

NORTHERN

INSIGHT

AUGUST 2022

ISSUE 82



OLD POST OFFICE - NORTHUMBERLAND
WHEN YOUR HOME BECOMES YOUR BUSINESS

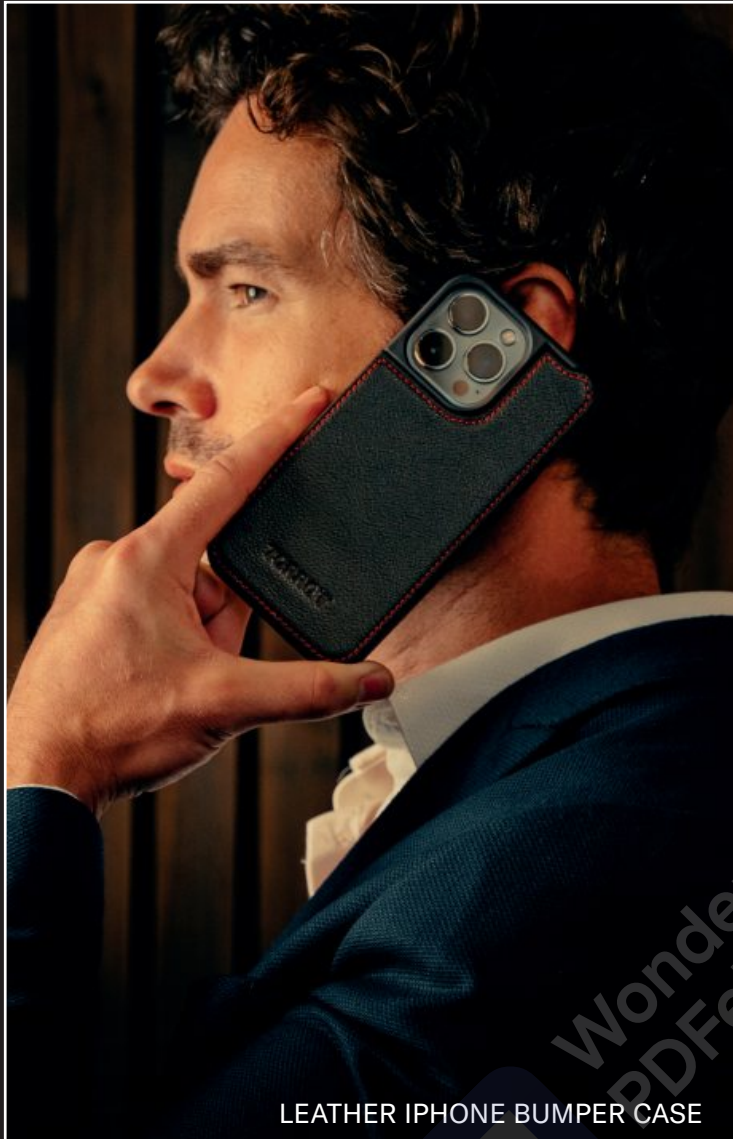
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FOREWORD

Welcome to the August edition of Northern Insight.

Our covers stars are the Old Post Office Holiday Studios in Northumberland who reflect on a fantastic first year in business.

Elsewhere we highlight the return of the Northern Law Awards where our long time friend and contributor Barry Speker received a much deserved lifetime achievement award.

On our travels we sample fine French hospitality at the Hotel du Vin and a stunning spa visit at Wynyard Hall.

Another vibrant issue we are very proud of!

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

M.J. Grahamslaw
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PARTNERSHIP HAT TRICK FOR THE ENTREPRENEURS' FORUM



Newcastle-based marketing and design agency Guerilla, Northumbria University and Business Durham all join as partner organisations of the Forum.

Elaine Stroud, Chief Executive of the Entrepreneurs' Forum, said: "This year marks 20 years of the Entrepreneurs' Forum which is an incredible achievement and cause for celebration. During that time, we've seen over 1,000 North East entrepreneurs join our network and grow their businesses. We exist to support them in realising their ambitions but we can't do it alone.

"By working with our partners, the likes of Guerilla, Northumbria University and Business Durham, we're able to build a strong network of support for our members, ensuring they have everything they need to achieve their goals.

"We're looking forward to working more closely with our new partners in the long-term and are excited to see the impact of our new partnerships."

Guerilla join as corporate partners of the Entrepreneurs' Forum. Corporate partners are strongly aligned with the Forum, building long-term relationships with its members and offering support and services to them as they grow their businesses.

They join existing corporate partners Agilico, Brewin Dolphin, Hilton Newcastle Gateshead, LUMO, Qrious and Ward Hadaway.



AYCLIFFE FABRICATIONS COMPANY COLLABORATES WITH THE ADVANCED MANUFACTURING FORUM

Aycliffe-based BTS Facades and Fabrications recently hosted a networking event in partnership with The Advanced Manufacturing Forum (AMF), to showcase its expertise in the manufacturing industry and promote the fabrications sector across the North East.

The event welcomed engineering and manufacturing businesses from across the North East to share knowledge and exchange expertise.

The team of 48 at BTS, who manufacture high-quality facades and rainscreen products for clients around the country, were at the forefront of the event, exhibiting their products and sharing reflections on their recent successful move into automation.

The meet-up, which included a factory tour, presentation and an exchange in best practice, was even granted the seal of approval by Newton Aycliffe's Mayor, Ken Robson, who said he is "blown away at what the business has managed to achieve."

Philip Atkinson, BTS' managing director, said: "It's such an honour to have been able to host this event at our offices, which are a showroom for exactly what we do.

"Some incredible North East industry leaders attended. These events are all about learning from one another, and that's exactly what we saw today.

"I hope that everyone who came along was able to see that our investment into automation and machinery has made a huge difference to the way we work, and it is certainly the way forward for us. This certainly won't be the last time I invite fellow business leaders over to our offices; I love showing people around and banging the drum for our incredible workforce and for our thriving sector."

ACTION! INSPIRED HR ARE CAST BY NORTH EAST SCREEN

A North East HR company that started life as a solo micro business with a cast of just one has taken on as one of its clients, a major player in the region's TV and film industry.

Blyth based Inspired HR has added North East Screen to its impressive list of clients to help them manage a period of exponential organisational growth. The north east of England's screen agency develops and champions the region as one of the UK's leading film and TV production hubs where exceptional screen industry talent can live, create, and work.

Now celebrating its fifth anniversary, Inspired

HR was set up in 2017 by Nikki Masterman as a home-based business and quickly developed into four business arms - employment legal services, HR consultancy, health and wellbeing and a recruitment agency. Now with nine staff and offices on Blyth Quayside, Nikki's client sectors include a variety of sectors including healthcare, charities, financial services, hospitality, retail, manufacturing, and creative agencies.

Nikki's dramatic growth and her high level of professional standards and service delivery caught the attention of North East Screen, and it is a relationship that really excites Nikki.

"The North East is a vibrant hub for the TV and film industry and it's great to be a small part of that. I think that it's particularly important when a firm is looking at who is going to look after their HR that they choose the right people



based on their experience, knowledge and integrity and I'm delighted that North East Screen have cast us into that role."

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STEELMEN FORGE AHEAD WITH NEW INVESTMENT AND SENIOR BOARD

Redcar Athletic FC are delighted to announce that local businessman Dale Smith is making a long-term time and financial commitment to the club.

The investment will fund improvements to facilities, the matchday experience and off-the-field resources, all with the purpose of growing the club for the benefit of the entire local community and the wider Redcar and East Cleveland area.

The commitment will also mean Dale becomes chairman of the senior section, supported by a new set of directors who will be named in due course.

Dale will also lead the newly-formed management board, while Kevin Fryett will become club president and Steve Connelly will remain as first team manager.

Meanwhile, Teesside Athletic FC will be renamed Redcar Athletic Foundation, while Redcar Athletic FC will become a force for civic pride, positivity, entrepreneurship and ambition in the Redcar and East Cleveland region.

Dale said: "It's a privilege for me to be able to make this commitment and become a custodian of this fantastic club. I am from the area, I played for the club as a junior and, most importantly, I am very, very positive about the future of Redcar and the wider Redcar and Cleveland area.

"Redcar Athletic is already a fantastic place to be with wonderful people, supporters and volunteers and I will do all I can to make it even better.

"We want to make the club a hub for all those who care about Redcar, who want to improve our town or their lives or other people's lives. The club will be a vehicle for both social change in our area and a hub for great experiences on both match and non-match days.

"To cement our intention, I want to announce that we will be committing to the creation of a Young Entrepreneurs' Fund that will support, coach and mentor young entrepreneurs from across Redcar and Cleveland. I am passionate about creating strong and enduring local businesses and truly believe that these businesses are the future of creating better places to live, to work and to stay across our region."

MYSTERY COMES TO NORTHUMBERLAND

A North Yorkshire author who fell in love with Northumberland after a recent visit has based her second children's book in the county.

The Secret of Flittermouse Cliffs is the second in the *Great Friends from Grey Owls* series written by Zoe Billings. The series follows the adventures of Liz, Barrie, Jenny and James, four secondary school pupils who find themselves getting caught up in all kinds of challenges.

In the *Secret of Flittermouse Cliffs*, the four are back at Grey Owls after their summer break, and are now in year 8. There are difficult challenges for Liz, and the other three really band together to support her to have any hope of joining the October half term outdoor activity trip, up in the beautiful wilds of Northumberland.

Arriving in Northumberland they look forward to a week learning rock climbing, abseiling, archery, kayaking and gorge walking, not to mention a game of rounders on the wide golden beach with the castle standing proudly at the end.

But all is not quite what it seems. A missing carabiner and a newspaper headline plunge the four into their second thrilling adventure where, if they don't manage to solve the mystery, lives might be at stake.

The series of books promote in children the values of honesty, kindness, hard work and courage, while tackling modern issues in a sensitive way, empowering children to be confident as they enjoy real page turning adventures.



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HYBRID GROWTH

Sales and Marketing are two professions that until relatively recently have worked in silos almost consistently.

They are fundamental to any business.

So which one comes first?

“Smarketing” is a term I almost find as offensive as typing as you do reading but was a term doing the rounds in early 2019 as organisations in a bid to be more efficient combined roles. Sales and Marketing professionals were created with lofty titles and enormous expectations to deliver both remits. I would argue such roles are unmanageable and unachievable given how different these role profiles are. Of course there is cross-over, although I would lean towards the term ‘brand ambassador’ over any covering both – for ultimately we are all responsible for being this in any organisation regardless of our remit.

So as an organisation looking to grow and expand, who should you hire first? With the UK average Marketing Manager salary at c£45,000 and Sales Manager at c£48,000 (Reed, UK- 2022) either way it’s an expensive and risky choice. As a small business these salaries can represent a disproportionate level of investment to the time taken to achieve a return. And we too have faced similar challenges, often asked by our clients as to which one comes first and who to invest in.

Just Williams, established in 2015 began life as a sales only organisation working in partnership with many other marketing services, internal and outsourced. Through working with our customers, hosting a range of forums and engagement, it became clear the link between sales and marketing required a more combined approach and a more cost-effective one for the business community.

As a result, Hybrid was born in 2020 enabling businesses to embrace both sales and marketing solutions in a more cost-effective and efficient manner. With expertise in both subject matters and taking a combined approach from the outset to increase brand



Jessica Williams

visibility, create connections, increase sales pipelines, processes and in turn maximise results – we have seen our client base grow by 280% in this time.

Struggling to hire sales and marketing professionals?

You no longer have to choose between who to hire or combine roles in an unachievable manner for all involved. Outsourcing in the current climate is not only a cost-effective solution, it is a sustainable one.

We are now able to work harmoniously together for our businesses using both sales and marketing to help them grow in a sustainable way. If you too are looking to grow, expand and diversify – we would love to chat to you. In September we are holding The North’s first Sales, Service and Success Conference at Teesside University International Business School. These subjects will be discussed at length and 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.

Book Now!

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 The Just Williams Sales Academy for more info

Book now through www.justwilliamssales.academy or contact us on JWSA@justwilliamssales.academy.

We look forward to welcoming you...

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COVER STORY



Mychael, Lisa and Izobel

WHEN YOUR HOME BECOMES YOUR BUSINESS

One year into running Old Post Office Holiday Studios in Northumberland, founders Lisa and Mychael (and Izobel) are in it for the long run.

Lisa and Mychael have run businesses together for 15 years. All of them creative. All of them award winning. All of them carefully planned. Until now.

“Old Post Office is our accidental business.” Explains Lisa: “It’s our most creative business yet. And we’re winning awards again. But we didn’t plan it.

“When we moved to the country in 2020, Mychael wanted to revisit his furniture and interior design roots. So we created every inch of every studio - together.”

Now in its second season, Old Post Office has 5 consecutive Airbnb Superhost awards and over 95% of reviews are a maximum 5 stars.

But it’s not always been plain sailing.

The Night That Almost Changed Everything.

“We’re not a party venue. People pause with us. They read, cook, walk, talk, reconnect and relax.” says Lisa.

Except one night, one day-long pub crawl later, one group of guests had a different idea.

“Mychael and the police settled things down eventually. The guests were evicted. But it was scary. This is not just our business. It’s our home. I must admit that, because of that night, I did wonder if we’d made a mistake. Luckily it was, and remains, a complete one off.”

At the beginning, Lisa and Mychael had no idea how they’d feel about strangers in (albeit self-contained) parts of their home. And one isolated incident aside, it’s been brilliant. Many guests return. Strangers become friends. And every visit teaches Lisa and Mychael more. 2022 has been great. 2023 will be even better.

“

Our other businesses will stop. This won’t.

Which is strange. Because this is the only business we didn’t really plan.



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A THIRST FOR LIFE

By Michael Grahamslaw

“The sum total of my knowledge of wine is...I like it” was a famous line spoken by yours truly as a young sales rep in the 1990s in conversation with a hotel chain’s national wine manager during a gourmet dinner.

Indeed as a young man in the 1990s, the world of wine can be a daunting and often conflicting one, especially with a lot less information and exposure at our fingertips.

Countless bottles of the good stuff since, I have certainly made up for this! Picking up the odd bit of advice from wine lists, chatty sommeliers and weekly columns in the newspaper. A little longer in the tooth then, the chance to review the Hotel du Vin Newcastle was a welcome one – a great choice for all residents but wine lovers especially.

The hotel is a magnificently refurbished Edwardian building which sits on the banks of the river Tyne overlooking the Ouseburn. Translating from French, the hotel is literally “The Wine Hotel” so unsurprisingly offers unique, wine-led overnight stays and dining experiences. The hotel embraces various different influences from French brasserie chic to nods to the building’s maritime past with ship ropes in the courtyard and porthole windows. At the heart of the hotel is the hotel’s French-styled Bistro du Vin, a stylish light-filled room which nicely contrasts with its dark-stained floorboards and exposed brickwork.

The restaurant offers a relaxed, all day dining offering from breakfast through afternoon whilst of an evening aims to provide an authentic French bistro experience. This of course lends itself nicely to the hotel’s impressive glass-windowed wine cellar which stocks some of the best from France and beyond and creates a real sense of spectacle for diners. This then seemed like the perfect place for my wife Lisa and I’s 30th wedding anniversary celebrations with our children, Jack and Holly.

On arrival, we were warmly welcomed by Abi the hotel’s young wine expert who looked after us superbly well for the duration of our meal. A Durham university graduate, Abi is incredibly knowledgeable about wine and applies herself with great enthusiasm. After enquiring as to our preferences, Abi sagely recommended a summery Greek Savatiano white along with a Portuguese Douro red which had a great structure without being too heavy for a Summer’s evening.

Starters were very good too. Three slices of shimmering amber sea trout were served on a bed of cucumber salad with yoghurt and dill. Lisa meanwhile enjoyed the roasted garlic soup with sourdough croutons whilst Tiger Prawns were nicely sauteed in garlic and pastis butter for Jack and Holly. Shells were left on in the true French style.

Main courses are divided into from-the-grill specialities and ‘plats principaux’ main plates. Holly and Lisa tucked into the grilled escalope of Normandy chicken with petit salad whilst Jack opted for the confit duck leg parisenne with pancetta, peas, broad beans and frisee lettuce. I was



swayed by the 250g sirloin steak with red wine just, grass fed and 50 day aged for maximum flavour served with pomme frites.

A glass of port has long been an after dinner staple, however we were surprised when Abi suggested one of the white port variety for our final actor. The hotel chain has recently partnered with bespoke port makers Graham’s whose No. 5 blend is a modern alternative to the old seadog tippie. Abi was keen to know our thoughts so brought us four snifters of the wood-aged, dry fruity port which packed floral aromas and a long, crisp finish. The girls even enjoyed theirs served with a Mediterranean tonic over ice with a wedge of lemon and a sprig of mint.

This rounded off what had been a superb meal – high quality and even a little educational. If you want to do an anniversary meal right, do it with *du Vin*.

For more information,
www.hotelduvin.com/locations/newcastle/bistro



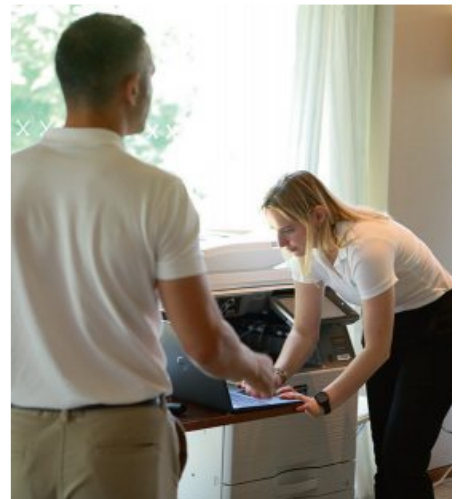
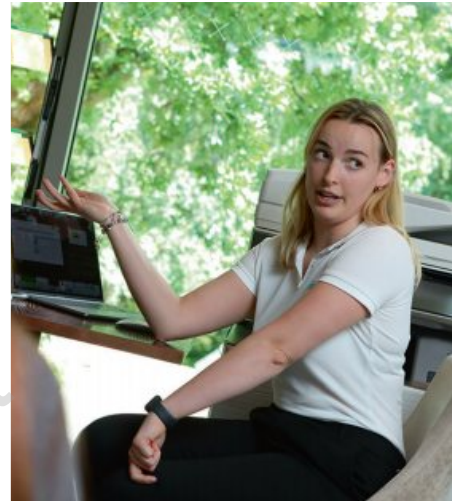


TECHNOLOGY SPEED DATING EVENT!

CMYK Business Technology held its first 'Technology Speed Dating' style event at Close House in July.

The event marked the launch of a series of Technology Events aimed at discussions around the rapidly changing landscape of workplace technologies and how your business can take advantage of the latest tech trends. CMYK showcased a wide variety of technologies and gave their guidance on what the future looks like and how your business can capitalise on these changes.

*To find out more please contact
the CMYK Team*
0191 389 7751 ask@cmyk-digital.co.uk





PLASTIC MOULDINGS NORTHERN — 20 YEARS IN THE MAKING

If you look at what makes any company successful, you'd probably say that strong growth upon solid foundations would be a must. You'd want experienced people who knew their product and marketplace, and you'd hope to see an annual upward turn in profits.



Well, as Plastic Mouldings Northern Ltd (PMN) celebrates their 20th anniversary the North East based company is a shining example of a regionally rooted business with the capability and capacity to operate on a national and international scale.

PMN was set-up in 2002 by Freddy Bourdais and Mark Rigg and they've grown year on year ever since. Their profits have always been bigger than the previous year. Turnover has increased every year. They've doubled turnover in the last two years despite a pandemic. They've built their workforce to 22 people and they've recently acquired new premises which now gives them 45,000 sq ft at their Bishop Auckland site.

"Mark and I both had a background in plastic moulding and when the firms we worked for were taken over and relocated to the south of the UK, we decided that we didn't want to make the move," says Freddy, the PMN sales director. "We love the area and we'd built relationships in the industry, so we decided it was the optimum time to set up our own company. We made the investment into Plastic Mouldings Northern Ltd and developed and grew our core product base as well as specialising in areas of expertise with key partners."

"Connections and collaborations have been key to our growth. We heavily invest in building relationships with our customer base and have built up many strong relationships over the years with key personnel, who have themselves progressed and moved to other firms like McLaren, Bentley, Rolls Royce, Jaguar, JCB and BAE Systems. We kept in touch and thanks to our reputation of innovation and supplying high quality products, we began working for their new companies also, on a national and international basis. In addition, we have an established sales team operating across the UK, this means we are able to offer a quick service and response time to customer enquiries thereby building in-person connections and relationships further."

So, what exactly is it that Plastic Mouldings Northern Ltd (PMN) are doing so well at producing?

With over 150 years combined experience in the field, Plastic Mouldings Northern Ltd predominantly produce plastic formed parts, across industries including the automotive industry, defence, aeronautical, medical, precision engineering and food. Their product range is extensive, and their capabilities and innovative techniques are vast, supplying high quality and often very intricate moulded parts. PMN have built up a prominent reputation across the manufacturing sector and supply clients nationwide and internationally, with recent client contracts established to Australia and New Zealand.

They have also taken the opportunity to diversify. Plastic Mouldings Northern Ltd are now the only stockist of new plastic containers and pallet boxes in the North East. They are also the largest dealer of reconditioned pallets in the UK and are at the forefront of providing a more cost-effective and yet still durable option for customers.

They also partner with the French firm, JOUPLAST®. PMN holds the exclusive contract to distribute their adjustable risers (which ensure decking and paving slabs sit even) across the UK and Ireland. Their products are stocked by Homebase and Wickes and turnover in this product alone was over £1m last year.

Needless to say with the continuous and strong growth trajectory at PMN, owners Freddy and Mark have taken the decision to further expand the senior management team and have recently appointed a General Manager, Katharine Elton, to further steer growth and development.

The company is a perfect example of how any business should be run. The first twenty years have been a story of immense success for Plastic Mouldings Northern Ltd, a company with a strong regional base at its heart but with a national and international presence across the industry. With further growth and development in the pipeline it's clear to see that the company is shaping up for an even greater future – and most definitely one to watch!

To find out more about Plastic Mouldings Northern Ltd and their entire range of products visit: www.pmn-ltd.co.uk







AFRICA — THE COMING CONTINENT

Joel Popoola is a member of the IoD's North East (North) Branch. He is also the Chair, IoD Africa Special Interest Group.



Joel Popoola

Why has the special interest group on Africa been established?

Africa is coming of age as a continent. After Brexit and post-pandemic, global markets are going to be vital for British businesses — and Africa's emerging markets offer huge untapped potential.

There is a huge cachet to buying British in Africa, meaning billions of potential customers for British businesses, many of whom have the products and services African nations' companies and growing population needs. Britain has a lot to export - clean energy expertise, professional services, education, advanced manufacturing products, media, even football - and Africa is ready to buy.

But is the UK ready to sell? One recent parliamentary report found that UK-Africa trade has 'flat-lined' — and accounts for just 2.5% of all UK trade. Pre-Covid the world's five fastest-growing economies were all African, and regional leaders like Nigeria and South Africa are likely to become superpowers of the global economy as we move towards the second half of this century.

More needs to be done on both sides to take advantage of the opportunities on offer. That's where the special interest group comes in — we aim to stimulate business opportunities, increase networking and grow awareness of British businesses in Africa — and African businesses in Britain.

Why is now the time for businesses to consider Africa in their growth plans?

In September 2021, the UK became the first country in the world to sign a memorandum with the African Union's 54-country Continental Free Trade Area — the first step towards a UK-Africa free trade deal. If you want to take advantage of emerging markets on the continent, now is the time.

Why are British businesses hesitant to pursue opportunities in Africa?

I think people think doing business in Africa must be very different to doing business in Europe or North America. In fact, at least 24 African countries speak English and many of their legal and regulatory systems and business culture will feel very familiar to British businesses. The special interest group is designed to break down those barriers and grow mutual awareness.

What is your day job?

I am a digital entrepreneur with a background in finance. One of my major projects currently is a mobile app called Rate Your Leader which is designed to help African political leaders with transparency, accountability and trust. Regrettably businesses are sometimes also put off pursuing opportunities in Africa because of a reputation for corruption in

some quarters — which sadly isn't always underserved. But things are improving — and digital technology is one of the biggest drivers of that improvement.

How has the IoD helped with your own business?

When I started information gathering for Rate Your Leader, the Business information Unit at the IoD was very supportive and helpful with my business intelligence. The quality and promptness of the unit was unparalleled. They are always ready to go the extra mile!

The IoD has also helped me to connect with business leaders across Britain who I would not otherwise have met. Networking is everything in business and through the IoD I got immediate access to over 20,000 British business leaders.

I am also working through the IoD to become a Chartered Director. There are so few Chartered Directors in the North East, but the skills you learn on programmes like the IoD's are fundamental to improving business performance and productivity.

An Africa Special Interest Group online event examining Africa's developing infrastructure takes place on September 22nd 2022. More details can be found at www.iod.com

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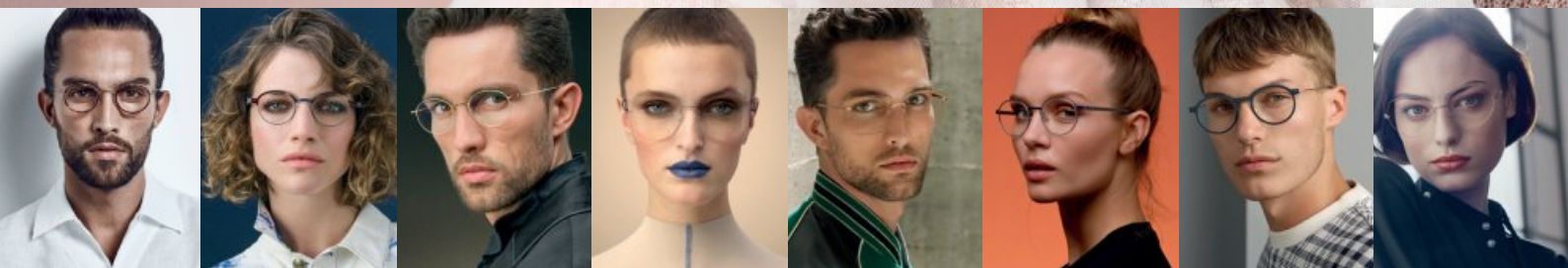
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L-R: Matt Gray and Lewis McNicholas

BRINGING REGIONAL FOCUS AND PASSION TO BANKING

The North East is the home to GB Bank, a new specialist bank committed to boosting economic growth and prosperity for underserved regions of the UK. By offering accessible and bespoke lending products for property developers across the regions GB Bank's ambition is to be the bank of choice for property developments and regeneration in communities that need it most.

At the heart of the bank is its people who bring an abundance of regional knowledge and passion to help turn business property ambitions into a reality. Earlier this year the team officially moved into their prestigious headquarters at 2 Centre Square, Middlesbrough which is home to the bank's head office staff, covering finance, risk, customer management, marketing, human resources, IT, lending, savings and more.

Here we introduce two of the bank's Relationship Managers, Lewis McNicholas and Matt Gray. Lewis and Matt are an integral part of the lending team with extensive experience working in the property finance and lending sector coupled with practical 'boots on the ground' know-how. They appreciate the challenges individual developers are facing and can create bespoke funding options to support unique development needs.

Lewis explains: "One of the reasons I joined GB Bank was the bank's vision and passion to help businesses to grow which will then help communities grow. Whether I'm working directly with the developer or with an introducer I believe working in partnership is the only way we can help them to reach their full potential. We have a unique approach which involves our credit team joining us at customer visits. This means we can get under the skin of each business and understand how the funding supports our customers as well as the individual development needs. Each customer is part of our community, and this is where being locally based really helps. If a customer identifies a new opportunity, we can be on site quickly to really drive forward a positive outcome for the customer as well as the wider benefits to the local economy."

Matt adds: "It is fantastic to be involved in the journey of GB Bank at this early stage and I'm excited to work with local property developers and see building developments progress thanks to our funding. It's all about sitting down and finding out how we can help them. We are constantly looking at ways to support business owners and demonstrate how we can think outside the box. It's all about adding value and not just meeting their lending needs. Our commitment to the future is also incredibly important to us. We will work with developers to 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."

GB Bank intends to provide property development loans of between £1 million and £5 million, supporting regional property developers, SMEs, and construction companies across the underserved regions of the UK. The bank's ambition is to lend £3 billion over 5 years, building a £1 billion plus balance sheet. It will fund almost 20,000 homes and several million square feet of office space, supporting the creation of over 100,000 jobs. This will enable GB Bank to fund almost 20,000 homes and several million square feet of office space, supporting the creation of over 100,000 jobs. To support GB Bank's commitment to funding sustainable developments for the greater good, the loans are coupled with competitive savings products, directly linked to ecologically sound residential and commercial developments in communities that need them most. For savers, competitive fixed rates will be protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS).

For more information and to follow our journey please visit www.gbbank.co.uk



If you would like more information on how GB Bank can support your property development loan requirements, please contact Matt Gray (matt.gray@thegbb.co.uk) or Lewis McNicholas (lewis.mcnicholas@thegbb.co.uk)

GREEN MARINE SECURES NORTH EAST FUND INVESTMENT

A North East offshore business is aiming to make a big splash across the pond after securing a five-figure investment from the North East Small Loan Fund Supported by The European Regional Development Fund.

Green Marine Solutions specialises in coordinating all the logistical aspects of offshore operations, including personnel and vessels, communications systems, software and maritime surveillance.

The Sunderland-headquartered firm primarily works with clients in the offshore wind industry and has already been involved with high profile projects in South America and mainland Europe, as well as off the North East and East Anglian coasts.

And it is now looking to use a £50,000 Small Loan Fund investment obtained through regional fund management firm NEL Fund Managers to establish a presence in the fast-expanding US offshore wind sector for the first time.



Green Marine Solutions is expecting to break through the £2m turnover barrier for the first time this year and is expecting to create a number of new jobs as the business grows.

Its client base already includes a range of household name energy businesses, including EDF, SSE Renewables and Siemens.



DEVELOP NORTH PLC SECURES £6.5M DEBT FACILITY FOR INVESTMENT INTO THE NORTH

Develop North PLC, a North East based investment fund providing loans to property developers in the North of England and Scotland, has secured a £6.5m debt facility from Shawbrook.

Managed by Newcastle upon Tyne-based wealth management and fund management specialists Tier One Capital, the investment fund will utilise the facility to continue supporting residential and commercial property developments in the region.

This funding represents Shawbrook's ongoing backing for Develop North PLC's strategy to support the levelling up of the North through alternative lending that delivers high quality property schemes.

It also continues a strong relationship between Shawbrook and the fund, which was recently rebranded to greater reflect its focus on the North of England and Scotland.

Since its launch in 2017, the London Stock Exchange-listed fund has supported the development of 31 residential and commercial projects, across the North East of England and Scotland with a combined value of £66m and an estimated £160m Gross Development Value (GDV).

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

The Speciality Finance team at Shawbrook has an established track record in providing funding lines to non-bank specialist lenders across multiple sectors, including property, SME and consumer finance.

Ian McElroy, Chief Executive at Tier One Capital, said: "Shawbrook's financial experience in both the Specialist Finance and property development markets has proven to be invaluable to the fund in recent years and we are delighted that we are maintaining our relationship and working with the Speciality Finance team to continue the momentum of Develop North PLC.

"This agreement is a strong endorsement of Develop North PLC's commitment to supporting economic and community growth through property investments in the North of England and Scotland.



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."



CCBS Group
Business & Funding Solutions

To see a range of our recently transacted deals, visit us at www.ccbg.co.uk/deals



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INVESTMENT INTO GREEN TECHNOLOGY



Steve Plaskitt

Steve Plaskitt, Corporate Finance Partner at Azets looks at the move to Green Tech Private Equity.

The UK transport sector contributes 28% of the country's carbon emissions, therefore transport must play a role in the UK's green agenda. With 1 in 10 new cars sold in the UK last year being electric or hybrid this highlights some moves being made to support this, resulting in infrastructure changes and the move away from fossil fuels. Albeit slowly.

Importantly though, the world of business and private equity investors is quickening the pace of change - green tech investment has kickstarted.

It is not just the electric car market that is starting to change, construction companies in particular are keen to demonstrate their green credentials and how they intend to meet the sustainability agenda. Companies are beginning to describe themselves by their commitments to sustainability, biodiversity and Net Zero as much as by their turnover and profit.

So how will green tech investment drive the environmental agenda and how quickly is this happening already?

Fundraising statistics (using Beauhurst) show interesting trends:

- There is an increase in the number of urban farming, precision agriculture and green tech companies being created and a shift away from biomass or clean energy companies which had been the initial focus of Government support and its feed in tariffs
- Of almost 1,000 green companies in the UK, 40% are now involved in technology or are rich in intellectual property.
- These green tech companies have seen a huge uplift in the number of fundraisings with 2021 alone raising 25% more funds in the first half of the year than the previous peak in the whole of 2017.
- At this rate UK green tech investment will increase by 150% by the end of this year to £1.5 billion.

More specialist green tech funders are appearing and have stated agendas from tackling the waste mountain and reducing the environmental cost of plastics, to addressing the shortage of green social housing and the high carbon footprint. With the top 20 investors accounting for fewer than 20% of all the equity fundraisings and 94 green private

equity and venture capital funders in the UK, SMEs have a lot of choice when raising money.

Until recently, many green tech funds were focused on the big problems and the larger Government-led projects that would address them. Increasingly as they turn their attention to the SME market, they see many likeminded small and medium sized companies determined to let their staff and customers know that they are transforming to address green issues.

As investors are becoming aware of the importance of investing money to address the climate emergency, so too are entrepreneurs and company directors, and this should give us all hope for a healthy future for us all and the planet.

At Azets, we have acted on deals for businesses that seek to address some of these issues – from efficient ground source energy for social housing to the roll out of the electric vehicle charging infrastructure – and we see more opportunities in the coming months.

Steve Plaskitt has over twenty-five years of Corporate Finance experience in the North East market. For more information please call 0191 226 8352 or email: steve.plaskitt@azets.co.uk

GETTING THE RIGHT REFINANCING RESULT

By Julie Cuthbertson, corporate finance manager at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors

The old adage 'cash is king' remains as true in business today as it's always been and it's pretty much certain that, at some point in their lifespan, the majority of businesses are going to need to do something to review and realign their cashflow situations to help them move forward.

For some, this action will be required to support the next stages of their growth and development, while for others, it could be needed to simply improve their cashflow situation or a part of a wider rescue package.

Whatever the situation, the basic principles of refinancing a business are pretty much always the same and building an understanding of how the process works will give you a better chance of securing a successful conclusion.

In the first instance, an appreciation of how the business funding market works is essential. The days of just having a few banks to approach have long gone and there are now hundreds of funding providers out there looking to offer business's finance.

Each funder has their own criteria on which they make their decisions, as well as their own specific sectors of interest and their individual appetites towards balancing the risks and opportunities they face (which many have been formed by negative previous experiences over which you have no control).

Understanding where your business fits into the funding market, possibly with your professional advisors' assistance, will help you

focus on the sources of capital that are most likely to want to hear from you.

Once you've decided on your best options for success, make sure you build a credible case for securing the finance you want and, most importantly, have the numbers to hand which indisputably back this case up.

We've all seen hugely enthusiastic business owners wax lyrical on Dragons' Den about how wonderful their company is and what huge rewards there are waiting for those that support them, only for their investment cases to fall apart when the figures they're presenting are found to be lacking in either substance or detail.

The same fate will befall you, albeit in a less televisual way, if you haven't got robust financial information in place on which potential funders can confidently make a decision.

When it comes to sitting down and discussing your business case with a potential funder, remember that you're presenting yourself as much as anything else.

In the first instance, confidence in a business plan will grow if funders know they can have confidence in the management team that will

deliver it.

Make sure you all have your key business messages down to a tee, are crystal clear on the purpose for which you want the finance in question and have anticipated as far as possible the questions that are likely to come your way.

It may, of course, be that despite all your efforts to get things right, you may not be immediately successful, in which case the key thing to remember is to not take it personally.

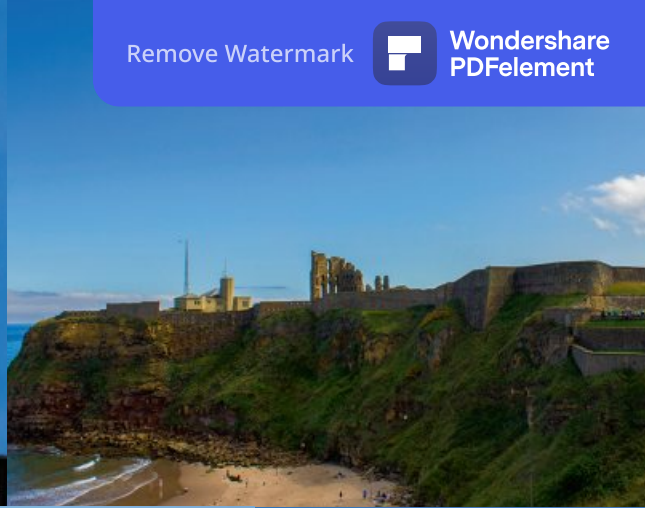
It can be deflating, but with the right support, advice and perspective, rejection can help you make a better case next time round.

Keeping your end goal constantly in mind, presenting your case as clearly as you can and making all the data available that any funder could possibly want will give you the best chance of securing the refinancing package that you're after.

For further information on refinancing and all aspects of corporate finance, please call RMT Accountants & Business Advisors 0191 256 9500 or visit www.r-m-t.co.uk



Julie Cuthbertson



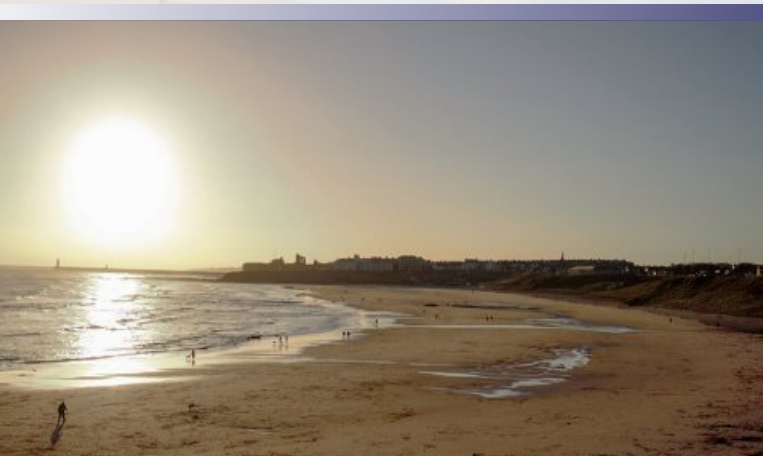
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INVESTOR BEHAVIOURAL BIAS

I recently read an article describing the five biases investors display, with 98% of us displaying at least one of the five. So, let's run through them one at a time.

“Anchoring”

What it is:

Fixating on a specific reference point, like the price paid for an investment or market index level and basing decisions around that one number.

How it affects investors:

Can cause investors to overvalue, or undervalue, asset prices or market performance based on an arbitrary number drawn from experience.

“Loss Aversion”

What it is:

Feeling losses much more intensely than feeling the reward from an equivalent gain.

How it affects investors:

By prioritising the avoidance of short-term losses over long-term gains, investors may put the success of their long-term goals in jeopardy.

“Recency”

What it is:

Placing too much emphasis on experiences that are freshest in one's memory — even if they're not the most relevant or reliable.



How it affects investors:

Believing that short-term trends will continue may lead investors to ignore new information and be slow to react to changes in investment markets.

“Familiarity”

What it is:

Preferring to invest in what is familiar. — especially from domestic markets. For instance, the average Canadian has 92% of their wealth in Canada.*

How it affects investors:

Leads to concentrated portfolios that hold only

the most familiar investments — especially from domestic markets. This can increase portfolio risk and lead to a bumpier investment experience.

“Confirmation”

What it is:

Seeking, or accepting, only information that supports what one already believes.

How it affects investors:

By ignoring information that doesn't support one's decisions, an investor can form unrealistic expectations that can lead to portfolio concentration and increased risk.



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

So, what should you do to avoid falling into these behavioural traps?

Firstly, you need to follow a disciplined investment process focussing on long-term financial goals. It is important to keep the longer term in mind and ignore today's "noise" or latest scare story. Global diversification is a great strategy and, whilst we may not be as bad as the Canadians, we do tend to be biased towards UK holdings. Finally, try and look at the big picture, rather than seeking the comfort of hearing something that you believe must be right. It may well not be.

In the current climate, the worst thing that any longer-term investor can do is sell. Human nature and evolution taught us to flee when

we feel threatened (a fall in the markets), but to return when we feel safe (when markets have risen). This is a sure-fire approach for wealth destruction. It is also the exact opposite approach taken by the world's most successful investor, Warren Buffet.

Our advice is to take advice and we would be happy to provide it. We do not charge for an exploratory meeting, so it is a no-lose scenario for you or your clients if you are a professional adviser.

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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* Source: Investor Economics: Household Balance Sheet Report- Canada, 2021.



Robson Laidler MD Graham Purvis (forefront) with the team.

ROBSON LAIDLER CROWNED NORTH EAST ACCOUNTANCY FIRM OF THE YEAR

Robson Laidler Accountants has scooped the title of North East Accountancy Firm of the Year (51-200 employees) at the prestigious North East Accountancy Awards, which was held during a glittering ceremony last week (on 30 June) at the Hilton Hotel Newcastle Gateshead.

The award comes hot off the heels of the firm becoming the region's first accredited B Corporation in the region, which is awarded to businesses who display the highest standards in social, environmental and economic performance.

The 14th North East Accountancy Awards – sponsored by Nigel Wright Recruitment – gathered together the best of the North East finance community to share their successes and achievements of the past two-years in a night of great celebration.

Robson Laidler is one of the largest independent accountancy practices in the North East, originally starting as a single practice in Newcastle in 1920, and now has a second office in Chester le Street taking its head count to over 100.

The Firm of the Year award recognised Robson Laidler's achievements in meeting rigorous social and environmental standards, which represents the firm's commitment to goals outside of profit and having a positive impact on its people, clients and the environment.

Regarding financial performance, over the past 12-months Robson Laidler secured an additional £400,000 in new business, increasing turnover by 13.5%. And as part of its profit-sharing scheme, the firm split profits between staff.

Robson Laidler was also praised for its involvement in the region's second largest acquisition deal to date, supporting Tombola on its £402million acquisition by Flutter Entertainment in November 2021.

Robson Laidler managing director Graham Purvis said: "We are beyond proud to receive regional recognition for the work we have done over the past 24-months to make a positive difference to the lives of our people, clients and our communities.

"From setting up initiatives to help our clients overcome the barriers of the Covid-19 pandemic to help them evolve and make sustainable businesses, to enhancing our HR policies for staff, to becoming B Corp accredited and launching our own Community Foundation giving 5% of our profits to local charitable causes – we really have considered all our stakeholders in our business strategy to ensure we make the biggest positive impact.

"But most of all this award is for our team; it is the external recognition for the part they have all played in making the company what it is today. We know that more work is needed to get us to where we want to be as a business but for now, we are delighted to celebrate our success and to be an advocate for businesses in our region."

Robson Laidler has also been shortlisted in the North East Chamber of Commerce Business Awards 2022 and will attend an awards dinner later this month.

If you'd like to learn more about Robson Laidler's services visit:
www.robson-laidler.co.uk

For a full list of all NEAA winners visit: www.accountancyawards.co.uk

NORTH EAST NURSERIES SOLD TO AWARD WINNING KIDS PLANET



L-R: Kanchan Chadda, Robson Laidler's Michael Moran, JLF Law's Jabad Jaigirdar and Ajeet Chadda.

North East Nurseries Limited has been sold to Kids Planet Day Nurseries for a significant sum (on 7 July 2022).

The acquisition sees North East Nurseries five nurseries – Ashbrooke Day Nursery in Sunderland, Kenton Park Nursery in Gosforth, Southfield Day Nursery in Cramlington, Wallsend Day Nursery and Westerhope Village Nursery join the Kids Planet family.

The deal completed exactly eight years to the day that North East Nurseries former owner Ajeet Chadda and his wife Kanchan acquired their first two nurseries in Westerhope and Gosforth on 7 July 2014. Since then, Ajeet and Kanchan have steadily grown their business into a successful group of children's nurseries, known as Choice Childcare Limited in five different locations across the region.

North East Nurseries former owner Ajeet Chadda said: "Running and growing Choice Childcare has been a huge part of our lives and it was never going to be an easy decision to hand over the reins. However, from meeting the Kids Planet team, we knew they were the right people to take the business forward. We wish them every success in building their North East presence."

The deal, which was competed in a record time of 8-weeks from initial offer to completion was led by Jabad Jaigirdar from JLF Law who was lead legal advisor on the disposal and Michael Moran director at Robson Laidler Accountants who provided corporate finance and due diligence support. Ajeet Chadda continued: "After our first meeting with Kids Planet, we were surprised at how quickly things moved from there, and the deal was completed in record time. We can't thank Jabad from JLF and Michael from Robson Laidler enough for helping us every step of the way."

Robson Laidler director Michael Moran said:

"We originally helped Ajeet and Kanchan acquire their first two nurseries eight years ago, so it has been a pleasure seeing them to the end of their journey and selling their business for a healthy sum."

JLF senior partner Jabad Jaigirdar said: "We were very pleased to advise on this important business sale. I am delighted that the transaction completed at a very high speed highlighting the depth and experience of the JLF corporate team and the close collaboration between all parties involved."

Kids Planet CEO Clare Roberts said: "We are extremely excited about the acquisition of Choice Childcare, which has an established presence in the North East early years sector. Our number one priority is to offer the highest quality of care and education. We look forward to building on the legacy of the founders by continuing to create environments in which children can develop and thrive."

www.robson-laidler.co.uk



DIVERSITY, ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION

HOW THEY WORK TOGETHER AND WHAT IS NEXT?

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 few months Andrew has looked at the importance of a robust policy and approach for Diversity, Engagement and Inclusion as they are of true importance to get right, rather than being viewed as just a box ticking exercise. This month he looks at how the three work together and must be delivered if an organisation is to be fully immersed in the strategy correctly.

"We have had great feedback from the last three articles and that is why I thought I would bring the conversation together in a way which explores the way that Diversity, Engagement and Inclusion work together.

"I will then conclude this article with what should come next, to keep the ball rolling on robust policy and ensure that boards are abreast of what they need to focus on.

"Diversity, Engagement and Inclusion (DEI), as we have seen in the last three articles, are three separate entities that need to be of importance to all organisations. Each one plays an important role in the way people are treated and the success that an organisation enjoys due to its positive enforcement of their importance. So they are intra-dependent not independent of each other.

"It is when the three are done in conjunction and take support from each other, that the real results are achieved, such as a bigger talent pool, increased employee engagement and trust, new perspectives, ideas and innovation. It opens doors, hearts and opportunity. For example, by having a diversity policy but the environment where people will work is not reflective of the diverse needs, you are weakening your strategic direction and not fulfilling potential.

"By interconnecting the concepts, you not only focus on the representation of an entity, you improve the way that contributions, presence and perspective of every person in the company is not only valued but is also integrated into the working community.

"There are a number of ways you can integrate people in the workplace and promote their upholding throughout every rank, stakeholder and external party.

"Firstly, be aware of unconscious bias and communicate the importance of managing that bias. Look at global recruiting trends, consider your current challenges and ensure you have significant representation of the people that can have positive influence and input. That means not ticking boxes, and not creating tiers or a 'them and us' attitude.

"A quick win in combining your DEI policies is to ensure the promotion of pay equity. On a HR level, acknowledge holidays of all cultures, mix up your teams, and make it easy for your staff to participate in employee resource groups. Develop strategic training programs and coaching, and track progress over extended periods of time on an individual and team level.

"Make sure all your policies are accessible, in multiple languages and multiple formats. And ensure there is always facilitation of ongoing feedback.

"If you want to take bolder steps, and build a truly inclusive work culture, you must extend all the initiatives of DEI beyond recruitment by providing equal opportunity and treatment at every employee experience moment.

"And as a board or a leadership be willing to set your yourself appropriate DEI metrics. As well as judging yourself, perform analysis too. Listen to your employees, capture and understand their experience at the other end of the policy. That is the only way you will know if it is enough.

"Don't be afraid to revamp policies, customs and encourage a new culture. Make sure all your materials are inclusive, using gender neutral language and make sure that all contract benefits resonate with all employees.

"Look at your technology and ensure that is an open door to all and improve your feedback vehicles. When you are confident you are having success, don't be afraid to market it, so that employees can share your joy and working at such an amazing company!

"Superbeings claim that 86% of people claim that workplace diversity is an important attribute to consider when they are looking for a job. An even higher percentage look for the DEI benefits once in post when deciding on future career decisions. So it's not just about recruitment, it's about retention and an holistic approach to the right way to do business.

"To get the best of your efforts collaborate with external facilitators and platforms, to help you spot your unconscious bias that might exist, but you are too close to see. And remember when you apply all three, you strengthen your efforts.

"Take these steps to employee and stakeholder engagement and then look at what comes next to cement your good behaviours with moves into improving other performance indicators such as ESG.

"Environmental, social and corporate governance is becoming increasingly more important to not only employers and companies but to individuals in employment. To embark on the journey properly engages your team further and therefore is an extension of DEI.

"By taking an approach that evaluates the extent to which your company or organisation works towards positive social goals and assessing your impact on society, environment, being transparent and accountable all adds weight to your DEI.

"In my next article I will look more at how you can take steps into ESG and what the goals should be."

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



Andrew Marsh



Left to right: Michael Dickens, Investment Manager at Maven, Cllr James Rowlandson for Durham County Council, Ben Staerk, Managing Director of Furniture Clinic, and Peter Rippingale from Business Durham.

FURNITURE CLINIC SECURES £500,000 FUNDING PACKAGE FROM THE FINANCE DURHAM FUND

Maven supports manufacturer and retailer of furniture care products to create new jobs in County Durham.

The Finance Durham Fund, managed by Maven Capital Partners (“Maven”), established by Durham County Council and overseen by Business Durham, has supported local business, Furniture Clinic Ltd (“Furniture Clinic”), with a £500,000 funding package. The investment will enable the business to embark on a programme of growth to invest in the development of its factory in Consett and create 12 new jobs in County Durham.

Furniture Clinic manufactures a range of premium cleaning and restoration products providing a range of specialist leather, fabric and wood products used in many industries. The product range has recently expanded to include a full range of specialist products used to repair and restore wood and flooring. Everything is produced in-house from product R&D and testing to production.

This Durham business, that was named as

the 10th fastest growth north east business in 2021, will use the funding to further expand its presence overseas and in particular in European markets. Furniture Clinic already boasts an impressive range of high-profile customers including Harrods, Rolls Royce, John Lewis, Four Seasons Hotels, the NHS, the Royal Airforce and DFS.

Michael Dickens, Investment Manager at Maven, said: “We’re delighted to support Furniture Clinic, an established and growing local company, headquartered in County Durham, manufacturing a substantial product range to a number of markets. Ben has built an impressive business and it’s great to provide funding at this time as it looks to invest further in expansion as well as create new jobs in the area. This investment is Maven’s 50th since we opened two offices in the region in 2017 and it’s a great testament to the number of

innovative, high growth businesses the North East is home to.”

Ben Staerk, Managing Director of Furniture Clinic, said: “We’ve seen 50% year on year growth over the last two years with the creation of new product ranges. The process of developing and launching new products is becoming more complex as we grow, and this investment will make sure we have the right people and finance available to continue to roll out new products and grow sales. We look forward to working alongside Maven as they support us in our ambitious growth plans.”

Cllr James Rowlandson, cabinet member for resources, investment and assets at Durham County Council, said: “We are delighted to have been able to invest in Furniture Clinic through Finance Durham, and also to assist the company to expand its Consett base with a capital grant from our County Durham Growth Fund. It’s fantastic to support this home-grown business as it grows both nationally and internationally and to help them as they explore exciting new markets for their products.

“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.”

www.furnitureclinic.co.uk

Finance Durham Fund

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

How can Finance Durham help my business to grow?

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

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



Purchasing new
machinery



Capital
expenditure



Exporting
abroad



Investing in
new products



Hiring a
new team



Filling gaps in
working capital



Sales and
marketing



Management
buyouts

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

For more information please contact:

info@financedurham.co.uk | T: 0191 731 8595 | financedurham.co.uk

HIGH GROWTH SOFTWARE BUSINESS COMPLETES SIGNIFICANT FUNDRAISE

2022 continues to build on the bumper M&A activity in the software market which has been on an upwards trend.

The emergence of COVID emphasised that some sectors and markets were more vulnerable than others. B2B software was highlighted as a strong sector for M&A due a number of factors including; certainty of revenue and recurring revenue, growth prospects and customer tie in.

Cavu CF has recently advised on a significant fundraise for Notify, a North Tyneside software business who successfully raised £3.1m.

Notify was founded five years ago by Duncan Davies and Andy Dumbell to establish an online platform enabling businesses to improve health, safety and wellbeing in the workplace. The company has created a software platform so clients can deliver improvements to their safety, wellbeing and sustainability culture and compliance. It counts the likes of Travis Perkins, Siemens Mobility, Birmingham City University and Cazoo as clients and has users in over 100 countries.

The latest funding round was led by Calculus Capital who invested £1.85m alongside the North East Venture Fund (NEVF), supported by the European Regional Development Fund and managed by Mercia, and private investors, in one of the largest recent VCT investments in the North East. This round marked the third investment in Notify involving Mercia.

The Wallsend-based business will use the funds to accelerate investment in sales and marketing, as well as product development to deliver artificial intelligence capability to the Notify platform. It will also make additions to help Notify's clients meet the growing demands of ESG reporting.

The Notify fundraise follows shortly after Cavu CF advised HiComply on a £3m fundraise from BGF. HiComply have developed a software platform which enables SMEs to protect business data and effectively manage information security compliance and the investment will be used to increase headcount in sales and marketing functions.

We continue to see strong demand from software platform businesses wishing to raise capital to fund growth. There is no better time to raise capital with the large amount of dry powder in the market – we are seeing evidence of this with from UK, US and European investors.

We are also witnessing a number of shareholders of software platform businesses looking to realise their equity either through a trade sale or private equity. There is a strong market for buyers and investors who are looking to acquire software platform businesses.

It is important that businesses which are either seeking to raise capital or realise equity through



Sahil Nayyar

either a sale to a trade buyer or private equity, are very well prepared before approaching the market.

The Cavu team are highly experienced in this sector and are able to advise clients on key matters which ultimately drive value. We look forward to continuing to work with exceptional software businesses in the coming months.

www.cavucf.com

PRESTIGIOUS AWARD RECOGNISES RGCF'S ABILITY TO DELIVER COMPLEX TRANSACTIONS

RG Corporate Finance has capped its most successful year to date by scooping a prestigious accolade at the North East Accountancy Awards 2022.

The Newcastle based CF advisory boutique won the Corporate Finance Deal of the Year Award for having advised on the multi-faceted transaction involving the management buyout (MBO) at eQS Group, a £20m debt raise, whilst also advising eQS on its four subsequent acquisitions, all within 18 months.

Presented at an awards dinner at the Hilton in Gateshead, the award recognised the ability of RGCF, led by Partner and Head of Corporate Finance, Carl Swansbury, to advise on and deliver a series of complex transactions, a number of which happened concurrently, to support the growth ambitions of the equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) consultancy.

Working incredibly closely with eQS' management team to support the MBO, debt raise and initial acquisition, RGCF went on to advise the business on the development and execution of its buy-and-build strategy.

Utilising RGCF's dedicated in-house research capabilities to identify and approach a number of off-market targets, which included eQS' most recent acquisition, Challenge Consultancy, a business that provides EDI training and consultancy services, the Group has been able



to complete four acquisitions following the completion of the MBO.

Carl Swansbury, Partner and Head of Corporate Finance at RGCF, said: "Recognition from our peers for the work we have done in helping the management team of eQS complete its MBO, £20m debt raise and subsequent acquisitions is a real honour, and we were very proud to receive the award.

"It is testament to the capabilities of our talented team to deliver these and other complex transactions. We are enjoying

another very strong period of transactions and have an extensive pipeline of projects to support businesses, management teams and shareholders in the North East and across the UK."

RGCF have advised on a number of transactions of late, including advising North East based gift card provider MBL Solutions on its acquisition by Liverpool-based, listed Appreciate Group.

RGCF also advised the shareholder of cloud-based property software business, VTUK on sale of the business to LDC backed iamproperty Group.

Outside of the North East, RGCF advised Software as a Service (SaaS) procurement software provider Market Dojo, based in the South West, on its sale to French listed Esker.

Carl added: "The diversity of the businesses we are advising reflects the broad expertise and knowledge of the sectors where RGCF is active, which is enabling our team to support the continued growth and development of businesses both here in the North East and further afield. We are helping shareholders realise maximum value for their businesses by advising on disposals to not only domestic, but also international strategic trade buyers and management teams."

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SOLICITORS



MINCOFFS SOLICITORS CELEBRATE CONTINUED GROWTH AND EXPANSION

A leading North East law firm is celebrating a period of continued growth and expansion, despite the challenges of the pandemic.

Mincoffs Solicitors, based in Jesmond, specialises in its corporate and commercial offering and works with clients across a diverse range of sectors including technology, healthcare, leisure and hospitality, manufacturing, and media and entertainment.

And the corporate team at the award-winning firm has completed on more than 250

transactions over the last two years, worth an aggregate deal value in excess of £1.1bn.

Along with the impressive figures, the business has welcomed a string of new staff, including new Commercial Director, Matthew Flinders and the appointment of corporate lawyer Luke Philpott and the promotion of Head of Residential Conveyancing, Emma Liddle brings its number of Partners up to 12.

The firm ranked in the top 20 nationally for deal volume in the Experian UK M&A Review, along with maintaining its third place position in the North East for quarter one.

A six-figure investment into its reception area has created additional meeting rooms and event space, while installing new technology has allowed the company to better host presentations and seminars, as well as streamline remote court proceedings.

Mincoffs has also introduced hybrid working for its 100-strong team to give staff more flexibility over their hours and promote the importance of a work-life balance.

And the firm continues to work with a wide variety of top clients across the North East and further afield, including premium hotel group the Cairn Group, building services experts Northern Bear PLC, Sheffield-based engineering solutions supplier L. B. Foster, innovative game designers Steamforged Games, based in Manchester, and Indian power generation manufacturing company, Sudhir Power.

A FAMILY OF FINANCIAL ADVISERS EXPAND INTO WASHINGTON BUSINESS CENTRE

A family-run firm of financial advisers that's thrived since arriving in Sunderland plans to expand and create new jobs.

Wood Kirkbride IFA, which was set up last year by David Wood, specialises in the management of savings, investments, pension portfolios and mortgages, and has taken office space at Washington Business Centre with the hopes of creating three new jobs this year.

After working in the financial sector for 34 years and running his own business as an independent financial adviser for 18 years, David already has an established list of clients with whom he has long standing relationships, built upon trust and his financial expertise.

When considering his next career move during the pandemic, he decided to set up Wood Kirkbride IFA with the plan to pass the business on to the younger members of his family when he retires in the future, ensuring



his clients will continue to receive the same great service and expert advice.

Now working alongside his niece, Lois-Eryn Kirkbride, who worked with David as an administrator while studying Finance and Business at the University of Sunderland before becoming a Level 4 qualified independent financial adviser, David is laying the foundations for a business with family at its core.

He has also brought onboard Jackie Patterson as business manager, who he has worked with in the industry for over 19 years, as well as Abbie Taylor as a business support administrator, who is studying towards professional qualifications later this year.



TEESSIDE LAW FIRM TRIUMPHS AT NORTHERN LAW AWARDS

Teesside law firm, Cygnet Law, has been named Team of the Year in the Family Law category at the prestigious Northern Law Awards.

The Northern Law Awards celebrate legal talent within the region, highlighting the successes of those practising and working in the legal industry in the North of England.

The law firm, which has offices in Darlington and Redcar, was presented with the accolade at a ceremony which took place at the Hilton Newcastle Gateshead.

Cygnet solicitor, Jessica King, from Loftus, also triumphed at the awards, winning Trainee of the Year.

25-year-old Jessica joined Cygnet Law in March 2020 after completing the Legal Practice Course at Sunderland University and securing a Master of Laws. She undertook her training contract with the firm and qualified as a solicitor in March 2022.

Jessica is now a valuable asset in Cygnet's Public Law department, representing parents, grandparents and Local Authorities in ongoing care proceedings.

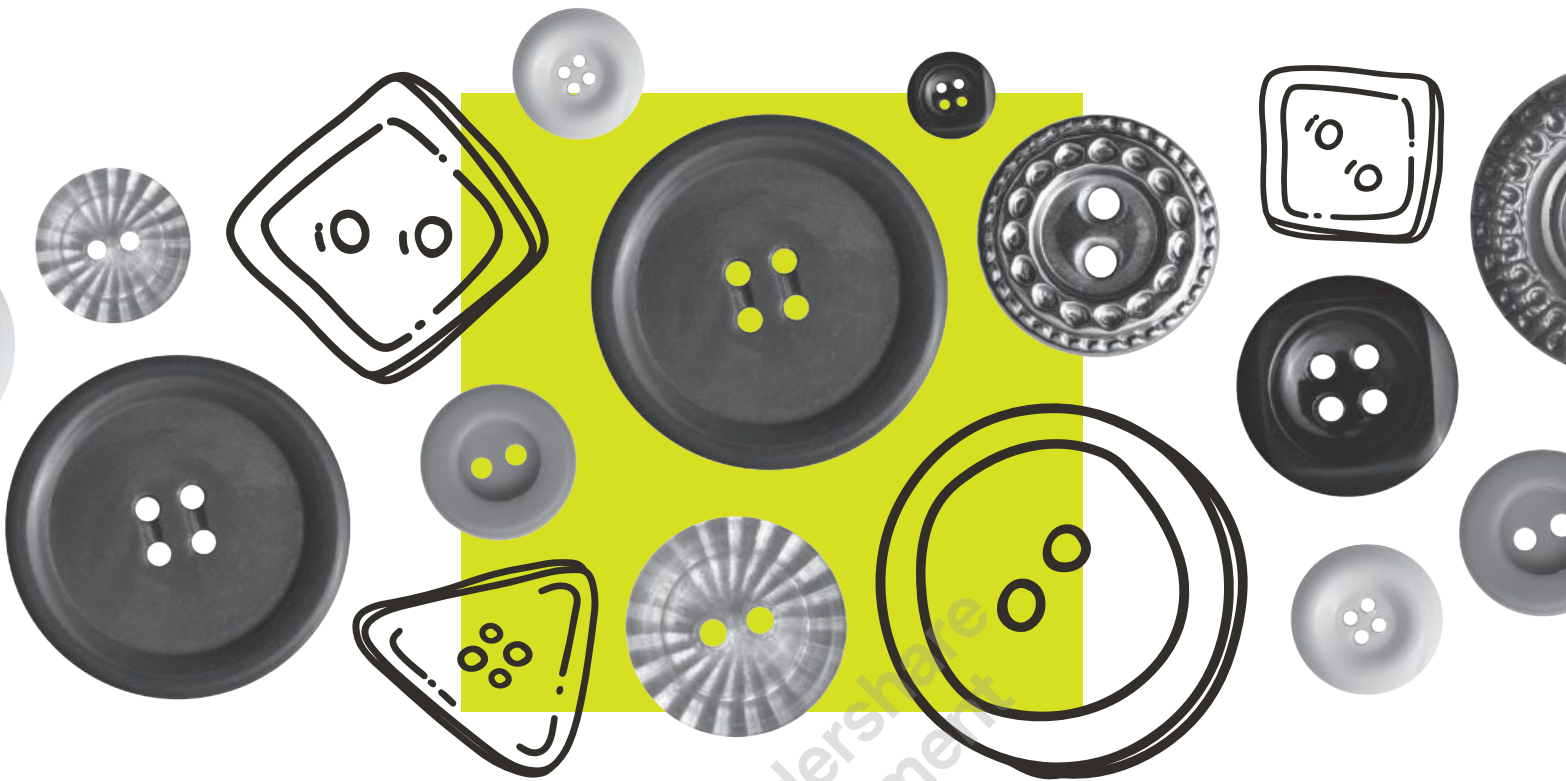
The wins come at an exciting time of expansion for the firm. After building a strong reputation from its base in Redcar over the past 20 years, and successfully opening a second office in the town in 2021, it recently opened a new office in Darlington.

Stacey Phoenix, director and solicitor at Cygnet Law Darlington, said: "We are delighted that our talented Family Law team have been recognised on a regional level. The award is a testament to the hard work and dedication that they show as they continue to go above and beyond for our clients.

"Jessica being awarded Trainee of the Year demonstrates the commitment that she has shown to the legal profession and to her clients. She is incredibly talented, and we are very proud to have her as part of the Cygnet team."



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A NIGHT OF CELEBRATIONS

The Northern Law Awards celebrate the great wealth of legal talent and success within the region, and is the law event for all those practising and working in the legal industry in the North of England. Recently, the sixth Northern Law Awards gathered together the best of the Northern legal community to share their successes and achievements of the past two years in a night of great celebration.

www.lawawards.co.uk







L-R: Paul Johnstone, Charlotte McBride, Sue Graham, Paul McGowan and Helen Scott.

DOUBLE SUCCESS FOR COLLINGWOOD LEGAL AT THE NORTHERN LAW AWARDS 2022!

Collingwood Legal had an extremely successful evening at the recent Northern Law Awards gala dinner at the Gateshead Hilton Hotel winning both “Law Firm of the Year (1 to 5 Partners)” and “Employment Law Firm of the Year”.

The Northern law Awards celebrate and recognise success and excellence in legal practice in the North of England. Shortlisted firms are assessed following a rigorous process including an interview with an independent judging panel. Many excellent law firms in the region were shortlisted for the 2022 awards including national and international legal practices.

The firm highlighted client wins and success in high profile cases as part of its success during the assessment process. In addition to success with clients, the firm has also embraced flexible working and wellbeing strategies including popular regular Team based PT training session to improve fitness and combat stress.

Paul McGowan Managing Partner at Collingwood Legal said: “We were thrilled to be shortlisted for the Employment Law Firm and Law Firm of the Year at this year's awards. We were up against tough competition in each category and to come away as the winners of both awards on the night was a wonderful surprise. We recognise that the last two years have been tough for many of our contacts and clients and all of the team at Collingwood Legal appreciate and are grateful for your continued support of the firm.”

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IS LONG - COVID A DISABILITY FOR THE PURPOSES OF THE EQUALITY ACT 2010?

Nathan May is a Solicitor at specialist employment law firm, Collingwood Legal. Nathan considers recent commentary and case law on Long - COVID and the Equality Act 2010.



Nathan May

Some individuals who contract COVID – 19 have been known to suffer from “Long COVID”. The NHS website lists various symptoms of those who suffer with Long COVID including fatigue, shortness of breath and problems with memory. What is particularly difficult is that understanding of Long COVID is in its infancy with little certainty as to how long the symptoms could last for any one person.

This lack of knowledge can be particularly difficult when an employer considers its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 (EA 2010) in respect of disabilities. Disability is defined in section 6 of EA 2010 as “*a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities*”. An impairment will only have a “long-term” effect if “*it has lasted for at least 12 months, it is likely to last for at least 12 months, or it is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person affected*”.

Because of the variety of symptoms and unpredictability as to the prognosis of this condition, it is uncertain whether Long COVID meets this definition.

What has been suggested to deal with this uncertainty?

Due to this uncertainty, the TUC called for Long COVID to be codified as a “deemed disability” under the EA 2010, meaning there

would be no requirement to test whether an individual meets the aforementioned definition. However, there has been no indication from the Government that such reform will be enacted.

Therefore, it will be a matter of fact in each individual case as to whether an individual's symptoms meet the definition in section 6. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) caused controversy in May 2022 when it tweeted that without case law on this subject, it could not recommend treating Long COVID as a disability. This was later equivocated to the more neutral advice that “employers [should] continue to follow existing guidance when considering reasonable adjustments for disabled people and access to flexible working, based on the circumstances of individual cases”.

Clarity from the Employment Tribunal

However, The Employment Tribunal has recently provided some much-needed clarity following its decision in *Burke v Turning Point Scotland*. Mr Burke was dismissed by reason of his ill health in August 2021, having first contracted COVID – 19 in November 2020. Mr Burke experienced severe headaches and fatigue which prevented him from returning to work. His symptoms would briefly improve before relapsing. As a preliminary issue, the Employment Tribunal was asked to conclude

whether Mr Burke's symptoms met the definition in section 6.

Despite two occupational health reports obtained by Turning Point Scotland stating that Mr Burke was fit to return to work, the Employment Tribunal found that Mr Burke was disabled for the purposes of the EA 2010. The Employment Tribunal accepted the Claimant's evidence as to the debilitating impact Long COVID had on his ability to carry out day-to-day activities and that it could well be that his symptoms lasted for at least 12 months.

Why this is important for employers now

Employers should be wary of the possibility that their staff who have Long COVID may be disabled and should consider their duties under EA 2010, particularly the duty to make reasonable adjustments. What adjustments may be considered reasonable is, again, a question of fact, but considering the symptoms of Long COVID, it may involve adjustments to the hours of work of the worker, altering their duties or making homeworking available.

Collingwood Legal is a specialist employment law firm and we provide bespoke training and advice to organisations on all areas of employment law.

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WINN 20th ANNIVERSARY

Executive Chairman Jeff Winn opened his doors to host the annual Winn Group summer social event on its 20th anniversary.

Attended by 250-plus employees and business contacts on a sunny evening in Jesmond, the event had a free bar, entertainment and catering trucks on hand to keep guests suitably happy as the celebration of the company's achievements went off in fine style.

Taking on in excess of 100 new members of staff and opening a third office site, in the last 12 months, the accident management company has enjoyed record turnover and profit levels for the end of the previous financial year, marking two decades of growth and expansion.





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LAWYER OF THE MONTH

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

GRAHAM SHANNON

emg Solicitors.

Which area of the law do you work in?

My main area of work is employment law.

Did you always envisage a career in the industry?

I decided on a career in the law after watching the 'Paper Chase' a 1970s American tv programme about Law Students at Harvard and another 70's American tv programme about a lawyer called Petrocelli who lived in a caravan in Arizona. And on this side of the pond there was Crown Court too!

What has been your career path so far?

I studied Law at Essex University, sat my Final Exams at Newcastle Polytechnic, and started my practical training at George Mills Solicitors in Washington before completing it at Alderson Dodds Solicitors in Blyth where I qualified in 1989, and later joined the partnership. I retired from an enlarged Practice (Alderson Law LLP) in 2020 to join EMG (and before all that I worked as a paperboy, a bar tender, and, very briefly, a cook in Greece)!

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

In my current role the biggest challenge so far has been making the transition from paper case files to electronic ones.

Who do you most respect in your industry?

I respect any lawyer who can combine knowledge, enthusiasm and compassion, (and who can touch type)!

Which fictional lawyer would you most like to meet?

The fictional lawyer I would like to meet most is Tony Petrocelli.

What is your greatest strength?

My greatest strength I regard is my ability to communicate well with my clients and put them at ease. I also cook great chilli!

What is your biggest weakness?

My biggest weaknesses are my IT skills, and cake.

What are your future career aspirations?

My remaining career aspiration is to help further the career aspirations of others. I'm lucky to be surrounded by a lot of bright enthusiastic young lawyers and its reassuring to know the profession is in good hands looking forward.

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

In the next 10 years I anticipate a more diverse profession, a greater reliance on technology and a healthier work life balance emphasis for those fortunate to work in it.

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WHAT THE END OF THE 'BLAME GAME' MEANS FOR DIVORCE

Statistics from HM Courts & Tribunals Service revealed that 12,978 applications were made under the new non-fault divorce system in April 2022. Last year the courts received 6,764 digital and 1,965 paper applications.

The significant spike in the figures when compared to the same period last year, make it clear that most separating couples prefer not having to provide evidence of 'conduct' or 'separation'. The figures suggest that bringing in 'no fault' divorce has achieved the objective of making separation much simpler - now the only requirement is to give a statement of irretrievable breakdown of the marriage or civil partnership.

In turn, it is hoped that the new 'no fault' regime will reduce anxiety and conflict for all involved, instead putting more focus on dealing with any children and the fair division of assets. Some people, of course, may feel disappointed that they cannot have their 'day in Court' and cite their partner's infidelity or unreasonable behaviour, but ultimately as family lawyers we encourage a more amicable split, especially when children are involved.

So, what's changed?

There are a number of changes aimed at making the divorce process easier for separating couples, such as the change of the language used. The archaic Latin language previously used, such as "Decree Nisi" has been changed to a "Conditional Order" and the "Decree Absolute" has been changed to the "Final Order". The objective is to help each side more confidently navigate the divorce process themselves as a "Litigant in Person" without necessarily needing legal representation.

In response, at Sweeney Miller Law, we have reduced our fixed fees for dealing with the procedural side of the divorce as, although the divorce is technically more straight forward, splitting couples still need to consider the significant implications of divorce for them and their family. For example, divorce can affect your tax position, pension entitlements and inheritance position, which is why specialist advice is recommended.

Divorce is just the beginning

Whilst simplifying divorce is welcome, it is important to remember that the technical divorce process is separate to the often more complex division of assets and financial settlement, as well as dealing with arrangements for any children; it is therefore advisable to get specialist legal advice about these issues when contemplating or during divorce or separation. Even if you are divorced, without a financial consent order approved by the Court, you are open to a claim from your former spouse at any time in the future. There is no time limit on claims until the agreement is made legally binding.

That said, we often hear couples say they have done their own divorce, and ticked the online box confirming they did not wish to apply for a financial order. This is one of the occasions where the "DIY Divorce" becomes problematic.

Ticking "yes" will not start a Court case in relation to your finances, but it means you can make an application in the future. If you tick "no" and you remarry or form another civil partnership you usually won't be able to apply for a financial order.

Clean break

A simple "clean break order" may be possible in situations where there has been a short marriage with no children or shared assets and Sweeney Miller offer fixed fees for splitting couples in these situations. However, for couples who have shared a long marriage, have children and/or shared assets, then there is far more to consider and financial disclosure is a Court requirement to reach a fair settlement between the splitting couple.

Splitting assets

It is important to remember that all assets are considered in any settlement, including pensions. Pensions can often be valued more than the family home and should not be forgotten. Pension sharing in divorce is a highly complex area where pension specialists are needed to confirm how the pension should be valued and be split if necessary. Not all pensions will be split or shared, and it is therefore important to get specialist advice on how best to protect your future wealth.

The Sweeney Miller Law family team has excellent connections with financial and pension advisors. In addition, we have a large conveyancing team which can help with the sale or transfer of the family home, as well as an experienced commercial team to assist in dealing with your company on divorce. We also have an Estate Planning team that can help you create a Will to reflect your new wishes. We help clients from start to finish with their divorce and financial settlement and offer a free initial no obligation 30-minute consultation.

Rebecca Cresswell is the Head of Sweeney Miller Law's Family Department. To find out more, book an appointment by emailing rebecca@sweeneymiller.co.uk, calling 0345 900 5401 or visit www.sweeneymiller.co.uk

sweeney
miller  LAW



Rebecca Cresswell



ST JAMES' SQUARE LAW FIRM KARTING EVENT RAISES £10,000 FOR THE CHRONICLE SUNSHINE FUND

Commercial law firm, St James' Square, hosted their annual Charity Karting and Networking Event earlier this month at Karting North East.

The event brought together clients and staff for an action-packed afternoon of endurance racing whilst raising money for the firm's charity of the year, The Chronicle Sunshine Fund.

The afternoon started with welcome words from Paul Monaghan, the firm's Managing Partner, followed by Siobhan Sergeant from The Chronicle Sunshine Fund who gave a touching insight into the charity. 35 teams raced the afternoon away in a two hour race over a 1.1 mile outdoor circuit. FRP Advisory fended off stiff competition from other businesses to claim first place and take home the SJS winner's trophy.

During the event, Paul presented The Chronicle Sunshine Fund with a cheque for £10,000 that had been raised by St James' Square Law Firm. This was well received by The Chronicle Sunshine Fund, who have experienced a year-on-year rise of applications from North East families desperate for funding. The money will allow the charity to supply specialised equipment to children living with severe disabilities. The donation was also perfectly timed in that on the same day The Chronicle Sunshine Fund were able to approve equipment for a young boy that had his application rejected due to financial constraints.

Paul Monaghan said, "We are absolutely thrilled that our guests could join us today and we're immensely grateful for their support. It's been a fantastic fun-filled afternoon but to be able to raise so much money for The Chronicle Sunshine Fund makes today a win-win event."





Images by LifeStudios



Siobhan continued. "We were delighted to be the beneficiaries of this amazing event and when the team at St James' Square Law Firm suggested we take part, we couldn't resist! For a small charity like ours, it was an important opportunity to network with prominent regional businesses and outline the work we do with North East families. It was an emotional moment when Paul presented us with a cheque for £10,000. This donation will help us provide life changing equipment for children with disabilities and terminal illnesses in our region."

St James' Square Law Firm has increased its fundraising activities over the last three years. Although it is known as a leading commercial law firm, the business has developed a reputation for raising significant sums of money for North East charities that help families and children who are living with disabilities.

Since it began trading in 2017, St James' Square Law Firm has raised in excess of £160,000 for North East charities. It plans to break the £200,000 mark this year. Commenting on the achievement, Paul Monaghan said: "In 2017 we original set out to raise a few pounds for charity. What started as an idea, later became an obsession. While our business is, at its heart, a law firm, we go the extra mile to help others. We are delighted to be able to raise such large amounts for charity and I thank all of the staff at St James' Square Law Firm for continually going above and beyond in that endeavor."

www.sjs-law.co.uk



“

...while our business is, at its heart, a law firm, we go the extra mile to help others...



L-R: Louise Duffy, Partner and Head of Banking Team and Andrew Coddington, Partner, Banking and Restructuring

MUCKLE LLP STRENGTHENS BANKING TEAM WITH NEW SENIOR APPOINTMENT

Leading North East law firm, Muckle LLP, has strengthened its Banking and Restructuring team with a senior appointment.

With over 20 years' experience, project finance lawyer Andrew Coddington joins the firm as Partner and brings with him a wealth of experience acting for both borrowers and lenders, with particular expertise in energy, acquisition and Islamic finance.

With two decades spent acting on countless international power-based developments across Europe, the Caribbean and the Middle East, Andrew is channelling his vast experience to bolster the Newcastle-based

firm's already extensive presence across the energy industry.

Andrew said: "Muckle has a great team that has done fantastic energy-related work for some years. And I want to use my experience and knowledge to build on what is already here.

"There aren't too many project finance specialists in this part of the world, and that is certainly something that sets Muckle apart

in the market. Energy cuts right through every aspect of Muckle, from employment, litigation and banking to areas including corporate and real estate.

"All of what we do is collaborative and cohesive, with the engagement, influence, knowledge and skills of everyone here driving things forward - and that is different from other firms. I'm thrilled to join such a forward-thinking firm at such an exciting time and look forward to what the future holds at Muckle."

The team, led by well-known finance practitioner Louise Duffy, has a reputation acting for lenders and borrowers, with a large client base made up of banks, private equity providers and corporate borrowers.

Louise said: "We're delighted to have Andrew on board, he brings a wealth of expertise that will help drive our team forward, especially in the energy sector."

To find out more about Muckle, visit:
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L-R: Carolyn Hargreaves, Rebecca Newton, Hayley Stoker

NO FAULT DIVORCE

On the 6th of April 2022, The Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act 2020 came into force, bringing with it long-awaited reforms to the law governing the divorce process in England and Wales. This introduction of a 'No Fault Divorce' represented the biggest shake up in divorce law for more than half a century.

No longer do separating couples need to apportion blame for the breakdown of their marriage, or live separate and apart for lengthy periods of time, to be entitled to a divorce. Accompanied by new terminology and timescales, the changes mean that a spouse, or a couple jointly, can now apply for a divorce simply on the basis that their marriage has broken down irretrievably.

The need for unnecessary 'finger-pointing' is removed and the, at

times, lengthy delays that resulted from the requirement to live apart for significant periods of time are no more. Vexatious spouses are in difficulty contesting a divorce and locking their spouse into an unhappy marriage.

Carolyn Hargreaves, the Partner who heads up the Family Law Department at PGS Law, said of the changes: "We very much welcome the 'No Fault Divorce' legislation as both simplifying the process and providing clients with an opportunity to focus on resolving other aspects of their separation, such as achieving a financial settlement or making arrangements for children.

"It is the right change. Divorce is difficult and removing the element of blame is welcomed.

"Here at PGS Law, we listen and support our clients throughout. No matter what their family situation is, it will be familiar to our team of experienced family lawyers. We work closely with our clients to provide clear, tailored advice and very much look forward to guiding our clients through the new process."

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LEASEHOLD REFORM: WHAT THE CHANGES MEAN FOR YOU

“Easier, faster, fairer, cheaper”. That’s the government’s promise for buying and extending lease agreements in its new leasehold tenure reforms – but will it work?

The reforms have been on the cards for a while, explains Dale Smith, founder and director of residential and commercial conveyancing firm Grey-Smith Legal, and it's time to make preparations for when they become law.

The government's promise

In 2017, the government announced its plans to tackle the growing problem of newly built houses sold as leasehold rather than freehold and to limit ground rents of new lease agreements. The second part of that, which is the first phase of the plan, came into force on June 30th, meaning that ground rents have been abolished for new properties.

This means that, under the Ground Rent Act, if you are building new properties intended for leasehold, from July you are not able to charge your leaseholders ground rent.

Generally, the Act applies to the following regulated new leases:

- Those granted on or after 30 June 2022
- Long leases exceeding 21 years for a single dwelling
- Those granted for a premium

And while there is nothing in the legislation about existing ground rents yet, The Competition and Markets Authority is working towards limiting unfair charges by securing commitments from developers and freeholders to remove steep rises.

The Act does not apply to business leases where the property is being used for business purposes or significantly contributes to this purpose.



When will ground rent be abolished?

As of June 30th, 2022, if you are a landlord of a regulated lease, you cannot require a leaseholder to make a payment of ground rent.

The legislation has come into force to protect leaseholders from these expensive annual rents they often see little return on.

If you do charge rent in contravention of the Act, you will be liable to pay a fine of between £500 to £30,000, so it's important to be aware of the changes.

The peppercorn limit

Technically, the Act requires that any ground rent on a new residential lease may not exceed one peppercorn per year. In reality, this means it would be reduced to zero. A peppercorn rent, historically, meant a rent that was low value, or nominal. Hence why it is zero.

The Act also bans landlords from charging a fee to collect the peppercorn. This reduces the incentive to charge leaseholders an actual peppercorn.

The next phase

While this new legislation tackles ground rent, there is still much discussion around leasehold properties, and although it is not expected that there will be any further reforms in 2022, the second phase is expected to be introduced during the next parliamentary session in 2023 – 2024.

Existing leaseholders won't benefit from the abolishment of ground rent (in England, this amounts to 4.6 million people), and these homeowners will be waiting to hear what

the government will do to fulfil its promise of making it 'easier, faster, fairer and cheaper' to extend their leases.

The next phase of legislation will look to address the issues surrounding lease extensions. For one, currently, leaseholders can only extend their existing terms by 90 years but in the new reforms, they have been promised that this will change to a 990-year term.

The government have also agreed to a standard cost calculation when determining the value of the premium a leaseholder pays to a landlord. In doing this, it protects them from costly and time-consuming negotiations.

An online calculator will also be introduced, with the aim of ensuring 'standardisation and fairness' during the valuation process.

Be prepared

As a landlord, you must be prepared for these changes. Any ground rent collected after June 30th will be considered an illegal transaction and you could be liable for a fine and will have to repay the rent.

One bonus, however, is that it's thought that the reform will provide a fairer balance in landlord and tenant relations in the residential housing sector.

Only time will tell whether the reform is successful, but one thing is for sure: knowledge is power, and landlords must utilise this to ensure they remain on the right side of the lines.

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NORTH TYNESIDE BUSINESS FORUM CELEBRATIONS

North Tyneside Business Forum celebrated their 10th Birthday (delayed two years by COVID) at a VIP party at the Mouth of the Tyne Festival.

Around 70 members attended, and Chair Karen Goldfinch was delighted to welcome a diverse range of businesses to the event.

"This was a fantastic way to celebrate just how far we have progressed in the last 12 years."

If you are a North Tyneside based business, why not join the Forum? This was one of the many member benefits.

To find out more:

www.norhttynesidebusinessforum.org.uk







ROB POOLS RESOURCES OF CITY'S BUSINESS COMMUNITY

One of Newcastle's most understated charity fundraisers has pledged to find almost £2million to create a hydrotherapy pool for a specialist school.

Successful businessman and entrepreneur, Rob Armstrong from Newcastle has had a long-term relationship with Hadrian School in the city's West End. The school looks after some of the most severely disabled children in the North East and four years ago, Rob was instrumental in raising £1.4m for a Rebound Therapy Centre which was then named after him in recognition of his fundraising efforts.

Now he has set his fundraising sights on raising almost £2m for a hydrotherapy pool, massage room and café in the school's proposed Community Disability Hub. Participants would be able to engage in power wheelchair sports, dance, music, karate, football, disability palates, yoga, swimming, Rebound etc. It will also offer the disabled community a place to meet, eat, socialise, and hire as a venue for parties and celebrations.

In May, Rob hosted a glittering fund-raising ball compared by TV celebrity Jeremy Kyle. The North East business community turned out in force and at the end of the night, a staggering £250,000 was raised towards the school's target of £2m.

Following the Ball, the region's business community have pledged another £750,000 additional support in terms of materials and business support in kind, giving a massive £1 million pledged.

Rob added: "People have been fantastic such as Courtney Cliff who has once again donated a huge amount of labour and materials including all the bricks needed to complete the project. But he's not alone as so many others have either pledged cash or in-kind help with the building."

HEALTH VISITOR RECEIVES HEALTHWATCH AWARD FOR "GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND"

A Gateshead Health Visitor has been awarded a prestigious Healthwatch Star Award for going above and beyond to help families in her area.

Healthwatch Gateshead champions outstanding health and social care services in the local area. They gather and represent the views and experiences of service users of all ages. They also celebrate the outstanding achievements of health and social care champions, awarding Healthwatch Star awards to people and services nominated by the public for special recognition.

Trish Mulligan from Chester-le Street has been nursing for over 40 years, with a wide range of experience in general nursing, high dependency, midwifery, and health visiting. She's been working as a health visitor in Central Gateshead for five years and has



built up a good working relationship with the town's Jewish community as well as local refugees, asylum seekers, and families needing support in the area.

'I was so excited to receive this award. It's such beautiful feedback, especially considering this person said I'd never judged them – that's so important as a health visitor. I'm absolutely thrilled but really, I'm just doing my job – I just want to help and support people,' said Trish.

Phill Capewell, Interim CEO at Healthwatch Gateshead said:

'We're always delighted to pass on such glowing feedback – for someone to go out of their way to tell us about a positive experience they've had means a lot, and Trish should be really proud of herself.'



MVS VISITS VTS

As part of Maritime Safety Week, members of a national nautical charity paid a visit to the operational hub of the Port of Tyne.

Alan Feast, Harbour Master at the Port of Tyne invited members of the Northumbria Unit of the Maritime Volunteer Service (MVS) to the Port's Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) to see the work carried out there.

Tyne VTS provides 24/7 coverage of the Statutory Harbour Area. The Aim of a VTS is to ensure safety of navigation and protection of the environment. The visit was one of several activities organised by the Port as part of Maritime Safety Week.

Jennifer Mitchelson, Head of Unit MVS Northumbria said: "We were given a tour of the facilities by the Harbour Master and enjoyed a general discussion around maritime safety and the movement of

vessels around the port. For all of us who are river users it gave us a unique insight into the work carried out behind the scenes."

The Maritime Volunteer Service is a uniformed, voluntary organisation, with more than 25 active units spread around the UK coastline at major port and river areas, Northumbria Unit is based at St Peter's Marina.

The aim of the MVS is to keep the country's maritime traditions alive. Practical training in seamanship, small boat handling, engineering and communications helps to achieve this.

Membership is open to both men and women irrespective of ethnic origin or disability from the age of 18. New members are always welcome – no experience necessary, for more information see www.facebook.com/mvsnorthumbria

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NE YOUTH'S ANNUAL CLAY PIGEON SHOOT IS A SOARAWAY SUCCESS

NE Youth have been running a shoot for 35 years and the money raised- (now over £500k) has helped 1000's of young people.

This year's event was run across two days with 56 teams taking part and was sponsored by Northumberland Estates and Storey Homes.

The sun shone all weekend at Hulne Priory in Alnwick and an amazing £62,000 was raised.

Rory Wilson, Northumberland Estates CEO, said: "We are proud to support NE Youth again this year. The charity works hard to make a positive difference in the lives of young people across the region and shares many of the same values as Northumberland Estates by acting to bring about positive change in communities throughout the North East."

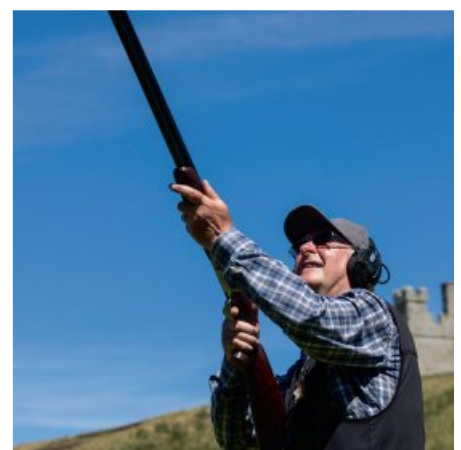
Stuart Morgan, Land Director for the North East at Storey Homes, said: "We were very proud to jointly sponsor the NE Youth's shoot and thrilled to hear it was such a success. The work that NE Youth do to support youth projects and empower young people across the North East is outstanding and as a business, we are committed to supporting the communities in which we build, which is why supporting this fantastic event was such a great fit for us."

The Sunday shoot was in memory of John Shallcross who started the event many years ago and was sorely missed.

Jon Niblo, CEO of NE Youth commented: 'This has been an incredible two days for our Charity. The generosity of all guests during this very difficult period for local business was overwhelming. So many people played a key role in pulling this event together and on behalf of all of our beneficiaries I would like to a huge thank you.

Particularly our main sponsors Storey Homes, Northumberland Estates and The Inn Collection Group.'

www.neyouth.org.uk





COVID-19 RECOVERY GRANT ENSURES MILITARY COLLECTABLE FIRM IS FIGHTING FIT FOR THE FUTURE

A specialist Durham-based military collectable and kit company, is marching to success, thanks to a Covid recovery grant from Open North Foundation.

The £1,255 donation to Military Incorporated will enable additional security measures at its warehouse and shop in Langley Park, which it moved to in February 2021.

Just before the pandemic struck in early 2020, Phil McCready made the bold decision to leave the motor industry and turn the hobby, he took up as a seven-year-old, into a business.

Phil, said: "I had been collecting military items for over 30 years and one day I decided to turn it in to a business so, in November 2019, I



made that dream a reality.

"Growing up around the soldiers guarding Windsor Castle, gave me access to the British military from a young age and I was fascinated from the off, it's a life time passion that has turned in to one of the fastest growing military businesses in the UK, if not Europe.

"Just prior to the pandemic we had a clear marketing plan in place and much of that involved attending fairs and other relevant community events where we could promote the business. That, suddenly, became impossible, when stringent Covid-19

restrictions were put in place and this had a huge impact on our plans. However, we developed a much more outward facing on-line presence and we have steadily recovered. Our warehouse and shop have a growing footfall of customers and we have on-line customers for all over the world.

"Our goal is to become the largest military collectables and kit company in the world, and we're well on track to be that company.

"The grant from Open North Foundation is very much appreciated. The last two years have been a massive learning curve for myself and the grant is not just great news for the business but is evidence that very experienced and knowledgeable people from within the business community are confident we are taking the business in the right direction. Given that this is my first business venture, that is very reassuring news."

Open North Foundation was established in July 2020 and is a direct response from the business community in the North East to provide financial and in-kind support to small businesses in the region directly hit by the pandemic.



GREAT TURNOUT AT MOST SUCCESSFUL HOPPINGS FAIR

Newcastle's much-loved travelling fair – The Hoppings – has been voted a resounding success after more than 400,000 visitors flocked to the week-long amusement attraction.

The enormous travelling fair, the biggest in Europe – with more than 450 attractions – is held annually at Newcastle's Town Moor and returned recently (17 -25 Jun) after a two-year gap due to the covid pandemic.

And now organisers have praised the thousands of well behaved visitors who turned out in force to support the event, which was trouble free, and making it one of the best attended Hoppings ever.

First-time organiser Ryan Crow, of Crow Events, said that this was the most family oriented Hoppings he had ever seen and his team was thrilled by the size of the crowds and their behaviour.

"We didn't know what to expect after covid, but it was a memorable week in the North East, everything went like clockwork and with British summertime on our side everyone had a fantastic time," he said.

This is the first year that the Hoppings has been operated by Crow Events. The family run company took over the management from The Freeman of Newcastle, who still act as consultants for the event. Crow's is one of the UK's largest fairground and events providers and has been in operation since 1865.

NEW SHELVES STACKED AT NORTH TYNESIDE FOOD REDISTRIBUTION SCHEME

A North Tyneside food redistribution project is improving its recipe for success with the help of a four-figure grant from Newcastle Building Society.

St Paul's Community Partnership in Willington Quay runs a weekly FairShare scheme, where food donated by local retailers and collected from a range of other local sources is made available for people in need across the community to collect free of charge from its George Street centre.

With limited storage space available, the charity was struggling to organise so many generous donations and risked losing track of all available items.

But now, thanks to a £1,000 Newcastle Building Society grant, St Paul's has been able to buy a series of sturdy metal storage units which have allowed the room to be properly organised and made it easier for food products to be made available in date order, so that nothing goes out of date without being used.

The funding is being provided through the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation, which offers grants to charities and community groups located in or around the communities served by the Society's branch network.



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ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS RETURN FOR THE DRAGONFLY BALL

Over 200 guests descended on The Biscuit Factory for the 10th Dragonfly Ball, the first large scale event organised by the Dragonfly Cancer Trust since Covid-19 hit.

The event this year followed a masked theme to reflect some of the essential support that the charity offers to young cancer patients across the country. Mask decorating kits are one of the most popular items in the activity boxes which are sent to children's cancer wards and continue to have a huge impact on those receiving treatment.

The charity works with families, hospitals, and hospices across the UK supporting palliative cancer patients from 0-25 years old. This year, special masks were designed by young people currently undergoing treatment on the cancer ward, alongside an exclusive masquerade mask decorated and signed by Absolutely Fabulous star Dame Joanna Lumley which saw £2k raised for the exclusively designed masks at auction.

Businesses from across the North East helped to raise over £25,000 at the event which was hosted by local comedian and BBC presenter Steffan Peddie, alongside Miss Newcastle, Kirsty Wright.

Jane Dennison, CEO, Dragonfly Cancer Trust said: "When the country went into lockdown all our fundraising streams drastically halted, the number of applications from young cancer patients continued to grow, but the team managed to provide vital support through one of the toughest periods the charity ever faced. The return of our Annual Ball is a key milestone, and an opportunity to raise vital funds for the charity."

The focus of the Dragonfly Cancer Trust is on memory making and helping young patients to make each moment matter with their loved ones and this



is done by providing Cash Gifts, keepsakes and creative therapy.

Sanjeev Vadhera, Chair of Trustees, Dragonfly Cancer Trust said: "The applications we receive never fail to move us and motivate our drive to help as many young people as possible. When young patients and their families reach out to us it is predominantly when they are nearing end of life, the support we are able to give through cash gifts and making memories gives that young person one final bit of empowerment in their life to decide on their final wishes and make memories for their loved ones.

Requests can range from a meal out with family, a cinema trip or even one last weekend away with friends. The team were also able to just this month facilitate a gig visit and meeting with Ed Sheeran which was phenomenal, and to see the joy in the little girls face when she was told is just so heart-warming, these memories really matter so much to the young people and their loved ones."

If you'd like to get involved and support the charity contact:
info@dragonflycancertrust.org or visit dragonflycancertrust.org

PLASTIC MOULDINGS NORTHERN RAISES THE DECK WITH JOUPLAST®



Copyright Carre d'ARC/C Grille

North East based Plastic Mouldings Northern (PMN) are bringing a flair of France to terraces across the UK and Ireland after securing the exclusive distribution rights to JOUPLAST® and their innovative range of products for the perfectly finished outdoor space.

The home improvement market is big business, and the flagship products are now hitting Wickes, Homebase and Amazon with turnover hitting £1m last year. The products have been used for decades across Europe, but are a relatively new concept in the UK and act as bases for decking and paving slabs to ensure they sit evenly across surfaces.

The JOUPLAST® plastic adjustable riser is an innovative and simple product which allows the rapid and perfectly level construction of decking and paving. The range of products allows hard landscaping to be quickly and easily installed, whilst maintaining perfect lines and an even finish.

Freddy Bourdais, Co-Founder and Sales Director at Plastic Mouldings Northern said: "JOUPLAST® is very successful in France, and it makes it much easier to lay decking and paving level. We are delighted to hold the exclusive distribution rights in Britain, and the response to the product line has been phenomenal. We strongly feel the product will continue to see exceptional growth and there is scope to be even bigger in our market than in France in years to come."

With the summer months in full swing, the range offers homeowners the chance to get inspired and design and finish all outdoor spaces simply and durably. The key to JOUPLAST® is that it offers a comprehensive range of products for outdoor design projects, from secret fixings for timber decking to construction packers and modular garden steps. They have everything needed, and the range is suitable for a landscaping professional or a homeowner.

Freddy added: "The clear ambition is to make JOUPLAST® the 'go to' brand for all types of decking solutions here in the UK as it is in France."

Watch this space as it would seem Plastic Mouldings Northern has its sights firmly set on becoming a significant player in the UK Landscaping market.

To find out more about the JOUPLAST® range visit:
www.pmnproducts.com www.jouplast.com/en

TAXIS ARE GO, BUDGET TO THE RESCUE

A local taxi company has come to the aid of 100's of stranded passengers to get them to their destinations, many as far as Edinburgh, from bookings from transport operators LNER and others operating in the region.

Thursday saw over 900 passengers transported to work and other commitments, thanks to Newcastle's Budget Taxis, who rallied all of their staff and drivers to assist during the planned rail strikes.

Customer Care Manager David Singh told us: "We have many loyal passengers that take cabs to the train stations and airports for their onward travel, however we have pulled out all of the stops to ensure that they get to where they needed to be in the light of the train strikes."

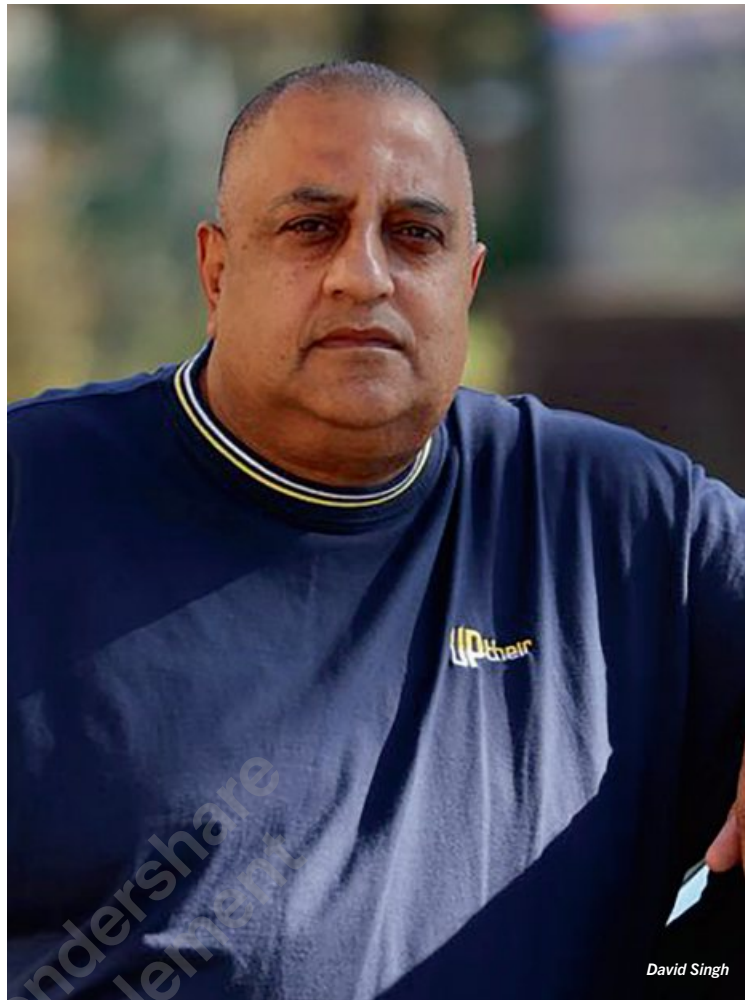
Friday, bookings were in excess of 1000 extra passengers as commuters try and get to where they need to be.

Known for always helping in a crisis, staff at Budget were asked to put in extra hours to look after their loyal clientele, so they wouldn't lose out and do everything in their power to get them to their destination.

David concluded: "We're extremely grateful to our staff at Budget, they are always the first to volunteer to help in a crisis and this is no exception."

Budget Taxis operate all over the North East.

www.budget-taxis-newcastle.co.uk



David Singh

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CALIBRATE ENERGY RISE TO THE CHALLENGE OF UNDER-PERFORMING HEAT PUMPS



Heat Pump specialists put support package together for local businesses let down by current suppliers.

A North East Company that specialises in the design, installation and maintenance of large-scale ground source heat pumps has recalibrated their business plan, in response to a critical need in the market following the pandemic and a change in legislation.

Following a trying time in the industry over the last few years, many commercial heat pump users have been left with frustrating challenges including no support and maintenance for their systems, the performance of aging equipment depleting, and due to the RHI Tariff beginning to be removed, a loss of significant income as well as an increase of running costs.

Gary Matthews, managing director of Calibrate Energy Engineering based near Bamburgh, said: "We had a number of companies approaching us who weren't current customers asking for help and support, because their heat systems were no longer working, were no longer efficient, were under performing or causing business disruption, and becoming a drain on finances.

"In response, we revisited our own business plan, and decided that we had both the skills and capacity to help these businesses. We re-imagined our services so we could help even more people and create a bigger positive impact on reducing carbon emissions."

One such company to recently receive the help

of the Calibrate team had a 5MW heat pump system installed by another supplier, who had folded. The system was no longer performing as it should and despite receiving £600,000 a year from Ofgem's RHI tariff, it was still costing the farmer £300,000 a year to run.

The heat pump was therefore fast becoming a financial drain rather than the asset it should have been, and to make things worse its poor performance gave it a rating below Ofgem requirements, which put the six-figure income generated by it in jeopardy too.

Jack Smales, who is in charge of technical sales at Calibrate, explained: "Having fully assessed the system, we identified a plan of works and re-calibrations to address several problems which were stopping its optimal performance. The customer has now received ROI in the first year following our intervention and at a time of ever-increasing energy prices that is a huge relief for them. Of course, now the system is under our care the business can relax and know that they will enjoy a positive impact for the heat pump for many years to come."

Having recently won awards at the ACR Awards and Royal Highland Show Technical Awards for an innovative three-way installation in the Borders, Calibrate continues to demonstrate ground breaking solutions. Being hugely experienced in enormous megawatt heating, chilling and electricity generating solutions ideal for high energy-use industries, the team are very well placed to support a wider heat pump customer base, with slightly smaller needs, in improving their current systems too.

With over 20 years' experience in both the UK and New Zealand, the market leader is

keen to use the team's experience to ensure that there is reduction of carbon emissions and that there are viable, working solutions to change commercial energy consumption and utilisation.

Susie McDonald, co-founder of Calibrate said: "Our original purpose was to be a small business packing a huge punch by installing some of the largest heat pump systems in the world, aimed at seriously high energy users. To put that into perspective, our latest installation was 8.2MW, enough to provide heating and hot water to a small town. However, over the last year we have realised that if we don't help maintain and support smaller commercial systems, fitted by companies who no longer exist, that our ethical aims and the industry as a whole will be set back.

"We have transitioned to support those smaller projects as well, reducing our original benchmark above 1MW to 200kW upwards, creating targeted support packages to look after and service existing systems. We make sure these systems are performing well, maintain them regularly to make sure efficiency ratings are achieved, ensure carbon is reduced, more energy is created and that there is a financially viable way to achieve the goals we are all ultimately striving for: spend less and protect the planet."

Calibrate is focussed on helping commercial businesses meet the government's Net Zero targets by 2050 and is dedicated to creating a more sustainable future for all.

More information on the company and its range of service is available at www.calibrateenergy.co.uk

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LEADING BUSINESS AND SECTOR GROWTH IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE



Colin Bell

Change brings the opportunity to innovate and improve. Colin Bell, Director of Business and Sector Growth at the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (North East LEP), explains how business support in the region is evolving.

The North East LEP and the North East Growth Hub are recognised as national exemplars, with many others learning from and adopting our methodologies, tools and systems.

Our team have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic and the EU exit with over 57,000 engagements with businesses to help them survive, revive and recover and in doing so improve the productivity performance of businesses receiving intensive support by over £9,000 per employee (measured as GVA per employee).

In addition, we have led sector growth in energy, tech, health and life sciences, working with partners to create and deliver ambitious plans and claim a global foothold. As businesses continue to face economic headwinds, we will continue to support the development of an ecosystem that will help them to tackle the issues of today, to chart a route to the future and to achieve their ambitions.

The role of the North East LEP is however changing and we are transitioning to a new environment set out by Government in the Levelling Up white paper. As the exact parameters of this landscape are still emerging, it's critical that we adopt an agile and flexible approach that can be quickly adapted to the changing environment.

Within this is an opportunity to sharpen our focus and to drive forward a more impactful and modern approach that delivers more for less.

A key opportunity in the emerging landscape is to embed innovation across all aspects of strategy and delivery. It's our collective innovativeness that builds regional competitiveness, that drives business and sector growth and claims our foothold in emerging global markets.

We also recognise that if innovation lies at the heart of our economic competitiveness, then as a LEP and through our partnerships, we too must embody an innovative approach and culture. We therefore see change as an opportunity on which to build on our strong foundation and to reimagine and realign our approach to add maximum value.

Opportunities include:

- Refocusing the one-to-one support available through the North East Growth Hub's triage team, meaning that any person or business requiring information, support or guidance can access it.
- Adopting modern and innovative business models to create a flexible platform to deliver a more streamlined, cohesive and impactful customer journey.

- Boosting our sector leadership by applying more resource to work closely with businesses to lead the development and delivery of ambitious sector strategies in energy, tech, health and life sciences, advanced manufacturing and knowledge-intensive business services, including the introduction of specialist sector-focused Growth Hub Connectors to support businesses.
- Embedding innovation across all of our activities to ensure that we spread a culture of challenge-based and collaborative innovation and focusing partnerships on capturing first mover advantage in global emerging markets in which the North East demonstrates competitive strength.

In addition, we look forward to continuing our close working relationship with Government to shape the forthcoming Enterprise Strategy and to deliver national initiatives locally such as Made Smarter and the Net Zero Hub on behalf of the Department of Business Energy and Industrial Strategy.

We look to the future with confidence and are embracing the opportunities that comes with change to continue to drive the creation of more and better jobs for the people of the North East.

We are here to support businesses to start, innovate and grow. Find out what support is available for your business via NorthEastGrowthHub.co.uk

FINDING THE RIGHT PATH AFTER RESULTS DAY

The North East Local Enterprise Partnership (North East LEP) has worked with schools and colleges to provide guidance for students and their parents, as they navigate the range of post-16 and post-18 options available to them.

As thousands of students receive their exam results, Matt Joyce from the North East LEP explains what support is available.

The North East LEP has always worked really closely with schools and colleges to help make sure that each and every young person in our region has the opportunity to be successful in whatever career they choose. And an important part of this is helping people to understand all the options that are open to them when they move on from school or college.

As we're heading towards exam results days, we know that lots of young people and their parents will be feeling the pressure to make the right decision about what they do next. So we wanted to provide a simple guide to all the pathways which young people can take, from A levels to apprenticeships and from T Levels to traineeships.

On our North East Ambition website (www.NorthEastAmbition.co.uk), people can watch a short film which tells young people about their options. So anyone who's unsure about their next steps can watch the video and get a simple comparison of the different pathways – including apprenticeships, traineeships, a range of vocational and technical qualifications, and, depending on their age and previous qualifications, higher education. We know that parents often have a huge



Matt Joyce

influence on their children's future plans and that there's been significant change in the education landscape in recent years, so these resources have been designed to update and help inform decision-making at what can be a stressful time.

There is information on A levels and T levels, as well as other vocational and technical options, and apprenticeships, which can now be taken up to degree level.

North East Ambition doesn't replace the advice young people get at school or college, but it complements it, giving easy-to-digest information that families can look at together.

We are also creating a film created specifically for SEND students and their parents – again, this will be shared on the North East Ambition site – and both videos provide links to the National Careers Service, where people can go for more in-depth information and support once they have an idea of the range of options there are.

Most importantly, I want people to know there is support out there.

If you don't know what path to take, or if things haven't worked out as you'd hoped, don't panic. Make sure you ask for advice and speak to someone to talk through your options, whether that's someone at your school or college, someone within your local authority, or the National Careers Service.

Young people have come through such a difficult time over the past two years and the world looks very different after the pandemic. That's why we're doubling down on our work to support schools and colleges, and help each and every young person gain the skills and qualifications they need for their next steps in life.

Visit NorthEastAmbition.co.uk/options to see information on post-16 and post-18 pathways.



IN CONVERSATION WITH...



Laura Kyle

LAURA KYLE

Construction lead at the North East
Procurement Organisation (NEPO)

What services does the organisation provide?

NEPO achieves benefits across the public sector through collaborative procurement. NEPO undertakes high-value procurement in major strategic areas of spending such as construction, energy, facilities management, fleet, food, ICT and professional services, on behalf of North East local authorities. Our frameworks are also available for use by the wider public sector including, but not limited to, government departments and their agencies, non-departmental public bodies, NHS bodies, emergency services and educational establishments. Another key area of NEPO's approach is embedding social value within procurement solutions to ensure they create value within the local economy, and positively impact our communities and the environment.

Tell us about your role at NEPO.

I oversee all activity included within NEPO's Construction Work Programme for the North East region. Between my team and myself, we develop and manage a suite of collaborative solutions within the construction portfolio, ensuring NEPO Member and Associate Member Authorities have compliant and

robust routes to market for all of their construction needs. The portfolio captures a diverse offering including construction works, materials, highways services with an annual spend of over £250 million.

What do you enjoy most about your role?

Being able to see a tangible, finished product at the end of the procurement journey. Generally speaking, in procurement, we work in continual cycles and sometimes the outcome of a process isn't really visible. However, in construction, we can clearly see the impact our solutions offer and it's extremely rewarding to know we have played a part in the development of the North East.

I also thoroughly enjoy the relationship management aspects of my role including meeting new people, introducing NEPO and explaining what we do. I am exceptionally proud of what we deliver as an organisation and I love to promote our success!

What's your proudest business achievement?

Most recently it's the creation and the launch of NEPO's three-year construction strategy and the subsequent growth of our solutions. NEPO is extremely excited to see some iconic and pivotal projects delivered through our construction portfolio as an enabler for much-needed regional development and growth.

What challenges have you encountered?

The pandemic was very tough and overnight we adapted to new ways of working. As an

organisation with collaboration at the heart of everything we do, we adapted quickly to virtual working and forming teams online as opposed to face-to-face. I'm proud that we successfully achieved another way of working whilst ensuring we continued to deliver effectively for the region.

How has the industry changed since you began your career?

Traditionally, procurement and purchasing were seen as interchangeable terms and we were the department in which staff could order everything from stationery to cleaning supplies. Procurement's remit has significantly transformed and now we are recognised as a core, strategic service both within the North East and nationally. Upcoming procurement reforms will undoubtedly bring significant changes to the way we operate but we're up for the challenge!

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

Don't wish for it, work for it! I've always had a strong work ethic and firmly believe that hard work is the key to success.

How do you like to unwind?

I enjoy reading and walking my dog in the wonderful North East countryside and coastline that we're lucky to have on our doorstep.

www.nepo.org

Eothen Care Homes

Compassion, comfort and companionship



Eothen Care Homes enhances the lives of older people by providing experienced and specialist care at our three North East care homes

Whitley Bay

Gosforth

Wallsend



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"We laugh together, we comfort one another. It's absolutely amazing." A Whitley Bay resident.

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IN CONVERSATION WITH...

NIC BROWN

Managing Director of KBL Technical Ltd.

What were your career ambitions growing up?

To be honest, I had no direction or idea what I wanted to do, I sort of got here by accident. I knew I didn't want to be unemployed as my work ethic was too strong. I am a South Shields lad and I remember the miners strike very well and how that affected families, who were already struggling. I knew I didn't want to be like that. I am very driven, and the very thought of that time was of immense worry and misery for many families, so I knew that I had to work hard to prevent being in that situation.

Tell us about your current role at KBL.

I am the managing director now, but I honestly don't care much for titles. I'm very much a team player, but I am also a good leader and have no problem leading from the front. I go over and above to be a good employer to my staff, and I have the same morals and ethics with our clients too.

What is your proudest business achievement?

Probably creating the company name — KBL, as it is the initials of my three children; Karl, Bradley, and Logan. I am immensely proud of my kids, I probably don't tell them often enough, but who does? I stay humble and try to avoid complacency, as that tends to lead to failure, which nobody wants. I am also extremely proud that KBL is a RATIONAL Service Partner, which in our industry is a privilege. A total of more than 1,200 certified RATIONAL Service Partners work tirelessly to serve their customers' needs, around the world.

How has your industry changed in the last decade?

Well, our business commenced in 2008, so I was in maintenance then, but since Covid, it has changed everything. Equipment is much easier to operate now, and the last decade has seen significant improvements to connectivity and accessibility. You can even monitor your ovens, fridges etc., from a phone these days! It's all a bit Big Brother — but technology stays still for no man!

What are you currently working on?

We're currently working with a wedding venue in Barnard Castle and five steakhouse restaurants based in the North East. The company is growing rapidly and because of this, we are no longer just North East based, but national. Operationally, it is still better for us to work in this region and there are still a lot of businesses here we can target.

Tell us about the team you work with.

Well, KBL is currently on 28 members of staff, made up mainly of engineers. This is growing and we're currently recruiting. We have a good team of people here, which I am grateful for, however I always think that loyalty goes a lot further than expertise. You can train someone to do a job, you can't train someone to be loyal, they either are or they're not. Take Lisa, our office manager for example, I trust her implicitly and know that she's always got my back. She knows that I always try and do the right thing — her dependability is unwavering.

What is the best piece of advice you've been given?

Never react to a problem with passion. Take time to reflect first. Make decisions calmly, and, if you can, sleep on it. Every problem seems easier to handle in the morning!

What has been your biggest challenge?

Probably that business doesn't get easier as you grow, things just change and with change brings a new set of challenges. Business is a bit like having kids, there are different challenges at different stages. As any business grows, you get more zeros at the end of it!

Who are your heroes inside and outside of business?

Outside of business, my parents. My dad was literally an angel and before he passed, he would have done anything for anyone. As a family, we all went to him and my mam for advice, which they always readily gave and mam still does. I miss him, immensely. Inside of work, literally anyone who is loyal and supportive and who comes in, does the job they're paid for without whinging! I admire hard-working people and anyone who is genuinely nice, basically.

How do you unwind outside of work?

I like to go to the cinema with my wife, Sam, our children, and our gorgeous grandkids; Hugo and Penelope. We love sunny holidays too, so go away as often as we can. I love just spending quality time with the family, eating out at some of the restaurants we service and just chilling.

What is your favourite book?

SAS *Rogue Heroes* by Ben Macintyre. Awesome book telling the story of their fight for adversity.

**KBL, Commercial Catering Specialists,
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info@kbl-technical.com**

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*...Never react to a
problem with passion.
Take time to reflect
first...*



SERVICE

Remove Watermark



Wondershare
PDFelement

*At KBL we have
wealth of exper
in commerci*

- WE UNDERTAKE
WARRANTY WORK FOR
SEVERAL MANUFACTURERS
RATIONAL - BOTH SCC &
BLUE SEAL & MIDDLEBY

- WE CAN GIVE YOU
MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS
WITH OUR HIGHLY TRAINED
OPERATIVES.

- GAS & ELECTRICITY

Nic Brown

IN CONVERSATION WITH...

DAVID WADDS

*Director at Carney Consultancy
and Carney CDM.*

What is your role at Carney Consultancy and Carney CDM?

I am a director at both firms. Along with managing director, Angela Carney, I help with the day-to-day running of Carney Consultancy and oversee a lot of our fire-risk assessments and deliver training. I also look after the IT side of the business.

Carney CDM was launched in 2022 and is a sister company of Carney Consultancy - a health and safety, training specialist consultancy working in the construction and engineering sectors.

Led by our director, Caroline Morton, Carney CDM provides principal designer services in line with the CDM Regulations 2015. My role is to help develop existing relationships that we have with principal contractors.

What do you enjoy most about your role?

Every day is different. It is a fast-paced working environment which I enjoy and everyone in the business has an opportunity to develop their skill set and progress.

What's your proudest business achievement?

Being appointed as a director at Carney Consultancy at the end of last year. I joined the company in 2016 having worked in the glazing industry as a glazing install manager. I started working in construction in 2007 and in 2011 graduated with a degree in construction management and began working in a supervisory role.



David Wadds

However, I began to realise that I wanted a role that would involve less travel and I also wanted a career change.

In 2014, I undertook a NEBOSH General Certificate to focus my career towards health and safety. I was then fortunate to become a health and safety advisor at Carney Consultancy, I became operations manager in January 2019 and went on to become a director in 2021.

What challenges have you encountered?

Moving from one sector to another was a huge challenge. However, with this came huge opportunities and personal progression.

How has the industry changed?

It has diversified massively. There are vast opportunities for people to undertake alternative roles and enter sectors from different routes. If we look at the Carney team, we have graduates, those who took the apprenticeship option and others that started their careers within the trades and worked their way up.

There isn't a defined path and no one route is the right way.

How do you like to unwind?

By spending time with my wife and daughter.

www.carneyconsultancy.co.uk



Joanne Howe

CONFLICT RESOLUTIONS

By Joanne Howe, Howe Consultancy.

One of the biggest issues to deal with in the workplace are conflicts. We're not talking out-and-out fisticuffs and brawls here but more disagreements between staff. Although disagreements will always happen when spending time with the same people, most of the time the little niggles that set in can easily be diffused if not avoided altogether.

Staff conflicts can have a big negative effect on staff morale and productivity, so it's vital that you get the situation under control. But "howe" exactly do you go about reaching an agreement between two members of staff with seemingly no compromise between them? Well, it's easier than you think! Here are a few pointers from me to hopefully help you on the road to office Nirvana. It's even more important to manage team relationships now when a lot of the workforce have hybrid working and only come together as a team on a less frequent basis.

● **Anticipate** - If you can see something coming, or a problem brewing between staff, don't be afraid to raise the issue. Anticipate the problem arising and nip it in the bud. Call staff involved into a private meeting – either together or separately – and talk through the issue. Be fair and be assertive on what happens next.

● **Acknowledge** - Now you can see the problem, acknowledge the issue exists. In the meetings with staff, be absolutely transparent. Hide nothing and let them know that you appreciate there is an issue. At the same time, let all involved know that you will be working towards a solution that suits everyone. Don't make anyone feel left out or belittled no matter how small their complaint or issue is. This could open up another problem so be fair.

● **Analyse** – Having heard each side of the story about the problem, take time to review what has been said. Read back what all staff have said and think about the best solution for all parties. Look for patterns in people's explanations as it may be something seemingly small which is causing the disagreement. It could be something as trivial as that which is easily put right. If it's something bigger which is the root of the problem, apply the same strategy.

● **Answer** – Now you have your solution which seemingly solves each member of staff's issues, call them into another meeting to discuss the resolution. Ask for feedback about the solution and take into account anything they may say. This may help with further tweaks to the policy which may need to be made. Once everyone is happy, agree to implement any changes and leave it at that. Monitor the situation though and get feedback with a quiet word to see if it is working. If you've followed the steps and done it right, it will be!

Remember – staff get paid to work together not to like each other and this sometimes needs to be said.

So, there you go... my simple solution to a seemingly simple problem which if left unchecked could escalate.

If you need any help with HR issues like conflict resolution, get in touch with us at Howe Consultancy on 07921 256 981 or email us through our website at www.howeconsultancy.co.uk



L-R: Tim Smith, Denis Jackson (Law Debenture), and Jo Lewis

NORTH EAST WHISTLEBLOWING SPECIALIST EXPANDS

Rising awareness and demand for whistleblowing services is driving the growth of a specialist UK hotline provider based in the North East.

Safecall recently celebrated relocating to larger premises in Colima Avenue, Sunderland to accommodate further growth and recruitment.

The company has doubled its office space and reported its busiest year securing more than 150 new clients. Staffing is set to increase in the next 12 months. Safecall is confident of almost doubling revenues by 2024, which would represent around 60% growth in three years.

While legislation and compliance are among

the drivers of change, many businesses and organisations see that whistleblowing establishes an improved workplace, where employees are respected which has the added benefit of improving overall wellbeing.

More employees are being encouraged and empowered to do the right thing and report wrongdoing at work; likewise, more employers are recognising the ethical benefits of supporting staff to report wrongdoing safely.

For Sunderland-based Safecall – an independent, specialist whistleblowing and

compliance services provider – the changed landscape has accelerated interest in their services in recent years. During the pandemic the company's client base grew and in 2021 Safecall received thousands of concerned calls and enquiries from 108 countries.

Joanna Lewis, MD at Safecall, said: "More companies and organisations see the benefits of creating a safe space for employees to live and work. Employers are increasingly seeing how such services protect the integrity of an organisation as well as the reputation of a brand.

"Safecall has seen an increase in UK enquiries. We have also seen growth in new clients across Europe and in the Middle East and Far East. There has been an increased number of clients in financial services, insurance, healthcare and construction."

For more information, visit:
www.safecall.co.uk





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Ammar Mirza CBE

JUDGEMENT DAY

Courage, conviction and comradery. Three words that reflect the past few weeks where I have been asked to judge two distinctly different competitions, but both of which left me inspired and thankful.

In a world that is beset with trial and tribulation, where all we hear about is how hard done by or how poor we are, the loss of critical services, and our North East region that is still constantly and consistently featured at the bottom of all enterprise and education league tables. Yet conversely all I see is how passionate, proud and productive young people and businesses have become.

Don't get me wrong we have some significant challenges to contend with and some compelling research that highlights this. But all too often we seem to focus on

the negatives rather than promoting the positives.

The first event I was asked to judge was the Law Awards at the Hilton. I was, once again astounded at the calibre of entrants and all of which made me think how much of an impact our professional services have made on our region, not just economically but socially. All of these successful legal firms and businesses employing hundreds of local people across the North of England. I must admit it was a hard job choosing between the entrants and for me all of them are worthy winners.

To see in-house solicitors be recognised from larger firms was refreshing, and to hear of how all of the legal teams had innovated and supported each other during Covid was a delight.

The second and even more impressive event was judging the emerging talent award with the Entrepreneurs Forum. Three had been shortlisted - Doxford Group in Northumberland, West Barn in Durham and Wander Films in Middlesbrough - from across the whole of our wonderful region.

Spending the day travelling with fellow Judges was a great experience as we got to properly get behind the scenes and see what makes these incredible entrepreneurs tick. These business leaders certainly put

me to shame with their desire, direction and determination to succeed.

Each and every one of the finalists shared their inspirational story and tales of trials and tribulations. To say it was the hardest awards I have ever had to judge would be an understatement. I was overwhelmed and overjoyed with the immense talent we have in our region and the work of the Entrepreneurs Forum to showcase and platform these entrepreneurs is truly wonderful.

Being a judge is a very rewarding experience, although I imagine it is also a way for awarding organisations to say to me that I shouldn't get any more awards...Which I am very happy with, as there are far more worthy people out there.

I am equally proud to be judging the Northern Asian Power-list and we also have our very own Annual Asian Business Connexions Awards on the 20th October. Which is still accepting entries. Why not come along and judge for yourself how great our talent is across the North East.

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

Did you know?

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

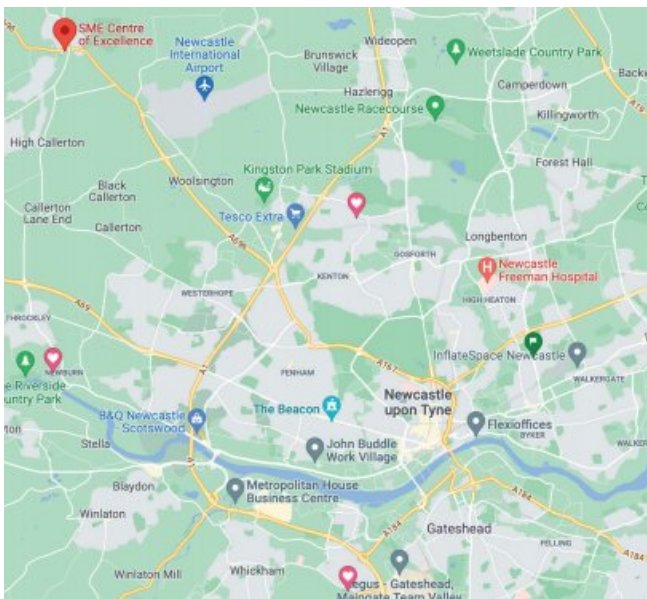


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YOU DON'T NEED COACHING, DO YOU?

This is a question I often get asked when I tell people I work with that I often use a coach or a mentor myself. Most people aren't quite clear why they ask this question (I always check). Some of the reasons seem to come from the fact I am their coach (why would a coach need a coach?), or I help them find answers themselves (so why would I need help to find my own answers).

The truth is, I believe everyone benefits from coaching (and mentoring) as it helps you take a different view, challenges your way of thinking, and gives you and different perspectives on a situation.

It's like the time someone who was coaching me was able to show me that working and coaching others can actually give you energy (I had mentioned that I often found really deep, transformative coaching sessions could be very tiring). When I looked at coaching slightly differently and used this approach, I found I would come out of even the most challenging coaching session as a coach with lots more energy. Up until that point, I just assumed that a really deep coaching session would leave me tired.

One of the reasons I use a coach is I know I can't see all of the angles on my own. I carry my own biases, assumptions and I have my own way of problem solving and idea creation. This means it can be almost impossible for me to coach myself (as an example how I do ask a question to myself I don't normally ask?). A great coach can help you get beyond all these barriers (your own bias, assumptions, and processes) to give you a fresh perspective and help you find new creative ways of working or a different solution to a problem you couldn't see. It's like when a close friend can see an issue or a solution that you sometimes

just can't. How invaluable is this different perspective and how insightful can these different questions be? One client gave me some feedback to say:

"(Nevil) asks very insightful questions, challenges without causing offence and managed to tackle every barrier that I had put in my own way! (Even the ones I'd hoped he hadn't noticed!)"

One of the other reasons people ask that first question is they have a slightly skewed view on what coaching is and how coaching works (these are people who I'm not currently coaching). They may have experienced "coaching" in the past and this view of coaching may resonate with you. They (and perhaps you) have had that one to one time with a senior manager where they have told you what you did wrong or told you exactly what they wanted you to do. Now, these two approaches have merit in certain circumstances, but they aren't what I would call coaching. For me a coach can be challenging, and can highlight gaps in knowledge, thinking or approach, and they will help the person they are coaching fill these gaps themselves. They open up new ideas and help people see things that they might not have noticed before. I have experienced and been fortunate enough to help a number of people experience quite big "aha!" moments. These moments where you suddenly realise a situation isn't a challenge, it's an opportunity.

Or when you realise that your behaviour in a certain setting is having a hugely positive (and unfortunately, sometimes a negative) effect on your team around you. Or when you realise that something you are doing is holding you back from achieving your own goals. Another client put it this way:

"I'm confident it will change my life. I now have self-belief, something I've been looking for for years"

If you haven't experienced professional coaching, I encourage you to go and speak to a coach, to find out what they do and how they add value. If you are really curious about coaching, then have a look at our introduction to coaching course (it's an online course with a number of free lessons) to give you an insight into what goes into becoming a coach (there is lots more there than most people appreciate). Coaching can be challenging and rewarding as a coach, and as the person being coached. The vast majority of people find coaching to be a positive benefit in their personal and professional lives.

Which leaves us with one final question: You don't need coaching do you?

To discuss coaching or becoming a coach, speak to Nevil...email him: nevil@newresults.co.uk, connect with him on LinkedIn or visit the website www.newresults.co.uk



Nevil Tynemouth



Hope Johnston and Jordan Carr

ONYX HEALTH EXPANDS WITH TWO NEW DIGITAL APPOINTMENTS

Newcastle-based healthcare marketing communications agency Onyx Health has expanded its growing digital content team with the double appointment of Hope Johnston as Digital Content Manager and Jordan Carr as Social Media Executive.

The latest additions to the team come off the back of a period of sustained growth, which has seen the agency expand its international client portfolio.

Onyx Health's new digital content specialist Hope grew up in South Tyneside and holds a Business and Marketing Management degree from Sunderland University. She joins the Onyx Health team from Gateshead-based agency, Mediaworks, where she was a Content Strategist, working across multiple client

accounts regionally and nationally. Prior to this, Hope worked for leading parent and baby brand, Tommee Tippee, as a Digital Marketing Manager and for Hebburn Sports Club as their Marketing Manager. She has expertise in branding, social media, SEO and PPC that she will bring to her new role with Onyx Health.

A Newcastle native, Jordan started his career as a Digital Media Apprentice at Newcastle University Students Union, before progressing to become a Marketing Assistant. In this

role, he was responsible for the Student Union's social media and creative content, which incorporated elements of video and creative design. One of Jordan's proudest achievements in this role was seeing the videos he helped produce for Black History Month being used to help educate school children.

Commenting on the new appointments, Onyx Health's Executive Director Trevor Pill said, "Creating high quality digital content is an essential element of the creative communication campaigns that we develop and deliver for our clients. Our new appointments bring valuable digital content experience to the team, enabling us to develop and enhance our existing client offering. It's been amazing to see our headcount grow from ten to thirty in the last two years. We're very proud of the fact that our recruitment strategy continues to revolve around North-East talent. It's something that we hope to continue into the future."

www.onyxhealth.com



Louise Kennedy

SPOTLIGHT ON NEURODIVERSITY AT WORK

Sunderland based Oculus HR provide innovative and flexible HR solutions to SMEs regionally and nationally through their dedicated and holistic approach. The team recently launched the HR Masterclass concept which has seen high demand and growth for the bitesize HR Masterclasses.

The sessions are tailored to support employees in the workplace and enhance and improve the day-to-day skills necessary to help businesses and employees reach their goals. One of the key topics regularly covered is Equality and Diversity, and the team have seen a high demand to cover the subject of neurodiversity in the workplace as part of this.

Louise Kennedy, Managing Director, Oculus HR said: "There is much more awareness of the concept of neurodiversity amongst employers and in recent months we've seen an increase in requests to cover sessions around the subject.

Many of the employers we work with are committed to creating more inclusive workplaces and there is a strong feeling and need to create an environment where neurodivergent individuals can succeed. Our bitesize HR Masterclasses are bespoke in nature and a perfect way to address current talking points to ensure up to date HR information and support is in place across the business."

Neurodiversity refers to variations in the human brain and cognition around functions such as sociability, learning, attention, and mood. As an employer the first steps in understanding neurodiversity is to recognise that a range in cognition exists. Specifically, neurodiversity in a workplace context is an area of diversity and inclusion that refers to alternative thinking styles such as dyslexia, autism, ADHD and dyspraxia.

A recent study by Agility in Mind reports 'between 15 and 20 per cent of the global population is thought to be neurodivergent'. By developing an inclusive work culture employers have the opportunity to foster the diversity of thought and develop different approaches to work, thereby integrating and leveraging the full potential of neurodivergent employees whilst also supporting business growth and capacity.

To enable neurodiverse creativity to flourish within the business, employers need to ensure the right structure and mechanisms are in place – key is ensuring managers have clear training and guidance to be on hand to support employees.

Consistency of managerial support for neurodiverse employees is of essence and a culture of inclusivity that supports neurodiverse individuals can provide a valuable source of highly skilled talent. Some of the top global employers are embracing the strengths neurodivergent people bring to the workplace, whilst at the same time recognising the challenges many still face in the workplace.

Louise Kennedy, Managing Director, Oculus HR said: "Communication and consistency are key when supporting neurodiverse employees in the workplace. Ensuring managers have the right mechanisms and training in place will support employees to succeed and flourish. Through our sessions we are able to show employers that often even just small adjustments make workplaces more neurodiversity-friendly, contributing to workplace equality and inclusion on a greater scale."

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

“

...Communication and consistency are key when supporting neurodiverse employees in the workplace...



L-R: Jess Atkins,
Stephen Gosnay, Lisa Fleming,
Samantha Williams.

FUNDRAISING RACE NIGHT IS TIPPED FOR SUCCESS

An award-winning logistics compliance and training business are to host a race night at Newcastle Races to help raise funds for a North East charity.

Logico, who have recently moved into larger premises at Aycliffe Industrial Estate in Newton Aycliffe, are regular supporters of North East community events and are proud of their local roots, this being reinforced by their commitment to raise vital funds for local charity, the Bradley Lowery Foundation in their latest fundraising campaign.

Launched in 2019, Logico have gone from strength to strength under the leadership of its managing director, Lisa Fleming. Through her guidance and unwavering support of the transport industry, Logico has quickly gained

UK-wide recognition, achieving Authorised Auditor Status for the DVSA Earned Recognition programme, the only North East company to achieve this and Lisa being only the third woman to have gained the accolade.

Helping to support businesses throughout the UK with transport compliance and training, Lisa is a passionate supporter of her local area and regularly hosts and is involved with charity campaigns, when she found out more about the amazing work that the Bradley Lowery Foundation does, she jumped at the chance to be involved.

The Bradley Lowery Foundation was established in 2017 following the death of six year old Bradley Lowery, who lost his life to Stage 4 High Risk Neuroblastoma, a rare and aggressive form of childhood cancer. After Bradley's mum, Gemma, started a fundraising campaign to get Bradley treatment in the USA, which was not available in the UK, with the support of thousands of people, over £1.3 million was raised, these donations provided the funding base for the charity.

Now in its fifth year, the charity has not only raised vital funds for treatment and equipment not yet available on the NHS but has raised awareness of Neuroblastoma and childhood cancers.

The race night, held on the 30th September, will bring together the great and the good of the north east business community and is a fabulous opportunity to network, enjoy the racing and of course, have a flutter, while

raising funds for this important charity.

"When I found out more about the work the Bradley Lowery Foundation are involved with, I was delighted we could help in a small way," said Lisa, Logico managing director. "As a growing north east company, I feel it's part of our responsibility as business owners to try and give back to our local community when we can and this is a great way of doing just that. We've got lots of activities planned for the evening, I'm looking forward to bringing everybody together and of course, raising lots of money for the charity in the process."

Gemma Lowery, Bradley's mum and founder of the charity, was delighted Logico had decided to support the charity, commenting, "We'd like to say a huge thank you to Lisa and her team for sponsoring the race night, it's vital for us to collaborate with businesses to raise awareness of childhood cancers and to raise funds to continue with our vital work.

It's important we continue sharing the message about the terrible cancers that children are unfortunately affected by, by doing this we will save more lives in the future and help to enrich the lives of children and their families who are affected."

Limited sponsorship and table packages are currently available with an option for every budget.

For more information, please contact Logico at hello@teamlogico.co.uk

UNION JAB HITS THE NORTH EAST

Union Jab's owner Charlie Cooke has a rather amazing back story- he was diagnosed with autism at an early age and had a rough childhood. Determined not to end up at the 'special school' he trained to joined the army but couldn't get in - so he found his love for boxing and nutrition instead. He went on to take his A Levels and two degrees.

Charlie's main focus now is to give something back to the community with his unique, family friendly, all-inclusive boxing classes. He's already established numerous different classes as part of Union Jab which include Youth Boxing for ages 7 to 14, and a range of boxing and fitness classes for more mature individuals looking to take up the sport in a safe and welcoming environment.

Charlie believes that the condition he has should not be a barrier for those looking to get into boxing or any sport, indeed all of his classes at Union Jab are open to autistic children and adults.

He said: "I would like to think that I am helping people with any condition similar to my own know that it is not a barrier but a unique asset, and they too can easily get into sport and fitness, whether its boxing, swimming or golf".

Charlie is a registered boxing coach, personal trainer, and accredited nutritionist.

For more details visit: www.unionjab.com



Charlie Cooke

Family friendly, all-inclusive boxing classes which include Youth Boxing for ages 7 to 14, and a range of boxing and fitness classes for more mature individuals looking to take up the sport in a safe and welcoming environment.

UNION JAB

NEWCASTLE

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UNIONJAB.COM/BOOK





CARBON NEUTRAL TYNE TUNNELS HELPS COMBAT POLLUTION IN DELHI



TT2, which runs the Tyne Tunnels and is a major North East employer, has been certified Carbon Neutral for a second year running and is now offsetting its employees' carbon footprint to help combat pollution.

The Tyne River crossing - which has slashed its carbon emissions by 90% since it changed to open-road-tolling last year - has achieved Carbon Neutral status for a second time by further reducing its direct and indirect emissions, from owned or controlled sources.

The biggest impact has been made from optimising energy consumption through employee initiatives and education, LED lighting installation and purchasing 100% green energy. Plus the recent introduction of open-road-tolling, a team garden with beehives, employee composting and an internal recycling scheme are all counting towards supporting the Government's 2050 net zero target, reducing carbon footprint and energy consumption.

To celebrate its green achievement, the company has decided to off-set its 150

employees' annual carbon footprints – which is a combined total of 1,043 tonnes, costing £4,533 – by donating that cash to help reduce pollution in Delhi, India.

Chief Executive at TT2, Philip Smith, explains more: "We are encouraging every one in our team to think greener and make active efforts across the whole site to reduce energy use and increase recycling and, it's working - everyone's pulling together and doing a great job.

"We asked all our people to vote for a United Nations carbon offsetting project they would like to support and they chose a 'Gold Standard' off-set scheme to help upgrade a composting plant in Okhla, Delhi. We are proud to be making a difference to the environment, not just on our doorstep, but now on the other side of the world, too."



The Delhi composting plant turns 200 tonnes of waste collected from dumpsites every day, into compost which is used by local farmers to help rejuvenate the soil that has been affected by the overuse of chemical fertilisers.

TT2 announced earlier in the year that it is trialling its first electric vehicle, with a view to replacing its full diesel-powered fleet with EVs, to reduce yearly carbon emissions by 60 tonnes.

www.tt2.co.uk



Grandmother, Maureen Harrison (left), with her granddaughter (foreground) and More Than Grandparents CEO, Melanie Nichols (right)

CHARITY'S WORK FOR KINSHIP FAMILIES BOOSTED BY BERNICIA FOUNDATION SUPPORT

A Wearside charity offering essential support to grandparents and families who take on the role of parents to keep vulnerable children out of the fostering or adoption system, is making plans to provide more help after gaining vital new financial backing.

Sunderland's 'More than Grandparents' (MTG) helps over 300 families, many including single people who have become parents to young children impacted by challenging and sudden upheaval in their lives. This could include bereavement, lack of parental role models, neglect and physical and substance abuse.

The help ensures that children remain within the safety and security of their immediate family unit - known as kinship families - rather than go into the care system.

The charity has received £5,000 from The Bernicia Foundation, a charitable Trust set up by North East housing association, Bernicia, and is now looking to deliver more essential services to families at its Atheneum Street HQ as well as in the Durham area.

Having seen their reach spread further afield during the pandemic due to a general lack of community resources and support services available, MTG is now hoping to take its expertise to families, instead of families having to make the journey to Sunderland for 1-2-1 support, counselling-based sessions or use of the facilities.

More Than Grandparents' CEO and founder

Melanie Nichols, said, "We're seeing more and more people coming to us, a lot through word of mouth, so we're looking to put the money towards a new 26-week wellbeing support project. This will help those suffering from or in isolation, requiring trauma attachment therapy, living in poverty and needing our close intervention or general counselling services.

"It will also help us to maintain our much valued peer chat groups, 1-2-1 advice sessions, after-school recreation and craft clubs, creche facilities, therapy and counselling, and an in-demand food bank to many more kinship families across Wearside and Durham. However, this all comes with ongoing costs.

"Many of the children come here with emotional trauma, as well as attachment or behavioural issues brought on by their experiences. It requires a much higher level of support and parenting for all involved.

"We're very grateful of the funding from The Bernicia Foundation as without external donations like this, we simply could not do the job we do for the hundreds of families like, for instance, Maureen and her granddaughter.

Grandparent Maureen Harrison, is one of many

kinship families in the North East. As primary carer to her ten-year-old granddaughter, she has relied on the charity's services for eight years and has formed a close bond with staff and carers. She explained, "They just get it, they're tremendous and are there for us, by our side whenever it's needed. By having a place to meet, where people will listen and you can chat things through without judgement relieves a lot of pressure. They help with everything and I can't praise them enough.

"I remember within a few weeks at the start, our lives had turned upside down and had changed forever. From one day to the next, it felt like we were being bombarded, and when you're trying to do what's right for the child and your family, go with your heart and do what you have to do, you have no time to take in what's happening, slow things down or think straight, and that's hard.

"The reality is that families are just not given the right support, financially or otherwise from the beginning when it's needed. We need to go searching for it and charities like MTG and Mel become a daily lifeline to so many."

More Than Grandparents is now calling on the UK Government to urgently put in place recommendations from a recent report - 'Independent Review of Children's Social Care' - given the lack of financial assistance available to carers who are now being impacted by the cost of living crisis.

The next round of Bernicia Foundation funding is now open. North East charities, community organisations, volunteer groups and young people working towards personal goals, are encouraged to apply. Details are at www.berniciafoundation.com. Closing date is midnight on Tuesday 16 August 2022.

www.berniciafoundation.com



IN CONVERSATION WITH...

JULIE DEELEY

Director of operations at
EN:Able Futures



Julie Deeley

Can you tell us about EN:Able Futures?

Following the successful appointment as one of 16 Flexi-Job Apprenticeship Agencies registered with the government, EN:Able Futures is offering its unique service in the North East.

We operate on a not-for-profit basis and share the same values and commitment to increasing training and employment opportunities in housing and construction in communities that have been hardest hit by the current economic climate and the loss of traditional industries.

EN:Able Futures is the only organisation in the North East providing a Flexi-Job Apprenticeship Service in construction, and will be recruiting apprentices for organisations operating in the construction and built environment sector from the Tees Valley up to the Scottish Borders.

Our Flexi-Job Apprenticeship Service has had huge success across Yorkshire and the Humber and we are immensely proud that, over the last nine years, we have employed over 430 apprentices hosted by 113 organisations, supported young people to achieve their career aspirations, won many awards and built strong employer and client partnerships. We want to replicate this across the North East.

What is your role?

I am director of operations. Essentially I run EN:Able Futures reporting into the board and our chief executive, Lee Parkinson who sit within our parent company Efficiency North Holdings Ltd. I have over 30 years

of experience in managing successful programmes and interventions to support local unemployed individuals secure sustainable employment.

What is your proudest business achievement?

Being appointed director of operations in 2019, is definitely a highlight as has helping develop the team and the business. Most of all, it has been wonderful to think that we have enabled young people to progress in their careers and the organisations who have benefitted from their skillset.

How has the industry changed since you began your career?

There are so many ways – the skills shortage continues to prove problematic and is frustrating. On a positive note, there is now a much better understanding amongst employers who recognise the need for apprentices.

What do you think are the opportunities going forward?

We have wanted to expand into the North East for a long time. We want to create apprenticeships across the region, expand our services and support both organisations and apprentices to become successful.

What is your mantra to do business by?

It has to be our company values and they are:

- **We care.** That's why our team dedicate so much time to our apprentices, and work hard to help them achieve their aspirations. We also are passionate about helping businesses to meet the skills their company needs.
- **We aim high.** Our apprentices aim high too! We want everyone to achieve their aspirations.
- **We enjoy.** We love our work and our passion is so obvious and transfers to those we work with.
- **We are aware.** We know what is affecting businesses and we are here to help, and can bring others together to help us all meet our objectives.
- **We give.** Our work goes back into the communities we work to make a positive difference to all.
- **We save.** We save your business time in recruiting by looking after your apprentice recruitment needs.
- **And importantly...** We make it happen together. Without you all we wouldn't be where we are today.

www.efficiencynorth.org

GETTING BUILDING FUND SUPPORT SEES EXPANSION OF AIRVIEW PARK ENTERPRISE ZONE



L-R: Mike Clark, Director of Tynex Commercial Limited, developers of AirView Park; Matthew Ebbatson, Programme Manager at the North East LEP; and Mark Hunt, Chief Financial Officer at Newcastle International Airport, at AirView Park.

Two new state-of-the-art flexible workspace buildings are currently being built on the AirView Park development in Woolsington following a £944k investment from government's Getting Building Fund.

Strategically located next to Newcastle International Airport, AirView Park aims to grow the number of businesses in the North East involved in international trade and attract inward investment from startups and SMEs keen to take advantage of the region's global trade links.

When complete, the two workspaces that form part of Phase Two of the development will have the potential to support up to 100 new SMEs and provide the flexibility for businesses to expand and grow, creating more local jobs and providing a boost to the North East economy.

The £944k awarded to developer Tynex Commercial Ltd from the Getting Building Fund ensured essential infrastructure works could be delivered during the coronavirus pandemic and construction of the new employment sites could continue.

Helen Golightly OBE, Chief Executive of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, said: "By responding to the changes brought about by the pandemic and creating office space that meets the needs of businesses both now and in the future, the new developments at AirView Park have already generated a lot of interest.

"By focusing Getting Building Fund investment

on key strategic sites like AirView Park, the North East LEP is helping to create the right environment for businesses to grow and create more and better jobs in the region.

"The development's location next to Newcastle International Airport also supports the North East LEP's ambition to increase the number of North East businesses that export goods and services from 6% to 9.5% by 2030."

One of 21 Enterprise Zones sites across the North East, AirView Park aims to create more SME businesses focussed on growing and maximising trade and inward investment between North East England and the rest of the world. It also aims to attract UK or global companies looking to build or establish a strategic northern base, as well as fully support organisations wishing to take advantage of new and existing export routes.

The North East Trade and Export strategy – published in 2021 by the North East LEP, North East England Chamber of Commerce and Department for International Trade – showed approximately 4,500 businesses in the North East region (North East LEP and Tees Valley Combined Authority areas) currently export goods and services. Businesses in the North East LEP area that currently export goods and services typically generate over £15bn of revenue from exporting each year.

One of the new buildings will provide a dedicated Business Support Hub for North East SMEs, offering a physical service centre for export expansion. All key exporting services and resources will be co-located at the Hub, creating a launch pad for businesses to begin international trade.

The second building, Denyer Court, will offer multiple leased office units or a single occupancy HQ building.

Mike Clark, Director of Tynex Commercial Limited, developers of AirView Park, added, "We are delighted to have the full support and backing of the North East LEP as the allocated grant funding has enabled us to progress the site at pace, delivering a high quality scheme to meet market demands at a time when needed.

"We are already receiving enquiries from potential new occupiers, some operating in emerging and fast growing industries, so we are very confident that Phase Two and AirView Park will become a key site for Newcastle and the wider North East economy."

When complete, AirView Park will offer 175,000 sq ft of bespoke offices, tailor-made to suit businesses looking to relocate to more cost effective out of town premises. AirView Park is already home to the national headquarters of Bellway Homes plc.

The Getting Building Fund was established early in the coronavirus pandemic to kick-start the economy, create jobs and help areas realise growth opportunities coming out of the coronavirus pandemic. The North East Local Enterprise Partnership is managing £47m awarded through the Getting Building Fund to support capital investment across the North East.

The two new state-of-the-art flexible workspace buildings supported by the Getting Building Fund are due to be completed by the end of the year.

For more information about AirView Park visit www.airviewpark.co.uk

For more information about the Getting Building Fund and the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, visit www.northeastlep.co.uk



FLEXIBLE WORKING: WORKING SMARTER NOT HARDER

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

Flexible working has long been a concept, with many scholarly articles extolling the benefits of greater engagement and a nod toward promoting family friendly policies.

In 2003, the Government introduced the right to request flexible working which initially covered parents and carers and then extended to cover all employees. Offering flexible working practices was more of a tick box exercise.

Fast forward to the last few years, and we are regularly reading about the 4-day working week, unlimited annual leave, home/hybrid working and flexible working hours. It's mind boggling.

Offering more flexible working practices can really help businesses to attract and retain the right employees in today's competitive candidate market place. In today's generation, it's almost an expectation.

A question I am often asked by clients is "What flexible working practices can I offer and what do I need to consider"? Here's what I advise:

Flexible Working Hours

This is where employees choose when they work throughout the course of the day/week to fit around their personal commitments. Not only will they achieve a better work/life balance but by placing greater trust in your employees to ensure the work gets done, they are more likely to feel more engaged at work.

4-Day Working Week

The 4-day working week is currently being trialled in the UK by 70 businesses, following the huge success of similar trials in other countries and early adopters such as Panasonic and Microsoft Japan. This is where employees work 80% of their contracted hours for 100% of the pay.



Heidi Turner

Sounds like a raw deal to the employer? Actually, no. Business who have adopted the 4-day working week model have reported a significant increase in productivity, a decrease in stress and consequent increase in profitability.

Home/Hybrid Working

Many businesses already offer some form of home/hybrid working arrangement, recognising benefits such as cost savings from reduced or no office space. It also expands recruitment to national markets, not just local.

However, this does need to be carefully managed. Maintaining employee engagement can be challenging, remotely and some employees may prefer be in the work environment, so working from home shouldn't be imposed, unless absolutely necessary.

Increased/Unlimited Annual Leave

Some employers, like Netflix, offer unlimited annual leave. They place complete trust in their employees to take time off when they need it. Placing this degree of trust in employees can reap huge benefits in terms of employee engagement and commitment.

Whilst you might not want to go this far,

increasing your annual leave entitlement is a good move in today's battle to win and keep key talent.

Key Considerations

You may not be able to offer flexible working to all of your employees for operational reasons, but this doesn't mean that others should miss out on the opportunity. Just be careful that you have sound business reasons for treating employees differently, and communicate this well.

If you offer home or hybrid working, you will need to undertake a risk assessment to ensure that employees have a suitable work station.

Flexible working isn't necessarily a contractual right, but you need to be careful on the working of your employment contracts.

Flexible working is no longer a luxury. It's a necessity. We need to challenge the 9-5 and work smarter, not harder.

If you would like to discuss any of the themes in this article with Heidi and how you can implement flexible working to benefit your business, you can get in touch with heidi@cheviotth.co.uk

MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE TO ENSURE THE DEMAND FOR GREEN SKILLS IS REALISED

There's a need for clearer pathways into green jobs if we're to fill skills gaps and help more young people turn their passion for sustainability into careers, explains David Jones, Vertical and Horizontal Markets Manager at the North East based educational charity and leader in vocational and technical learning, NCFE.

More and more young people are growing up with an interest in the environment. You only had to watch the recent jubilee celebrations to see how prominently the topic featured and hear the underlying message that young people can be part of the solution.

Yet when learners begin to map out their next steps, it's still far too difficult for them to understand how they can turn their desire to make the world a better place into rewarding and impactful careers.

Last month's report by the Learning and Work Institute for WorldSkills UK - Skills for a net-zero economy: Insights from employers and young people – was very timely. It's a warning that, despite a clear passion for the subject, too many young people aren't clear on what green skills and green careers look like.

As a sector, this is our fault, not theirs.

Let's start with careers guidance. Careers advisors need to be empowered with knowledge and understanding around the vast number of opportunities found in sustainability and green industries. We can't have emboldened learners met with barriers at the very first hurdle.

We must be listening to them as well and taking steps to address the issues they raise.

If we look at the reasons young people want to pursue green careers, as expected, the WorldSkills UK report shows a huge majority (71%) feel inspired to combat climate change – with 62% saying they're passionate about sustainability.

However, the report also states that, "educators and the skills system are not developing young people's understanding of green careers, nor acting as the source of



their inspiration for a job that combats climate change."

A really damning statistic to emerge is that less than one in five learners (16%) said their interest in a green career began because of learning about it through education. What's more, even fewer said they'd been inspired by their teachers.

We know there's a lot of good practice taking place at schools, colleges, and within training providers, but do young people recognise how this activity can help them with a career in sustainability? We should also be establishing communities of practice amongst our educators, so that good practice can be shared and scaled.

In support of teachers, we know from a previous report by the Education and Training Foundation, most don't feel prepared when it comes to sustainability. A worrying 74% of teaching staff felt they hadn't received adequate training to embed sustainability in their work or educate learners about climate change.

On the other side of this, we see only 16% of learners being inspired by their family and friends. Previous research undertaken by Gatsby showed that parents are predominantly informed by their own experiences when it comes to speaking to their children about careers. It's the same when it comes to educational pathways.

As educators, we should focus on how we can support parents and carers to understand career opportunities within sustainability, so they can then support with decision making. As a sector, we need to collaborate and ensure there are clear pathways for young people through education into employment.

To do this, we need to be responsive and work closely with employers to find solutions that address their needs.

An area that would help link education and industry would be a clear and consistent definition of green jobs and skills. Current terminology can often be confusing, and we need to help young people better understand how they can link their interests and future careers.

As the WorldSkills UK report highlighted,

there are some sectors that will require more technical, harder green skills, such as construction, engineering, manufacturing, and transport. We must work with those industries to ensure that we understand where the gaps are, and the specific skills they require.

Alongside more specialist skills, equally clear is the need for more general skills - and it's these that can often prove harder to identify and map into occupations. We should be recognising examples of where young people are learning about sustainability through their curriculum - not only in specific subject areas.

We also need to link sustainability with essential skills. As stated in the report, "a successful transition will require people with broader skills, such as management and people skills".

A final area the report identifies is a significant gender gap when it comes to young people's understanding of green skills. The report states that 72% of women have never heard of green skills and don't know what they are, compared to just over half (53%) of men.

Addressing the gender gap now should be a priority, otherwise it will continue into those sectors and widen still further. The UK Energy Research Centre, in their Green Job Creation, Quality and Skills Report, highlighted that there's some evidence to indicate that women are underrepresented in green jobs occupations and training programmes, relative to men.

We need to highlight some positive role models and industry champions, so our young women have people to aspire to.

I welcome the commitments WorldSkills UK are making as they look to address the issues raised in their report. We should all be making our own commitments.

At NCFE, we're proud to be embedding sustainability into the curriculum, throughout all our products and services. We're working with established and emerging experts in the industry to identify areas of need and to help develop clear pathways into green jobs.

To learn more about sustainability at NCFE visit [ncfe.org.uk](https://www.ncfe.org.uk)

HOW HIGH-QUALITY ENERGY DATA FACILITATES NET ZERO SUCCESS



Brendan Garvey

Businesses can accelerate their net zero journeys by implementing efficiency and carbon reduction strategies discovered through energy data analysis. The challenge for many businesses, however, is retrieving this data. Data and energy and carbon management technologies can provide businesses this data.

The Bank of England recently analysed the financial implications of different climate scenarios and measured the impact on banks and insurers. The analysis warns of a great loss of capital as investments fail to materialise, loans increase and climate-based legal action becomes more commonplace.

The underlying issue creating losses of capital is attributed to one recurrent theme found in the analysis: a lack of data on key factors that entities need to understand and manage climate risks. Without carbon emissions and energy consumption data, businesses cannot effectively create action plans to reduce their emissions and energy waste.

Brendan Garvey, Chief Commercial Officer of ClearVUE.Business, engages with numerous business leaders who are passionate about net zero, but they face uncertainty on how to achieve it because carbon and energy data is insufficient or completely absent from their purview.

"When I get the chance to talk to customers, the first thing I am asking is about their business and what they're trying to do to reduce their climate impact. Every time I get into that conversation, customers are very passionate about it. But the one thing that stands out, is that the majority of organisations do not know where to start. They are really struggling to understand how to get from

where they are currently to where they need to get to."

The Bank of England's survey confirms this issue. The surveyed financial institutions in the report collectively expressed that incomplete data is a disruptive force in many business' pursuit of a decarbonised and more sustainable business. The report states:

"The inability to capture appropriate and robust data in certain areas is a common limitation, which means many climate risks are only being partially measured... Examples of gaps include information about the location of corporate assets to permit physical risk assessment, and a lack of standardised information about value chain emissions relating to corporate counterparties."

Producing data-driven sustainability and climate action reports is no easy task, admittedly, but the presence of such a report serves as an invaluable, transparent reference point for stakeholders. It enhances consumer and investor buy-in.

"Businesses are becoming increasingly aware that net zero and sustainability are only going to become more important in ensuring the longevity of their business model," said Brendan Garvey. "What businesses need help with is understanding that having a focus around their Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) strategies can really help

as they develop their net zero plans and begin their net zero journey."

Digital and data technology play a significant role in facilitating net zero strategies.

Next-generation smart meters are powered by cutting-edge and scalable computing technologies that enable advanced data streaming. Systems utilising this tech can deliver a business' energy and carbon consumption in real time.

"As we explain to customers, the first step starts with knowing their baseline emissions, and using the data from their business to help them design a plan to achieve net zero." Brendan Garvey says.

Real-time data equips businesses to make proactive decisions. Loganathan Bose, the Head of Products at ClearVUE.Business who develops the hardware of the ClearVUE.Zero system, says that energy and carbon data give "businesses a head start with accurate readings of where they are now. Businesses can measure real progress, project future targets and course correct with constant, consistent, reliable and readable data. In a climate of changing regulations, businesses can not only seamlessly adapt and comply, but also exceed targets."

Dan Smith, Director of Energy Services at ClearVUE.Business, adds: "By implementing a high-quality energy management and carbon accounting system, businesses will be able to identify and reduce their energy consumption, and give them an advantage in terms of cost and carbon reduction at the same time. This really does provide a win-win scenario for both businesses and the world we live in — ensuring businesses have the means to create a lasting planet for future generations."

**Visit clearvue.business for more information.
Call +44 (0)3 300 300 200.**

PUTTING YOUR EGGS IN THE RIGHT BASKET: THE FUTURE FOR SMES EAGER TO CUT UTILITY COSTS WILL BE TECH-DRIVEN MULTI-UTILITY PROVIDERS

By Josh Gill, CEO of Everflow



Josh Gill

While finding the right utility provider(s) and managing utility costs and usage is undoubtedly an essential component of any successful business's operation, it is crucial that such processes do not unduly burden the minds of business leaders.

In the current economic climate, companies must be free to focus on achieving growth; SMEs, in particular, simply cannot afford to be weighed down by overly complex and ineffective systems of managing their utilities.

As such, commercial utility suppliers from all strands – electric, gas, telecoms, water, and waste – have a common responsibility to develop more cost-effective and efficient offerings for their customers; offerings that will require a consistent investment in forward-looking, tech-driven innovations that push suppliers to adapt to the evolving desires of UK businesses.

Unfortunately, the B2B utility industry has often failed to effectively deploy cost-saving technology. This shortcoming provided Everflow with the competitive edge in 2015 to become the UK's fastest-growing water supplier with its mission to use cutting-edge technology to simplify business processes of managing their water supply and usage.

Bringing technology to the forefront

Our innovative automation of administrative tasks such as downloading invoices, receiving account summaries and meter readings, along with providing clients with the tools to manage their water utilities more efficiently across multiple premises, allows us to offer a more cost-efficient, tech-enabled service and a more seamless means of controlling water bills.

Additionally, through the development of our water efficiency certification scheme, we have been able to provide clients with reports showing fully costed and personalised water efficiency recommendations, which includes calculations on how much water each client could save and the impact this will have on water bills and carbon efficiency.

While our passion for providing SMEs with an innovative and sustainability-focused utility offering started with water, our mission certainly does not end there. In February, we officially entered the commercial waste management market, bringing with us the same commitment to making business customers' lives simpler and more sustainable.

Beyond offering a similar tech-enabled seamless customer experience, we can now also provide businesses with a sustainable waste management offering. We currently only use sustainable suppliers that avoid using landfills, instead offering to re-use and recycle waste for other purposes.

Broader utility offerings are also attractive to our network of utility brokers – who serve as the backbone of the industry tasked with helping businesses to secure the deal that best suits their budget and needs – by offering

new ways of delivering better services to customer bases and diversifying their sources of commission.

The multi-utility future

As well as a desire to give businesses access to a waste provider with great services, savings, and a focus on sustainability, our move into this new frontier is also part of a wider commitment to a multi-utility future which will deliver significant efficiencies to the management of commercial utilities.

Our customer research has shown an express desire to consolidate utilities under one supplier if it is proven more convenient and delivers discounted costs. While one might assume SMEs to be entirely cost-driven, both factors were of equal importance; a sign that the desire for convenience, which has pervaded all aspects of our personal lives, is also present in everyday commercial tasks.

Previously the technology has not been there for a multi-utility service provider to enter the B2B space; however, it is clear that businesses currently hit by rising costs are keen to secure savings and reduce inefficiency wherever possible. A one-stop-shop for utilities that offers a smooth, tech-enabled experience presents the most attractive way forward for many of these businesses.

Innovative developments such as this are necessary if the wider utilities industry is going to step up to support businesses and households and offer cost and time-saving measures that will help many to weather the storm ahead.

www.everflowwater.com



SARAH DEWAR: PRIORITISING FRONTLINE COLLEAGUES' WELLBEING

Chief People Officer for Mental Health Concern and Insight IAPT, Sarah Dewar, is passionate about prioritising colleagues' mental health and wellbeing – and has been awarded the 2022 CIPD North East People Management Awards for Excellence in Health and Wellness.

“Our organisation is about supporting and helping people, and our new strategy puts our people at its heart.”

Sarah is an HR professional with over twenty years of experience educating organisations in colleague care. Throughout her career, she has used her expert knowledge to help shape HR departments in both the private and not-for-profit sectors.

Fascinated by people and the value that an engaged workforce can bring to an organisation; Sarah is passionate about workforce wellbeing and enjoys participating in the decision-making process. Within just a year as Chief People Officer, Sarah's work, alongside the People Team and leaders across Mental Health Concern, has resulted in winning the CIPD North East Award for Excellence in Health and Wellness, and she hopes this will inspire other organisations to consider adding a CPO into their own team.

“I am so glad that so many organisations are investing in a Chief People Officer on their Executive team. My interest stemmed from



Sarah Dewar

my law degree – though I soon realised I didn't want to pursue law; I was fascinated by employment law and the complexity of the workplace.”

Sarah joined Mental Health Concern and Insight IAPT during a significant change. Before 2021, Mental Health Concern prioritised service users rather than its employees despite the incredibly demanding nature of the work. High absence and attrition levels, combined with low morale, were at odds with the organisation's ethos. An internal wellbeing survey in early 2021 had very low uptake and revealed that people felt ‘abandoned’ regarding their own wellbeing.

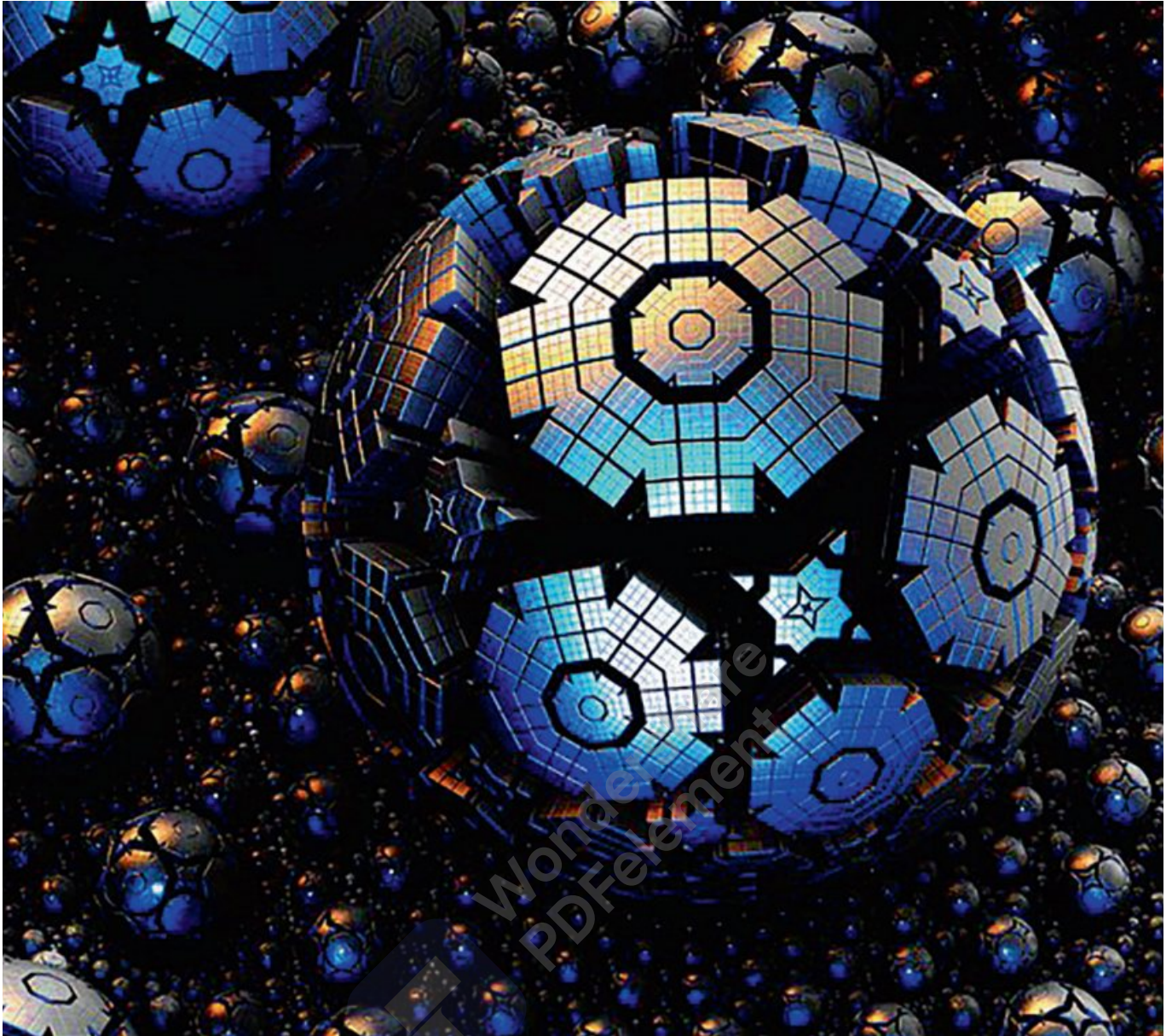
Through their tireless commitment to the organisation and the people that make the work possible, Mental Health Concern and Insight IAPT have experienced a dramatic change in morale and workplace culture. In April 2021, the charity launched its wellbeing strategy, directly linked to the CIPD Pillars of Wellbeing. A series of policies were introduced

including an Agile Working Policy, Colleague Forum, and the launch of an Employee Values Award.

In response to recent economic hardships, Sarah and the other executives have implemented several financial support initiatives including charge cards for lower-income workers and implementing a Real Living Wage as of April 2022 - impacting around 200 colleagues. Since Sarah joined as CPO, the organisation has been named a Great Place to Work provider and employees have reported increased satisfaction at work.

“I aim to continue with a modern and progressive people offer that enables us to grow in our journey as a Great Place to Work. We will be focusing on diversity and inclusion, choice, and personalisation in all that we do.”

For more information about Mental Health Concern and Insight IAPT visit:
www.mentalhealthconcern.org



SSCL ON A MISSION TO WORK SMARTER AND TRANSFORM CLIENT EXPERIENCE

More than 100 'bots' have joined Shared Services Connected Ltd (SSCL) workforce - the leaders in critical business support services for the largest UK Government departments, Defence, Police and CITB.

SSCL runs a Centre of Excellence from Newcastle and is on a journey delivering an omnichannel service strategy, supporting a faster and more intuitive service experience for clients.

SSCL's Service and Strategy Innovation team knew it was important for clients and end users to be able to get the answers they needed fast, and that our people wanted to work smarter. Technology and innovative design, combined with the skills of our people enabled the company to look at where Robotic

Process Automation could benefit services, reducing repetitive manual tasks.

The company developed and supported the running of more than 100 'digital workers' in SSCL operations freeing up people to concentrate on other tasks. RPA robots are 100% accurate, and able to complete tasks without veering away from a pre-determined path.

These 'digital workers' can carry out repeatable administrative tasks 32 x faster, all day every day. They can log into applications,

move files and folders, copy and paste data, fill in forms, and extract data from documents.

Digital workers have helped to free up our people enabling them to deliver an enhanced service to customers and meet business objectives.

SSCL operates more than 600 individual client automated solutions across 100+ business processes in HR & Payroll, Finance & Accounting, IT Operations, Contact Centre, where 'robot workers' are responsible for completing in excess of 6,000 individual transactions every day across HR & Payroll, Finance & Accounting and IT Operations, enabling company growth and better service.

Our success can largely be attributed to the people here at SSCL, with a growing team of developers and technical analysts with over 60 years of combined automation experience, specialising in RPA and focused on automating manually intensive tasks, SSCL can perform rapid deployments in as little as two weeks.

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

WHAT CRISIS ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

The human mind is very quick to grasp onto novel events and distort its reality around these but when it comes to businesses, crises affect customers every bit as much as they do the businesses they buy from, but they are often seen as “external” to the organisation, as David Cliff explores here...

It sometimes feels like Covid has been such a context marker in people's lives that there is little awareness of what went on before it. People talk about the “new normal” but the reality is there are old norms that are all too easily forgotten. This is linked to a tendency in many companies to neglect the value of ‘organisational memory’. This is no less true of the field of customer service.

Covid, the war in the Ukraine and a recognition of our over dependency on globalised supply chains have led to shortages, increased costs, and process discontinuities in multiple business arenas. For example, some cars are now being manufactured with missing key parts due to supply chain difficulties and will need to be retrofitted with those parts as they become available, before going for sale. Systems created to facilitate immediacy, convenience, low inventory and maximising profitability are great when times are good but can ultimately manifest itself in poor supply and poor customer service when they are less so. On this latter point many organisations frequently resort to using world events and supply difficulties as reasons for poor service delivery or problems of supply, rarely intellectually engaging with other factors within their gift to influence that could make a huge difference to their organisation's delivery. Current so called “crises” now often given rise to companies neglecting their customer service with the toxic mind-set that external factors alone are to blame and “you are lucky to get it anyway in these times”. Consumers are not stupid, and whilst often loyal, this has real limits. They recognise the world has changed and might initially offer some latitude, but novel challenges of supply and demand won't wash for long. They will always find those that “can” if you “can't” and get wise to the fact that once plausible reasons for why you can't deliver are something they no longer buy into.

It is interesting to see that the Institute of Customer Service recently announced that customer complaints have reached record levels. 17.3% of customers are now complaining about poor services, that is approaching 1 in 5 transactions.

Equally, many customers are becoming increasingly angry over waiting longer for call centre and other customer facing responses. Research suggests that even quite reasonable people can become aggressive, distressed and use expletives when complaint processes are depersonalised, automated or in some way neglect to observe the buyer's individuality as a human being.

Some things don't change. Customers are individuals, supply and labour issues need to be the purview of good management and leadership to deliver and evolving business models need to place themselves closer to the customer at times of challenge rather than further away. For example, almost universally and ever more frequently used recorded messages saying something like: “we are dealing with an unusual high level of calls at the moment” can be appreciated at peak times but wears thin as a 24/7 experience.

All the novel geopolitical, economic, and epidemiological events of recent times may sell consultancies and seminars, but they are only part of the ongoing challenges that leaders and managers must face day to day. Instead of the symbolic “wringing of hands” and coming out with platitudes about the unique circumstances we are experiencing, some companies would do better by undertaking some decent horizon scanning, developing solution focused planning and recognising that loyalty is truly a two-way process wherein customers need support in the context of their longitudinal relationship with the organisation, not just today's crises.

A real exemplar of failure to do this is around pricing in the current inflationary pressures. Sure, costs have risen significantly. Some organisations try very hard not to transmit costs to the customer except as a very last resort but for some it is a first and preferred strategy, especially when external factors such as a cost-of-living crisis make inflationary pressures the perceived norm wherein additional costs can be ‘squirreled’ in.

The mind-set of being in partnership with one's customer cannot be underestimated here - are they part of the process or simply prospects to exploit?

Every business needs to examine where its values truly lie in this respect.

www.gedanken.co.uk



“

*...17.3% of customers
are now complaining
about poor services,
that is approaching 1 in
5 transactions...*



Tariq Albassam, Director of Operations at Newcastle NE1 Ltd.

NATURE ISLAND LAUNCHES ON THE TYNE

Maximising the opportunities that the river Tyne and the Quayside presents is one of our top priorities at NE1. Alongside ‘greening’ the city, both are central to our plans to help shape the future of Newcastle; that’s why we are delighted to have played our part in a pioneering nature island project that launched on the river this month.

Working closely with community charity, Groundwork North East and Cumbria, and the Environment Agency, as part of the Tyne Estuary Partnership, we have been involved in a large project to install a floating island on the river. The pioneering scheme will help create new habitats for wildlife in and on the water, as well as bringing nature to the city. At high tide, people will be able to see the island, which looks like a small, wild garden, measuring 1,000 square feet, floating on the Tyne in front of Wesley Square between the Millennium and Tyne Bridges.

The floating island is ground-breaking, as it is the first of its kind anywhere in the world to be installed on a tidal river like the Tyne and has been created to withstand the huge tidal flow variations on the river. Newcastle has always been a city of innovation and we are delighted that once again we are delivering a first-of-its-kind on a project that could be transformational for rivers and cities around the world.

The new floating nature island will be a vital hub for wildlife both on the island and in the water around and under it, helping to recreate habitats lost to industrialisation and urban development over the years, as well as helping to improve water quality and greening this section of the riverbank. Pollinator plants have been used to attract wildlife and to create space for nesting birds as well as an under-island ecosystem to shelter migrating fish.

While small in scale compared to the vastness of the river, the floating island is large in comparison with similar projects in other areas. It equates to roughly eight car parking spaces in size, providing a beautiful and significant addition to the Quayside, one that will deliver major environmental benefits. The floating island is being run as a trial that will be managed for the next three years and will provide a test bed for future, larger floating eco-systems on the Tyne and elsewhere.

As well as its impressive eco-credentials, the island is hugely significant for the future of the river and the wider city. Efforts to improve water quality are essential as we work to attract and improve activity on the water, bringing new people and new events and activities to join the kayakers, cruises and boats that already enjoy the river.

Newcastle NE1 have supported this project from its inception because it closely mirrors our focus on the Quayside and reflects the hopes and aspirations of the people of Newcastle. We know from our consumer research that greening the city is a high priority for businesses and the public, and this is an important first step in softening the boundary between the Quay wall and the river, as well as establishing a precedent and demonstrating our ambition for improvements in the area.

Our plans and vision for the Quayside and the river have been shaped by public opinion and the views of businesses, garnered from surveys and direct consultation over the last few years. We have also worked with leading North East architects and world-leading place-makers, Gehl, to pull these

views together into an aspirational vision for the area.

Two of the key themes that have emerged from these discussions are the need to make more of the river and the Quayside with a call for more activities on and off the water, coupled with the need to make the city greener, with a focus on introducing more plants and trees. These themes and wish-lists come together in the floating nature island.

At NE1, we are driven by the desire to continuously improve and develop our projects and their delivery. In the case of the floating island eco-system, we will be keen to explore how we can expand and improve on this idea in the future, as well as measuring how businesses and the public respond and interact with it.

Evaluating the impact of the floating eco-system will be the next step for the project and exploring whether similar projects could help businesses meet their environmental targets. In the future, businesses looking to measure and reduce their carbon footprint could get involved in supporting the project to offset their carbon usage. Developers working on projects that must allocate a percentage of their budget to improving the local area could even start to explore adding floating eco-systems into their offset portfolio.

Floating islands are not common and are tricky to create and manage, especially when navigating the huge tidal differences of the Tyne but they have the potential to deliver enormous environmental benefits. Creating something so innovative and bespoke has taken a lot of time, hard work, and collaboration between a multitude of key partners. We are now excited to see the fruits of this labour and to measure the impact delivered by the floating island.

www.newcastlene1td.com



Visualisation courtesy of Groundworks.



Bryony Gibson

I FEEL THE NEED, THE NEED FOR SPEED

Bryony Gibson, Director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, explains why it is important to have pace and momentum when recruiting.

Inspiration can arise from anywhere. It could be a place you visit, someone you meet or, more recently for me, a movie I watched.

Hopefully, *Top Gun: Maverick* needs no introduction but, without wanting to highlight my age too clearly, it is a famous quote from the 1986 film that led me to think about how “the need for speed” is vital if you want to become the best Navy fighter pilot in the US, but it is equally important in the (slightly less glamorous) world of recruitment.

And, while it is not a death-defying mission into the unknown, presently, competition to attract talent is as fierce as I can recall in over 20 years of practising recruitment in the North East.

Businesses' intention to bring new people in has soared well above pre-pandemic levels and continues to head skyward, but the severe shortage of quality candidates brings a serious challenge, even if you have a wide network of people at your fingertips.

A sentiment supported by the CIPD's most recent Labour Market Report, spring's most popular response to hiring difficulties was to raise starting salaries. An obvious but short-term fix, the approach comes with a warning as there is a limit on how far you can go before negatively affecting the morale of your existing team.

Encouragingly, the firms I am advising are also looking at other

approaches to tackle the challenges. Upskilling the existing workforce, more flexible methods of operating, and a focus on improving job quality are ways used to influence decision-making but, from a recruiter's perspective, the speed you engage and take decisions often correlates directly with the rate of success.

You see, generally speaking, the best person for a role is unlikely to be actively looking for new openings in the job market. The perfect people always have options, and it is often only through existing relationships that they can be enticed to explore a new opportunity.

Now, more than ever, the relationship between business and recruitment consultants is key. If you can find the right partner, it will allow you to exploit their market knowledge, access their network, and capitalise on their expertise, reputation, and ability to generate interest in your vacancy in the right circles. From your side, you need to be comfortable trusting the advice you receive, as you may need to be flexible on the final solution, which is not always as bad as it sounds.

Once you choose to engage in a candidate-driven market, you need to be prepared to give time to the process and make fast decisions. As recruiters, we realise you are busy and that hiring is often an addition to your core responsibilities, but the more time and importance you place on the process, the better long-term results you will see.

When an impressive candidate's curiosity is piqued, it is important to move through the stages of recruitment with speed, not haste. This might require breaking the rules a little to streamline more traditional, drawn-out recruitment processes and protocols but, right now, slow hiring means only the average will remain in your race and making fast decisions reflects a dynamic corporate culture that will endear the best talent to you even more.

So, if you like someone and want to stay ahead of your competitors, my advice is to “feel the need for speed”. Act fast and invite them in for an interview and, if it goes well, don't delay in making them an offer. After all, your company is only as good as the people it employs.

For public practice advice and expertise, get in touch:
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Hi, isn't it hot?!

Had to keep out of the sun last week as black is not the best colour for that sort of weather.

Still had lots of friends around, cousins Dexter, Teddy, and Kinny along with Auntie Lola and Uncle Ossy – didn't do too much running around though.

Still really busy at work.

Check our website for recent projects. See you next month.



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

George from Fenham asks:

Q. Several years ago I had my windows replaced with double glazing. After a few years, the south-facing ones became

subject to occasional, unsightly internal misting. As there was a ten-year guarantee I claimed for renewal of the windows. The insurance company claimed that the condensation was normal and therefore refused the claim.

A. One of the great unspoken truths of sealed double-glazed units (SGUs) is that eventually they will all mist up. The time scale should be twenty-ish years in a perfectly made and installed window. But in poorly made ones it can be a lot less. Five months has been reported.

So, in a way, the condensation is 'normal', in that it will happen eventually in all windows. But I would have thought you could expect that a ten-year guarantee would reasonably cover you against misting within that time. It depends on the insurers' small print.

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RAZORBLUE BREAKS OWN RECORD WITH 48% GROWTH

North-East headquartered razorblue has seen its biggest year of growth yet, taking revenue for the 21-22 financial year north of £12m, significantly exceeding last year's 32% growth.

CEO, Dan Kitchen said: "Our long-term strategy to put our customers first, constantly improving our service, evolving our product offering, and employing the most skilled technical experts – continues to pay off. We continue to implement our growth strategy through geographical expansion, having completed another acquisition with others in the pipeline.

"We have also launched our own digital academy, working closely with local

colleges, to help create the IT networking, development and security skills we urgently need in our industry."

The company now has seven offices and expanded its reach into Scotland in 2021 following the acquisition of SARN Technologies, its second acquisition in as many years.

Commercial Director, Mark Wilkinson said: "This has been yet another phenomenal year of growth for the business. As expected, to facilitate this growth we continue to add new people to our ever-expanding teams enabling us to be positioned even better for faster growth in the next financial year.

razorblue has plans to recruit 40 additional team members in the next 12 months to support its plans to continue expanding its nationwide coverage, and adding more products and services to the current offering.



DIGITAL SCHOOL OF THOUGHT SEES TECH ENTREPRENEUR SHORTLISTED FOR NATIONAL AWARD

29-year-old Jack Deverson, co-founder and managing director of Evidence Based Education, has been named among the 'Young Entrepreneur of the Year' finalists in this year's Great British Entrepreneur Awards.

Evidence Based Education was set up in 2015 to deliver both online and on-site training to teachers and schools, both nationally and internationally.

It was set up by academic and former teacher, Prof. Stuart Kime, and Jack Deverson, who is fluent in both Chinese and German. EBE aims to deliver teacher training in a way that is both sustained and sustainable, delivering long-term benefits for schools and their staff.

The company has since gone on to provide training to over 40,000 teachers across the globe, from the UK to as far afield as China, the UAE and the US, and is hoping the launch of its new cloud-based platform, the 'Great Teaching Toolkit', will see the company continue to chalk up success as it continues to innovate and grow.

Jack said: "It really took me by surprise when I received the email this week informing me that I'd been shortlisted for the Young Entrepreneur of the Year award.

"Over the past few years, it felt like we were spinning plates at times when launching the Great Teaching Toolkit as we were balancing recruiting and onboarding staff, with investing in the new product development, and all the while keeping the day-to-day business running – providing our schools and teachers with great-value and top-quality training and support.

The shortlisting isn't the first time Evidence Based Education has received national acclaim. As well as having been supported by Cambridge University in the past, the company also made headlines when it was awarded a Queen's Award for Enterprise for Innovation in 2019.

CLOUD EXPERTS HTG MAKE SENIOR APPOINTMENTS

Fast-growing secure cloud expert Howell Technology Group (HTG) has made two appointments to its senior leadership team, to spearhead the company's next phase of growth as it works on plans to boost turnover to £30m and headcount to 150 in the next five years.

The new appointments see George Galloway join as sales and marketing director, bringing with him a 20-year background in senior commercial roles within the IT industry. HTG's former programme and operations manager Niall Quinn, who is a certified Project Management Professional (PMP), PRINCE2 holder, and experienced Scrum Master, is promoted to operations director.

CEO Kevin Howell commented: "This is a pivotal moment for HTG, as we restructure and strengthen our senior leadership team to enable our growth. We are very pleased to have George on board, and to recognise Niall's achievement and ambition with a senior appointment.

"Attracting and retaining the highest levels of talent is vital to our success. Both are highly



regarded within the North East business community and will play a key role in leading and shaping our future.

"I have known and worked with George for 30 years and his wealth of experience in the industry, and his insight into growing successful technology companies will be invaluable.

"Joining HTG as a project manager in 2019, Niall quickly proved himself to be one of the rising stars of the business, with a combination of high level technical and delivery skills, and we are delighted to be able to fast track him to the senior leadership team."

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Ian Glasson with the team at Tyne Theatre & Opera House

CENTRE STAGE FOR JIGSAW DIGITAL

Those normally shy performers at Jigsaw Digital recently stepped into the spotlight to help launch a new website for Newcastle-based Tyne Theatre & Opera House.

The fresh, user-friendly site makes it even easier to browse the theatre's vast range of shows offering 'something for everyone'.

As a charity and local independent venue, the team at Jigsaw Digital offered their skills and time for free to help Tyne Theatre & Opera House get their new site designed and launched.

Theatre director Joanne Johnson said: "We're so pleased to be launching our new website, so our audiences can see what's coming soon and find out more about our venue easily.

"We're incredibly grateful to have been able

to work with Jigsaw Digital on this project, their team are so talented, friendly, and easy to work with and have allowed us to bring our vision of a new website, that best reflects our venue, to life. We would recommend their services to anyone looking for help with improving or creating a website."

Ian Glasson, co-founder and director, at Newcastle-based Jigsaw Digital, explained: "As long-time supporters of the theatre we had no hesitation in offering our services to bring a new lease of life to their existing ageing website.

"It was a pleasure working on the project and with a very knowledgeable and professional theatre team. We look forward to assisting again on any digital projects that may arise."

Ian added: "On another note, I would like to congratulate them on their recent National Lottery Heritage Fund Grant win and can't wait to see the improvements that they make."

The new website has been designed to enhance and optimise user experience, ensuring audiences' online experience is as positive as their in-person visits to this Grade I listed building, first opened in 1867.

As well as browsing the theatre's outstanding programme of comedy, music, theatre, variety, family shows and more, visitors can now view a selection of recommended nearby

spots to eat, drink, and stay – all guaranteed to add a sense of occasion to their visit.

Visitors will also learn more about the ways they can support the theatre's Preservation Trust by donating, joining their Friends' Club, Naming a Seat, or by taking a Theatre Tour!

Although Jigsaw Digital design and build websites for a range of clients, the agency's key strengths are as a digital products studio, focussing on CRM and ERP systems. The company is regularly creating multi-platform apps.

Co-founder and director Michael Taylor said: "One of the strengths of Jigsaw Digital is our experience in integrating sites into a Shopify ecommerce environment.

"But our customers are very varied. They include music festivals, manufacturers, retailers, wholesalers and home improvement to name a few. These clients are spread nationally with only around 10% of business being North East based, although we would love to work with more regional clients. That's why it was a pleasure to work with Tyne Theatre & Opera House."

Details about the theatre:

www.tynetheatreandoperahouse.uk

Details about Jigsaw:

www.jigsaw.digital



Steve Morland

HOW CLOUD NATIVE TECHNOLOGY CAN TRANSFORM YOUR BUSINESS

By Steve Morland, Specialist Tech Lead, Leighton

Over the last few years, we've seen digital transformation emerge on a rapid scale with the evolution of technologies known as 'cloud native' - namely, the concept of building and running applications that take advantage of the cloud computing model.

Designed and built to exploit the speed, agility and scale that cloud computing offers, cloud native technologies have been instrumental to the success of many digital native companies such as Netflix and Uber. It doesn't end there. Cloud native technologies are disrupting traditional ways of doing business and have changed the way software development is done today, leading to the adoption of DevOps, Agile practices and other strategies to deliver software that makes money, saves money, creates efficiencies, integrates systems or solves problems.

But just how can cloud native technology transform your business and what are its benefits?

1. Cost-effectiveness

Whilst traditional models for software development confined businesses to fixed

resources and infrastructure, cloud native technologies are designed to function on the cloud, which reduces running costs and the costs of backup, maintenance, development and usage of resources. And with serverless systems adopting pay-per-use models, costs are driven down considerably by paying based on demand.

2. Flexibility

Cloud native technology removes the restrictions that traditional architecture introduced and offers unlimited capacity that can adapt to service usage peaks. This could be the perfect fit for your business if you don't know the workload you are expecting or are planning for considerable growth. This approach also gives flexibility to your product roadmap - your users' needs may change through the product's lifecycle and being

confident that your architecture can adapt to that change will empower you and your team to evolve your product.

3. Speed to market

Time to market has become a key factor in most businesses with the need to conceive, build and launch applications that benefit the business and its customers at the forefront in today's post-pandemic world. Cloud native technologies enable an element of automation and collaboration which was not possible in the era of server-based software development, drastically increasing speed to market.

4. Focus on development, not infrastructure

With the speed, agility, and power of cloud native technologies, many of the limitations of traditional software development disappear, enabling your business to accelerate or enable innovation and focus on developing applications that can meet shifts in customer demand or reinvent how to develop, deliver and sell products and services.

Although cloud native technology might not be the perfect fit for every business problem, it is a good fit for most business needs, particularly as companies look to digitise business critical functions and empower their product owners to deliver business change.

leighton.com



SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT FIRM CELEBRATES 30 YEARS WITH RAPID GROWTH

Newcastle-based software development business Leighton is celebrating 30 years in business this month and praised its team following two years of rapid growth.

The company announced the strong set of results which has seen the business grow in revenue by 64-percent last year alone, with turnover expected to grow another 65-percent by the end of this financial year.

One of the UK's leading software development businesses it boasts an international portfolio of customers including British Airways, Atom Bank, EQUANS and North plc.

The team celebrated with a party at Wylam Brewery in the City's Exhibition Park on Wednesday 20th July with its team of investors and enjoyed live music by Ellen and the Funktones.





MORE THAN A BUZZWORD

The phrase 'design thinking' is being used ever more frequently, but why?

You'll likely have heard it in relation to product and technology innovation which it became known for, but over the past decade it's mainly used as an approach to solving diverse problems faced by businesses, government, education and social organisations.

Here at Waterstones, we've been using design thinking to help businesses understand issues and find ways to adapt, grow and thrive for years.

What is design thinking?

While the phrase insinuates an exclusively creative approach, it is in fact scientific and methodical – showing there is space for both science and creativity in problem solving and innovation.

There is no single definition, but founder of agency IDEO, Tim Brown described it as: "...a human-centred approach to innovation that draws from the designer's toolkit to integrate the needs of people, the possibilities of

technology, and the requirements for business success."

This definition translates well into the business world; it is a human-centred, experiment-led method adapted to solve complex problems and innovate.

What does it look like?

The Institute of Design at Stanford University breaks design thinking into five processes: empathise, define, ideate, prototype and test.

Aiming understand actual problems (empathise), generally through user research such as interviews, focus groups or workshops. These insights are used to define problem statements, potential solutions to these problems are developed through brainstorming and then prioritised in the ideate stage, then tested through experiments, and this often requires the creation and testing of a prototype.

This is a simple way of looking at it, but design thinking is not linear with each stage unearthing potential changes to the overall project.

How does design thinking differ from traditional problem-solving?

User first: empathise with and understand users before defining the problem; not assuming.

Show, don't tell: The hands-on approach means potential solutions are tested and

refined before final delivery, leading to better alignment between outcomes and objectives, and increased efficiency.

Think outside the box: It challenges assumptions based on ingrained thought patterns and past experiences, meaning solutions are innovative and responsive to real problems.

Collaboration is key: Actively sought out in this process, involving multiple stakeholders to encourage discovery of unique perspectives which may not have otherwise been gained.

When should you use design thinking?

In the business world it can be combined with other methodologies, models and practices, and by incorporating some of its features, you will increase the likelihood of fulfilling the desirability component of the value centred model, which can be applied to all transformation projects.

Want support in applying design thinking to your business? Get in touch with our team today at info@waterstones.com





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RAFT OF PROMOTIONS DRIVING NEXT PHASE OF GROWTH AT FORFUSION



L-R: Head of finance, Jill Taylor,
Fiona Inglis, account support
manager and CEO Steven Forrest.

Senior appointments set North East technology firm on track to take on tech giants.

Leading business IT strategists Forfusion have promoted several team members into key roles as they prepare to take on multi-million pound global technology giants.

The Cobalt Business Exchange-based Forfusion, designs, implements and manages mission-critical networking infrastructure for large public and private sector companies.

As independent experts, the business is committed to ensuring businesses' have the best connection possible for their IT systems. By switching them from say traditional MPLS networks over to SD-WAN technology, a faster and more reliable service improves a company's site-to-site connectivity and helps them achieve their goals quicker.

After appointing several highly experienced professionals, the firm is poised for an exciting year of growth. Steven Forrest, CEO of Forfusion said, "The business has had some key successes in recent years, and it has been great to bring some influential women into the business. Through the last 12 months we have really invested in our operational structure, and we are in a better position for it.

"We have established key relationships with industry giants to not only raise awareness of the infrastructure solutions available, but to work with businesses to engage their needs and provide the optimum service for their own growth ambitions too."

As head of finance Jill Taylor manages the business' financial functions, ensuring all monetary data is accurate, any risks identified, managed and reported on time. Having started her career in finance in Newcastle, Taylor moved to London where she gained extensive experience over 23 years within City institutions, primarily in insurance services and retail.

Katie Griffin has been promoted to business services director, but she hasn't always worked in the tech sector. With 15 years spent as a primary school teacher through to deputy headteacher in the North East, Griffin found a change of career scene was necessary owing to changes in the education system. An opportunity with Forfusion came back in 2016 and her career has flourished since, as she aided the firm in developing key HR and operational processes to implement best practice.

Joanne Thomas heads up Forfusion's marketing department. After studying sociology at Leeds University, she worked in operations and account management, where she looked after clients that included Associated Press. Her move into the tech

sector came in 2011, when she joined MintTec, a small IT systems integrator in Southampton as a Business Development Manager. When the company was acquired by Forfusion in 2017 this presented her with an opportunity to pursue a career in marketing and has now been working as the firm's Marketing Manager for several months.

In her role, Joanne coordinates internal and external resource with a key goal to boost company growth by driving brand awareness opportunities and showcasing Forfusion's services and technology solutions.

Fiona Inglis is well-versed in all things tech, having extensive experience in the sector. She joined Forfusion in 2016 after spending several years working for a national firm in Scotland. As she marks a sixth anniversary with the business, she has recently been promoted to Account Support Manager.

She said: "It's great to work in the technology sector. I'm not overly technical but I like to learn how things work. I'm happy to have a technical consultant explain to me the benefits of some of the technology we provide for our clients. That's one of the great things about Forfusion, the technical guys can take this stuff and explain it to you on a human level to help you understand."

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connection is everything



James Drake

ECLIPSE WHOLESale TARGETS GROWTH IN YEAR AHEAD

Established in 2003 by Managing Director, James Drake, Eclipse Wholesale is a channel first telecommunications provider offering market leading services throughout the whole of the UK, via a network of trusted Channel Partners to provide a high quality, cost-effective service to their customers.

Over the last year Eclipse has reached new heights and evolved, better business processes have provided a greater understanding of what can be delivered and a clear vision of what an All IP and Full Fibre future looks like, this has helped develop and become Eclipse's strategy for 2022 and the years beyond.

As a result of the pandemic, many industries closed their doors, however the telecommunications industry had to react to the many challenges thrown at it, the team at Eclipse worked diligently on aiding customers in using telecom products to meet the challenge. The need for reliable broadband connectivity was significantly increased more than ever, most businesses were introduced to remote working for the first time and time was always of the essence with every customer engagement.

"The Pandemic was tough for everyone, but I feel the technology in Eclipse's portfolio really eased the pressure on a lot of business customers" says James Drake (MD), "it also advanced the migration from some legacy products and started more people's journey towards All IP and Full Fibre."

As we now reach the other side and (hopefully) say goodbye to the worst parts of the pandemic, Eclipse are focussed more than ever on a long term goal of becoming the UK's leading Connectivity and Comms Aggregator for small to medium sized Channel Partners. Over the last 12 months Eclipse have focused on developing and expanding its Partner Programme, with the aim of increasing Partner numbers who wish to focus on Full Fibre, Connectivity, Unified Communications, Mobile and IoT.

Eclipse are well positioned to assist Channel

Partners who wish to move Channel vendor or those who are entering the telecoms market for the first time, all Partners will benefit from Eclipse's long-lasting supplier relationships and status within those vendors (Zen Advantage Partner, CityFibre Strategic Partner, and Gamma Gold Partner).

"We are already seeing positive results of our hard work" says James Drake, "we have already been shortlisted for SMB Distributor of the Year and Sales and Account Management Team this year at our industry awards, this exposure has led to more enquiries as people seek to engage with us for the first time."

Looking towards the future, Eclipse know it will require more hard work just to maintain the current levels of growth and success but are keen to continue their ever growing commitment to the Channel.

James Drake continues "As with any marketplace its sometimes challenging to differentiate, however we know we have a unique broadband opportunity, both in the North East and Nationwide that will generate a great deal of interest when we launch in a few months, all I say is watch this space."

To find out more visit eclipsewholesale.co.uk or contact us at contact@eclipsewholesale.co.uk or 0344 243 5555



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sub-10...9... 8...7...6...

Innovative e-learning provider prepares for lift-off at the launch of their new platform.

The e-learning world is overcrowded with companies making bold claims about their content. sub-10, an e-learning provider based in the North-East, prefer to let their content speak for itself. They've built an intelligent platform capable of generating a learning pathway that takes individuals on a progressive journey, building knowledge over time.

This platform was officially launched at a showcase event in Newcastle on 13th July. The event provided a great opportunity for sub-10 to showcase the platform, demo content, and outline their vision for the learning marketplace.

"sub-10 offers a different way of learning, using emotive design to engage learners. You can complete our concise units at a time that suits you and allow content to build over time." said Angela Ross, co-founder.

sub-10 began in 2018 and were quick to win plaudits for their learning solutions for companies including Sage plc, Northumbria Police, and Your Move. Now the focus is shifting to their own content, available for all on the platform.

"Our platform monitors progress, sends reminders, delivers high-quality digital content and automatically reports on completion to show compliance. You can sign up and start training on the same day." said Peter Stephenson, co-founder.

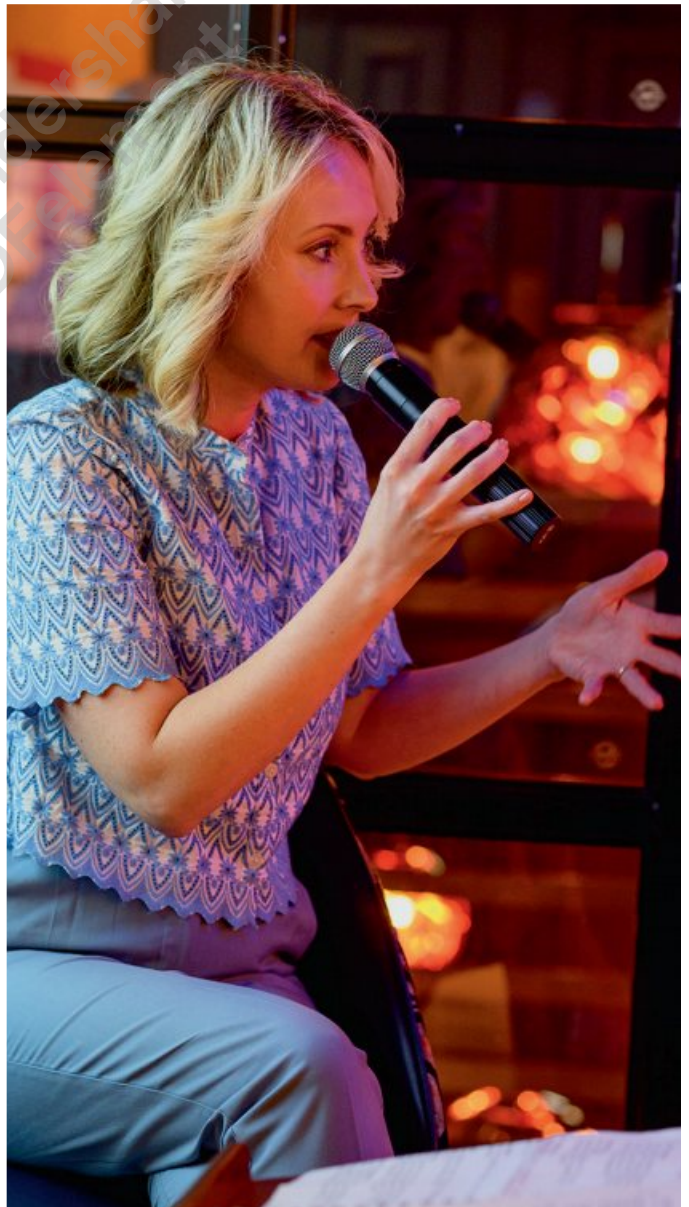
All sub-10 content is 10 minutes or less, with concise compliance units building into a learning pathway of content designed to be consumed in short bursts. This isn't microlearning; sub-10 units are built up, not chopped up.

"At sub-10, we offer dynamic, engaging content and an easy-to-use platform in one solution. You get 'want to do' learning that helps keep you compliant and protected." said John Webb, Learning Director.

The launch event featured a diversity, equity and inclusion discussion with Di Keller and Debra Gardner. DEI is a subject close to sub-10's heart and just one of several key topics - along with Safeguarding, Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Bribery and Corruption, and Code of Conduct - available on a platform looking to lead the way through a busy and often bewildering learning marketplace.

**Scan to try out the free content on
sub-10's platform today.**





PROPERTY WEBMASTERS PRODUCE 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.

"Why are we going down the electric car route when we have cars already? The crypto portal is the same sort of concept. We have currencies already, but it's about creating more options for people.

"The world is becoming a smaller place, everyone is being connected these days wherever you are, so crypto helps to break down international boundaries. It was inevitable that this was going to happen."

The property industry is aware of the importance and significance of blockchain technology – a system which records information in a way that makes it impossible to edit or hack – and that links well with crypto and various other ways of investing and transacting.

It is an approach that is growing in the UK and around the world, particularly in the US, and Property Webmasters wants to ensure it is well placed to help estate agents take that step if they want to.



Property Webmasters' CEO Jamie Arthur

Jamie Arthur, the chief executive and founder of Property Webmasters, said: "More and more industries are engaging with crypto and more and more estate agents are starting to too.

"Such a portal is intended to connect with clients who are willing to accept crypto as a payment method for a property. Crypto has been around for years and in the last five years we have seen crypto go on an upward trajectory – we want to be part of that worldwide progression.

"If it continues then that market is only going to get bigger and bigger. To many, it might be alien but it is really not that complicated.

"It is important for us to keep up with trends. In a digital space, looking at technology, you want to be ahead of the curve. From an innovation point of view it is vital we are looking at crypto."

Property Webmasters is basically creating a transactional real estate listing website which will only display properties whose owners are willing to accept crypto as a currency.

The more who accept the bigger that site will become.

The plan is for Property Webmasters to then implement a crypto feature into its very own AgentPlus website solution for estate agents at home and abroad within the next 6-12 months.

James added: "We have clients in different corners of the world. Crypto, digital tokens, solves a lot of problems when transferring a lot of money between companies.

"Proof of funds, for example, is there immediately. It is simpler to cut out a lot of the paperwork that banks require and it is regulated in many areas now.

"I believe that in the future it will be pounds, dollars and crypto when you talk about currency, and it is merely another source of paying for goods or in this case property."

For further information on what Property Webmasters can do for your business check out www.propertywebmasters.com



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NORTH EAST CONSTRUCTION FIRM LANDS VAUX HOUSING DEAL

One of the North East's most ambitious residential developments is set to begin, with Tolent appointed to commence work.

Sunderland City Council has signed a deal that will see North East based Tolent take on the construction of 135 ultra-modern homes that will form the new Vaux neighbourhood at Riverside Sunderland, the first of 1,000

homes planned for the area as part of ambitious plans to double the number of people living in the city centre.

The £40m project will see Tolent construct the stunning sustainable houses using modern methods of construction, renewable energy and smart technology to reduce the carbon footprint of the development, producing high quality, low carbon properties in the heart of the city. The homes will stand alongside The Beam and City Hall – the latest development to rise from the ground at Riverside Sunderland.

The homes will provide a future living offer that will attract new and existing Sunderland residents to live in the vibrant city centre, with the homes sitting alongside the orchards and allotments of Kingsley Gardens and nearby Riverside Park, which is continuing on its journey towards an accessible, attractive and ecologically diverse parkland. The Vaux neighbourhood will be the site of the Expo Sunderland in 2024 which will showcase the new homes and the aspirational lifestyle offer that Sunderland will provide.

Included in the scheme will be a cluster of award-winning dwellings, that were selected as the best in the national Homes of 2030 Design Competition - which explored how homes will look and function in the future.

A1 INDUSTRIAL TRUCKS IS ON THE MOVE

One of the UK's largest independent Mitsubishi forklift dealerships has moved into a new home, thanks to support from award-winning North East law firm, Mincoffs Solicitors.

A1 Industrial Trucks is the leading supplier of forklifts in the region, with more than 500 vehicles available for short or long term hire.

And the business, which is part of the Northern Bear Group, is settling into a new premises on Team Valley Industrial Estate following a move from Newburn Industrial Estate.

Mincoffs Solicitors' real estate team advised on the terms of a 10 year lease of the space, which has had a full refit to create the perfect base for the expanding company.

Northern Bear's Group Operations Director, Keith Soulsby, is confident the new premises will give the business space to grow.

"A1 Industrial Trucks was founded nearly forty years ago and in that time it has grown from a small service and repair business to a major supplier of materials handling

equipment all over the UK," he said.

"Like with any company, finding the right space to work in makes a huge difference and we couldn't be happier with the service we received from Mincoffs in securing our new premises.

"The team were incredibly helpful throughout the whole process, answering any questions we had and making sure it went as smoothly as possible."

Jordan Down, a Solicitor in Mincoffs real estate team, advised on the terms of the lease for the new space along with Partner and Head of Real Estate, Ryan Bannon.



METNOR CONSTRUCTION CELEBRATES 20TH ANNIVERSARY

Metnor Construction, part of the Newcastle based Metnor Group, is celebrating its 20th anniversary with a record number of new wins including a £17million project with Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.

With expertise to carry out multiple large scale projects, typical contract values for the business range from £1m to £50m. And despite the challenges of the pandemic, turnover for Metnor Construction is forecast to reach £90 million in 2022.

Operating across the UK, recently completed and current works for the business include two major private residential schemes at Market Quarter in Rugby, and another in Warrington, a healthcare centre in Kettering, alongside a number of student accommodation contracts.

And now the firm is celebrating its anniversary with a prestigious new local client win. After a competitive tender, they are delighted to have been awarded the Principal Contractor role at the new NHS training centre at Cramlington Hospital. The £17million Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust project is a 6,750 square metre development which will accommodate a clinical skills and nursing training centre of excellence, conference facilities, office space, meeting rooms and flexible areas for clinical use. The project which is due to start in July 2022 will also include a drive through Starbucks.

Chris McDonnell, Pre Construction Director at Metnor Construction said: "We're really delighted with the win at Cramlington Hospital. Our growing reputation and credentials in the healthcare sector coupled with our local North East delivery team have played a significant role in helping us secure the appointment. It's a fantastic and exciting opportunity to be supporting the NHS in delivering this key facility and we look forward to getting started."

Chris Cant, CEO of Metnor Group said: "We're delighted to be celebrating our 20 year anniversary with such a prestigious win at Cramlington Hospital. We're forecasting record turnover and it's thanks to our fantastic staff, supportive clients and suppliers that we're tracking such ambitious growth."

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Prices Now Released For Hexham's Luxury Apartment Scheme

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HISTORY AND 21ST CENTURY IN PERFECT HARMONY

Stunning 6-bedroom property for sale in Corbridge



There are times when an opportunity comes along when you really can't believe that there's a chance to buy a piece of history in one of the North East's favourite locations.

That's precisely what you'll find with The Radcliffe which is situated in a prime position within the delightful market town of Corbridge with wonderful views over the Tyne valley.

As you can see from the photos, it is a stunning property which has been meticulously developed and extended to produce a home with character and potential.

The Radcliffe has been loved by Karen Little and her family. When they bought the house it was a former guesthouse.

"We really have felt like the latest part in the history of this house," says Karen. "It is a Grade II listed property which has its roots back in 1760 when it was built using stone from nearby Dilston Hall which was owned by the Earl of Derwentwater, James Radcliffe. He was beheaded during the Civil War. Dilston Hall fell into disrepair."

Since those very early days, Karen's home has been extended on several occasions, principally in 1890 and again in 1919. Consequently the front of the house is of Georgian era while the south facing rear is Victorian. This gives the interior a wonderful variety of rooms. Those at the front have a cosy feel while those at the back have traditional Victorian high ceilings. The sun-bathed garden looks down onto the River Tyne and the historic Corbridge bridge.

"In recent years, the house was called The Riverside Hotel. When we moved in we decided to reclaim The Radcliffe name.

We've also continued with the development of the house so that we now have a contemporary one bedroom, self-contained annexe at the rear. We're also fortunate in that we have plenty of car parking space with ample room for five cars at the front and two at the rear."

Corbridge is steeped in history. Over a period of 350 years, Roman Corbridge evolved from a military centre into a thriving civilian community up until the 5th Century.

Corbridge remains a vibrant market town with everything you could possibly need in terms of facilities...shops, bakers, greengrocers, clothes shops, restaurants, pubs, hardware shops and medical facilities such as GP surgeries, opticians, dental practices, hearing clinic, physiotherapist, podiatrist, chiropractor...and there are excellent transport links with a regular bus and train service. The station is only a ten minute walk from the house.

In other words, The Radcliffe in the centre of Corbridge is a wonderful opportunity to own a stunning home in an enviable location within one of Northumberland's most prized market towns.

Offers in excess of £1,795,000.

If you'd like more details, get in touch with Sanderson Young estate agents on 0191 223 3500 or log onto their website sandersonyoung.co.uk Once you're onto their site, type Corbridge into the search bar and The Radcliffe will load. You can then scroll through a video and 22 photographs, some of which you see here.







MODO BLOC TO REDEVELOP FORMER CARE HOME INTO LUXURY APARTMENTS

North East design-led developer Modo Bloc has secured planning permission to redevelop a former care home in Forest Hall, Newcastle.

The rapidly growing Newcastle-based developer is to create 12 self-serviced luxury apartments at the site, just off Station Road, at Springfield Park.

The £2m project will comprise five one-bed and seven two-bed high-end apartments when completed early in 2023. The two-bed apartments will have a mixture of layouts, aspects and features, making each of them unique.

Modo Bloc Construction will be starting on site shortly. The existing layout of the building minimises the amount of demolition and construction work required, enabling the development to keep to a strict timeline. The project will be styled and developed much like an earlier scheme that Modo Bloc brought to the market in 2021 - Chelmsford Lofts, a stylish 8-flat aparthotel in Sandyford, Newcastle.

Once the Springfield scheme is completed it will be handed over and managed by Your Homes Newcastle, a subsidiary company of Modo Bloc.

George Jenkins, MD of Modo Bloc, explained: "Springfield Park apartments will be delivered to the same high standard of building construction and interior design as Chelmsford Lofts. These are designed with an aspirational, modern standard of living."

WORK GETS UNDERWAY TO RESTORE HISTORIC SUNDERLAND BUILDINGS

The buildings at 177 High Street West and 1-2 Villiers Street are two of the last long-term vacant properties in the Old Sunderland Riverside Conservation Area, which are now being restored to their former glory and brought back into use as part of Sunderland's Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) - a scheme led and funded by Sunderland City Council and Historic England.

The Council owned properties will be transferred to the Tyne & Wear Building Preservation Trust (TWBPT). Working with Mosedale Gillatt Architects and Northern Construction Solutions Ltd, the Trust will deliver the first phase of the works with a £350,000 grant from the Levelling Up Fund and £65,000 from the Architectural



Heritage Fund. The works will see the properties undergo roof and structural repairs, the removal of pebble dash and rendering in lime render, and window repairs and replacements.

The second phase of works will be funded by the HAZ partnership grant scheme and will enliven the street frontages with the reinstatement of high quality traditional shops fronts. The project will build on the successful restoration and reuse of neighbouring 170-175 High Street West, which is now home to local businesses including Pop Recs and Sunshine Co-operative.



THREE APPOINTMENTS STRENGTHEN YOUR HOMES NEWCASTLE

Three experienced professionals - Alison Thompson, Siobhan Weightman and Hayley Hoben-Blight – have joined Your Homes Newcastle (YHN), bringing significant expertise to the organisation's team.

Alison Thompson has joined as Interim Assistant Director Finance and Performance and will take on responsibility for the wider finance directorate who are responsible for managing money effectively within the organisation. Having held roles with DWP, Defra, the NHS and most recently the Ministry of Justice, she brings a wealth of public sector experience to her new role.

Siobhan Weightman has been appointed Assistant Director Technology and Transformation, a new directorate at YHN focusing on how digital transformation can improve customer experience and efficiency within the organisation. She joins the firm having built a successful career in local government, policing and housing.

Completing the hat-trick of appointments is Hayley Hoben-Blight, who is Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Lead at YHN. Hayley has been promoted to her new role having previously served as a Safe Living Officer at YHN. EDI plays a significant part of YHN's culture, so a specialised role was created to deliver a coordinated response to plans, projects and strategies to embed EDI across the organisation.

The roles are important new additions that YHN managing director, Tina Drury, believes will build on the organisation's fresh focus, set out in its new business plan.

She said: "We have an ambitious plan at YHN, and - at its heart, the aim is to ensure we provide the best value, service and experience for our customers. These appointments are about not only improving the efficiency of our service, but also ensuring that YHN residents enjoy the best care and support possible – and that our service reflects the diverse communities we serve too."



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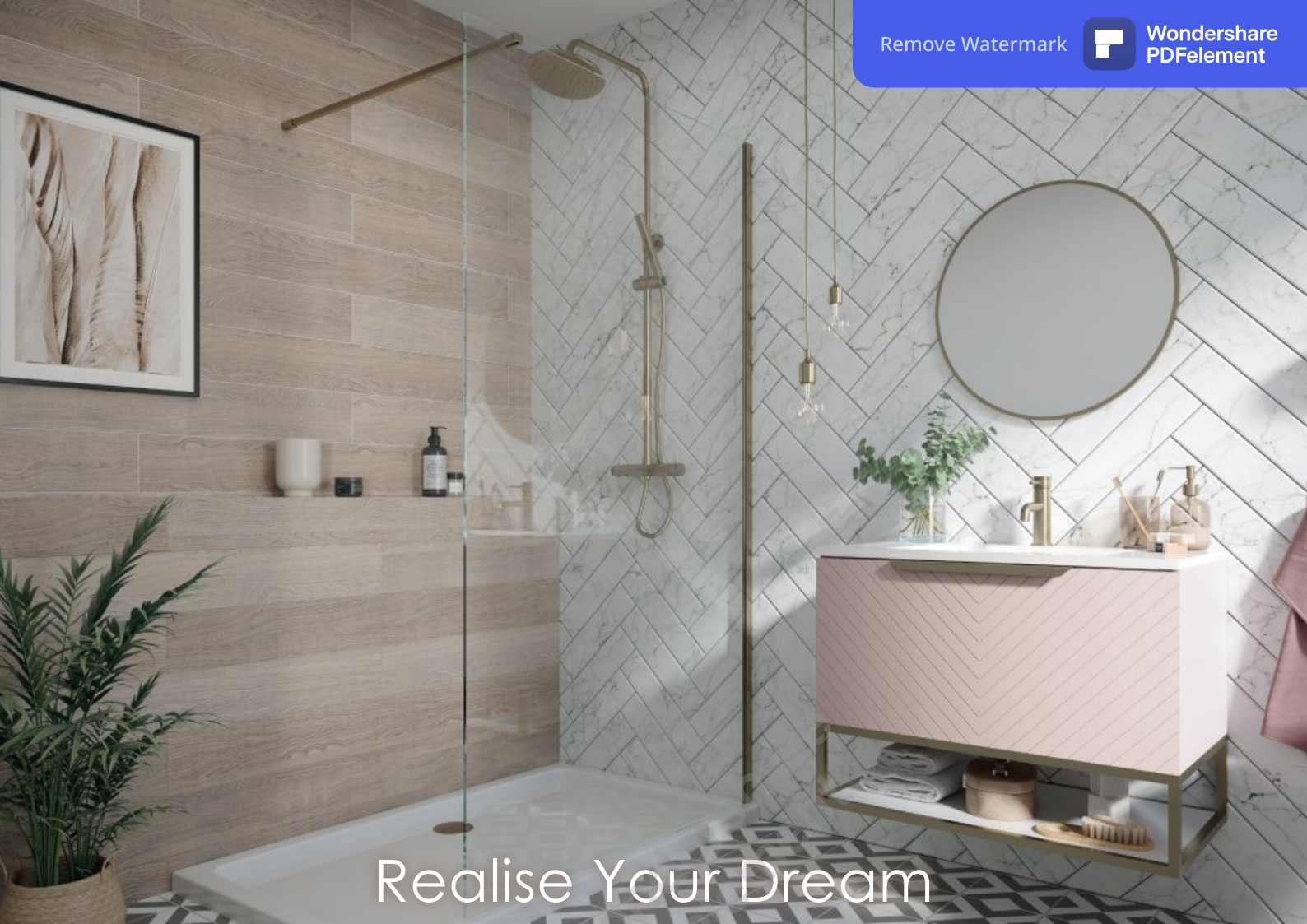
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Manor House is a stunning and historic, stone detached house set in a most beautiful garden site of over 0.6 acres, directly overlooking the sea - the uninterrupted views are magnificent and the property offers a unique opportunity for those buyers seeking a special coastal home. This traditional family home has been refurbished and extended over the last 20 plus years, creating a versatile house along with a former Coach House/garage. Cresswell is a quiet seaside village on the unspoilt Northumbrian coastline, with miles of sandy beaches stretching up to Druridge Bay and beyond. The small coastal hamlet has a recently restored Pele Tower, village ice cream shop, and 'The Drift Cafe' featured recently in the Sunday Times 'Best places to eat by the Sea' - more amenities can be found in the market towns of Morpeth and Alnwick, as well as schooling for all ages.

Tenure: Freehold Council Tax Band: G EPC Rating: D

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LANDLORDS NEED TO PREPARE FOR RENTERS REFORM BILL

New legislation could be the last straw for many private landlords, according to a leading expert.

The Renters Reform Bill has been labelled by the Government as the biggest shake up of the private rental sector (PRS) in 30 years.

As part of the new rules, social housing standards will be extended to private rentals.

Key points from the bill are:

- Intentions to abolish 'no-fault' Section 21 evictions.
- A proposed shift to periodic tenancies.
- Rent increases to be limited to one per year.
- New Ombudsman system that all landlords must join.
- Proposed ban on renting to families with children.
- Tenants to have the right to request a pet within the property.
- Tenants can 'passport' deposits between properties.
- A new property portal to help everyone understand their responsibilities.

Matt Hoy is Director of Estate Agency at leading commercial and residential property

experts Bradley Hall.

He said: "Although on the surface there doesn't appear to be anything too scary in the new legislation, for many landlords this could be the regulatory straw to break the camel's back on PRS investments.

"This legislation was intended to improve conditions for renters but it may well exacerbate the already supply-scarce rental market and further drive-up rents. Is that fair for tenants?"

However, Matt believes that those using agents such as Bradley Hall will be well placed to deal with the new changes.

"With the backing of our expert agency & property management teams I'd hope our clients will barely notice these changes," added Matt.

"We're also happy to help any landlords disposing of tenanted properties. We have applicants waiting."

The report also highlighted that fewer than one

in five landlords have managed tenancies.

Laura Walker, Head of Property Management at Bradley Hall, said: "The announcement of the Reform Bill should be something that all Private Landlords consider for the management of their properties. A number of landlords will continue with poor practice and will have no regard to legislation in place, but it is only a matter of time before this catches up with them. There is more and more pressure on landlords to meet minimum criteria to regulate the system and ultimately penalties will be introduced where the standards are not upheld.

"Landlords need to ensure that where they are not experienced or competent, they seek appropriate advice from professionals, in the same way they would see a doctor about their health. There is more and more red tape appearing around the Rented Sector with limits on deposits, healthy and safety legislation and processes to follow for evictions.

"Experienced agents deal with lettings and tenants day in, day out and are best placed to help landlords navigate this space.

"I would recommend that any landlord who isn't using an agent for management services gets in touch for a chat about what benefits it could have for them."

For more information on Bradley Hall, visit: www.bradleyhall.co.uk



Janet Hopkinson

IT'S ALL ABOUT EVENTS

Asked what he thought would define his premiership, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan famously replied, "Events, dear boy, events".

It is much the same with the property market. Events largely control turnover and turnover affects prices - up or down.

There are major events like world wars and global pandemics and inconvenient events like fuel and food shortages, interest rate hikes and cost of living rises. But it might surprise you to learn that the events which so often drive the property market are not global or even national: they are personal. These events are births, deaths, beginning cohabitation or ending cohabitation, stage of life changes, ambition, career success and career failure. These everyday events create a need or desire to move on or move in.

These personal events will always be with us no matter what is going on in the world or which government is in power. When a government — any government — dabbles in the property market, the result is usually a massive hangover once the policy party is over.

No, the market is best left to home buyers and sellers. Right now we seem to be in a state of zero gravity. We are floating between price rises and price drops, as the lack of property for sale is counteracted by the rising cost of living, garnished with some pretty momentous global news.

Put it this way; if you wait for global events to stabilise, you will wait a long time. It's better to let your life events direct you. That way everyone knows where they are.

Janet Hopkinson, Operations Director at Sanderson Young

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HOW COULD IT BE OTHERWISE?

A friend of mine translates German tourism websites into English. The task goes beyond simple translation. A German may say “The view of the mountain is excellent”. We Brits are more nuanced and may say “The mountain, in the sunset is sublime”.

Translating the website of a camping site in the Black Mountains, my friend wrote “The shower block and toilets are spotless”. The client came back with “But how could it be otherwise?” The Germans simply could not understand how such a basic given should need to be mentioned.

I was reminded of my friend when reading through the Rental Reform White Paper. “How could it be otherwise?”

The main points in the paper should already be adopted by all reputable letting agents. Sadly, a minority of agents and landlords do not agree, hence the need for much overdue legislation. “Section 21 ‘No Fault’ evictions are to be abolished”. Fine by us since we have never attended court using this route for eviction.

“Apply the Decent Homes Standard to the private rental sector”. If a landlords business model is predicated on letting sub-standard property, I suggest they are in the wrong business.

“Introduce a new Property Portal to help landlords understand their obligations”. This is a fair one. Letting agents have systems and qualified staffs to do this. Smaller landlords do not and easy access to help them understand legislation should be warmly received.



Damiano Rea

“Introduce a housing Ombudsman covering all private rental sector landlords and providing redress for tenants”. Long overdue and most welcome.

The media was quick to find landlords railing against over regulation and threatening to sell their properties leading to a shortage of rental accommodation. Nonsense. Many of these landlords jumped on the Buy-to-Let bandwagon in the days when Margaret Thatcher stalked the earth. Most have done very nicely out of their investment.

But the world has moved on. The days when a landlord might regard his portfolio as a cash cow and tenants as mild irritants who could be removed with a ‘Section 21’ notice if they dared complain are behind us.

Along with lettings practice, the terminology has changed. “Landlord” and “Tenant” conjures up a Lord and a supplicant. “Owner” and “Occupant” puts the relationship on a more even keel and implies partnership rather than hierarchical structure.


Partnership is key to a better, long-term relationship. The property owner seeks a reasonable return on their investment. The

occupant seeks secure tenure in a nice home. So, while I welcome legislation to protect occupants’ rights, I cannot help but feel, if everyone in the private rental sector had just applied a little common sense, we would not need the legislation. Happy owners and happy occupiers should not need the law to reach agreement.

On that note, Heaton Property has just registered our first customer to use every one of our services. She first came to us as a tenant through our Pro-Share Plus scheme. Then bought a property in Pandongate House where we are block managers. When work forced a move, our lettings and property management service was utilised. Now, having bought her ‘forever’ home she is selling the property through our sales division. Happy customers make for return business. How could it be otherwise?

www.heatonproperty.com
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Heaton Property is an award winning full-service estate agency from the North East set up in 2005. In September 2021 the company won gold in the 2021/2022 Best Estate Agent Guide.



Duncan G Young

WHAT IS MY HOME WORTH?

Our beautiful region continues to be a highly attractive option for those looking to improve their quality of life and, for many individuals able to work from home, the opportunity of living in Northumberland and then commuting to London or Manchester is very appealing.

As we are in the midst of the traditionally busy summer period, with considerably higher numbers of people looking to purchase/rent a home than we have available, it is fair to reflect that a number of vendors and landlords have asked, "What is the true value of my property?"

We can only advise on factual evidence and those facts are very variant. The real truth is that the value of your home is worth what somebody is prepared to pay for it. That demand has significantly

increased in recent times and we have had many examples throughout the popular Newcastle suburbs, and along the North East coastline, of buyers paying as much as 30% more than the asking price! With such excessive demand pushing prices to levels they have never reached before, we believe our job to our client is to ensure the very best marketing techniques are used and that their home is presented at its most impressive level.

We have recently launched the newest version of our website, which has even more clever technology behind the scenes and completely replaced our hardware and software systems which makes us much more effective and efficient.

In the last six months we have invested in social media, appointing our own Social Media Manager, supported by a new consultant joining us shortly, which we see as essential to the support of our sales and lettings teams. For Sanderson Young these platforms are real and supported by firm followers of our company; we have not, as some companies have, bought "Followers" or "Likes," but have organically grown our following through our posts, which remain interesting, relevant, and factually accurate.

The company will continue to grow in strength, and we have further invested by increasing our number of employees by five people in the last 12 months. This is a clear indication of the confidence that we have that the housing market will continue to be strong.

Duncan G Young, Chairman, Sanderson Young
duncan.young@sandersonyoung.co.uk

HOW DESIGN CAN IMPACT THE SUCCESS OF YOUR HOSPITALITY VENUE

Whether you own a bar, shop, hotel or restaurant, hospitality venues are no longer solely about what they serve.

For most, the atmosphere of the space is what will entice them to your venue, which is why clever interior design is crucial to a successful hospitality business, says Bethany Walker, head of interior design at Styled.

Think of your favourite bar. What sets it apart? Chances are, it sells broadly the same range of wines and spirits as any other, but for some reason, it's secured your top spot.

The same goes for cafes, restaurants and boutique hotels, all of which will have that extra added something that appeals – the ambience. And what creates that ambience? The interior design.

So how can you make your interior design work for your venue, and ensure your guests keep coming back for more?

Know your audience

Something that is true for any business but is often forgotten - if you want to attract a certain type of customer, you need to identify this customer and appeal to their lifestyle and aspirations.

What are they looking for in a venue? If your target market is a younger audience, the chances are they will be looking for style just as much as substance. Social media-friendly elements such as neon lighting, quirky artwork and plush furniture are a must – creating user-generated content that is perfect for sharing across Instagram and do a large amount of your advertising for you.

And don't forget about the smallest rooms: restrooms and reception areas can be the perfect spot for your audience to snap some pictures if the décor is right, so make sure yours are something to shout about.

On the other hand, if you're the owner of a café looking to target families, you will have different priorities when it comes to your interior design. Space, for one is key. Offering ample seating that is both comfortable and practical for larger groups is key. Think about where they can store



buggies or additional bags without overcrowding or blocking the space.

Start with your audience and work outward from here, keeping them at the forefront of any design decisions throughout.

Trend-setting

As appealing as it may be to want to constantly keep up with the latest trends, the reality is that it is simply not cost-effective in the long run.

The solution to this is to pick a style to suit you and your target audience, rather than looking to nail the latest trend. Opting for a more timeless design is always best, however you can still add in some on-trend pieces through elements that tie in with your brand, ensuring it won't feel out of place when new trends come and go. It can also help you stand out from your competitors in a crowded market.

Invest in those all-important key features such as your furniture, fixtures and fittings, and update your accessories periodically. This way, you can keep up with the trends while keeping your overheads low.

Brand identity

Brand identity is huge when it comes to standing out from the crowd, and there

are some large brands out there within the hospitality industry who do this all too well, such as The Ivy Brasserie, Black Sheep, Alchemist and Botanist.

One of the key components of their huge success is their approach to interior design; each venue, no matter the exterior or the location, follows a continued style and theme inside, allowing their customers to instantly recognise and resonate with the space and brand.

There is a lot to be said for familiarity and a key part of these chains' appeal is offering this in abundance to guests. Customers know exactly what they're getting before they even enter the space.

Few hospitality venues work on such a scale, but if you have more than one venue, it's always a good idea to continue your interior design theme throughout each of your premises, to capitalise on consumers' love of the familiar and strengthen your brand awareness.

If you'd like to inject some style into your hospitality venue, we've got plenty of ideas! Visit www.styledinteriordesign.co.uk for more information.



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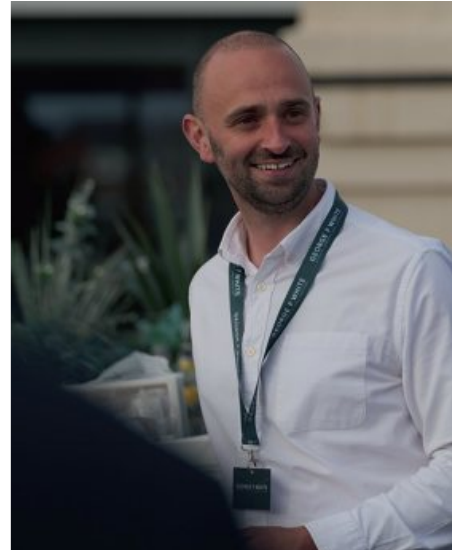


EXPANSION CELEBRATIONS

Recently George F. White held an event at ABOVE Rooftop Bar in Newcastle to celebrate their merger with Johnson Tucker LLP.

Richard Garland, Partner, said: "We are delighted to welcome Johnson Tucker into the George F. White family. The expansion of the team through the merger brings together a wealth of experience and commercial specialisms and allows us to service all our clients' commercial property needs through one trusted partner."







TO MARKET, TO MARKET

Michael Blake, Director with youngsRPS, was delighted to be invited to the recent launch of 'The Market Place' in Morpeth town centre by owner Imogen Roth.

The Market Place, occupying the former Boots Pharmacy shop on Market Place West, offers a zero waste refillery and café right in the heart of the town. The unit, which had been unoccupied since Boots left the premises, proved to be the perfect spot for Imogen's expanding business, not only in location but also in name, reflecting the ethos of the business.

Imogen has been busy working behind the scenes on this project for some time and

explains, "This has been in the planning since autumn last year as I've had my eye on this unit for quite some time and I'm looking forward to bringing a prime location back into use and seeing the reaction of our regulars and new customers".

Michael, who is based in the youngsRPS Grey Street offices in Newcastle, but lives locally to Morpeth, marketed the shop on behalf of the owner and comments, "Imogen has really brought this part of Morpeth Market Place back to life. Her proven business model has already been a great asset to the town, but was often missed by customers who struggled to find them when located further up Newgate Street. This new location will drive passing trade and increase footfall to this part of Morpeth. Imogen's contractors have executed a fabulous fit out of the store, reflecting the stylish yet minimalist feel of the brand. As a company, youngsRPS were thrilled to play our part in bringing this to fruition for Imogen.

"Michael further comments that there was a lot of interest in the property. The owners, however, who have lived near Morpeth for many years, were keen to see the property relet as quickly as possible, but wanted to see an



Michael Blake with
Imogen Roth

interesting use and a high quality fit out, that would add to the retail offer of the town, which has improved markedly over the last decade, with a number of commercial developments, particularly the Sanderson Arcade, which has cemented the town's position as one of the strongest market towns in the region".

The youngsRPS Commercial team, based in Newcastle, operates nationally offering the very best service to valued clients. youngsRPS cover all areas relating to commercial property including property management, sales and lettings, development, investment, valuations, rent reviews and lease renewals."

To learn more about youngsRPS Commercial Team visit www.youngsrps.com and to follow Imogen's progress you can follow @themarketplacemorpeth on Facebook and Instagram.





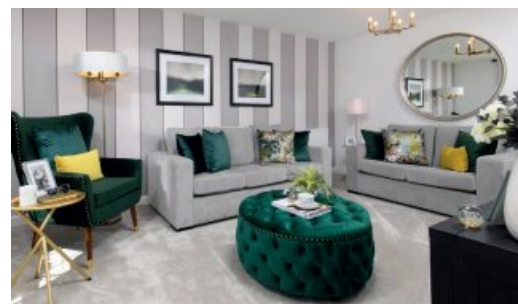
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MANAGING A REPUTATIONAL CRISIS

MHW PR was recently engaged to undertake two separate projects of work around crisis management and business continuity – for companies in the healthcare and the education sectors.

One of these hit the regional and national media but MHW's client was prepared; and the other, so far, has been managed through

discreet stakeholder communication.

Wayne Halton, director of Newcastle-based MHW, explained: "Both projects were set in hugely different sectors and were quite unique in nature. But, as with many things, there is a process to follow and adjust according to circumstances."

He outlines several 'golden rules' to follow – a pick and mix to choose from:

- **Have a plan:** keep it up to date
- **Act quickly:** tell it first, set the agenda
- **Communicate:** regularly and truthfully
- **Stakeholder map:** understand your audiences
- **Teamwork:** identify and prepare a task group
- **Channels:** be clear about best ways to communicate
- **Care:** be human and empathise; apologise
- **Monitor and evaluate**
- **Prepare for next time**

Wayne Halton added: "The best companies and organisations prepare for the worst. It's a valuable insurance policy. Nobody wants to be caught on the back foot and constantly chasing a bad story."



ALPHAGRAPHS IS TOP OF THE CLASS FOLLOWING ACQUISITION

A Teesside-based print and marketing company has recorded a promising 12 months after the acquisition of a former client.

Stockton-based AlphaGraphics North East (AGNE) took over one of its key clients, Class Fundraising, last summer. Class Fundraising provides personalised Christmas cards, gift tags, wrapping paper, mugs, coasters and tea towels to schools nationally as well as a huge range of products and services throughout the rest of the year.

Since then, the AGNE team has grown to nearly 80, with eight new members of staff taken on over the past few months, in both office and factory roles.

New recruits include an automotive account director, account manager, printers and finishers working across both AGNE and Class Fundraising.

AGNE managing director, Andrew Dalton, said: "These new appointments will enable us to expand further and ensure that we can better manage some of the new contracts we have taken on in recent months. It also gives us scope to take on more contracted business moving forward."

"We've recently expanded the mezzanine floor in our Stockton base, as we wanted to relocate our Class Fundraising services into the current AGNE site. We have been planning the move for some time and it's great to now have almost everything in one place."

"This expansion will also enable us to add more new roles to the business, such as project management and new product development."

RADIO NORTHUMBERLAND GIVES A YEAR'S SUPPLY OF CHEESE AND CRACKERS



Community radio station, Radio Northumberland are celebrating the popularity of one of its zaniest shows as it reached a broadcasting milestone.

Presenter Nev Johnson's "Cheese and Crackers" has been on the air for a year and it's proving to be one of the stations most listened to shows. The show covers all styles of music and years and features songs that may be classed as "cheesy" as well as classic pop and rock which are classed as "crackers."

Presenter Nev said: "I love finding tracks that make people, smile, groan, or cheer. It's a lot of fun to do and as we are an internet-based station, I get requests from all over the world."

The Bedlington based station is manned entirely by volunteers and relies on sponsorship and donations to keep it running. With listeners all over the world, the station has a growing popularity and its shows have gained national acclaim from fans of the various musical genres it serves including New Wave, 80's Country and Heavy Metal.

The station would like to hear from anyone wishing to volunteer their services in a variety of roles from presenting to marketing and behind the scenes technical assistance.

www.radionorthumberland.com



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Sharon Starkey

MARKETING AND MEDIA MATTERS

In the latest of these popular series of features we talk to...

SHARON STARKEY

Managing Director, Resolution.

Did you always envisage a career in the Media industry?

Growing up, I wasn't certain what I wanted to be when I was older. I was aware of my love of language and always had a strong desire to problem solve, as well as a respect for great design and clear communication. Back then, I wish someone had made me aware of the opportunities available in this sector. As an organisation, we think it is important to work with education providers to talk to students about our roles so they are aware of the considerable opportunity that lies within the creative sector.

What has been your career path so far?

I have spent my career working in various marketing roles both in-house and agency for small and multi-national organisations. I think it's important to choose carefully between B2B and B2C as well as considering in-house or agency as they are very different roles; there is a risk of thinking the sector isn't for you if you get it wrong. My work has taken me all over the world to deliver these services, but I do love being in the north. At Resolution we are proud of our Teesside location, there is something great about this region, its people and their innovative nature.

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

I love marketing, it never fails to amaze me how powerful it is when activity is considered, aligns with company objectives and is both consistent and measured, but I never had a desire to be a business owner. I chose to create Resolution as a means to allow me to focus on more of the work that I loved; it was never in my thinking that I would create a business that employed a team, which of course has changed my role significantly. I don't consider myself an entrepreneur and I am very aware that I am learning as the business grows. For a creative, tackling business elements such as accounting and legal can be tough. We've overcome this by doing exactly what we suggest our clients do with their marketing and have sourced experts to handle the elements that we don't have in-house capability for. I feel incredibly fortunate to be surrounded by suppliers who look after our best interests so we can concentrate on doing the same for our clients.

Who do you most respect in your industry?

There simply aren't enough column inches to answer this. I have worked with so many great people, the creative industry is highly collaborative and filled with inspirational characters. I still encounter opinion that our sector is a bit fluffy and not that important, however clear messaging and communication is critical for a business and I congratulate anyone who heads off to forge a career in an industry brimming over with talent and imagination. It is important that we showcase these people to create role models for the next generation to aspire to.



Which fictional media character can you most relate to?

If you have watched West Wing you will be familiar with CJ Cregg, White House press secretary. She is working in a fast-paced role and has to absorb information quickly before relaying it whilst reducing any potential negative fallout. She is usually in possession of high-level information and must hold the attention of the audience. She is empathetic and has an ability to remove emotion and apply logic in the toughest of situations. It is a delicate role and she is a master at it. I can relate to some of the issues she faces, albeit mine are not a matter of national security! I would like to think, like her, I am able to stand back and observe a situation before making informed decisions.

How did you adapt your business during the coronavirus crisis and support clients?

We are in the business of communication, so we did exactly that. Honest phone calls with our clients to understand the specific challenges they were facing followed by campaigns to tackle them. Nearly all of our clients had an updated message to share and it was all hands on deck as we adapted every single comms plan to make sure our clients' brand profile reflected the ever-changing landscape. We are proud of the relationships we have with our clients and it was really positive to see everyone pull together in what was an extremely difficult time for businesses.

What is your greatest strength?

I am a geek and will ask more questions than necessary to understand the subject. We use this information to risk assess everything. Our business is extremely efficient at considering every possible outcome and preparing for it. We aren't afraid to change our plans, if a potential future problem is foreseen, we will quickly adapt, or even scrap an idea and start again. Our campaign ideas are based around strategy and are rarely stand-alone pieces. Our ideas have been tested way before we start to implement them for a client.

What is your biggest weakness?

I can usually see how a communication method can solve a problem and want to help even when there isn't necessarily the budget required. I'm a strong believer that if a job is worth doing, it's worth doing well and, like most agencies, we are guilty of overservicing our clients. This can see me working long hours; I start the day early and regularly go to the office over the weekend in order to add value and grab the extra time.

What has been your proudest achievement?

I am extremely proud of the team we have curated at Resolution. Our culture is motivating and connected, and the team is made up of experts who want to make a difference. Everyone has something to offer and pulls in the same direction to achieve results for the client. We are confident in our abilities and work hard to get results. We have created something special here, which I don't take for granted. Our agency is transparent, we don't hold clients to lengthy contracts, we don't mark-up supplier costs and if there is a better option for our client, we'll tell them.

What are your future career aspirations?

I want to do more of the same for our clients and support those who want a career in the sector whilst profiling how wonderful a place the north is to do business. I try to spend as much of my time as possible supporting organisations who are upskilling our future creatives. I get involved with the work carried out by the team at Spark Tees Valley who are aligning industry and education to showcase the world of work to primary school

children. We also deliver an annual competition to A-level students at Queen Elizabeth's College in Darlington which affords them exposure as to how we tackle a brief. The winners come into our agency for a day to work on a live campaign. In addition to this I am a part time lecturer at Teesside University and a director of Tees Valley Business Club where the board are dedicated to sharing knowledge to support regional business growth.

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

The industry naturally moves very quickly, being delivered by creatives. I look back at the job I was doing more than 20 years ago, and it bears little resemblance to the way our account executives operate. Technology has changed the landscape and allowed us to be much more productive and better at measuring the effectiveness of our activity. I think technology will continue to positively influence our daily operations but believe the power of creative minds getting together and developing ideas will always be the constant in our industry. As clients demand more and the sector becomes increasingly transparent, services will be procured based on ability, competence and integrity. I hope that our industry will become much more comfortable collaborating with others that may previously have been considered competitors.

How do you like to unwind?

I like to read. It was studying George Orwell's *1984* that made me realise the power of language. It was his concept Newspeak, that removed and reduced words in order to control thought, that made me realise an extensive vocabulary would make me free. As well as the news which I keep up to date with, I like to read classic literature and we have created quite a library in the office containing all the books I would love to have the time to read. I don't read as much as I would like but I always have a book in my bag and use car journeys to listen to audio books. At the moment, I am reading *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D Salinger and listening to *The Chimp Paradox* by Professor Steve Peters.

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Make your marketing work harder



LEADING NORTH EAST AGENCY RE-BRANDS WITH ORIGINAL LINE-UP TO CREATE NEW BREED OF MARKETING CONSULTANCY

The co-founders of award-winning Newcastle-based creative agency, Unwritten, have re-grouped to transform the company's offer and re-launch as a team of strategic marketing consultants.

This dramatic pivot recognises the need for dynamic marketing strategies that respond to changing market environments, where companies need to concentrate their limited resources, more than ever, on the greatest opportunities in order to increase sales and achieve a long term competitive advantage.

Offering the highest level of expertise on an interim, and therefore highly cost-effective, basis, this bold shift in direction has already secured a number of ambitious new clients looking to reevaluate their marketing efforts in order to drive growth.

Lisa Eaton, Co-founder and MD, Unwritten, said: "Given the current climate and the changes we've all seen and felt over the last few years, many businesses have had to reconsider what success looks like for them. With so much business transformation taking place, the need for powerful and dynamic marketing strategies has never been greater, but investing in ongoing, full time strategic talent can be costly - especially when the requirement for such high level activities might be time-limited.

"However, without a comprehensive and informed marketing strategy, marcomms activity risks being low-impact, costly and impossible to measure. In just twelve weeks we will deliver a bespoke strategy that's wholly aligned with our client's business objectives, ensuring their marketing efforts are focused and effective."

The move benefits from the expertise of Unwritten's original line-up, as co-founder Amy Mooney reunites with Lisa to focus exclusively on strategy development, establishing Unwritten as a new breed of consultancy.

While campaign delivery and creative content are no longer on the Unwritten menu, this new approach draws on the team's significant



strategic development skills and empowers clients to build their reputation, increase qualified leads and drive profitable growth.

Amy Mooney, Co-founder and Director of Strategy, said: "Stepping away from Unwritten in 2019 to develop my family business was a big move, but one packed full of invaluable experiences. Now that I've completed my own company's strategic groundwork, I am in the fortunate position of being able to hand over day-to-day marketing operations to a prepared and talented marketing team. This way of working lets me narrow my focus toward high value tasks and longer term growth projects - which also happens to be one of the client outcomes within Unwritten's strategic framework.

As consultants, Unwritten provide an external, unbiased viewpoint, placing fresh eyes on an organisation's products, services and market position, and exploring buyer behaviours and insights. The end result for every client will be a fully-fledged marketing strategy that's ready for immediate implementation by an in-house team or partner agency.

For further information about Unwritten, its team and its services, visit www.unwrittengroup.com



FRISK RADIO HAS LAUNCHED ON DAB IN NEWCASTLE & GATESHEAD

Promising North East dance station - Frisk Radio - has become one of the first commercial radio stations to broadcast across two of the UK's

permanent small-scale "SS-DAB" multiplexes.

After an initial launch on MuxOne's "Tynemouth & South Shields" multiplex, Frisk have extended their coverage to the urban areas of Newcastle and Gateshead by taking carriage on the multiplex of the same name, operated by Tyneside Community Digital.

In the process, the station has dramatically increased their TSA from 350,000 to 750,000 adults, while still allowing advertisers to target listeners in each transmission area separately.

Owners Stuart Landreth and Michael Winter are delighted with the developments: "Our initial launch on the Tynemouth & South Shields multiplex gave us a year or so to find out feet. With the two transmitter areas combined, we now have a fantastic foothold on the entire Tyneside conurbation, and we are now ready to ramp up our marketing efforts across the region.

We're continuing to bring in new listeners, who love our upbeat music format with minimal commercial interruptions." Despite the two multiplexes being owned by two separate entities, the transition is seamless for drivers, with in-car DAB units switching automatically between the two transmitter networks through use of the "alternative frequency" technology which finds the strongest signal. Frisk Radio is also available online at www.friskradio.com and on smart speakers "Play Frisk Radio".

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IN CONVERSATION WITH...

MARC MILLAR

*North Wealth Management, and
Senior Partner Practice of St. James's
Place Wealth Management.*

Here he talks to Highlights
PR's Keith Newman about
his work.

Marc tell us what you do.

I look after my client's finances helping them to plan their futures or put in protections for them, their businesses, and their families.

Why is it important for people to have someone like you, an expert in financial affairs to help them?

Everyone is so busy these days and they all have their own expertise, so someone like me can help them understand their options and explain objectives and goals for putting plans in place for their future.

We see warnings all the time that investments can go up as well as down so how do you minimise that risk?

It's a tough one because the markets are constantly changing. The markets will always react whenever the markets are down creating opportunities for funds and fund managers to buy into certain asset classes. The risk element will never go away but what I do is mitigate as much as I can by studying analysis daily and then trying to spread your investments as far as I can globally. It's my job to do the best I can for my client and it's also my job to know the markets.

Do you have to be wealthy to use a financial adviser?

Nope not all I think that's a myth and I think it's something St James's Place and North Wealth Management have got to overcome.



Marc Millar

People need all kinds of financial advice and assistance from a basic life cover policy up to wealthy business people who are trying to either extract profits from businesses or sell a business.

Have you an ideal client?

I enjoy the business owner side of things just now, just because it's a lot more interesting and there's a lot more to understand and learn. There's also a lot more to get into as far as what their circumstances and their plans are going forward so I quite enjoy that. You can never have an ideal client as everyone's different as we've all got different levels of finance, aims and objectives. No two clients are the same I can guarantee that.

I suppose a lot of your business comes from referrals from other people and trust but it doesn't necessarily mean to say that if you

go to see somebody that you will be able to help them. Is that right?

I can certainly help them, and I can certainly give them pointers even if they never become a client but the whole trust element is just crucial. We all want to be referred to, but I will go the other way and say I could definitely help them. They might not become a client but if they take the time to sit down with myself at no cost and no commitment and they're open to discuss their finances I guarantee I will be able to help in some way shape or form.

How can people get in touch with you?

Best way is by e-mail or mobile number and I'm happy to talk to anyone for free without obligation. I'd love to help.

**Marc Millar is on 07842 628731
Marc.Millar@sjpp.co.uk**

...WHAT'S YOUR USP?...

Keith Newman of Highlights PR
asked some of his RADAR clients
what makes their business unique?



For the last 10 years I've been connecting people from all over the world to the places they love. I pride myself on the unique nature of my British-made, location-themed gifts and design them to highlight iconic landmarks from the places my customers love.

As well as designing creative, stylish, and unique gifts I also source the best British manufacturers to turn my designs into quality items that can be cherished for many years. Sustainability is a crucial part of my choices and I have always enjoyed a five-star customer rating for customer service and the quality of my products.

Corinne Lewis-Ward, Powder Butterfly
www.powderbutterfly.com

Off The Grid Adventures is a unique activity company that delivers a wide range of programmes and interventions for young people and adult client groups. We work with several National Level Funders to create bespoke projects for disadvantaged groups of adults and young people as well as offering activities for mainstream schools, team building groups and family adventures. Activities could include anything from music and art through to specialist wilderness expeditions to Scotland or further afield.

Our skills, knowledge, expertise, and Community Interest Company structure could even help you to achieve fully funded projects that can be delivered in partnership with a range of other organisations. We love different and unusual projects. Get in touch if "Run Of The Mill Stuff" just isn't good enough anymore for you!

Paul Kirkpatrick, www.offthegrid-adventures.co.uk



With our video, live streaming and digital services, our USP is our approach to working with our clients more in person and bringing in new technologies that help the client benefit.

Dan Wilkinson,
www.thedwmedia.co.uk



We've had a vision for over a decade, before this company even existed, to create a community space for our clients to come together, learn effectively and be surrounded by like-minded business owners. In February 2022, that happened when we converted an old pub/hotel into The HUB Conssett. The vibe is electric when an event is taking place and the feedback has been extraordinary.

The space to co-work has allowed people to develop their own networks and be part of the thriving small business community in the North East in a different way.

Nicola Jayne Little,
www.mintbusinessclub.co.uk

Last month our RADAR members appeared on TV News, BBC Radio, Local TV and many magazines and newspapers. To find out more about the benefits of becoming a RADAR member, contact keith@highlightspr.co.uk or call Keith on 07814 397951.

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- Feature in Highlights PR's newsletter
- Exclusive offers on PR, media training and more
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Contact Keith Newman for more details.

Visit him on his floating office

keith@highlightspr.co.uk

07814 397951

www.highlightspr.co.uk





Veronica Swindale

nesma ADDS NEW CIM AND CIPR SUSTAINABILITY QUALIFICATIONS TO THEIR PORTFOLIO

Back in November 2021, I interviewed Dr Helen Goworek, Associate Professor in Marketing and Equality Diversity and Inclusion Lead for Durham University Business School.

We discussed the need for individuals and organisations to look at their own activities in relation to sustainability and take responsibility ahead of any legislation coming. We are now both certified Carbon Literate following training from Durham University and the Carbon Literacy Trust.

Meanwhile, not surprisingly, both the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) and the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) have also recognised the urgency of responsible sustainability. They have each crafted new diplomas to give us the education and tools to address this.

When thinking about changes to how we do things, it's essential to understand that individual and collective actions impact the whole planet, not just where we live. Let's face it; we have experienced some relatively severe weather conditions in the UK this summer with very high temperatures, as well as floods and wildfires, which are replicated around the world. This could be a result of our own activities in the UK and international activities in the USA, Argentina, and Australia, to name a few.

The fact is that the science is showing that we humans are responsible – and, perhaps more importantly, we can also mitigate or even reverse the process if we do the right things in the right places at the right time – but this must be now not later. We talk about 'future generations', but this must be our generation. We talk about the sustainability agenda in boardrooms, but it's now time for action with sustainability plans in place and their implementation a priority.

Diploma in Sustainable Marketing Chartered Institute of Marketing

BA Hons Level | Completed as a stand-alone CIM award or a full qualification

Perfect for those who want to deepen their knowledge around how marketing and its associated activities can support the sustainability challenges organisations face.

A CIM Module can be completed within 3 - 6 months, and a full CIM Qualification within 12 months.

The CIM Diploma in Sustainability Marketing (BA Hons level) addresses the need for us to understand what's going on regarding climate change around the world. It explores what the key drivers are and how we can put marketing strategies together to ensure our organisations can do as much as they can to reduce the carbon footprint and, by doing so, reduce the escalating global temperatures. We have the capability to reduce our personal carbon footprints by half, and it is understanding how we do that and with whom that is explored on the programme. The output is a plan of action for sustainability, supporting the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals. (sdgs.un.org). The qualification will undoubtedly appeal to those concerned with sustainability and keen to drive change within their organisation, whether you are in a marketing role or otherwise.

Specialist Diploma - Sustainability Communications

Chartered Institute of Public Relations

Master's Level | Completed as a full qualification

Ideal for communications professionals who wish to develop their expertise in how sustainability can be integrated into strategic public relations planning and management.

This qualification can be completed in around 3 - 6 months.

The CIPR's Specialist Diploma - Sustainability Communications (Master's Level) starts by understanding climate change, the need for sustainability and how to develop successful communications with all the stakeholders involved. (One key stakeholder, of course, is The Natural World). It is aimed at senior PR professionals who wish to advance a corporate sustainability communications strategy and develop strategic communications leadership skills. The output of this diploma is a clear strategic communications strategy around sustainability.

Both diplomas explore the need to understand the concept of greenwashing and the need to adhere to the Green Claims Code. Examples of good and bad practices are used throughout the programme.

nesma is excited and proud to have secured accreditation to deliver these diplomas to the market. The team is now busy pulling together some fascinating teaching materials to share with you. Both courses will be available from September for either online or face-to-face teaching. Plus, you can ask us about Carbon Literacy Training in-house for your team.

In a recent report quoted by Claire Kemsley, MD of Hays Recruitment, "it's great to learn that a large number of companies are seeing sustainability as an imperative and that increasingly employees will move to a more sustainable company".

So, whether your organisation is at the start of its sustainability journey or already implementing sustainable policies and responses through the marketing function, we look forward to helping you gain those qualifications to help shape your CV, your organisation and, ideally, our planet. As we know, there is no Planet B.

Find out more at www.nesma.co.uk

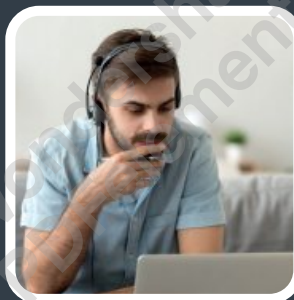
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ELAINE STROUD

CEO of The Entrepreneurs' Forum

How did you get into business?

I joined PwC as a new graduate and trained as a chartered accountant in London. Once qualified I took advantage of PwC's global network and seconded to their Auckland office for '2 years' which turned into 10 fantastic years. I joined the Entrepreneurs' Forum on my return to the UK as it seemed like a great place to build a network in the North East. I've loved every minute and took to the helm as CEO in 2021.

Who or what inspires you?

I've been lucky to meet and hear from some amazing individuals who have spoken at Entrepreneurs' Forum events. I'm inspired by people who take the initiative to get things done whilst making sure they are always doing what's right. Sir John Timpson stands out for me as someone who's grown a tremendously successful business that creates genuine opportunities for the disadvantaged. Even more impressive was that he and his wife had fostered over 90 children at the same time as building the business. Recently we had happiness guru, Danny Bent, speak at our conference. I was inspired by his positive can-do attitude to life which gave me a boost of confidence to push myself just a little bit more and enjoy the journey life takes me on.

What advice would you give to anyone interested in starting their own business?

Talk to potential customers to validate your idea and confirm there is a market for it at a price that you're willing and able to sell for. Don't be afraid to share your idea as you'll learn so much from talking it through with others. It's also important that you understand your cash flow as the biggest risk for a start-up is running out of cash.

What is your favourite part of your job?

Seeing our entrepreneurial members take inspiration from the events that we curate. I love hearing that a chance meeting between members at one of our events has led to a new venture taking off.

What has been your most memorable moment to date relating to your business journey?

The Forum is celebrating its 20th Anniversary and as part of this, I was keen to set ourselves a fundraising mission to raise £20,000 for charity to mark the occasion. We held a gala dinner in June and earlier this month I led a sponsored hike



around Kielder reservoir. So far, we've raised nearly £40,000 for cancer research and the Prince's Trust which makes me unbelievably proud.

What are your favourite magazines?

220 Triathlon is my go-to magazine of choice.

What does the future hold for Elaine Stroud?

The Entrepreneurs' Forum is 20 years old now and my challenge is to keep the Forum relevant for the next generation of entrepreneurs. I'd love to put the North East on the map as the hub of entrepreneurship in the UK and beyond.

www.entrepreneursforum.net
www.uniquemagazines.co.uk

“

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CHADWICK CELEBRATION AWARDS

Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust (BCCET) recently hosted its very first annual staff awards event.

One of the Trust's key values is Celebration and the awards provided an opportunity to showcase the valuable and inspiring contributions staff are making across the organisation to achieve the overall mission: Better Schools, Better Communities, Better Futures in Christ.

The celebratory evening at Ramside Hall featured 15 award categories, including teacher of the year, staff member of the year and mentor of the year.

Brendan Tapping, CEO, BCCET, said: "It's a great privilege to honour the outstanding employees we have and recognise the vital role they play in making a difference to people's lives on a daily basis.

"We have so many talented and dedicated colleagues across the organisation, both in our schools and the Trust. These awards celebrate them, their hard work, their passion for education and just how motivated they are to meet the needs of all our children."

The full list of the award winners are as follows:

1. **Mentor of the Year Award:** Angela Smith, St Aidan's Catholic Academy, Sunderland
2. **New Teacher of the Year Award:** Lee Bowdler, Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Primary School, Peterlee

3. **Staff Member of the Year (Classroom):** Susan Miller, St Bede's Catholic Primary School, South Shields
4. **Staff Member of the Year (Support):** Yvonne Stones, St Bede's Catholic School & Byron Sixth Form College, Peterlee
5. **Gospel Values Award:** Andrew Young, St Joseph's Catholic Academy, Hebburn
6. **SCITT/Teach First Trainee of the Year Award:** Jenni Scott, St Wilfrid's RC College, South Shields
7. **Partnership & Engagement Award:** Anna Armstrong & Community Partners, St Aidan's Catholic Academy, Sunderland
8. **Governance Award:** Cathy Emmerson, St Aidan's Catholic Academy, Sunderland
9. **Leadership & Management Award (Education):** Glenn Sanderson, St Aidan's Catholic Academy, Sunderland
10. **Leadership & Management Award (Support/Central):** Rob Bullock, S. Anthony's Girls Catholic Academy, Sunderland
11. **Teacher of the Year Award (secondary):** Rob Lannon, St Aidan's Catholic Academy, Sunderland
12. **Teacher of the Year Award (primary):** Nicole Fawcett, St Aloysius Primary Federation
13. **Achievement Award:** Gill Nixon, St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School, Sunderland
14. **Inspirational Staff Award (nominated by pupils):** Suzanne Blackburn, St Matthew's Catholic Primary School, Jarrow
15. **Team of the Year:** Catering - Chadwick's Kitchen







Year 7 Racing car prototypes

INSTILLING A LIFETIME OF CURIOSITY AT RGS

By Geoffrey Stanford, Headmaster, Newcastle Royal Grammar School

Some years ago, I remember being asked by my then four-year-old boy, how many banks there were in Germany and what the Japanese word for hospital was. When I asked why he wanted to know, his response was “because I don’t know”.

Shortly after, he asked my wife why there was a gap between a plane and its vapour trail and what colour molecules were. Educationalists are challenged with how to sustain this intellectual curiosity that young people instinctively show, by nurturing and inspiring a genuine love for learning, as opposed to the narrow pursuit of academic results.

Like many schools the RGS in Newcastle has, for a number of years, offered the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) as a taught course, now taken by well over half our Sixth Form. The EPQ provides an opportunity to carry out a detailed enquiry on their chosen topic; unlike GCSE or A Level courses with set specifications. In recent years, I have had pupils in my class research a whole host of subjects including: the costs and benefits of panda conservation; the impact of the digital age on live theatre; the mental health benefits of owning a pet; the medical benefits of wearable heart rate monitors; and how to clear up the great Pacific garbage patch.

The output of this research is communicated

through a university style 4,000-word essay, complete with references, source evaluation and bibliography. Along the way they are assessed on how they document and record their plan and the process they have followed before presenting their findings and conclusions to an audience.

Typically, students encounter various challenges over the course of their project: finding a sufficiently wide range of reliable academic sources; the collection and analysis of robust data to use as evidence; evaluating the relative strengths of the different arguments to reach a conclusion; all while adapting to long term project management.

The skills that pupils develop, along with the independence and resilience needed to complete the project, will serve them well through university and beyond into the many and varied careers that they will pursue.

Many subjects at school include some opportunity for research projects. However, the clear benefits of enquiry-based learning, have

led us to create the role of Head of Projects with the intention of incorporating elements of this approach throughout the school. For example, our Year 7 recently spent a whole week in small groups designing, building and testing rocket cars before presenting their results.

Meanwhile, our Year 8 students each carried out an extended project around their choice of one of the UN sustainable development goals and our Year 9 researched, wrote up and presented a report on a topic of their choice from a number of big questions across the sciences and humanities. While younger pupils benefit from some structure and scaffolding in how they approach these open-ended tasks, our intention was to show pupils that they can be self-sufficient and it was hugely impressive to see how they rose to the challenge, demonstrating real intellectual curiosity.

When asked for feedback, one student wrote: “I have found that I am a good thinker and designer, and that, when I put my mind to something, I can do anything”.

With this in mind, I recently encouraged our Upper Sixth leavers always to keep hold of their willingness to learn and the curiosity to ask why things are as they are, where necessary challenging the status quo. I noted that it is often easier just to accept things as they are but, with the benefit of the education that they have had, I hope that they will always think for themselves.

Incidentally, in case anyone was wondering, after consulting a number of sources, I understand that a molecule is smaller than the wavelength of light.

www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk



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*...This is a significant
and exciting
development for
Dame Allan's...*

DAME ALLAN'S SCHOOLS - BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

Dame Allan's Schools in Newcastle is recognised as one of the top performing independent schools in the North East. Their pupils consistently produce outstanding results across the age ranges. The Schools also win regular praise for their high standard of pastoral care.



Artist Impression of
External View

All of which suggests that, because things are going so well, it would be tempting to leave everything as it is.

However, Dame Allan's doesn't work like that. They continually strive to see what can be done to improve educational standards and provide additional and better facilities for their pupils and staff.

Anyone who has recently driven past the Dame Allan's site in Fenham will have spotted that there's a large amount of building work going on.

£8 million worth of building work to be precise.

A new two-storey block of classrooms and open areas is nearing completion. There's also extensive refurbishment going on in other areas of the campus.

Principal of Dame Allan's Schools, Will Scott, said: "This is a significant and exciting development for Dame Allan's which will provide much-needed space for our pupils as well as ensuring they're learning in the very best environment."

Dame Allan's consists of four different schools and are unique in the region as the only school following the pioneering Diamond Structure of education which combines single-sex education within a co-educational setting. The youngest pupils join a co-educational Nursery and Junior School before moving into single-sex Boys' and Girls' Schools between the ages of 11 and 16. Finally, they learn together in the co-educational Sixth Form.

One problem though has been that certain subjects have been scattered around the Dame Allan's campus. The newly constructed classrooms will resolve that in what is being seen as the next stage in the development of this historic school. It will also ensure that Dame Allan's keeps pace with the ever-changing educational landscape and will future-proof the school for many years to come.

"Construction work in the region of £8m is a sizable sum for any private sector business, but it is very rare for a school to see this size of investment," added Will. "It will ensure that some of our subjects can now be taught under the same roof. Our French, German, Spanish and Latin classes will all take place in the new building. We'll have three new Physics and Science labs, three art rooms, a print room for etching and screen-printing, a dedicated Sixth Form area for Design Technology, and new changing rooms for the gym. Overall there will be 16 new classrooms. Although it will be mainly our senior pupils who study in the new block, we will organise regular visits for our Junior School so that they will integrate easily when moving up to the Senior School. Some have even been shown around the site during the development stages."

It won't be all about formal education though. There will be a gallery area where pupils' artwork can be displayed. Exhibitions will take place. It is also anticipated that the general public will be invited to visit the school to see some of the displayed work.



Artist Impression of Art Atrium



"We might be a school...but we are also an important part of the local and regional community. We want people to see Dame Allan's as something that adds to their community and be a place where they will feel comfortable in visiting."

Dame Allan's is going from strength to strength. Over the past decade, pupil numbers have risen from 900 to over 1,200. The previous major development was the building of the Nursery and Junior School ten years ago. The Reece Technology Centre and drama studio have also been established, but this latest £8 million investment is the biggest move by the school to maintain a successful future. It is a true transformation and sends a strong message that Dame Allan's intends to maintain its high academic and pastoral standards.

For further information about Dame Allan's School, go onto their website www.dameallans.co.uk



IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MEMORIES

By Kieran McLaughlin,
Headteacher, Durham School

England winning the cricket World Cup. Usain Bolt winning his third Olympic gold medal in the 100m. Andy Murray winning Wimbledon. England winning the rugby World Cup in 2003. Virginia Wade winning Wimbledon. England winning the football World Cup in 1966.

Depending on your age and inclination, I am sure you can remember where you were, and how you watched, when one or more of these sporting events happened. Or, closer to home, there are other sporting events which are memorable, such as Jonathan Edwards' Olympic gold medal in 2000 or Newcastle United winning the FA Cup in 1955. Whatever the event, for most of us there is a memory of a sporting event which means a lot to us. But why?

On one level, sport seems entirely pointless. Most games revolve around an arbitrary, and in some cases, arcane set of rules which seem designed to ask competitors to perform ridiculous tasks. Why try to hit a little ball into a hole hundred of yards away with nothing more than a metal stick? Why do grown men and women run up and down a field trying to put a bag of air at one end or the other? It's all patently ludicrous. Aside from health benefits, which can be gained in other ways, why do we bother putting all this effort into pointless activities? And, why do so many people spend so much of their time and money watching sportsmen and women conduct their meaningless tasks?

There are two reasons why sport is so compelling. The first is the sheer exhilaration in raising the capability of the human body to the maximum of its potential. We evolved to perform certain feats in order to survive, but there is a huge pleasure in testing the body to its limit. We want to know what the limits of those powers are. What is the fastest we can run 100 metres; how high could we jump, and how much can a person lift?

The second reason is the theatre and emotion of top level sports. For the athletes, this is as



Kieran McLaughlin

much about mental strength as it is physical capability, and ability to deal with the stresses and strains of match point or the penalty kick can be what marks out the truly great athlete. For the spectators, the vicarious thrill of victory, or the despair of defeat, provide us with an emotional rollercoaster which makes us feel so much more alive. Our everyday lives can pass in a mundane stroll; empathising with those who put themselves in the cauldron of a football field or athletics stadium allow us to access the highs and lows of competition.

What makes games a game though is that nothing ultimately rests on the outcome. Fundamentally, who wins doesn't matter; or at least not for spectators. Whether your team wins or loses, you will get up the next day, carrying on with your life the same way, irrespective of yesterday's result. Nobody died, as they say.

At least that's how it should be. The reaction to the England men's football team losing on penalties against in the Euro 2020(1) final last year was an unwelcome reminder that there is always a sinister undercurrent that accompanies, seemingly inevitably, sports fandom. The unexpected success of the team,

reaching the first final of a major international football competition for the first time since 1966, seemed to count for naught when the inevitable social media hordes descended and pilloried the players who missed their spot kicks. There was more than a hint of racism too given the level of opprobrium heaped in the young black players in the team.

This is clearly wrong. No one should be made to suffer for mistakes which, under the eyes of watching millions, any of us could make. That isn't what sport is about. There is a famous saying from a former Liverpool manager, Bill Shankly, that "Football isn't a matter of life and death; it's more important than that." But even Shankly made that statement knowingly. Sport is not a life and death matter, though it may sometimes feel it. It's fine and indeed right to take it seriously, but it is the taking part not the winning which is what sport really is about.

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

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Simone Niblock

WHY DON'T YOU...?

When I was a child living in the North West of England, the summer holidays were a glorious time of reading novels, watching Grange Hill repeats, roller-skating in the backyard, and listening to the Radio 1 Roadshows presented by David 'Kid' Jensen.

There was also a show presented by precocious and smug children called *Why Don't You?*, abbreviated to *WDY?* *WDY?* was all about switching off your television set and doing something less boring instead, which I always found slightly confusing and paradoxical: if I switched off the television, I would not be able to watch the things that were being recommended...

Anyway, now that I am an honorary North Easterner, for what it is worth, here are my recommendations for things that could be done with children in tow in August in the North East. Whilst some do charge on entry, they are not eye-wateringly expensive, and the advantages of removing children from the life support machine that is their smartphone, are, to misquote the credit card advert, 'priceless'.

Beamish Museum, Stanley, County Durham

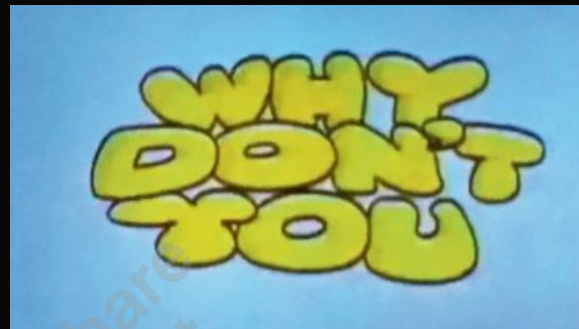
Beamish Outdoor Museum is of the best of its kind in the UK and has been in existence for 50 years. The latest addition to is a 1950s town, with the Welfare Hall being a replica of the Leasingthorne Community Centre in County Durham, showcasing the communitarian nature of typical mining villages of the era. If that is not of interest, try the Victorian miners' cottages or the fish bar that serves the best 'chippy tea' in the area.

Hadrian's Wall and Fort, Hexham, Northumberland

This does not need an introduction as it is world-renowned, and visitors come from all over the globe. Please do wear appropriate footwear when walking the wall; I was inappropriately shod in sandals the last time I walked the length of the wall, much to my chagrin and the delight of the children behind me who squealed excitedly every time I slipped and slid...

Tynemouth Aquarium, North Tyneside

As a child, the concept of spending a couple of hours looking at fish and other marine creatures would have been as welcome as eating the reviled 'frog's spawn' tapioca at dinner time. Now, however, having been seduced on screen by the various delights of *The Blue Planet* and *Finding Nemo*, I think that this is a must for all. Until I saw a clown fish IRL, as opposed to an animated one, I had no idea how magical a creature it was, and I would never have described a hammer-head shark as 'beautiful' until I saw one up close.



Barter Books, Alnwick, Northumberland

Rightfully respected as one of the best second-hand book shops in Europe, this is a tourist destination that will gladden the hearts of any bibliophile, whilst the glorious café will satiate the hunger that has been sustained by the energy you have used up walking up and down the rows of books. I have been eyeing up a limited edition of *The Waste Land* for three years now, so I hope that it is still there once I have persuaded my other half that, at just over £2000, it is a real snip!

Bamburgh, Northumberland

Bamburgh is frequently cited as having one of the best beaches in the UK, much to the annoyance of its residents who would prefer to keep it quiet. Its castle is almost as famous and has several events during the summer months, including an Anglo-Saxon re-enactment, for those of you who want to see people prancing around as Thegns of the 7th century.

Happy holidays!

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.

“

...if I switched off the television, I would not be able to watch the things that were being recommended...



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NIKKI MASTERMAN

Inspired HR

Set up in 2017 by Nikki Masterman as a home-based business it quickly developed into four business arms - employment legal services, HR consultancy, health and wellbeing and a recruitment agency. Now, Nikki's client sectors include a variety of sectors including healthcare, charities, financial services, hospitality, retail, manufacturing, and creative agencies. Here Nikki tells us about her taste in music, art and culture...



Nikki Masterman

Who is your favourite author and why?

My go to author when I need to switch off from work is Andy McDermott. He's written a whole series of books that is a similar concept to the Indiana Jones franchise. It's so easy to get lost in the mysteries of the world within them.

If it's an author within my profession it would be Daniel Barnett. Daniel is a top London Employment Barrister who puts employment law into simple explanations within a short series of books. I always recommend these to my HR trainees and clients wanting to learn more about employment law and HR.

What would be your three Desert Island Discs?

Run to You – Whitney Houston.

The Prayer – Celine Dion & Andrea Bocelli.

There You'll Be – Faith Hill (from one of my favourite films).

Who is your favourite film star and why?

Tom Cruise is an actor I have followed and loved since my teenage years. There is something about his cheeky persona.

I have also loved *Robert Redford*. A great actor with charm and charisma.

What are your top three films?

The Last Castle – Robert Redford plays an ex-general who is court martialled and sent to military prison. The warden played by James Gandolfini treats Robert and the other prisoners terribly, so Robert fights for justice and fairness for all.

Top Gun – Tom Cruise in a uniform, flying a plane and riding a bike. Need I explain more?

The Bodyguard – Whitney Houston plays a famous singer who is being stalked and Kevin Costner plays a bodyguard assigned to protect her and her family. A feel-good film with one of my favourite singers and favourite other actors.

Which poem left a lasting impression on you?

No particular poem comes to mind, but I can recite lots of nursery rhymes currently after my grandson was born last year!

What boxsets have you enjoyed?

Game of Thrones – I love fantasy and science fiction.

Taken – it's about a family through the generations that is impacted by alien abductions. Some great story lines in this.

Who is your favourite artist or performer?

Celine Dion – I love a strong ballad to sing along too. I'm that crazy lady sat at the traffic lights singing away at the top of my voice whilst driving.

What is your favourite venue?

You can't beat Madison Square Garden in New York City for a venue.

Which musical instrument do you particularly enjoy?

I love to hear the organ played as it reminds me of watching my dad play when I was a child. My dad passed away when I was 19 so watching someone play brings back great memories for me.

From the world of Arts and Culture who would be your ideal dinner party guests?

Audrey Hepburn – she personified talent, natural beauty and cared deeply for others through her humanitarian work. She would fascinate me in conversation.

Robert Redford – his career in acting and what he has done for the Arts and other actors is legendary.

www.inspired-hr.co.uk



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THE LINDISFARNE STORY RUNS FOR HOMELESS



Former Lindisfarne members Ray Laidlaw and Billy Mitchell are giving back to their hometown community by playing a special benefit gig in aid of the homeless.

Following the fantastic response to the first leg of the Lindisfarne Story UK tour earlier this year, the pair have announced a second run of nationwide dates in November culminating in a very special show in North Shields, the town where Lindisfarne began.

The final performance on Saturday 26th November at the Exchange in North Shields will be a benefit show for North East Homeless. The pair's performance will celebrate 50 years of Fog on the Tyne, the album which escalated the band to worldwide acclaim.

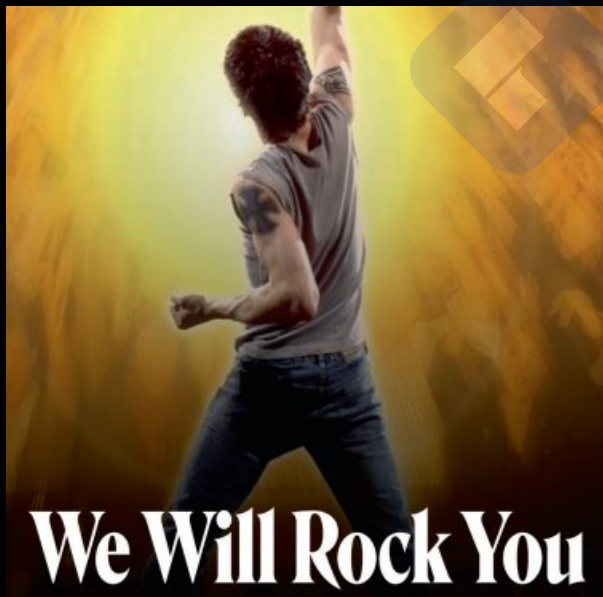
It was the UK's biggest selling album in 1971, and Ray and Billy tell its

remarkable story with a combination of rare video, unseen photographs, acoustic versions of their favourite Lindisfarne songs and tales from life on the road and in the recording studio.

The tour travels from Winchester to Basingstoke and Potters Bar to Barnard Castle and all points between but it is the North Shields date that has an emotional tie for both Billy and Ray.

"North East Homeless does amazing work in our home town, work that unfortunately is now more crucial than ever. It's important to Billy and I that we can give something back to the community that has supported us from the very beginning."

Tickets for the performance at The Exchange on 26th November are available from www.attheexchange.info



RETURN OF CLASSIC QUEEN MUSICAL

Having thrilled audiences during a sell-out run in 2019, the smash hit Queen and Ben Elton musical, *We Will Rock You* returns to Newcastle Theatre Royal (Mon 22 – Sat 27 Aug 2022) for one week only.

The musical tells the story of Galileo, Scaramouche, Killer Queen and the other 'Bohemians' and their journey to discover the Holy Grail of Rock and restore the free exchange of thought, fashion and most importantly, live music.

Combining 24 of Queen's biggest hits with Ben Elton's hilarious futuristic comedy writing, *We Will Rock You* boasts the scale and spectacle that marked the band's legendary live performances and continues to be one of the most spectacular touring musicals.

The show has seen unprecedented success in theatres and arenas around the world and more than 18 million theatregoers in 20 countries have been thrilled by *We Will Rock You* since 2002.

The awe-inspiring production showcases a number of Queen's finest hits, including *We Are The Champions*, *Radio Ga Ga*, *I Want To Break Free*, *Somebody To Love*, *Killer Queen*, *Don't Stop Me Now*, *Under Pressure*, *Bohemian Rhapsody*, *Another One Bites The Dust* and, of course, *We Will Rock You*.

We Will Rock You plays at Newcastle Theatre Royal from Mon 22 – Sat 27 Aug 2022. Tickets are priced from £29.50 and can be purchased at www.theatreroyal.co.uk or from the Theatre Royal Box Office on 0191 232 7010.

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North Tyneside Council



MEET THE ARTIST

This month Northern Insight talks to...

MARY ANN ROGERS

Mary Ann Rogers Gallery

What were your career ambitions growing up?

My career ambitions varied from becoming an eco warrior, spearheading an organization like Greenpeace, and doing my bit to saving the planet, to joining the police force purely to become a mounted officer. I never imagined myself with a mundane office job, which is exactly where I found myself aged 19. Fortunately it didn't last for too long!

Tell us about your current role?

Since 1986 I have been making and selling my drawings and paintings to make a living. It has been a steady progression of learning about what is achievable using my chosen medium, watercolour, and also learning how to create an interesting and varied platform not just in the UK, but farther afield, for my work. It is an immense privilege to be able to do something I love every day.

These days I own my own gallery at my home in West Woodburn, where I exhibit the largest collection of my paintings, as well as prints, cards and gifts. I believe the fact that it is my home, and I am usually here and love to meet visitors and hear what brought them here, makes it a really special visit.

From time to time I also show work by guest sculptors and jewellery makers.

What is your proudest achievement in the world of Art?

Being able to continue making a living from putting paint to paper is by far the thing that makes me feel most proud, but receiving the award for Best Selling Published artist from the Fine Art Trade Guild was amazing, especially as I was the only female, self-publishing artist to have done so, was a great moment.

How has the Art world evolved in the last decade?

I would go further back, and confidently state that the art world has changed more in the past 30 years than it has in the previous 200.

My experience only relates to that sector of the art world within which I operate, I can't speak for public art as I have very little knowledge of how that works these days.

Prior to the open studio movement, and the internet, the only way an artist could get their work sold was via a relationship with at least one art gallery. This could be quite a controlling relationship, and lead to artists creating work specifically for a client, or for a gallery owner. Artists and 'end users' were kept apart largely. This avoided any underhand deals directly between client and artist, cutting out the gallery commission. At best, having good galleries with owners who were genuinely interested in the work, who wanted to help grow an artists career was, and still is, a great way to sell work and develop.

These days, most artists manage their own careers. There is still a valuable place for art galleries, of course, but I know of no artists who don't have their own websites. Speaking personally, it is very important for me to have my work in art galleries, as it displays a confidence in my work, and the relationship with the gallery owners is much more open and healthy. For instance, I can indicate on my website the whereabouts of a certain painting, and direct an interested person towards the gallery where it is hanging.

What are you currently working on?

We have three white Aylesbury ducks here at Leam Cottage, who stamp around the place and forage through the tall summer grass, and I am working on a couple of paintings of them right now.



Landscape



L-R: Fellow artist Carol Nunan with Mary Ann, embracing the wide trouser look!

Tell us about the team you work with?

I have three permanent members of staff, and at busy times engage extra help locally. Lisa and Jane share much of the administrative work involved in the business. As well as the sales direct to the public, we also sell a wide range of prints, cards, tableware, stationery and gifts to galleries, interior stores, department stores, boutiques etc which takes quite a bit of work. Jane scans every painting which I make, so that we have a high quality file to use for multiple purposes from showing clients what is available to creating crops for greeting cards, product design etc. My husband is also on the team, and he does most of the fetching and carrying from the framer, also some deliveries, as well as keeping the place looking smart!

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

I can't think of any!

What has been your biggest challenge?

My biggest challenge has been to make it possible to continue to create paintings from the subjects that inspire me.

Who are your heroes inside and outside of the Art world?

Most of my heroes are from outside of the art world, and include people who did extraordinary things like explorer, Ernest Shackleton, high altitude climber, Anatoli Boukreev and sportspeople like the amazing Sarah Thomas, who swam the channel four times continuously.

How do you unwind outside of work?

I walk and swim a lot. We have a lake nearby where I swim several times a week, plus there are some great stretches of the river Tyne for distance swimming. My favourite thing is exploring a river with my husband, me swimming and him in the canoe.

Favourite Book and Boxset?

'The Worst Journey In the World' by Apsley Cherry Garrard is my favourite book, and my favourite boxed set is definitely *Schtisel*, a tale of a Haredi Jewish family living in Jerusalem. Lots of soup, side curls and wigs.

www.marogers.com

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Home and Gallery



Hare



Wild swimming



Ducks

CHANGING THE RULES ON CORPORATE TRAVEL

Corporate travel has long been associated with the image of the lone travelling salesman, driving up and down the country, staying overnight in a bland motorway hotel after eating a bland meal in a bland restaurant. However, travellers' needs have changed, hastened by the pandemic, with an increasing focus on longer trips, sustainability and working flexibly – and short-term rentals could be the answer, according to Dale Smith, CEO of accommodation management firm Host & Stay.

A recent white paper by the Travel Intelligence Network reveals that corporate travel managers could be missing a trick by focusing solely on hotels when finding their staff a place to stay; considering short-term rental providers as part of their programme could deliver better-quality accommodation solutions and more options for their employees.

Key findings of the white paper, which was commissioned by the UK Short Term Accommodation Association, included the estimation that 38 per cent of UK employees will travel on business this year – that's a major market to be tapping into.

Not only that, but travel needs have changed; fewer employees in any given company are travelling but trips are longer, with Covid-related travel restrictions leading to a trend for extended, multi-purpose business trips.

Furthermore, 38 per cent of travel managers do not believe that hotels will be able to meet the demand for business travel in 2022, with 80 per cent of companies rethinking their business travel programmes.

Into this space, short-term rental could provide the perfect solution, combining the freedom of renting a whole property with the flexibility of a traditional hotel.

The best of both worlds

After seeing how easy it is to work from anywhere, corporate travellers are increasingly looking for more space when working away from home. Corporate travel managers, on the other hand, are always looking to keep costs manageable.



Dale Smith

A short-term rental keeps all parties happy – more space is a given, while it's also an incredibly cost-effective option. Just think: a four-bedroom property shared between four people is always going to be cheaper than four separate hotel rooms. On top of this, with cooking facilities and living areas, there's the opportunity to stay in and socialise, thus cutting the expenses bill right down.

And with the long-term impact of repeated lockdowns taking a toll on many people's mental health, a short-term rental property with room to move around, creature comforts and, in many cases, private outdoor space offers a real mood-boosting home from home appeal – unlike being cooped up in a hotel room.

Making it work

For all the advantages, there is still some reticence among corporate travel managers to veer from the tried-and-tested hotel option – and for good reason.

A lack of recognised brands, uncertainty over quality and standards, and access to booking are some of the concerns surrounding the market, although the Short Term Accommodation Association (STAA), of which Host & Stay is a member, is taking proactive steps to counter these concerns.

Through the STAA, the sector has been working with accreditation organisation Quality in

Tourism to set minimum operating standards in safety, cleanliness and compliance with legislation, all of which are elements most travel managers regard as prerequisites to be included in their programmes.

Having worked in the sector for a number of years now, there are certain elements we at Host & Stay know are of vital importance to corporate travellers.

First is product quality. Corporate travel managers are pickier in terms of what they want their travellers staying in. Good, high-speed Wi-Fi is an absolute necessity, as are purpose-built office space to having sufficient table space or worktop to get the laptop out.

On-property parking is also a big thing, especially if workers are travelling in vans, and this is something that can often be overlooked.

An untapped market

However, such concerns are easily allayed, especially when travel managers – and travellers themselves – see the benefits of short-term rentals in terms of both cost and comfort.

With a changing world of work, it's clear that travellers are looking for something extra – and it's our sector that can provide it.

hostandstay.co.uk



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A SUNDAY WELL SPENT

By Michael Grahamslaw

Hot on the heels of a stunning overnight stay review - not to mention a headline sojourn to the Maldron Manchester - we returned to the Maldron Hotel in Newcastle for a Sunday Lunch in the top echelon.

Whilst the hotel's capacious restaurant serves its guests from Monday - Sunday, it also offers non-residents a high quality Sunday Lunch alternative in the heart of the City.

We visited on a sun-scorched afternoon and found the hotel to be an oasis of calm in contrast to the beery throngs of revellers enjoying themselves elsewhere in the city.

On a glorious day, we enjoyed an aperitif in the hotel's tree-lined courtyard area before adjourning indoors to the stylish dining area.

On hand to meet us was Clinton — one of the Maldron's precocious young food & beverage proteges - whose outstanding customer service belies his young years.

The hotel serves an extensive lunch and dinner menu daily and Sunday Lunch is an impressive extension of their high quality modern fayre and from-the-grill specialities.



An icy cold bottle of Picpoul de Pinet proved just the job as we kicked back for which would be a fantastic dining experience.

Starters arrived shortly thereafter. Lisa enjoyed the smoked haddock fish cakes - a welcome break from the usual salmon or crab variety - enlivened with lemon and capers and complemented nicely with a hot horseradish and zingy lemon mayo. Yours truly meanwhile plumped for the tomato red pepper soup with the obligatory slab of sourdough perfect for dunking.

Following on, from a choice of beef, chicken or pork, Lisa opted for the braised beef with a corner sofa of a Yorkshire pudding and pan juices. I meanwhile chose the roast chicken supreme which - melt in the mouth tender - exhibits a kitchen expertly skilled in cooking

it's meat to perfection.

This was served with all the trimmings including roast potatoes, a buttery mash, Savoy cabbage, honey glazed carrots and al dente broccoli.

Desserts were tempting too with a winning trio of warm chocolate brownie, Black Forest gateaux and baked vanilla cheesecake available to diners with larger appetites.

Whether it be for a family reunion, an outing with friends or leisurely couples debrief, the Maldron does Sunday Lunch very well. It seems all this hotel chain touches turns to gold.

For more information, visit
www.maldronhotelnewcastle.com/dining



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Whether it's the perfectly planned end point of a bracing country walk or the ideal place to kick back and refuel after a brisk round of golf, our newly reburbished, authentic country pub ticks every box.

Set within 450 acres of private land alongside the Georgian-inspired Linden Hall Hotel, Golf & Spa, the Linden Tree Pub is relaxed and genuine, beautifully in tune with its surroundings and firmly focused on delivering fabulous food and warm hospitality to every guest. Why not plan early and join us for our range of upcoming festive events:

Brunch with Santa

Sunday 4th & 18th December.
Fun for all ages! Plus each child receives a gift from Santa.

£16 per person

Christmas Day Lunch

Sit back, relax and indulge in great food with great company

£85 per person

New Year's Eve Party

Join us on New Year's Eve for a night of food, festivities and live music, and welcome in 2023!

£55 per person



For further information on our festive events, please email
specialevents.linden@macdonald-hotels.co.uk
or visit macdonaldhotels.co.uk/linden-hall

Terms & Conditions: Christmas events require deposit to secure booking and subject to availability. Christmas Day lunch and New Year's Eve require pre-orders by 25/11/22.



THE LINDEN TREE PUB - A PERFECT PLACE TO DINE AND UNWIND

The Linden Tree is a relaxed and genuine pub positioned in the wonderful rolling Northumberland countryside. Set within 450 acres of private land at one of the North East's leading hotel, spa and golfing venues, Linden Hall Hotel.



When you've got a hotel, spa and golf course that is situated only half an hour north of Newcastle and 25 minutes from the coast, it's hard to think of a better venue which is more ideally placed for a day trip, weekend break or midweek getaway.

However, there's another gem to this North East crown.

It's called The Linden Tree pub.

Fancy a pub lunch, Sunday carvery or relaxed dinner in a cosy atmosphere? Who doesn't?

Then you need to pop round behind the Linden Hall hotel and visit The Linden Tree pub which opened in May.

Head north on the A1 and when you've passed Morpeth turn onto the A697. Once you drive through the village of Longhorsley keep your eyes peeled and on your right you can't miss the signs for Linden Hall. If you want to go to the hotel, spa or golf club, turn in here.

However, go for another 50 or so yards and you'll see another entrance. Turn in...and drive along a lane to arrive at The Linden Tree pub. The journey is lovely and prepares you for what's coming up.

The Linden Tree pub is the sort of place where you'll find folk having a drink after a long walk or round of golf, or who've decided to go for a ride out and make a day of it by enjoying lunch or dinner. It's that sort of place. ...just drop in for a snack, full meal, cup of coffee or a pint.

You can sit outside, or in the pub itself or in the conservatory. It'll probably depend on the weather.

In the centre of the pub you'll find a well-stocked bar featuring plenty of local ales. If you are a wine and spirit sort of person, you'll be stuck for choice. (And yes, soft drinks are available, just in case you were wondering.)

As a decidedly family-friendly pub, younger diners who've worked up an appetite can enjoy everything from fish and chips to penne pasta dishes as part of a dedicated kids menu. For everyone else there's an extensive main menu which includes a variety of regional favourites including sumptuous Scottish ribeye steaks and the pub's signature Linden burgers.

Feeling really hungry? Go for the 10 ounce, 35 days dry-aged ribeye steak.

And of course, no pub can go without a selection of traditional Sunday roasts. The Linden Tree is no different and all come with beef dripping roast potatoes, spiced Chantenay carrots, Yorkshire puddings, charred sweetheart cabbage and cauliflower cheese.

Lovely.

"When we started designing The Linden Tree pub, we didn't want it to be just 'another' country pub," says Manager, Jess Terry. "We wanted it to be different and attract visitors who wanted to make a day of their trip to Northumberland as well as catering for those people who just wanted to pop in following a long walk or having played 18 holes at our neighbouring golf course. We wanted people from the local area, as well as those who would travel from Newcastle, Sunderland and Durham to feel as though we are a must-visit, or an essential part of their day's plans.

We also wanted to ensure that any visitors who were staying at the Linden Hall hotel next door would have an alternative to the more formal meal they'll be served in the hotel's Dobson Restaurant. We provide them with the perfect informal surroundings serving classic dishes in a friendly and convivial environment.

The hotel also features a stunning spa so we wanted to ensure that anyone who's been for a swim or strenuous gym session, can pop in for a refreshing drink before heading home.

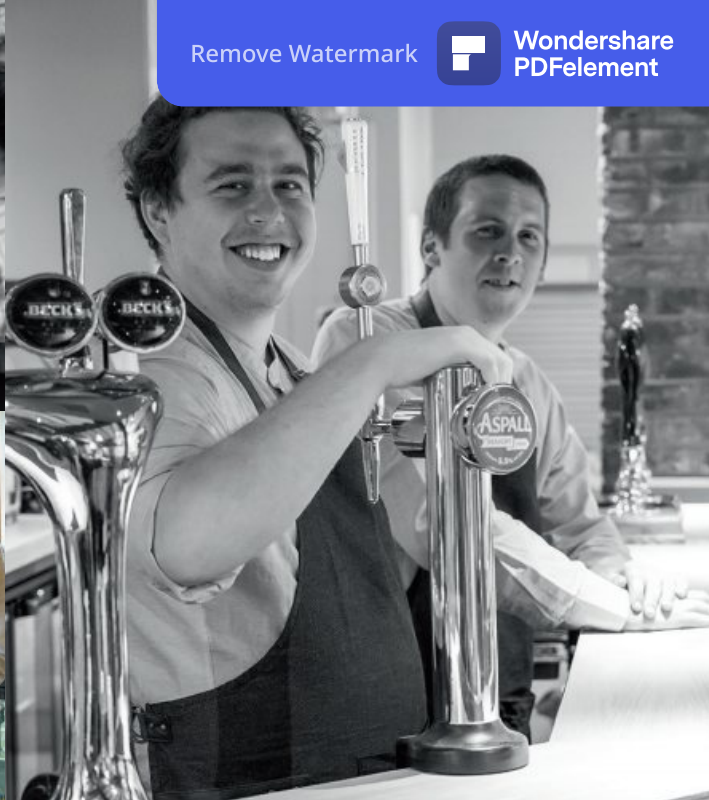
We're really proud of our Linden Tree pub. It's proving to be incredibly popular and we can't wait to experience Christmas. We're already taking bookings. We're also taking bookings for anniversaries, birthdays and, unbelievably, for Mother's Day and Father's Day in 2023."

In other words, people who've already discovered this gem of a pub are making sure they don't miss out when it comes to important dates in their diary.

Interested? You should be.

For further details of what's on offer, plus how you book a table, go onto the pub's website, www.lindentreepub.com







FULL OF FUSION FLAVOUR

One restaurant in the heart of Newcastle is well underway in preparing for the scorching summer sun, with its spacious AI Fresco dining setting – perfect for lovers of Pan Asian cuisine.

Launching onto the North East culinary scene back in 2018 – The Muddler Bar & Restaurant brought a new lease of life and a flavourful palate to Grey Street – boasting back to back bookings for evening meals and special celebrations, to which they're still in high demand of to this day.

Years of continuous success has allowed The Muddler to expand, creating a second formal dining room and newly improved outdoor seating area – providing diners with a prime view of the stunning Georgian architecture on Newcastle's famous Grey Street, whilst being able to enjoy a selection of delectable dishes.

Mirroring the extravagant flair of The Muddler's inner restaurant, the venue encases its private area in sleek black and gold borders – which balance perfectly against the warm wooden tables. As discussion over Grey Street's pedestrianisation persists, its restaurants like The Muddler who bring a

desirable chicness to the AI fresco dining options in the city.

Although The Muddler's main menu can be enjoyed in its entirety outside, their extensive selection of small plates are a mighty option when looking to enjoy a 'light bite' or fusion of flavour.

Mix up your traditional three course meal with a variety of robata grill, dim sum delights or classic small plates – each bursting with flavour. One of the latest additions to the plentiful menu is The Muddler's Chicken Katsu Bao. Deep-fried chicken breast served in a crispy golden panko crumb, topped with spicy mayonnaise and served in a steamed bun.

Or perhaps you hear the sound of the sea calling your name? The Muddler's Tuna Tartare is a serious people pleaser and highly recommended by the establishment's head chef. This dish balances wasabi avocado on top of spicy tuna, topped beautifully with crispy mouli, shallots and finished with a ponzu sauce.

If you're looking to make the most of the daylight hours, then The Muddler have an incredible weekday lunch time offer that's sure to take precedence over your packed lunch or sandwich meal deal. At £17.50 for 3 small plates*, you can dabble across the menu and find your favourite way to combine flavours.

So whether you're celebrating a special occasion, date night or lunch time stop off. Next time you plan on visiting The Muddler – be sure to take up space in their outdoor area and take advantage of, not only the stunning surrounds, but their equally moreish meals.

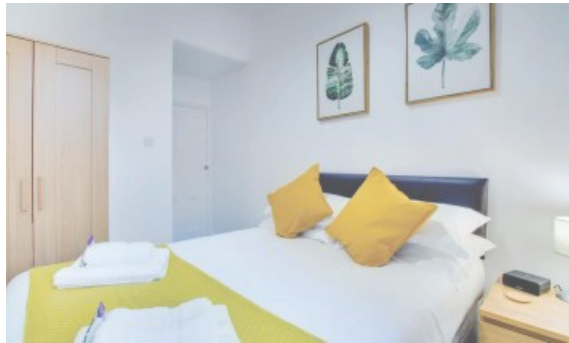
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NORTH EAST HOSPITALITY BRAND MAKE THE LIST OF FASTEST GROWING PRIVATE COMPANIES

Boutique bowling brand, Lane7, have been named one of the UK's fastest growing privately-owned businesses.

Lane7 feature in a list of 100 companies ran by British entrepreneurs that are growing at a rapid pace – according to the Times newspaper's latest award announcement.

The bowling company started with one site in Newcastle in 2013 - where they transformed an old ATS garage into a three floor bowling alley with a difference.

Forget everything you know about bowling alleys, their venues feature graffiti murals, arcades, ping pong & beer pong tables, karaoke booths, washed down with great cocktails and the best burgers in town.

With the huge success of the Newcastle site they've since rolled out their creative approach to bowling across the country.



With 11 locations in major cities nationwide, a site in Durham currently undergoing transformations in preparation for opening and several more sites in the pipeline for early next year.

Lane7 Founder and CEO, Tim Wilks, said: "We didn't originally set out to become one of the UK's fastest growing companies – we just wanted to make really cool bowling alleys and bring something different to the market.

"The success of the current sites has shown us there is a huge appetite for what we do and some amazing untapped markets across the UK. We've got big growth plans for the group and some amazing locations coming very soon."



BLACKBIRD INN FLIES HIGH WITH NEW SUMMER MENU

An award-winning North East gastro pub has launched its seasonal new menu to celebrate the arrival of the summer.

The Blackbird Inn at Ponteland, a popular foodie haunt, earlier this year won Pub of the Year at the North East England Tourism Awards.

The inn's summer menu is focused upon seasonal favourites such as raspberries, strawberries, pak choi, rocket, coriander, red onion, heritage tomatoes, organic cucumber, apples, local leeks, romaine lettuce and an array of locally grown herbs.

It kicks off its newly revamped starter menu with a choice of smaller lighter dishes including duck and pistachio terrine, asparagus and egg as well as smoked haddock fishcakes.

Popular traditional pub classics such as grilled Cajun chicken burger, the Blackbird beef burger, beer battered North Sea cod and pie of the day return to the menu, while new offerings include Asian crispy beef salad, potato and golden beetroot pave, slow-cooked pork belly and beef char sui noodles.

The latest summer desserts offer an array of fruit inspired choices ranging from mandarin roulade, cherry parfait and berry Basque burnt cheesecake to sticky toffee pudding with a honeycomb vanilla ice cream.

Gluten-free, dairy-free, vegetarian and vegan diners are all generously catered for with a wide selection of dishes.

Mains range from chicken supreme, slow-cooked pork belly, Thai pan-fried king prawns, North Sea chunky cod to pea and mint risotto with potato lattice crisps.

And, to round it all off, the dessert selection offers elderberry crème brulee, strawberry cake ice cream, plus a selection of creative vegan ice creams, sorbets and fruit salads.

Stuart Young of the Northumberland Pub Company, which operates the Blackbird, is enthusiastic about the new look menu. "It's great to shake things up and we like to change our menu along with the changing of the seasons," he said.



CITY RETREAT AT GREY STREET HOTEL WINS TOP AWARD

The salon at a top Tyneside hotel has seen off competition from across the UK to win one of the industry's most prestigious awards.

Around 400 leading figures from the beauty and spa industries gathered at London's Park Plaza (Sunday 3 July), for the Professional Beauty Awards 2022.

And City Retreat, at Grey Street Hotel, Newcastle, scooped one of the most sought after gongs of the night, Boutique Salon of the Year, sponsored by Guinot.

The salon, within the basement area of the Grade II listed building, comprises three treatment rooms, a nail bar and a pedicure station.

Along with a menu of skin and body

treatments using the Elemis product range, Dermalogica facials, manicures, pedicures and gel nails, it offers advanced IPL hair removal and skin rejuvenation, CACI non-surgical face lifts, hydro-facials, Lycon waxing, lash lifts, semi-permanent lashes and quantum light therapy.

The Professional Beauty Awards are the longest running awards for the beauty, nails, spa and aesthetic industries, recognising outstanding customer service, treatment delivery and innovation.

Entrants were judged by independent industry experts and every shortlisted salon, spa and clinic was interviewed by a member of the judging team. Therapists all then attended a live final in London where they had to do a trade test in front of the judges.

The award is the latest in a string of accolades for City Retreat, which was established in 2004 at 55 Degrees North Newcastle, by Lesley Caster.



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TRANSFORMATION OF ROYAL QUAYS TAKING SHAPE

It's probably fair to say that if you'd visited the Royal Quays shopping complex in North Shields before the Covid pandemic arrived, you may have been a tad underwhelmed.

There were probably more empty retail units than occupied ones. However, we have news for any of you who've not ventured there over the last couple of years. You won't recognise the place.

For starters, the Royal Quays has a new name...the Royal Quays Outlet and Independent Centre.

There's also a new person leading from the front and whose vision of how the Royal Quay should look and operate, is taking shape.

He's the Centre Manager, Matt Dawson.

Matt is a local guy and a proud Geordie. Two years ago he returned to the North East after working in the London area.

"I used to go to the Royal Quays on a regular basis before I moved south, but I have to say that my final visit left me feeling rather sad," said Matt. "It was a focal point of the community and gave visitors the chance to experience what, for many, was what the High Street used to offer and how it used to look. Consequently, when I saw the opportunity to return to the Royal Quays, which also came with the brief of transforming it and bringing the place back to life, I jumped at it.

And I'm proud to say that we're getting there. When I walked through the door two years ago there were 17 empty retail outlets. Today we have four. As is the nature of a retail centre like this, we'll always probably have four because there's an inevitable churn of retailers moving in and out.

I'm also delighted with the way local, smaller retailers have come on board...and it's why I've added the word 'Independent' to our name. I wanted to attract local retailers and give them the opportunity to show and sell their products alongside the big, recognised High Street names. I also wanted to attract visitors who weren't coming here solely to shop. We now have a brewery, an arcade, garden centre, a range of cafes and restaurants...we even have a dance studio and gym."



In other words, the Royal Quays isn't just about going to see what some of the bigger players in the retail world have to offer. Yes you will still find Next, Clarks, Mountain Warehouse, Roman, Trespass, Subway, Costa Coffee, The Works, Hallmark, Moss Bros etc, but will now find them sitting alongside dozens of other small businesses like the Whitley Bay Pizza Company, Acorn & Oak Play Café, Alternative Stores which offers vegan and health food, Moorandas Italian Ice Cream, My G gadget shop, O-K-L Collectable Toys, and Discover Retail Co-op which allows small retailers the opportunity to show what they can do.

Oh and there's still over 700 car parking spaces. And they're free.

"The concept of the Royal Quays had to change," adds Matt. "It needed to become relevant to more people. I had to change the style and image of the centre. Granted, it's not been easy bearing in mind that the day I took the job was very close to the day that the country went into lockdown. However, Covid meant that I had to time to assess the situation and put plans in place so that when we could open our doors again, I was ready to push on with the transformation.

I've also changed the way in which retailers can move into the Royal Quays. I've made it simple and easy for firms to take one of the retail units by offering flexible lease arrangements. We can offer short-term leases which gives small, independent businesses the confidence of knowing they're not going to be locked into a multi-year deal which commits them to a hefty investment.

All of the changes have given a boost to the people who work here. They can see that we are improving things...that the Royal Quays has a stable and successful future ahead of it...that there is stability and security. It all creates a better atmosphere for those people who work here, and I'm sure that is reflected in the positive reviews we receive from our visitors."

In other words, if you've not visited what is now called the Royal Quays Outlet and Independent Centre in North Shields for a while, you really do need to go and check out everything. You're in for a big surprise. Matt Dawson is doing a stunning job and, put it this way, if he can transform things so much in the space of two years, you can guarantee that the next two years are going to be exciting.

Set sail for the Royal Quays and drop anchor there for a buoyant retail experience.

royalquaysoutletcentre.com



“

*...We now have a brewery,
an arcade, garden centre,
a range of cafes and
restaurants...we even have a
dance studio and gym...*

Matt Dawson



GLITZY CELEBRATION FOR DAWSON & SANDERSON

Leading North East travel company Dawson & Sanderson recently celebrated 60 years of award-winning holidays and service with a retro-disco themed event.

The celebration, which was held on the roof terrace of Revolucion de Cuba in Newcastle, featured special guest DJ Denise Van Houten and an amazing display of fashion through the decades, from flapper dresses to shell suits!

The year is a double celebration for the travel agency, after it was recognised with the coveted Feefo Platinum Trusted Service award for 2022. This award, exclusive to businesses with a 5* reputation for customer service, is based on verified customer reviews published on the Feefo website.



HISTORIC NEWCASTLE BUILDING LOOKS TO THE FUTURE WITH NEW CAFÉ OPENING

One of Newcastle's most historic buildings has opened a new coffee and luxury ice cream café as it continues to invest in growth and high specification facilities.

Boutique office space provider, Alderman Fenwick's House, has partnered with Caffè Ginevra to bring the taste of Italy to Pilgrim Street. There the new café will serve freshly brewed Sicilian style coffee, homemade ice cream and freshly made cannoli from 8am to 4pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 3pm on Saturdays.

Located in the heart of Pilgrim's Quarter, which is undergoing a huge multi-million-pound regeneration, the café directly faces the new Bank House development.

The move is part of a series of improvements by Central Space directors Marc and Anthony Dixon to make the historic Alderman Fenwick's



House the best small business location in the city.

Originally built in the 17th century, the building has operated as the site of a popular coaching inn, as well as the home of the Newcastle Liberal Club for many years. The building is currently occupied by 18 businesses and has benefited from new ultra-fast broadband, as well as contemporary breakout spaces and meeting rooms. Further developments are in the pipeline with a food and drink outlet also planned for the North Tunnel.

Marc Dixon, managing director of Central

Space, said that Caffè Ginevra is a growing local brand and the café will be seen as a popular attraction. He added: "Good quality on-site amenities are important for businesses seeking a great working environment and to attract staff back to the office."

"This is a good partnership with Caffè Ginevra; they are a growing company that are well suited to the fabric of the building. We very much look forward to a beneficial relationship as we look to invest further and adapt the building to meet current needs."

www.caffeginevra.co.uk




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HOTEL IS JUST THE BUSINESS FOR HOME WORKERS

A newly-opened Tyneside hotel is proving to be just the business for post-pandemic home workers – thanks to its out-of-town location.

Sometimes, a business boost can come from the most unexpected quarter – as a landmark hotel on the outskirts of Newcastle has discovered.

The £7.5m Great North Hotel, at Gosforth, opened its doors to the public in May 2021 – six months later than originally planned due to Covid lockdowns.

But, while the pandemic delayed the opening, the changes it made to work habits have boosted business at the purpose-built 64-bedroom venue, owned by Malhotra Group plc.

Because along with providing full conference facilities, the hotel, on the Great North Road, is part of a wider development which includes a restaurant, Pizza Dough Co, a coffee shop and the acclaimed Three Mile pub.

And this breadth of facilities, combined with plentiful free parking, has proved a hit with local businesses and those who work from home but need a venue for occasional colleague lunches, formal meetings and catch ups.

Close to Gosforth Racecourse and to no fewer than three golf clubs, the hotel's owners always expected it to be popular with leisure visitors, but admit the demand from the business community has been a welcome surprise.

"When we built the hotel we created a fantastic meetings and events space, our Ouseburn Suite," said Marcella Swindell, Hotel Operations Manager, "but given that we are at



the heart of suburbia we rather presumed our focus would be on leisure visitors.

"However, we are increasingly welcoming people who are either working from home or who have adopted a hybrid working model – and who find they have nowhere to host colleagues, clients and customers.

"At Great North Hotel, not only can they use our Ouseburn Suite, which can be divided to create an intimate meeting space, but their guests can park - and charge their electric cars – and meals and refreshments can all be provided without the necessity of travelling into the city and the costs incurred by that."

The hotel's semi-rural setting, combined with its close proximity to the A1, has also proved popular with delegates and Marcella believes that may also be a result of post pandemic changes in behaviour.



"I think we've all learned to appreciate the benefits of being outdoors more," said Marcella, "and we are used to seeing delegates heading outside for a walk during meeting breaks.

"There is no doubt that the corporate landscape has changed and we are delighted that the flexibility and variety of services we offer have enabled us, not just to survive that change, but to benefit from it."

Day delegate rates start at £25 per person and for more information on meetings and events facilities at Great North Hotel visit www.greatnorthhotel.co.uk/meeting-rooms

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OUT AND ABOUT - HUNMANBY



For a summer outing by train, the east wolds of Yorkshire offer an enticing prospect. Take a trip to Hunmanby, on the line from Scarborough to Hull, and it's a short walk to the new Spirit of Yorkshire distillery, from which the products are now matured and for sale. From the North East you get there on a train to York where you head north east to the coast at Scarborough.

You can check your routing at nationalrail.com, now in its twentieth year of booking rail tickets and answering enquiries. If you have a short connection, change trains at Seamer, the station outside of Scarborough where the lines from Hull and York meet. If you have a long connection wait at Scarborough itself, may be to be the longest in the world. The small island-platformed station at Seamer is great for quick changes, not so good for a longer wait.

Through Filey with its unusual covered train shed, to Hunmanby, you take a left on leaving the station uphill on the Bridlington Road, passing a tyre recycling facility (I did not know tyres could smell as much!) to the industrial estate where the distillery is located. Tours run daily at 1100, 1300 and 1500, with no 1500 tour on Sunday. Book at spiritofyorkshire.com. The owning family are farmers and brewers, so the process is kept in house from field to bottle, since they even bottle the spirit on site. Made with 100% homegrown barley and water from the chalk beneath their farm, the "Filey Bay" single malt whisky isn't just made in Yorkshire, it's made OF Yorkshire.

Time your journey to spend the rest of the day at Filey Bay itself, with trains covering the trip from Hunmanby back to Filey about 20 past the hour. Having my bag from a few days away, I elected to avoid the footbridge and take the flat path out on to the Muston Road. As a regular depositor of luggage, I checked the Radical website to see if I could leave it somewhere, but Filey was not covered. (Radical works with general dealers, computer stores and Indian restaurants etc to look after items cheaply.) I turned right around the end of Station Avenue and into the compact town centre. In the 1850s the developer John Wilkes Unett, completed the Crescent, a grand row of houses on the cliff top to provide quality accommodation for passengers arriving by train. The railway had arrived a little earlier in 1846. Another developer, Sir Billy Butlin, built an even bigger site to the south which was due to open before the Second World War, but instead became RAF Hunmanby Moor. Eventually opening his holiday camp in 1946, Butlins traded until 1983 and a peak capacity the 11,000 campers eclipsed the 6,000 people in the town itself.

There are five miles of golden sandy beach at Filey, and to the north bracing walks may be had at Filey Brigg, a promontory of land jutting out into the sea. It's one of the best stretches of beach in the UK, with a range of eateries and entertainment to please the visitor. It was a lovely afternoon and I enjoyed my potter about. On return to the station for a well-connected trip from Filey, via Seamer, to York and north, I noticed a neat sign in the window of the taxi company: Left Luggage 50p. I wish I had passed by before! An unencumbered walk around a town is always better than hauling a bag.

www.spiritofyorkshire.com

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TO ALL THE LEAN START-UP FOUNDERS OUT THERE, PLEASE BE PATIENT

Patience has been my most valuable asset throughout this process and I know it's going to be essential as I progress.

I am excited that with patience the all-new Kind Currency website is now live!

Making kindness accessible, enabling you to protect people and the planet by easing the poverty and climate crisis with kinder action.

The new website enables Kind Currency to move forward, rewarding kindness in-kind. Supporting kind businesses, helping you to be kind and shop kind and together providing opportunities and resources to the kind people we depend on as a society on who are living in deprivation.

Gosh, it has taken some determination and much frustration to get here. My fingers have been burnt, my head has hurt constantly, tears have been shed by the bucket load (when people say there's no space in business for emotion, well, they've never started a business themselves). Lack of finances, lack of skills, lack of time, lack of hands, lack of heads. It's hard the start-up journey to the point it is painful.

There's been lots of challenges and I'm sure there'll be many more to come but today I am delighted to have a solution that will enable Kind Currency to begin the disruption society needs, creating an actionable economy of kindness that will deliver real change.



We have a number of founding businesses on board and are looking forward to onboarding many more kind businesses ahead of our subscription opportunity going live in the Autumn to develop our kindness fund. Our Kind Business Club is completely free, if your business is ethical in its nature, pays the living wage and has a community and/or environmental focus, we want to celebrate you and connect you directly with consumers ready to shop kind.

I started developing the initial idea with a lean start-up approach, I had no choice, I wasn't earning due to the pandemic, and I had chronic medical needs to meet, and I continue to follow this approach because the world is unbalanced. Finding solutions for the concept to work effectively at low cost or no cost has been the biggest challenge, but creative thinking, persistence and patience has got us there eventually.

Patience delivered what I needed, timing,

people, systems, opportunities. This time last year I expected to be where I am now, but health and major surgery impacted timing, people and systems impacted progress and opportunities were the wrong ones creating confusion. I constantly felt like I was going backwards, not forwards. Do I feel like I lost an entire year? No, I learnt so many important lessons, I fine-tuned the message, I grew as a person, I developed as a founder, and Kind Currency evolved.

I am exactly where I should be right now, on the path that is sparkling with kindness, it's took me 18 months to find it but, Rome wasn't built in a day as they say!

If you feel like you are falling and not flying with your start-up at present, be patient with yourself and the process, you will settle you on the right path to move forward with your journey.

www.kindcurrency.co.uk

as seen on

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Zeno Meynell-Rea, Operations Director, Punto Italian Kitchen, Heaton

I have a multitude of memories from spending summers in Italy with our grandparents, Nonna Lidia and Nonno Gino, on their smallholding or 'Fattoria'. Helping feed the animals, picking tomatoes, helping Nonna make pasta and joining Nonno on his daily meticulously inspect the grapes on the vine.



L-R: Nonno Gino, Nonna Lidia, Remo (Papa)

He even taught me how to press grapes 'the old-fashioned way', something of a rite of passage; although I should add the sensation of grapes in-between your toes is not particularly pleasant!

You may notice the majority of the memories tend to centre around food, and there's nothing that Nonna Lidia used to love more than to watch people, be it friends or family, eating and enjoying the food that she had produced.

Apart from a definite resemblance, I'm pleased to say I have also inherited this trait. Watching people enjoy food we have produced is truly a heart-warming experience. On more than one occasion customers at Punto have ordered various items, antipasti, pasta, pizza all to come at the same time. Picking at the dishes in an almost frenzied fashion, not knowing what to taste next. It's something I utterly adore seeing. I now understand why my Nonna enjoyed this all those years ago.

It's fair to say that since our parents opened 'Out of Town' back in 1981, the world of hospitality has changed. Customers are far more adventurous these days not to mention far more au fait with Mediterranean cuisine than they were 40 years ago.

What hasn't changed is the desire for good food.

While the COVID-19 pandemic didn't do anything to help the hospitality industry, it did provide a unique opportunity, which many companies seized upon in the form of 'Cook at Home' meal kits.

From the inception of Punto Italian Kitchen, some sort of cook at home offering was always going to be on the cards but rather than rushing in, or having to jump at this as a sole means of survival (as many did during the pandemic) we have had the benefit of being able to really plan and hone a product that can deliver the experience of Punto Italian Kitchen's food at home with minimal effort.

The starting point for this was ingredients. My Zia (Aunt) Rita had a saying, 'perfume in, perfume out'. If you start with flavourful fresh ingredients, you will end up with a flavourful dish. On our grandparents farm they had control over food from start to finish. They grew their own fruit and vegetables, raised their own livestock, fed them on food grown on the land, and used natural fertilizer, which, combined with the Mediterranean sunshine really created food of unparalleled flavour. We might not grow our own produce but we can source excellent quality ingredients.

Next is authenticity. We grew up with Italian food and the Italian way of preparing dishes and seeing our relatives prepare these dishes from scratch on a daily basis. We live and breathe our Italian heritage, even here in Newcastle!

The final element is the desire to share. Our national pride for great food feeds this desire. We want everyone to be able to enjoy the incredible flavours of Italy without needing to spend hours in the kitchen. Thus our mantra for Punto at Home: Prepared by us, Made by You.

puntoitalian.co.uk



L-R: Nonna Lidia with Maria (Mama)

A man with a beard and a blue shirt is sitting at a wooden table. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. In front of him is a white cup of coffee on a saucer. The background is a brick wall.

“

*...We live and
breathe our Italian
heritage, even here in
Newcastle!...*



Danny Parker



Images: Sean Elliott Photography



fern

DINING ROOM & BAR

Fern is an up-market neighbourhood Dining Room & Bar, the emphasis is on creating fine, flavoursome food where there's both respect and passion for the ingredients.

The cooking is skilful, generous, and heartfelt with dishes inspired by the rhythm of the seasons. Our Executive Head Chef Danny Parker writes our seasonal A la Carte menu based on the best produce available from our local suppliers, ensuring that ingredients come from trusted and responsible sources.

Danny explains, 'One of my favourite dishes from Fern's summer menu is our starter 'Isle of Wight Tomatoes, Peaches, Ricotta, Marcona Almonds & Bitter Leaves'. The fresh, sweet tomatoes and sweet peaches, paired with the tart dressing and bitter leaves with creamy ricotta and crunch from the slightly sweet Marcona almonds are the perfect combination for a vibrant summer salad. We also have this dish on our Terrace Special's menu, meaning you can enjoy it dining Al Fresco in the sunshine, paired with a cold glass of white wine, or Aperol Spritz.'

'My favourite main course is 'Pan Fried Hake, Crispy Courgette, Sauce Vierge & Creamed Potatoes'. Hake is a delicious fish, often underrated; choosing to pair it with delicious, seasonal products like crispy courgettes, creamy pomme purée with a vivid sauce consisting of garlic, fresh herbs, tomatoes, and lemon juice, is the perfect light summer dish.'

Serving a seasonally changing A la Carte Menu, Afternoon Tea, Sunday Lunch and Bar Menu. Fern offers a relaxed, informal Geordie hospitality, and memorable dining experiences, making it the perfect place to, meet, eat, drink, and celebrate.



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THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

By Michael Grahamslaw

Having featured the Gainford Group on our July front cover, it was quite fitting to visit the Vermont Hotel, one of the Newcastle-based leisure chain's premier venues.

Set on the banks of the River Tyne, the venue occupies a unique location in Newcastle's skyline combining timeless 1930s grandeur with contemporary elegance and luxury.

The Vermont happens to be an old favourite of ours being one of my first writing assignments back in the 1990s. In the intervening years, the venue has went from strength to strength and today comprises deluxe accommodation, oak-panelled dining rooms and a showstopping rooftop bar (more on which later).

Tucked away in a secluded conclave behind Castle Keep, the hotel has a real exclusive feel upon arrival with the car park often resplendent with supercars of old and new. It's little surprise



then that the Vermont is often the preferred dwelling place of celebrities visiting the city. Despite this lofty status however, the welcome remains warm and friendly in true Geordie fashion.

Being our 30th wedding anniversary, we went all out with one of the hotel's tastefully-appointed River Suites on the seventh floor. As its name would suggest, these are river-facing rooms which also impressively featured its own dedicated sitting room, luxury bathroom and master bedroom. Each room features its own unique elements inspired by the building's Victorian and Art Deco periods which has shaped the hotel's history and style. Little extras also include boutique toiletries, plush bath robes and slippers.

Active guests can enjoy use of the hotel's dedicated fitness centre with state-of-the-art cardio and resistance facilities whilst the sauna is also the perfect place to unwind and recover.

However, being a baking hot Sunday, we'd booked into to visit ABOVE the hotel's

recently-opened rooftop bar prior to our meal. This has caused a real stir as the first of its kind in the city, taking inspiration from other popular leisure cities like London, Leeds and Manchester. ABOVE offers breathtaking views and is a stellar choice for special occasion socialising. The venue is also available to non-residents with exclusive access a 12 floor lift ride away from its entrance down on Dean Street. In the glow of the golden hour, we enjoyed a couple of glasses of fizz before adjourning to the hotel's Maven Restaurant.

Here we encountered an all-day Sunday Lunch menu in full swing. Lisa opted for Soup of the Day followed by the traditional featherblade of beef with Yorkshire pudding, creamed potato, duck fat roasties and seasonal vegetables. I meanwhile paired the tempura prawn cocktail with the roast chicken supreme. Following our meal, we took coffee and liqueurs in the adjoining Redwood Bar & Lounge which is just as impressive for a nightcap as it is during daylight for a discrete coffee or business meeting.

Given more time, we may have also visited Gainford's other venues Livello and Aveika which are also nearby. In my opinion though, it is the Vermont which is the jewel in the leisure group's increasingly ornate crown. This Newcastle hospitality landmark is in safe hands.

For more information, visit www.vermont-hotel.com

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ZEERA - A JEWEL IN OCEAN ROAD'S CROWN

By Holly Grahamslaw

To celebrate our two-year anniversary, myself and my partner Josh recently visited Zeera Indian cuisine.

Situated on South Shields' famous 'curry mile', Ocean Road, the multi-award-winning restaurant has earned a reputation for offering premium Indian food in elegant surroundings, making it the ideal place for those wanting something a little bit special.

A family-run business, Zeera is owned and operated by the three Choudhury brothers – Shah Choudhury, the front-of-house manager and face of Zeera, and chefs Kohinoor and Abadur. This family-run venture ensures customers are treated to creative and authentic Indian dining.

Upon arrival, we were instantly impressed by the venue's atmosphere. With plush velvet seating, ambient lighting and glitter panelling, the restaurant blends its Bollywood-style dining areas with a luxurious and contemporary twist. These opulent surroundings were notably complemented by the exceptional service, with friendly staff who were attentive to all of our needs.

Zeera showcases the finest Indian cuisine, fusing traditional dishes with modern inflections. The restaurant also remains very affordable, offering a set menu of a starter,



main course, rice dish and dessert for only £12.95pp Sunday to Thursday. Also providing a comprehensive vegan menu, it seems that Zeera really does offer it all.

Feeling thirsty, we kicked off proceedings with some delicious Cosmopolitans from the restaurant's extensive cocktail list. A blend of vodka, orange liqueur, cranberry & lime juice, the classic drink really had the taste buds tingling, and paired well with some poppadoms and homemade house pickles. Customers can also enjoy favourites such as the Singapore Sling, Daquiri and the special Zeera Colada, as well as a wide selection of fine wines, sought from all over the world to complement the cuisine.

To start, we tried something a little different with the Zeera Treat, a sharing platter of two courses – wow! First up was the Kathi Kebab, diced lamb tikka tossed with onion and tomatoes and wrapped in a soft butter chapati. Next, we devoured a sizzling plate of delicious dishes, including Onion Bhaji, Cheese Tukra and tender Chicken Malai Tikka. Offering both quality and quantity, the starter indeed proved a real 'treat', demonstrating the attention to detail and flavour provided by the staff at Zeera.

Following up, we tried some traditional curry

dishes, although customers can also sample a plethora of in-house specials, marinated in Zeera sauce and cooked in an authentic tandoori clay oven. Here, we enjoyed the tasty Chicken Tikka Bhuna and the tangy Beef Roghan Josh. With special blended spices and mouthwatering thick sauces, both dishes were delicately flavoured, and paired nicely with a generous helping of pilau rice and naan bread.

For dessert, customers can enjoy classics such as Chocolate Tart and Apple Pie, as well as an array of Indian sweet treats, including Mango Kulfi ice cream and Gulab Jamun, sweet doughnut dipped in golden syrup. Feeling replete, however, we bypassed desserts in favour of coffees and liqueurs, which proved a fitting end to the sensational evening we enjoyed at Zeera.

All in all, Zeera really appears a jewel within Ocean Road's crown. Whilst the restaurant's location boasts some competition, Zeera continues to stand out from the crowd for its gourmet food, luxurious ambience and excellent service.

Zeera Indian Cuisine can be found at 206-210 Ocean Road, South Shields, NE33 2JQ. For more information, call 0191 456 1811 or visit their website www.zeeracuisine.com



WE'RE BACK TO CELEBRATE HOSPITALITY

The North East Hotels Association (NEHA) is now believed to be the biggest of its kind in England comprising of 47 of the region's best-known hotels including internationally and nationally recognised chains, and leading independent hotels.

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For more information & to discuss sponsorship options or reserve a category*, please contact Nola Collinson - sponsorship@nehotels.co.uk or 07792 382 693

Click here to see the success of our previous awards evening <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=--dZMAoR-yM>

(*Please note all categories are allocated on a first come first served basis).



Cédric Boc-Ho with his wife, Catherine.

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

Michael Grahamslaw sat down with Cédric Boc-Ho, owner of the French Quarter in Newcastle, to look at his story so far and forthcoming plans.



L-R: Rachel, Taryna and Moussa.

Did you always envisage a career as a restaurant owner?

Absolutely not! Up to the age of 20 I had been embracing life in all of its various forms in the company of friends and honestly didn't have a clue. However, after doing a Masters Degree in Hospitality Management I literally fell in love with the industry and my journey started.

Tell us about your career path so far?

I had spells in America working for a 5-star Intercontinental Hotel before moving onto Montreal in Canada. Visa issues led to me returning to Paris where I worked at establishing a superior level of service within a company who ran 20 restaurants. I then enjoyed a five year spell working seasons in the ski resort of Avoriaz for David Bremond. Here we worked hard and played even harder in what was an amazing party town.

In my first year I met my future wife Catherine and in my second year we moved on to working together at a bigger place. This period was packed with fun times but was also very exhausting.

In September 2015 we returned to the UK to commence work on the restaurant project which I long had in mind which led to the French Quarter being born.

Tell me about the cuisine at the restaurant?

Traditional French food served in a small plate format. Down to earth and unfussy.

Tell me about your team?

From day one we needed help in the kitchen as all of mine and Catherine's experience was front of house. Moussa Sow has been our Head Chef since the first year after being Paris based for 30 years and has done an unbelievable job in making the quality of the food consistently good.

We have also established an unbelievable management team led by Taryna and her Assistant Manager Rachel. This has allowed me to develop and improve the business and products.

It is vital to Catherine and I to create an excellent culture and a happy place to work and I think we are achieving that.

Who are your culinary heroes?

My Mum and my Grandmother who were great lovers of food and wine. They were both amazing cooks and gave me the most amazing simple tasty food.

What favourite dishes linger from childhood?

It is difficult to pinpoint one but I love the Spanish way of eating with a bit of everything. When I am in France I love to sample the different regional flavours.

What has been your most memorable meal?

The wonderful Pinxos in San Sebastien. I had thought of opening something similar around the concept of a Wine Bar with food on the side. Catherine and I were both in heaven!

How do you accommodate different dietary requirements?

Ahead of opening we did a lot of market research into gluten free and vegan dishes as well as food allergies. We essentially now almost have a gluten free kitchen as well as an extensive non alcohol spirit and beer section. The industry is constantly evolving which makes it a very stimulating environment to work in.

I'm dining at the French Quarter for the first time. What should I order?

Starter: Boards of cheese and charcuterie sourced from France with our fresh sourdough bread!

Fish Course: Salted Cod Croquettes in a tomato and chilli sauce.

Vegetarian course: Roasted figs (stuffed with goat cheese and honey) and our famous gratin dauphinois.

Meat Course: Bavette steak in a shallot jus (so French!)

Dessert: Café Gourmand.

What are your forthcoming plans?

I feel we are very much just starting the journey and that we can capitalise on our success as we have established a terrific customer base. It would be great to get a bigger venue or open a second restaurant. I am very passionate about wine and also have dreams to open a wine bar. Watch this space!

How do you like to unwind?

In holiday time returning to France to soak in the culture. When here, time with the family in the beautiful North East countryside.





AWARD WINNING SALON PURE BLISS FIRST IN THE NORTH EAST TO LAUNCH DERMAFORCE MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY

The beauty business is big business and Sunderland based Pure Bliss have expanded their treatment portfolio further to become the first salon in North East to launch the

latest medical grade treatment technology, **Dermaforce**, a powerful new force in non-surgical skin rejuvenation.

Dermaforce is an advanced cutting-edge device combining microneedling and Radio Frequency (RF) technology to effectively treat a large number of facial and body concerns, with amazing results.

The well-established Sunderland based salon has quickly become one of the most popular in the North East and were awarded the prestigious 'Decléor Regional Salon of the Year' over a number of years. The launch of Dermaforce follows the successful introduction of French brand Guniot into the salon last month.

Lisa Seferi, Spa Director at Pure Bliss said: "We are approaching our 20th year in business and as part of the celebrations we are delighted to expand our treatment portfolio. We recently launched Guniot into the salon and the response has been phenomenal.

We are really excited to be the first salon in the North East to bring Dermaforce to the region. The treatment is so versatile and can be used to target a number of concerns, through the advanced device combining microneedling and radiofrequency."



DECLARING A DISABILITY

John McDonald runs Eagle's Wings Consultancy to help organisations communicate with and understand people with disabilities particularly those with hidden disabilities such as brain injury and neuro conditions.

John has volunteered with the Maritime Volunteer Service for five years. He has a brain injury however, his disability does not stop him from being an active member of the Northumbria Unit, although he does have to take some extra precautions.

"To be a safe member of the unit I must declare my disability, not only on the membership medical form but also to my Head of Unit, this is so that when I'm on active duty the necessary support is put around me to help me to participate and also to ensure the safety of myself and other crew members.

"My experience has shown that if you have a disability, you can still be an active member provided you disclose your disability for effective support to be put around you.

"I have enjoyed five years of active volunteering on the water with the MVS because of the support that has been put around me and having a disability shouldn't stop anyone doing what they want to do."

MINDSTARS - MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

The number of children requiring mental health support is rising faster than the NHS can manage, with latest reports highlighting that 1 in 6 (16%) children aged 5 to 16 years in the UK have a probable mental health disorder.

Mindstars – a North Shields Mental Health And Wellbeing Social Enterprise believe that no child should have to reach a mental health crisis before they have access to help and support. They support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, together with their parents and guardians, delivering a full family approach. They provide children and young people aged 5-11 with support and activities focused on building resilience, self confidence, understanding emotions and gaining vital life skills, providing them with the vital tools they need to thrive.

One of Mindstars supporters Karbon Homes has been working with them since 2020. The Housing Association support many community organisations to make a real difference to people's lives and wellbeing. Together they have supported many children



in North Tyneside with Wellbeing clubs for children and Digital Mental Health Workshops for schools.

Now, in a three year partnership with Primary Care Networks in North Tyneside, Mindstars are about to launch a new way of working in the mental health field, where Mindstars work with local GP's and mental health services such as CAMHS, to deliver an intervention programme and hopefully reduce the waiting lists and need for NHS support.

The programme will be part of a growing range of offers and opportunities for children, young people and their families in North Tyneside, and highlights how the voluntary sector are perfectly placed to support the statutory services in communities.

Pure Bliss

To book your appointment call today **0191 549 9999**

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ESCAPE TO THE COUNTRY

Jack Grahamslaw finds Wynyard Hall's spa & afternoon tea package to be the perfect choice for high summer.

The sprawling 120 acre Wynyard estate is one of the most impressive of its kind in the region with the 19th century mansion standing triumphantly amid the rolling hills of County Durham.

The estate comprises wild, botanical gardens and an impressive 'plot-to-plate' conservatory restaurant however one of its more secluded attractions is its lakeside spa which is tucked away in the estate's old boating house.

This is a gorgeous bucolic English setting perched on the very edge of the lake which embraces modern wellbeing technology with a range of different rooms and treatments. The spa offers some very reasonable packages with two hours spa time followed by traditional afternoon tea overlooking the lake. I pitched up with my girlfriend Rosie one Friday afternoon to review the experience.

Our arrival at Wynyard was warm and welcoming and we were treated to a quick tour of the facilities before changing. The use of a personal locker, towels and plush bath robes and slippers are all complimentary whilst hairdryers, hair-straighteners and boutique toiletries are all available on-site.

The spa comprises a herbal sauna, salt inhalation room, rasal mud chamber, 'drench bucket shower' and perhaps most impressively, two outdoor hot tubs overlooking the lake and undulating countryside. On a sun-soaked Summer's day, this lovely decking area is the perfect place to unwind in nature and even enjoy a drink from the spa bar.

It is also worth noting that the spa offers a collection of personalised treatments from world-renowned spa experts ESPA. Think long-lasting facials, muscle revivers, immersive massages and beauty treatments.

Of course though, our trip would not be without incident! Reeling from the icy embrace of the Tyrolean bucket shower, yours truly nearly crashed right into the floor-to-ceiling window looking out upon the outdoor hot tubs. Rosie couldn't conceal her laughter as I went to sulk in the steam of the sauna away from the courting couple who had seen everything!

After two hours floating between each of these attractions, we showered and towelled off before reuniting with a little of my self-esteem back in tact for afternoon tea. This was taken in the spa's dedicated conservatory which also serves a mix of small plates, grazing platters and salads.

The restaurant catered nicely for Rosie's vegetarian requirements with her own selection of sandwiches in addition to my ham & mustard, salmon & cream cheese and chicken & avocado – all dainty, fingercut and bursting with flavour.

On the next floor up, scones came fresh and doughy, dusted with sugar and served with an assortment of organic jams, creams and butters.

Finally, sweet teeth will also rejoice at the dark chocolate brownie, carrot cake, lemon macaron and raspberry financier which sat atop.

Totally refreshed, we hit the road with mind, body and spirit in a lot better shape than when we arrived. The lakeside spa at Wynyard offers a real tranquil hideaway and is a firm choice for a Summer day out with a difference.

For more information call 01740 644811 or visit www.wynyardhall.co.uk/rest-and-retreat





“

*...body and spirit in a
lot better shape than
when we arrived...*





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THE SHAPE OF WATER

Drinking enough water is absolutely crucial to our daily energy, health, wellbeing and overall feel good factor.



Water makes up around two-thirds of our body weight, carries nutrients and waste products around our bodies, regulates our temperature, acts as a lubricant and shock absorber in our joints and plays a role in most chemical reactions happening inside us, therefore you can imagine if are water levels are low, it can have a huge impact to the way we feel.

For decades we have been bombarded with messages telling us that drinking litres of water every day is the secret to good health and with good reason. It has a big impact on things such as - raising energy, improving our skin, weight loss and avoiding cancer to name a few.

We're constantly losing water through sweat, urination and breathing. Ensuring we have enough water is crucial to avoiding dehydration.

The symptoms of dehydration can become detectable when we lose as little as 1-2% of our body's water and we continue to deteriorate until we top our fluids back up.

Research shows a 1-2% drop in water can lead to:

- Feeling tired and lethargic.
- Weight gain, because 80% of the time you think you are hungry you are actually thirsty - therefore you end up eating more.
- Unable to concentrate on a computer screen for long.
- Your hair, nails and skin can suffer.
- You become irritable.
- Your sleep patterns can alter.
- It is advised women drink around two litres per day and men 2.5 litres.

While water is the healthiest option since it has no calories, other drinks also hydrate us, including tea and coffee. Although caffeine has a mild diuretic effect, research indicates that tea and coffee still contribute to hydration.

Of course you can also get water from fruits and vegetables. Some have a very high water content such as watermelon, strawberries, raspberries, apples, cucumber, broccoli, spinach and tomatoes.

I would suggest buying a 500ml bottle of water and making sure you fill it four times a day. This works well and it's not too big to carry around.

There are also a number of water tracking apps which you can download to check you are drinking enough. If you are exercising or it is a very hot day, it would be wise to consume extra.

Listen to your body and from now on make sure you and your family drink enough water each day, make it part of your lockdown routine.

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DAVID'S SUMMING UP

Drinking enough water on a daily basis is one of the key factors to keeping your body in good health and feeling alert. There is also a correlation between drinking water and losing weight.

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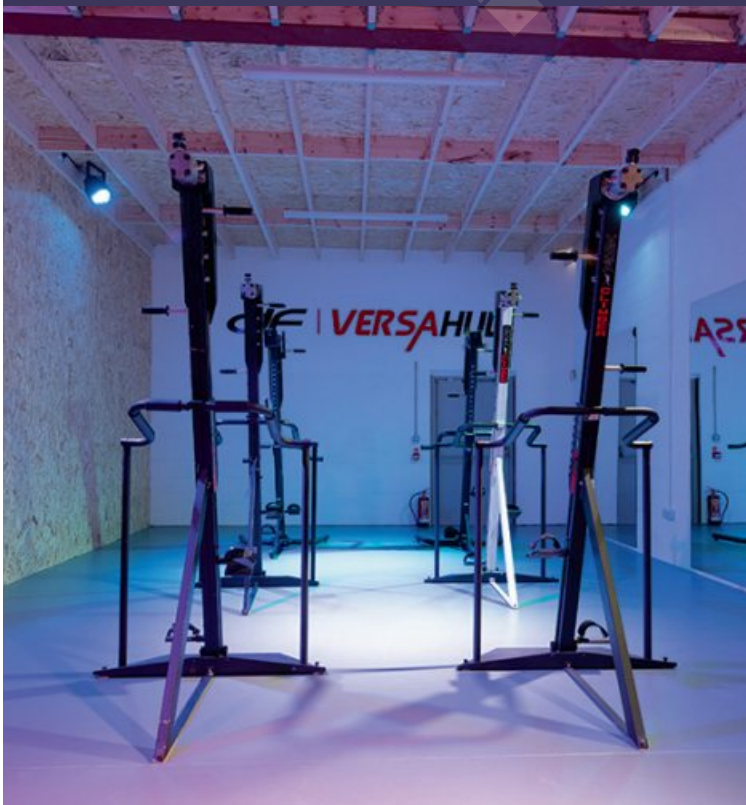
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THE LAST WORD



Barry Speker

from **BARRY SPEKER...**

A week is a long time in politics, the Harold Wilson saying goes, and so it was for Prime Minister, Boris Johnson. Having survived a confidence vote and spent a week holding forth at the G7 and a further inspiring trip to Ukraine, he returned to reality - which was mass resignations of ministers. He had to accept that the time had come to stand down.

His departure from the commons with almost a standing ovation from the Tory benches, was defiant to the last. His advice to his successor was 'keep an eye on the Treasury', stay close to the United States and stand up for Ukraine. To a Labour taunt he shouted "Mission, largely accomplished - for now" and "Hasta la Vista, Baby!". Will he be back?

Colourful his premiership has certainly been. But during post Brexit uncertainty, cost of living crisis, Ukraine War and fuel price explosion, we could have done without weeks of campaigning and public debating as seven candidates for Party leader kicked seven bells out of each other. Unedifying to see members of the same party and in some cases cabinet colleagues vilifying each other. Shades of the Dali painting 'Civil War'.



Labour could only enjoy the insults and allegations by leadership candidates alleging the others had neither the ability, experience, knowledge or electability.

Now we are down to Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss. 'Only spend when you can afford it' against 'Live now pay later'. Can Sunak persuade members the he can excite voters, despite his 'generosity' during COVID-19? Is Truss capable of winning a general election as a new Thatcher?

To be accurate about the saying, it was Liberal politician Joseph Chamberlain who said in 1886 "In politics, there is no use looking beyond the next fortnight".

While the media obsess about the leadership campaign, some advise escaping by having a 'Newsfast'. It is argued that life will seem brighter and bearable by turning off! Not an approach I can accept on any terms. We need to celebrate being in a free country where we are allowed to know what is happening here and in the rest of the world with safeguards to ensure accuracy and objectivity.

My own preference is for traditional sources of information - newspapers - as suppliers of news. It transpires that reading a newspaper regularly maintains thinking skills and 'cognitive reserves' and can stave off dementia.

A study at the University of California published in the medical journal 'Neurology' suggests that deterioration in a person's thinking skills can be slowed simply by regularly reading newspapers. What the researchers do not recommend is staring at a phone screen for hours on end, obsessing on cat videos on YouTube or spending hours curating or posting on TikTok or Instagram.

There is concern that the long term mental, political and cultural health of the nation is affected by the extent to which many, particularly the young, rely totally on social media for knowledge of what is going on in the real world. Such content may be quick, available and entertaining but is unlikely to be reliable.

Although not a player of Quidditch myself, I lament the recent announcement by QuidditchUK, the national governing body of the sport, to change the name of the activity to Quadball. This is to distance themselves from J K Rowling who invented the magical game in her Harry Potter books. The justification is dislike of Rowling's transgender views.

This is another example of demonising people who hold different views. Her view that 'men cannot change into women' was voiced in support of Maya Forstater, a tax expert whose contract was not renewed when she posted



such views on social media.

Employment Judges ruled that Forstater had been discriminated against contrary to the Equality Act 2010 because of her gender-critical views. Such views are lawful and are protected. How obtuse to change the name of a sport on such a basis.

Whilst we are in the midst of the Premier League 'Fast' (other than incessant talk of inflated transfer fees for unknown players) there has been time to enjoy the eventual emergence of women's football. Even long term sceptics plagued by misogyny are acknowledging that the sport deserves respect and is played with skill and verve.

The crowds watching England's Lionesses and the TV figures show that at last women's football is being taken seriously.

The fight back to beat Spain 2-1 in the quarter final was magnificent. The spirit of the players and the energy, good humour and lack of malice in the crowd were an example to follow in the men's game where violence, abuse and mindless tribalism continue to plague football.

Jodie Comer's performance in Prima Facie by Suzie Miller filmed at the National Theatre is mesmerising. She plays a female criminal barrister specialising in defending sexual assault cases who is the tormented when she becomes an alleged victim.

She is the sole actor and holds the entire production. It is very authentic and not to be missed.

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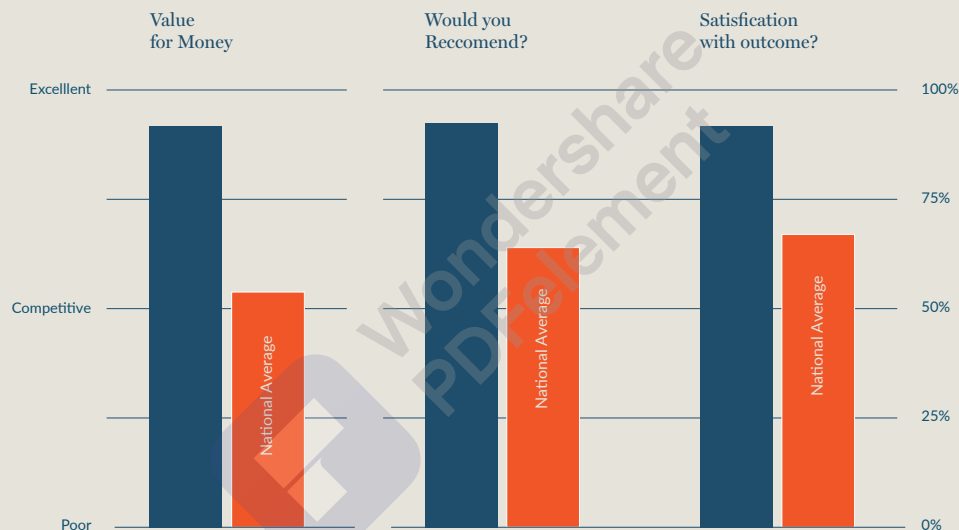
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