Ellingham and Lemmington the wedding party gets two nights, and those nights are exclusive. There won't be any other guests. It means the couple and up to 56 friends and family will be able to stay for the night before the wedding at Ellingham, or up to 14 at Lemmington. "To us, the night before the wedding is what makes our experience so special. The guests can relax and enjoy a full evening together, spending quality time with their loved ones in an entirely exclusive environment. Weddings are wonderful days but they can be fast paced with a lot going on and it means couples can't always get to see everyone for as long as they'd like. However, on the night before the big day they can mingle with everyone, and then on what is the third day, the wedding party can enjoy a big breakfast get-together before everyone heads for home.

"Too many wedding venues want to rush what is such an important and memorable day for the couple and their friends and family. It's one of the reasons why we as a venue continue to win awards, I'm delighted to say, on a very regular basis."

The best idea for anyone interested in booking either Ellingham or Lemmington, is to pop in for a visit. Anthony or one of the wedding team will be delighted to give you a guided tour and take you through how the two night event will work.

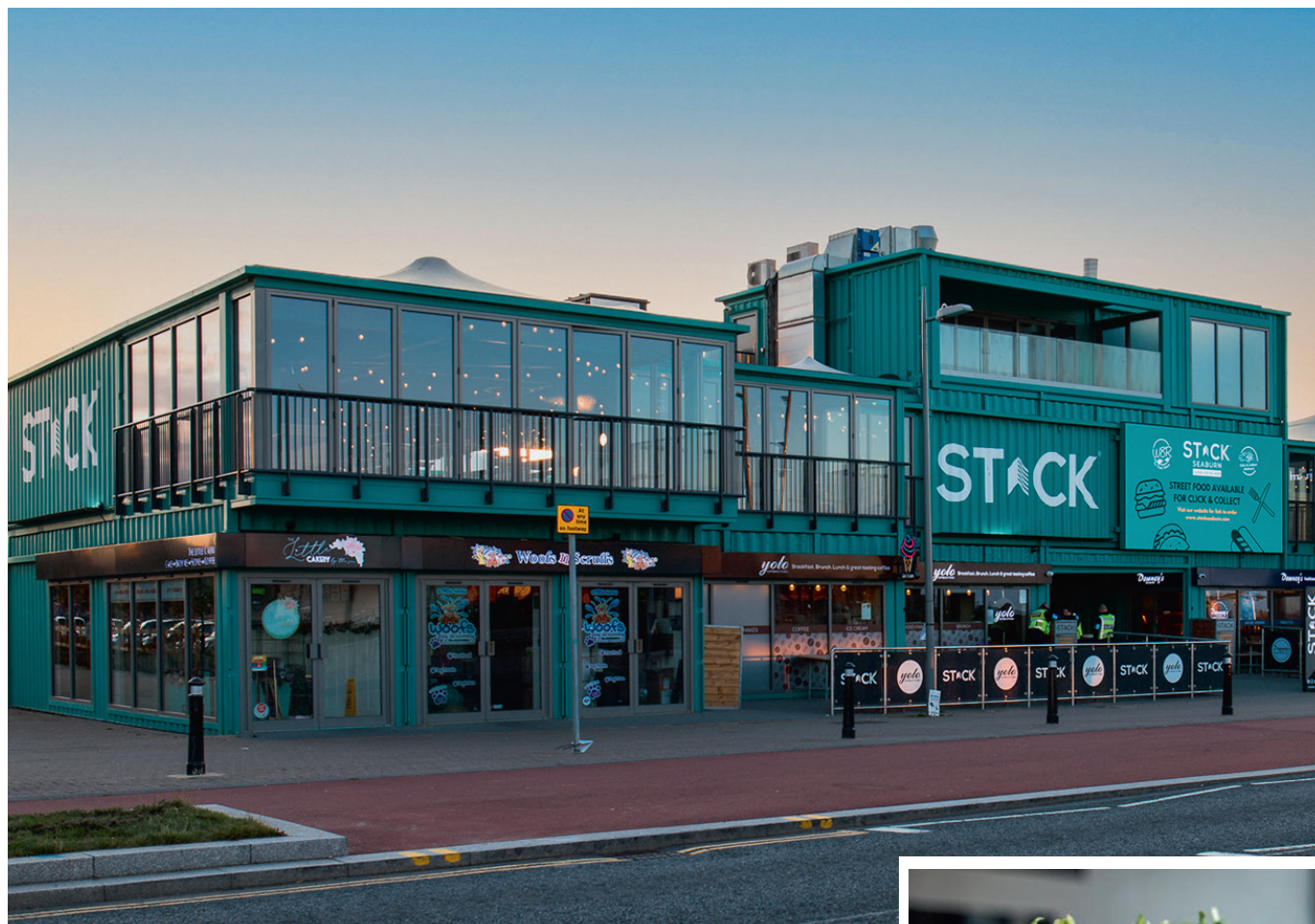
And of course, when you have such terrific venues as both Ellingham and Lemmington, they lend themselves to other events such as for corporate team building, conferences, exhibitions and networking meetings. Attendees can stay overnight within the hall or in a selection of cottages within Ellingham's eight acre grounds.

In other words, Ellingham and Lemmington continue to offer the very best when it comes to hosting weddings and events.

For further details contact Anthony and his team on 01665 568 118 or send an email via their excellent website, www.ellingham-hall.co.uk







A BIT OF POSH NOSH By Jackie Marston

As a regular visitor to STACK in Seaburn and the beach/facilities down there, we often do what everyone does and stop for fish and chips. Well, you're at the beach, it's the law, isn't it? Out last week though and hubby and I just weren't in the mood for fish and chips so stumbled across PoshStreetFood.

We had both heard about this place at some of the food festivals that we frequent, but as there was always a queue a mile long at this stand, we always opted for a quicker option. The owner of PoshStreetFood...is MasterChef quarter finalist Matei Baran with an array of culinary awards behind him, he came up with the concept after noticing nobody else offering this type of food at the pop-up events he attends. The fact that there was always a queue should've been the giveaway, but as we're both impatient and are often hungry, we just go to the ones without a queue, and then regret it!

Well, this time, it was an actual restaurant with seating inside and out. We popped in, with our dog, which is great – a dog-friendly indoors venue, result! We ordered drinks and are pleased to see that you could have wine with your meal so ordered a house red, which was Merlot and a house white, Chardonnay. They had a good wine list, but we were just having the one, so made a mental note to try these at a later date.

The restaurant was about half full and everyone was tucking in enthusiastically to an array of brightly coloured food offerings. We thought we'd share our food and so ordered a belly pork kebab and a short rib kebab. We'd only been seated a short while when our lovely waitress brought our drinks. Merlot was delightful said hubby, and my Chardonnay was tangy, perfectly chilled, and fruity, just as I like it.

When the food arrived, we were the ones receiving food envy, as it looked delicious, and we couldn't wait to tuck in. The belly pork is covered in a sweet and sour glaze and the crackling crispy, whilst the meat is succulent and juicy. It was served with Asian slaw, something crunchy, which was delicious, that I later found out was Bombay mix and mixed with the crispy onions and fiery chilli to make a great accompaniment. Chips were served on the wrap too, which was nice, and made it a large portion of food that any big eater would've loved. The whole combination wrapped up together and in one mouthful makes it a taste sensation for



your tongue, I absolutely loved it. My hubby's favourite though was the short rib. This is just melt-in-your-mouth and tasted like it had been slow cooking for hours. I have no idea how long they do actually cook it for, but it just fell apart in your mouth, it was than tender. It came with a punchy beef broth, red cabbage, crispy onions and chillies, as well as the flatbread and fries. Another winner and definitely one of the dishes we'd return time and time again for.

If you're down Seaburn and not in the mood for fish and chips, I can tell you, this is definitely a great contender. Very good value for money too, at just £10 per kebab and £4.25 for a glass of wine – the bill wasn't posh food prices, but the quality of food certainly was.

This is our new 'go-to' place in Seaburn. Compared to the other food venues there, this wipes the floor with them, in our opinion, and our absolute top place in Seaburn to dine.

POSHSTREETFOOD...
The STACK, Seaburn, Sunderland, SR6 8AA
www.poshstreetfood.co.uk
www.chefmateibaran.co.uk

IN CONVERSATION WITH...

CHEF MATEI BARAN

MasterChef finalist

From setting up a thriving restaurant in Seaburn's STACK, becoming the author of his own book; Big Chef, Mini Chef (cooking for kids, with kids) pop up street food vendor stands around the region, teaching cooking skills with his Healthy Kitchen Therapy as well as acquiring a new pub/street food bistro in Sunderland, Chef Matei is very much in demand for private dining too and he tells us what and why is he so passionate about what he does:

You sound like you are plate spinning with the variety of businesses you're currently balancing, how do you find time for it all?

It's a bit of a balancing act at times, but I am surrounded by reliable staff and a team outside that keep me on track. I am extremely driven, so for me, work is ingrained in what I do, this is all I know, so I give it 100% all of the time. PoshStreetFood...at Seaburn STACK is taking off very well, for anyone who wants something a little more special than fish and chips at the seaside and the chef offering in people's homes goes very much on word-of-mouth, so I tend to get booked from one event to another, but it can be tricky running everything to my exacting standards.

Tell me about your Healthy Kitchen Therapy and what it does?

I work with the MFC Foundation, the aim of their course is to help people who may be struggling with their mental health by offering classes in kitchen therapy. I know it may sound unorthodox, but there is evidence that cooking and spending quality time in the kitchen can greatly improve mental health. Look how many people turned to cooking during the lockdown, proving it definitely helps. I am looking to start one in this region soon and I'm talks with the colleges and universities in the region.

That all sounds amazing, are there any specific events that you're involved in this year that you'd like to tell us about?

I'm doing a MasterChef Experience with A Taste of Northumberland on Wednesday July 13th (7pm), where I am cooking and bringing a modern twist on some of the regions' favourite foods. I've been cooking for 25 years now, so doing these types of events really interests me.



Matei Baran



Tell us about your background and how you started your career as a chef?

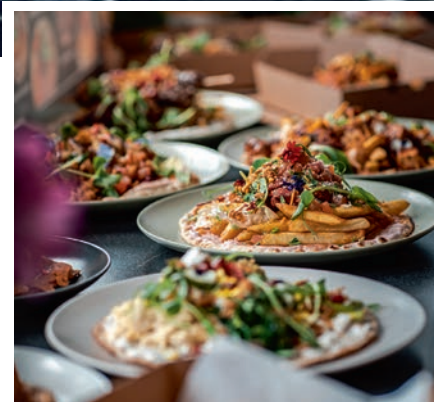
I believe I have this passion in my blood and have been born with it. I come from a family which had a big desire for home-made food. I think I cooked my first meals for my parents when I was just six years old.

I then went on to cook at different parties and festivals for my friends and that was my first start on street food, but I never thought that is what I would do in the future. I'm self-taught - back in my country, Romania I always used to love experimenting and trying new things. I also had a traditional seafood restaurant in my country that was very successful with amazing reviews from everyone who visited.

Whilst working in a summer resort I was advised by a colleague to try my skills in the UK, so I thought I'd give it a try, and here I am to this day!

I'm scared to ask you what the future holds, as I only have a few more column inches to fill in this interview, but here goes?

At the moment it is very hard to predict, due to what is happening around the UK with prices increasing etc., but I want that #PoshStreetFood



to be a renowned brand in the North East. Our Chef Matei Baran events to be one of the best players on the wedding/celebration market, as well as extending my charitable projects with Kitchen Therapy and Big Chef Mini Chef. Whatever happens, my passion for cooking will always be high as I simply love what I do, so the future holds more of the same and lots more, I hope!

Chef Matei Baran

www.mateibaran.co.uk

info@mateibaran.co.uk

For private functions, pop-ups, guest appearances etc, feel free to drop me a line.



HARDWICK FESTIVAL: NORTHERN MUSIC FANS IN FOR A TREAT

It's panning out to be a cracking summer full of music for lucky North East festival goers thanks to the buzz triggered by County Durham's very own Hardwick Festival - where headliners Stereophonics and The Specials look set to blow the roof off the main stage.

This year's strong festival line up, on Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 August, is based at Hardwick Hall, Sedgefield. It seals Hardwick's reputation as one of the biggest, longest-standing and most popular festivals in the region. Why traipse all over the UK battling train strikes, exorbitant fuel prices and motorway bottlenecks when there's a festival this good right on the doorstep?

As well as rock heroes Stereophonics - on Saturday night - and two-tone pioneers The Specials on Sunday, other musical crowd pleasers include Scottish duo The Proclaimers, indie singer-songwriter Jake Bugg and Californian blues musician Seasick Steve.

Another welcome addition to the main stage will be the popular BRIT award winner Becky Hill, who has clocked up 12 Top 40 hits on the Official Singles Chart. Another BRIT award winner Ella Ayre will appear at the festival along with Oh My God! It's The Church and local favourites The Redroom.

This summer at Hardwick is not only about singers and bands: there'll be an unmissable solid gathering of some of the biggest-name UK, European and International DJs. American DJ Danny Tenaglia, the highly influential house music guru with three-decades in the industry and a Grammy nomination

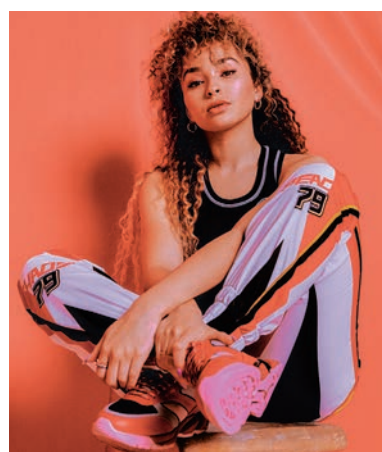
under his belt, will be a huge draw. As will German-born Tino Schmidt, AKA the Purple Disco Machine, and Spanish radio host and label founder David Penn who was rated the number one house music artist of all time by Beatstat Charts.

Throw in another 20-plus big DJ names including, British club DJ Brandon Block, electronic music producer Kevin Saunderson from Detroit, fellow American DJ Huey Morgan - lead singer of the Fun Loving Criminals - plus live PAs from Inner City and Robin S and you get an idea of the scale of the sounds ahead.

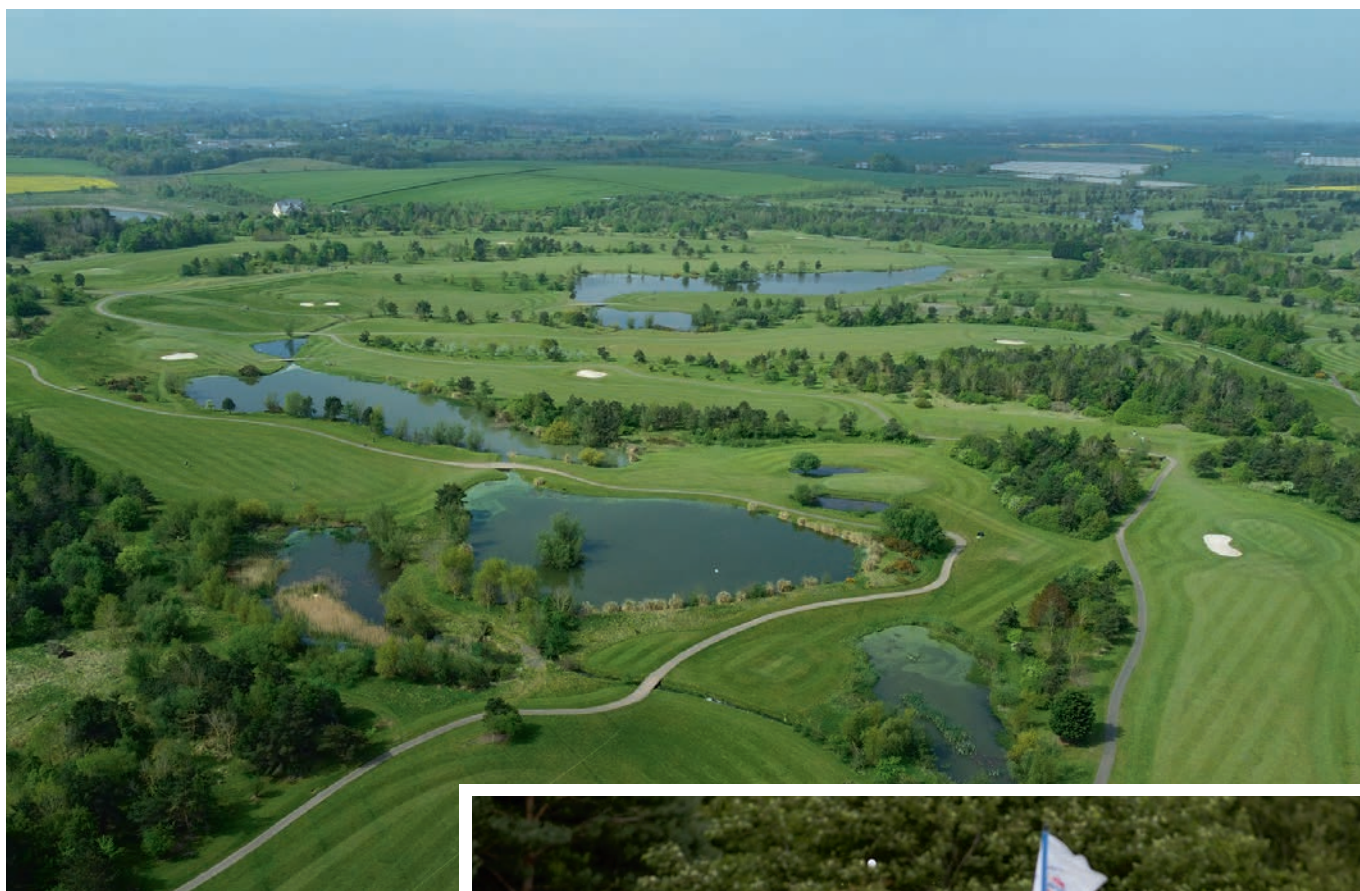
It's also worth keeping an eye out - or an ear open - for BBC Radio 1 DJ Arielle Free who will be taking to the Hardwick turntables following her appearances at Hi Ibiza and as a co-presenter of the podcast Love Island: The Morning After. Another performer expertly fine tuning the decks will be Ibiza regular DJ Jess Bays and founder of the successful club brand Superstore.

Spread across the spacious grounds of Hardwick Hall will be five music stages, three DJ stages as well as a Soul Tent plus karaoke, a large children's arena, fun fair plus a large array of street food.

To buy tickets or for more details go to:
www.hardwickfestival.co.uk



NORTH EAST GOLF CLUB FLYING HIGH IN ANNIVERSARY YEAR



Northumberland's Longhirst Hall Golf Club has bounced back strongly in 2022, receiving accolades from national industry bodies.

Firstly, the site near Morpeth was nominated for 'club of the year' by golf's governing body England Golf. This recognises the work carried out in all aspects of a golf operation, from the welcome, the clubhouse offering, the course, to the development of juniors and membership relationships.

Golfshake.com, which is golf's equivalent to TripAdvisor, has also awarded Longhirst 3rd place in the UK, behind Woburn golf club and John O Gaunt golf club, for outstanding facilities. It's one of only 205 UK clubs from over 3000 with three consecutive years of extremely high ratings.

Director of golf Graham Chambers said: "To be nominated from England Golf was a great surprise, and testament to what staff in each of my departments do on a daily basis. To get national recognition in this little corner of Northumberland, is phenomenal.

"The Golfshake.com awards, for me, were extremely satisfying, as these are from ratings given by independent golfers. To have these given over three consecutive years, again shows that we are doing some that the golfer loves, creating a welcome, friendly environment, and importantly



consistent and quality golf courses."

Longhirst opened its doors in 1997 after 500 acres of open cast land was transformed into two championship courses by Tom Dawson owner of parent company and travel agent Dawson and Sanderson Ltd. It is currently celebrating its 25th Anniversary this year and will be hosting a special golf day for their members on July 2 followed by an evening with Jason Issacs.

Longhirst is now firmly on the North East map for larger golf events. In addition, junior golf development is a huge part of Longhirst's makeup. With the great work professional Paul Fiddes does, it has one of the best academies in the North, regularly getting 30+ juniors at sessions, participating in coaching and playing on the course their own competitions.

As a result of the impact Longhirst has made in junior golf development they were chosen to be a host club of Girls Golf Rocks, an England Golf initiative to attract young female golfers to the game. They were also chosen to host the Northumberland schools final, which led to the regional final, and in turn to the Northern finals.

Graham Chambers added: "To come out of the pandemic in such a positive light is great for us, and long may it continue. We will continue to strive for more accolades, and work hard to further improve what we have, and I'm sure there will be some exciting projects around the corner."

Longhirst has two championship courses and one of the country's largest memberships.

More detail: www.longhirstgolf.co.uk

THERE'S SOMETHING VERY SPECIAL ABOUT SACHINS!



Bob Arora



Located on the historic Forth Banks of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Sachins finest Punjabi cuisine has become a local icon since opening over 39 years ago. Owner Kulmeet (Bob) Arora was a regular diner before taking over the restaurant in 2000. Quickly going from a big part of his life to being the centre of his life, Bob put his heart and soul (and continues to do so to this day) into turning the already bustling restaurant into a cut above the rest.

Featuring an ambient, atmospheric interior, Sachins is the perfect way to unwind after a long day at the office, to celebrate a special occasion or even just for a meal with a difference. No matter your reason, you can be assured of a friendly welcome every time.

Featuring an assortment of the finest beverages and an extensive wine list that any connoisseur would be proud of, there's something for everyone's taste at Sachins.

The award-winning restaurant is everything you could possibly want in a high-class Indian restaurant and prides itself on serving generations of loyal customers, year in, year out.



Don't take our word for it, here's what the critics say:

“

This homely spot skewers some great kebabs and rolls out the lightest of breads. Sachins' tandoori platter is not to be missed – five different kebabs are marinated, meatily juicy and taken to tables straight from the smoky clay tandoor.

ROOPA GULATI, THE INDEPENDENT



“

Choices were made, G&Ts were drank and seats were taken. Our first courses of Seekh kebab, minced lamb barbecued in the tandoor, and Machhi Tandoori, monkfish similarly cooked arrived and we tucked in. The rolls of lamb didn't appeal much to the eye, but the taste and texture more than compensated. The monkfish was in a class of its own. Skewer-cooked, the chef had spiced it just enough to give flavour sizzle without overwhelming the juicy chunks of meaty fish.

GEOFF LAWS, THE JOURNAL

**Sachins Punjabi Restaurant, Forth Banks,
The Quayside, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 3SG
0191 261 9035 info@sachins.co.uk
www.sachins.co.uk**



CARAVAN OF CALM FOR CONTACT MORPETH

A Northumberland mental health charity has invested in a new caravan to provide much needed respite facilities for its members.

Contact Morpeth has started using the new holiday home at Haggerston Castle near Berwick to help vulnerable people escape for a short break from the rigors of daily life. Funded with help from Northumberland County Council, the benefits of its use will greatly help those using it, as Chair Rhona Dunn explains.

"For many people with a mental health issue, getting through each day can be difficult. The caravan is a way to make a positive difference to someone's life as it encourages change, responsibility and of course relaxation.

"We've had a caravan on site there for many years, but it was getting old and in need of repairs. The new caravan meets all current health and safety regulations and is a great asset to the charity and to the people who use it."

Contact Morpeth covers South East Northumberland, an area with more than 155,000 people and it is estimated that almost 13% of the population have mental health issues. The regional suicide rate is 3% higher than the national average. The charity runs a drop-in centre with activities including keep fit, meditation, crafting, photography, and IT. There is also a café, and many members benefit from counselling which is carried out by a team of qualified volunteers.



PEOPLE'S KITCHEN COOK UP HEALTH SUPPORT

To many people, the work of The People's Kitchen in Newcastle is simply to provide food for the homeless and vulnerable people who visit their building. However, there is a far deeper infrastructure of help and support given behind the scenes which helps every bit as much as a meal or a hot drink.

Now, the Kitchen has teamed up with several partner organisations to offer more services to their "Friends" to support them with their mental health and general well-being.

Jackie Boardman a Trustee at The Kitchen explained why the additional help was so necessary. "We're not just about supplying food and friendship and we realise that more support is needed. We are now offering literacy classes to help people with basic reading and writing, music and drama classes to bring out creativity and talking therapies to help with mental health issues. We've even sessions of pet support and hairdressers who give up their time to help make our "Friend's" lives easier."

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.

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

COMMUNITY GARDEN IS THE HEALTHY LINK

Staff from Ernst and Young have donned their wellingtons and gloves to help create a healthy community garden in the grounds of Bedlington charity, Leading Link.

The garden will be a haven for people growing vegetables, herbs, and plants. Anyone can come in and grow vegetables, but people may just want to come and use the seating area to enjoy the community garden at their leisure.

The Busy Bees young people's climate group are the driving force behind the project. Several residents have come forward to get involved in the climate change group working towards what the community and young people have collectively asked for.

They will be planting and writing instructions on



when fruit and vegetables are ready to pick as well as placing informative and creative healthy and environmental messages around the garden space.

Going forward, the climate group wants to hold several small events within the garden including cooking workshops, mental health, gardening

and possibly just a good old party celebration too inviting all the people who have helped make this happen!

Thanks go to WL Straughan & Son for helping to take away the weeds for their compost heap and support from County Councillor Malcolm Robinson and Town Councillor Russ Wallace.

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The Northumberland Golf Club, High Gosforth Park,
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 5HT

“

*...workplaces are
losing experienced
employees and
individuals can
feel helpless...*

WHY MENOPAUSE MATTERS IN THE WORKPLACE

Many good things are born from adversity, from charities being founded to people being inspired to completely change direction in life.

Well this unexpectedly happened to established North East business woman, Catherine Harland.

After 30 years working in the corporate world, including 13 years running her own PR agency, Catherine Harland decided to change careers, training as a menopause coach and workplace training provider. She goes on to explain her 14 year journey and why she's passionate about helping workplaces and individuals navigate the challenges of menopause.

"I woke one day in June 2008, I was 38 and felt emotionally paralysed, scared and unable to drive my son to school, a trip I had done daily for 15 years. I did it regardless but to this day, I've no idea how. Suffering with anxiety, palpitations and gynae issues, I turned to the GP for help where I was diagnosed with burnout. Of course this made complete sense at the time as I'd experienced an incredibly challenging few months with work and personal issues. I was referred to various cardio and gynae consultants yet no one mentioned perimenopause or menopause. I now know that's what it was, albeit I was younger than the average UK perimenopause age.

Several years passed but I still wasn't firing on all cylinders. During yet another GP appointment I mentioned menopause but I was informed I was too young at 43. Cue another five years feeling *meh*. Not one GP (male or female) ever any mentioned perimenopause or menopause during my numerous appointments. After visiting Dr Google yet again, I returned to the GP to request HRT. I walked out with the prescription thinking 'how do I know this one is right for me?'

I never picked up that prescription and began to do my own research. In the meantime I was prescribed another HRT but again, confusion reigned.

Dr Google can be your friend as well as your enemy.

In 2018, I conducted mammoth research, I joined menopause support groups, I contacted various 'specialists' and in 2019 I saw yet another GP where I requested body-identical HRT. The GP had zero knowledge of this HRT, even though it was quite widely used at this stage, hence me having to spell it. He prescribed the wrong amount but due to my extensive research I identified this, informing the practice immediately. I could write a book on these all too common experiences which so many women have encountered, and continue to encounter, from being prescribed antidepressants to being completely misinformed.

Astonishingly, GPs do not receive mandatory menopause training hence their lack of HRT/menopause knowledge.

Fortunately the tide is slowly turning with some GPs are now undertaking independent menopause training.

I became more knowledgeable than any GP I had ever seen and because of regular menopause chats with clients and at networking events, women in the business world were turning to me for advice as they were scared of losing their career. I researched further and began my training to become a menopause coach as well as signing up for a functional health course.

With a new focus and drive, I said farewell to the PR world I had known for 13 years."

Menopause Mentor was founded, providing evidence-based, factual training to workplaces as well as supporting individuals. Menopause Table Talks are workplace menopause awareness training workshops to enable businesses to support their employees, to prevent tribunals and a host of other benefits. Other workshops include Employee Wellness and Menopause Champion training.

Catherine also provides 1-1 menopause coaching for individuals requiring personal support on nutrition, stress reduction, supplements and overall menopause understanding to enable individuals to take back control.

Women over 50 are the fastest growing section of the UK workforce. Ambitious and highly experienced, their contributions to the workforce can be significant.

However, the average age for menopause in the UK is 51, with nine out of ten women stating their menopausal symptoms impact their work, including fatigue, brain fog, anxiety and loss of confidence. One in four say they don't feel supported in the workplace while a third hide their symptoms, fearing for their jobs.

Nearly one million women have had to give up work due to menopause, workplaces are losing experienced employees and individuals can feel helpless.

There's so much misinformation out there leaving many women feeling quite lost at this stage of their lives whilst workplaces are losing experienced employees.

T: 07939 589123

E: catherine@menopausementor.uk

W: menopausementor.uk

DON'T GO IT ALONE

Training on your own and being able to stick to a high level of commitment on a regular basis is extremely tough, however, being accountable with both your fitness and diet will lead to quicker results, this is why training in a group environment works so well.

Social Benefits

Training in a group brings benefits you just don't get when you exercise alone. Social benefits such as being included as part of a team, a feel-good factor from the camaraderie and group chat, becoming a recognised face and making friendships that extend outside of the group, all help to boost how good you feel during and after the session.

Physical benefits

My clients always tell me they train much harder when in group sessions. They are more motivated, energised and inspire each other. They regularly say they'd never work that hard individually.

Research has shown that group exercise increases pain tolerance so that performance is improved, this is thought to be down to feeling in sync with those around you, otherwise known as 'behavioural synchrony'. This is also understood to improve team performances for footballers and rugby players who warm up with coordinated movements.

Training together to the beat of music when exercising in classes helps to create bonds in groups which then improves performance. Contact with others and social support in groups has shown to boost performance and improve commitment to ongoing attendance.

This has been proven over the years with our small six week body transformation groups, VersaClimber classes and our Beach Bootcamps.

If you find the thought of group exercise a bit daunting, choose a class that suits your personality. A more sedate pilates or yoga class for example may suit a more introverted personality type and may be less scary than a vigorous, high intensity group session. The benefits of group exercise in these sessions are still effective.



David Fairlamb

Our sessions are designed to suit all levels of fitness and there is no competition in any of our classes, meaning all of our sessions are inclusive and you work at your own pace. This is why Olympic athletes can train alongside absolute beginners.

We also have families at Bootcamp, a perfect combination of a fab location, lovely environment and all working in a group together, is why our sessions are so popular, proving exercise can be a

family affair.

We also run specialist classes for 60 years and over where the physical and social interaction becomes even more important.

Forming healthy habits is critical to your health and wellbeing. Joining a group exercise class has been proven to boost performance and improve commitment to ongoing attendance.

www.davidfairlambfitness.co.uk

DAVID'S SUMMING UP

If you are looking for that extra bit of inspiration and finding things hard training on your own, look to join a class/group exercise session the physical and mental benefits can be huge.

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THE LAST WORD



Barry Speker

from **BARRY SPEKER...**

The return to holiday planning after two years of Covid restrictions and limitations should be a time of optimism. However chaos on the railways from the RMT strikes raises considerable concerns that we are facing not a winter of discontent but a summer of disappointment.

Others who are considering strike ballots include doctors, nurses, civil service workers, BT engineers and barristers. Even traffic wardens are threatening to go on strike - what a treat!

Added to this are the mass cancellations of holiday flights, staggering petrol and diesel price increases, airport delays, and the worry that you may be rerouted to Rwanda.

Welcome signs of a normal summer at home included the invitation I received as a DL to represent the Lord Lieutenant at the South Shields Armed Forces Day, which returned after two years. The day is jointly organised by South Tyneside Council and the Badlanders Motor Cycle Association.

Together with the Mayor, Councillor Pat Hay, I took the salute of the parade along Sea Road led by 600 motorbikes, followed by sections of the armed forces, cadets, emergency services as well as the Houghton le Spring Pipe and Drum Band and the Westoe Brass Band.

It was a great day of tribute to the armed forces and many veterans. It was followed by A Family Fun Day and showed South Shields at its best.

An evening of great nostalgia was enjoyed at the Sunderland Empire seeing the Simon and Garfunkel Story, direct from the west end. Brilliant portrayals of the greatest hits including Bridge Over Troubled Water - the highest selling album ever. This is not to be missed particularly for aficionados like myself. The show is returning shortly to the Sage.

A pre-theatre meal at Aperitif next door to the Empire turned into a reunion treat. On arrival we found that the smart Italian restaurant is owned and operated by client and friend David Liu for whom I acted in the 1980s when he opened Ming Dynasty II. He reminded me that I obtained the Restaurant licence for him. We received a royal welcome. Aperitif is greatly recommended.

A study by researchers at Northumbria University has reported that people with strong northern accents are viewed as "less intelligent" and "less educated" than their southern counterparts. They found that "accentism" causes "profound" social, economic and educational harm for those with "denigrated accents" in the UK.

The report, 'Speaking of Prejudice', suggested that accentism is active in the UK and that accents should be made a protected characteristic under the Equality Act. This was particularly in view of the finding that unconscious bias may make it harder for people with northern accents to secure places at good universities and that speaking with

'denigrated or low in status accents' were more likely to be found guilty of a crime in court.

On the other hand such accents appear to be a positive advantage in securing a job as a Radio or TV announcer or presenter or selection as an MP. Speaking like William Rees-Mogg no longer attracts universal admiration particularly with the BBC, parliamentary selection committees or Question Time audiences.

Some regard Angela Rayner's accent, grammar and syntax as some evidence of connection with ordinary people. This does indeed show the danger of making assumptions from stereotypes on either side of the divide. Accents and those using them can be obtuse!

barryspeker@hotmail.com





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