

NORTHERN

INSIGHT

OCTOBER 2022

ISSUE 84

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FOREWORD

Welcome to the October edition of Northern Insight.

Since I penned my last foreword the seismic loss of Queen Elizabeth II has been felt throughout the world.

Her 70 year reign on the throne was unparalleled and her devotion to duty remained to the very end when meeting the new Prime Minister, Liz Truss, just two days before her death.

Fittingly, our cover star this month is RGS School, who in the Royal Charter of 1600 dictated that they should be known as Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School.

So in these continued challenging times, a new era dawns...
God save the King.

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

M.J. Gramslaw
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Autism Awareness Event

More than 50 businesses from across the North East discovered the benefits of employing people with autism thanks to an inspirational North East charity.

Smile For Life Children's Charity ran an 'Autism Awareness at Work' event at Harry's Bar in Newcastle City Centre, with the aim of highlighting skills associated with autism, and to give businesses the chance to find out how best they can support new or existing staff, colleagues, customers and clients with autism.

The event, sponsored by Smart IT, was on the back of shocking statistics which show that 700,000 people in the UK are autistic,

and yet just 21.7% of autistic adults are in full or part-time paid employment.

Meanwhile, individuals with autism are generally much less likely to be employed than people with almost any other recorded disability.

Smile For Life is practicing what it preaches: it employs two young people with autism at its Café Beam in Gosforth, and provides hundreds of placements a year to young people with a range of disabilities and learning difficulties who want to gain skills to enter the world of work.

One of its autistic employees – apprentice chef James Middleton – was a speaker at the event, while businesses also heard from autism expert Phillippa Chaplin and spoke to several of the charity's Young Ambassadors, who also have autism.



All Inn for the Great North Run

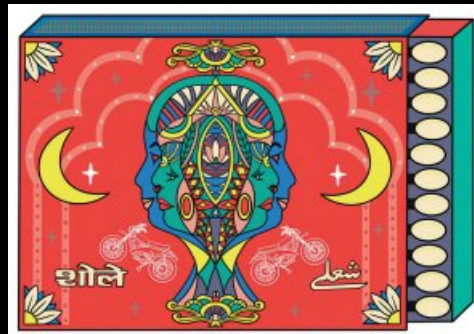
For so many charities the Great North Run is vital for fundraising. This year a team for The Inn Collection Group donned their running shoes and ran the 13.1 miles for NE Youth, the North East leading youth charity.

The team of six included Marketing Manager Zoe Cooper, Marketing Executive Olivia Smith, Rooms Director Kate Bentley, Central Reservations Manager Daniel Patterson, People Director Liz Robertson and Recruitment Manager, Cath Bellhouse.

Kate Bentley, Rooms Director said: "It is our absolute pleasure to take part in an event which hopefully will raise an incredible amount for such a worthwhile cause. Our charity of choice is NE Youth, and we hope our support will be able to make a positive difference to those most in need."

The Inn Collection Group has supported NE Youth since 2019. During that time they've carried out numerous activities to support NE Youth, raising over £80,000 in 2020-21 alone. Fundraising activities included sponsored runs and hikes, quiz nights, bake sales and much more. The group also sponsored NE Youth's annual Clay Pigeon Shoot Event at Bywell Shooting Ground. Alongside other sponsors, over £70,000 was raised over the 3 day weekend. They supported the event again in 2022, which raised a further £62,000 to support NE Youth's work with young people across the region.

Jon Niblo, chief executive, said: "At NE Youth we place great value on our relationship with The Inn Collection Group and therefore we are delighted to be collaborating on such an iconic regional event. Huge thanks to all the runners."



New artworks go on show to mark Tyneside Cinema's 85th Anniversary

Artists Adina Nelu, Sofia Barton and Colette Whittington and Tim Brunsden were given access to the cinema's archive of photographs, programmes and correspondence and were invited to reveal hidden stories and voices from the history of Britain's oldest surviving newsreel cinema still in operation.

Simon Drysdale, Interim Chief Executive of Tyneside Cinema, explained: "We have a really fascinating archive here at the cinema which includes everything from papers dating from the 1930s, when the cinema first opened, to photos from events across the years, like the Tyneside Gay Film Festival.

"Despite all this information, there are gaps in the story of Tyneside Cinema and the way it has been told over the decades, so we invited artists to help us reveal some of the hidden stories and voices from our past."

Adina Nelu is a Manchester-based film composer, producer and creative sound designer. She has created three audio-visual works – called Marie's Vision, Women of Tyneside and Transformation – which will be shown before film screenings and which celebrate the women who have played a role in the cinema's history.

Born in Newcastle upon Tyne, artist Sofia Barton's work uses bright colour palettes inspired by her Punjabi culture. 10 poster prints by Sofia will be on show around the Tyneside Cinema building, charting different moments in the cinema's history, from a celebration of Tyneside Coffee Rooms as a safe space for Newcastle's LGBTQI+ community, to screenings of Bollywood films during the 1980s.

Artists Colette Whittington and Tim Brunsden are both based in Liverpool. Colette Whittington specialises in working with underrepresented audiences while Tim Brunsden makes films with a focus on community and outsider culture. Together, the artists have created two installations, titled Lost and Found, which will be on show in the cinema's stairwells.

"More than 200,000 people watch a film at Tyneside Cinema every year and now these four artists will help us to share with everyone aspects of our story which most people will be unaware of," said Simon Drysdale.

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Jonathan Cawthorn

JS Group donates profits to help staff with fuel bills and rising cost of living

North East Company JS Group has set up a payment scheme to help staff with the looming price increase for household & fuel bills.

Managing Director Jonathan Cawthorn has put aside over 70K to help out his staff over the next 12 months with a weekly payment to help pay their bills. The scheme began on the 5th September with all staff receiving an additional payment of £34.80 to supplement their weekly wage.

Jonathan said "Hopefully the money will help towards the rising cost of fuel, gas and electricity that is due to double in October."

www.jonsigns.co.uk

www.theorangecompany.co.uk



Devine Chemicals relocates

Leading speciality chemicals manufacturer and global distributor, Devine Chemicals celebrates a milestone in its growth strategy with a new head office and a European office.

The company has relocated its head office to a larger premises in County Durham, North East England. In addition, the company has opened a second office and warehouse facility, Devine Chemicals BV in Heerhugowaard, Holland, to serve its European market. The new premises form an instrumental part of Devine Chemicals long-term growth plans to scale up its infrastructure and resources in the UK and EU, and to bolster its customer base in its key markets which include coatings, construction and agrochemical.

Devine Chemicals develops its own portfolio of premium quality products which are designed and manufactured in the UK. This includes DeCAL, a range of synthetic thickener and dispersants; DeTOX, a range of titanium dioxide pigments; DeLOUR, a range of water-based and solvent-based pigments; and DeDERMA, a liquid synthetic rheology modifier and thickener for water-borne and alcohol systems.

The company has also garnered a reputation for developing long-term relationships and acting as the sole UK distributor for leading chemical manufacturers including AFCONA Additives, Allinova, Lamberti S.p.A and Sepiolsa.

Benton House provides an ideal base

A move to new premises in Benton has proved a winning move for JM-Imports, the North East's leading High Performance and Exotic Car specialists.

Established in 2002 by Managing Director, Jurgen Vallons, JM-Imports was born out of a frustration to source the high-performance cars featured in the Fast & Furious film franchise and has steadily grown into a specialist car company that imports and exports high performance cars, race tunes and repairs them and supplies parts to other enthusiasts, with customers including the Crown Prince of Dubai, Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Maktoum. The company now employs 14 personnel and enjoys an annual turnover of some £2m.

Jurgen Vallons explained, "I was a CNC milling engineer with a good job but was always fascinated by high performance cars – the so-called 'supercar killers' as they were attainable by normal people but could out-perform the most expensive brands. We imported our first car from Japan in 2002 and learnt how to tune the engines and improve their performance and the company was up and running!"

"We now provide a one-stop shop to source, maintain and modify high performance vehicles, everything from the iconic Nissan GT-Rs to top-of-the-range McClarens and Lamborghinis, to the highest standards but our growth was restricted by our previous premises in Cramlington. I had met Courtney Clift, the CEO of Benton House, and



really admired the facilities he has created so was delighted when one of the larger units became available."

"What was attractive was the location, so close to the Metro station, the space we had in a 12,000 sq ft unit and the 24hr security the site provides. Courtney and his team were also very helpful during our relocation and flexible in the lease options so we were delighted to take a 10 year option. The unit now has all our facilities, including the Dyno Rolling Road and spray booths, in one location and we're shortly going to be installing mezzanine floors for additional car and parts storage."

"The first few years starting the company were tough undoubtedly, especially with a young family, but we've built up our expertise and global reputation and have learnt to work smarter to keep ahead of far larger companies."

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SALES, SERVICE, SUCCESS AND SUSTAINABILITY

Since the launch of Just Williams in 2015 and the Sales Academy in 2021, we have had an ambition to create an industry standard, to create a unified playing field and to ultimately professionalise the sales industry. And we are making progress, with over 3000 individuals having been through our online and face to face modules – both of which are endorsed and accredited by the national learning sales body – The Institute of Sales Professionals.

The Sales, Service and Success conference, originally planned for 2020 and subsequently delayed because of 'you-know-what', finally came to fruition last month following months and months of planning. For those of you who couldn't make it, fear not, we are already working on 2023, so watch this space! I thought we should use this space to share some key learnings and observations from the day, along with some of our delegates' feedback.



We had a full agenda with a range of keynote speakers and two panels comprising of local business owners and leaders. Our host for the day, Danny Bent kicked off proceedings with a brief interview with Dr Warren Harrison, Dean of Teesside University International Business School and our hosts for the day and yours truly.



Jeni Smith, Netkno known as the local queen of networking challenged our perceptions around resource and the true cost of networking and the true benefits of creating a diverse network

and therefore knowledge base. Jeni gave us a whistle stop tour of how we should network, where we should network and how to choose who to network with, given there are so many organisations, events, networks both online and face to face.



Paige Zima, winner of SAS Who Dares Wins, Teesside University alumni, entrepreneur and all round one of the most resilient women I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. Paige shared her own journey and talked about the importance of structure, routine and discipline. Small daily habits can create sustainable substantial changes and her hunger and passion to constantly learn, develop herself, not being afraid to try new things or stepping outside her comfort zone. Mindset matters to Paige and it is her philosophy when it comes to success in every area of her life.



Our first panel of the day comprised of Sophie Milliken, serial entrepreneur and owner of Moja Group and Chair of Smartworks, Tamma Carel,



environmental entrepreneur and in our minds B-Corp extraordinaire and environmental go to! Dr Millicent Ohanagorom Lecturer at Teesside University was our third panelist. These three incredible women made for a lively debate when sustainability became the dominant subject. People, Planet and Profit led the questions from the audience and the importance of personal values aligned with organisational sustainability in every aspect of the business.

We were fortunate to have Hartlepool College of Further Education, Social Allies, UMI, Teesside University Business School, The Sales Academy, Red Balloons and The Girls Networking exhibiting with us on the day (caption below)



During one of our mentoring sessions at Launchpad, Teesside Universities hub for newly launched businesses and alumni of the school, I had the pleasure of meeting Mike Martin, founder of Odyssey Health and Wellness. Mike and his business partner subsequently delivered an exceptional session for my team on our away day at Crathorne Hall earlier this year. So, who better to rouse the troops following a long, delicious lunch! Mike encouraged us all to think more about our overall wellbeing and made clear links between success and our own health and wellbeing. Following on from Paige's session discussing the importance of forming habits which form on frequency not on time. Set identity based goals was my biggest takeaway from this session.

Linda Moir has long been one of my business heroes and so to have her speak at our conference was a real pinch me moment! I first heard Linda speak in 2016 when I had just set up Just Williams at a Teesside University Business Exchange event about the power of a Brilliant Basics, Magic Touches philosophy. I immediately



adopted the phrase as many of you will know and embedded into our culture. To this day we use the BBMT philosophy. Linda shared her stories of her work at both Virgin and bringing together 15000 volunteers for the 2012 Olympic games and how bringing your personality to work was a non-negotiable when hiring. We decided we were very much in the red circle... You'll have to hear Linda speak to find out more about that one!



Authenticity in Sales was my subject matter for the event and whilst it was our conference, it felt remarkably humbling to talk about something so personal to our delegates. Never has this been more important and perhaps an overused word at present. My recent talks around Imposter Syndrome struck a chord with many. The way we engage with media and individuals has changed, you only need to look at your LinkedIn feed to see how much more open we are about sharing personally and how much more engagement those who do share receive. I am not talking a bare all, but a professionally authentic approach which requires self-awareness when it comes to engaging with your network. Be relatable.

Our final panel of the day interviewed by our host comprised of Nicki Clarke, CEO We are Umi who were also exhibiting on the day, Mandy Baker, Founder of Sail Creative, a creative agency with purpose at its core and one of regions first B-Corps and Pauline Crellin, Director of UK Trade Advocacy and World Events for the Department of International Trade. Sales was described as the lifeblood as any business by Nicki with the conversation turning once again to the importance of sustainability and the ever-increasing expectation of businesses to be ethical in every way. Whilst a debate erupted about the regional dish Parmos, we ended on the importance of authenticity and people ultimately buy from people.

If you would like to hear more about our conference, training opportunities or get involved in next year's conference (planning is already underway!) we would love to hear from you!

Find out more here or get in touch
www.justwilliamssales.academy
 @justwilliamssa01



COVER STORY

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

By Geoffrey Stanford, Headmaster, Newcastle Royal Grammar School

The Royal Charter of 1600 dictated that the RGS should be known as Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School. Everything is in a name, if its associations encompass hard work, service and duty to others.



When the RGS school community gathered in the hall to reflect on the passing of Queen Elizabeth II, the minute's silence was not simply emptiness. It was the heft of old wooden pews, a slight adjusting of weight, sleeve brushed against sleeve and the sweet pungency of white lilies. It was, in fact, a minute of togetherness in a place of learning which was made possible – and has flourished – through two Elizabethan eras. Simon Armitage, the Poet Laureate, wrote in his final poem for the Queen:

*'I have conjured a lily to light these hours, a token of thanks...
A promise made and kept for life – that was your gift –
Because of which, here is a gift in return...*

The gift of flowers, books of condolences, poetry and reflections about the impact the Queen has had allowed us to mark this event as an RGS family; the same was true of the summer Platinum Jubilee, celebrated with a little more exuberance but with equal appreciation of a life well-lived and a reign more than well-served.

If associations with the name of Elizabeth and our pride in the Royal Charter are to be justified, we have a duty to emulate the 'steadfast service, loyalty and humility' which the Lord-Lieutenant for Tyne and Wear, Ms Lucy Winkell, wrote about when signing our book of condolence.

What does this emulation look like in a 21st century school?

If we take Armitage's idea of a gift in return for a gift, that would be a good starting point. For the Jubilee celebrations, all Lower Sixth Form students joined in with service initiatives run locally; this followed discussions about the vow concerning service that Queen Elizabeth II made in 1947 on her 21st birthday. From learning about dementia care to picking up litter in Jesmond Dene; from friendship conversations with refugees to supporting primary school children; from The People's Kitchen to Ouseburn Farm, we wanted to give anything that was of use.

A gift for a gift? In return, we learned about economics and circumstance, geography and ecology, language, literature, memory, imagination. Most importantly we were given a greater understanding of what it is to be human.

At the moment, a most precious gift has returned to us from the British Library. The Lindisfarne Gospels, part of the veneration of St. Cuthbert, sit in the Laing Gallery until December. The Venerable Bede is our most prolific source of information on Cuthbert's life but there are other records which tell of the young man approaching Old Melrose Abbey to offer himself as an instrument of service to the community. One of

the most interesting fragments of story is about Cuthbert's apparently humble origins as a shepherd. Whilst this may be true, it is also the case that he first approached the monastery leading a horse and armed with a spear. This was a youth of noble birth and his trappings re-iterate the notion that those with the most have a responsibility to serve the needs of those with less.

Privilege is often allied with inequality and even Queen Elizabeth II's service has occasionally been viewed through the prism of immense fortune. A way to offset this is through a life described by Bede as 'gentleness, simplicity...virtue and...humility'. Cuthbert gave through teaching, talking and listening to those in every part of his community – 'situated afar off amid steep and wild mountains.' The Queen's devotion to the Commonwealth is well-documented. Two prosperous individuals – centuries apart – bear an uncanny resemblance. Independent schools have a duty to mirror them: whatever you have, you must be prepared to give. As we were granted our original school buildings and set up with charitable objectives, so we pay that rich gift forwards and share what we have.

It seems, as we watched those extraordinary images of the Queen on her last journey through London, that we have re-elevated the act of serving, which has often seemed to languish too far behind personal achievement and material success. Justin Welby's sermon at the Queen's funeral reminded us that 'in all cases those who serve will be loved and remembered when those who cling to power and privileges are long forgotten'.

Armitage, in his final stanza writes:

*'A blurred new day
Breaks uncrowned on remote peaks and public parks, and
Everything turns on these luminous petals and deep roots...'*

In times of uncertainty, we need to depend on each other's help. Our own deep roots were put down in Newcastle soil 500 years ago. Here's to the next 500, striving to live up to the name bestowed upon us.

www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk



Geoffrey Stanford



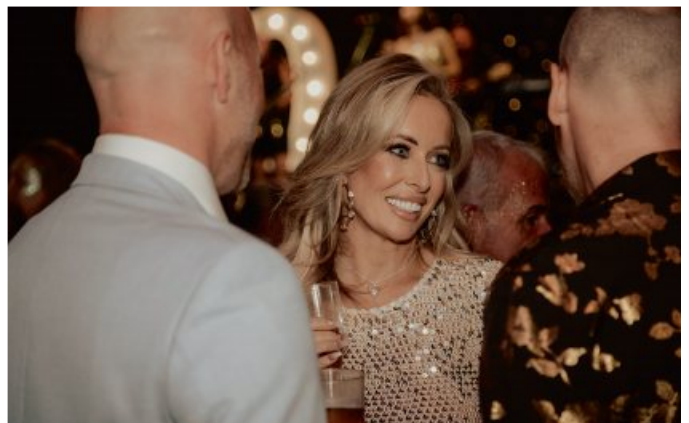


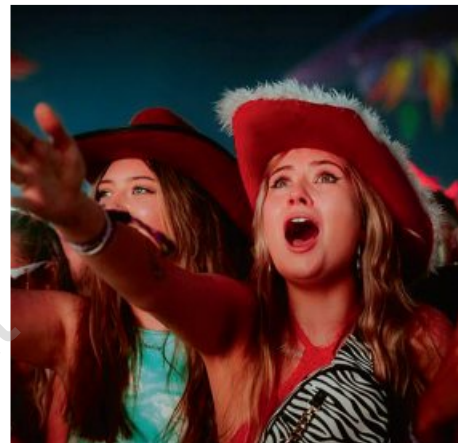
Lady Andrea Wylie's 50th celebrations

From a golden mermaid to fire eaters and stilt walkers, the red carpet was rolled out in style for Lady Andrea Wylie's 50th birthday party at Boulevard this month. Hosted by the 'one and only' Miss Rory, it was one of this season's most glamorous parties so far.

Copyright: Chocolate Chip Photography
Organisers: Claire Barber PR & Dan Cunningham







Claire Barber PR & LooseFest 22

Claire Barber PR: "Winning the PR for LooseFest, the largest music festival in the NE, was a bolt out the blue for CBPR and it was immensely gratifying not having to pitch".

"will.i.am and his band Black Eyed Peas, Mabel, Example and Patrick Topping were on the headline list along with almost 100 other music acts. Within a week I was deep into my international contact book, pitching to the media in the USA, Europe and of course, closer to home in the North East."

"Refreshingly we communicated almost entirely remotely, with almost no meetings, and with four months to go, it was important to get the brand out there and fast. Covid had hit the music industry badly and it was time to return with a bang. Strangely I found myself on the advisory panel for another international music event. I just thought wow I'm going for it."

"The LooseFest directors were something else. Young, fresh, they sprinkled magic wherever they went. Everyone loved it, it was just magical. If you're looking for something incredible in the NE to attach your brand to, LooseFest 2023 should be on your list."

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WE-AR VEHICLES SURPASSES PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS

We-ar Vehicles are celebrating record-breaking levels of growth, with 2021 seeing an increase in turnover by 30%. The Sunderland based company are also on track to exceed the 2021 turnover by over 50% in 2022.

The family-owned leasing company specialise in supplying and financing cars and commercial vehicles to suit any need nationwide. Their ethos around customer service and support have been a key driving force to support the firm's strong growth trajectory, with further growth and investment on the horizon, including new site acquisition.

The business operates a fleet of thousands of leasing contracts across the UK and despite a rocky period in lockdown with a period of closure, We-ar Vehicles weathered the storm and were able to keep output levels high. Monitoring of market conditions and a redirection of focus were key mechanisms to keep momentum and growth during the uncertain period for the Wearside firm.

Kaye Tansey, Managing Director at We-ar Vehicles said: "At the height of the pandemic the business closed for a short period, on reopening the market was turbulent. Our company is split between personal and company leasing, and when the pandemic unfolded the business leasing element took a hit.

We were able to refocus our efforts, implement strict Covid-19 health and safety procedures, and the period saw an increase in personal leasing. Over the period there was high demand from many individuals working in key sectors who had public travel issues and in particular we facilitated the dispatch of a number of our cars to medical staff across the UK."

We-Ar Vehicles have access to over a dozen of the UK's primary vehicle finance companies and deal directly with every manufacturer,

guaranteeing the best service, price and advice. With access to a host of deals from Audi, Jaguar, BMW, Fiat, Nissan to Vauxhall, We-ar Vehicles can quote on most manufacturers, providing some of the best car leasing deals available on the market.

The client base ranges from companies operating over 60 commercial contract hire vehicles, to company directors driving prestige cars, to private individuals with a company car allowance.

A lease is essentially a long-term rental agreement, offering exclusive use of a car for a set period at a fixed monthly price. As a business, this is the most cost-efficient method of funding the vehicles as it takes advantage of the tax and VAT regulations to reduce the whole life running cost of the vehicles and is supported by the buying power of the finance company, to assist in reducing the cost even further. Advantages include minimum capital expenditure, accurate monthly budgeting, improved cash flow, fixed interest rates, plus rentals can be offset against the businesses profits.

Kaye added: "We are not a dealership that holds a large amount of stock meaning that we also

don't have dealerships overheads to cover, this allows us to pass on the discount direct to the customer.

There are many advantages to car leasing from both a business and personal perspective from fixed interest rates to accurate monthly budgeting. We are seeing a surge in enquiries, especially given the current economic climate."

Electric Vehicles (EV) also have a key role to play in the growth of the car leasing market overall with recent research citing that EV's account for around 30% of business leases. Alongside the environmental credentials, EV's come with a host of financial benefits to customers who utilise the salary sacrifice scheme.

Kaye said: "The Electric Vehicle market is also strong growth area for We-ar Vehicles. We are seeing an increase in demand for electric models and our range is extensive with over 90 models listed including some top model Lexus and Mercedes-Benz vehicles. Employees and businesses alike can reap some great financial incentives when leasing electric including low EV Benefit-in-Kind tax rates."

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McGrady Clarke growth Drive energised by six-figure North East fund investment

A North East sustainability consultancy has powered up its growth plans by securing a six-figure investment from the North East

Small Loan Fund Supported by The European Regional Development Fund.

McGrady Clarke Group provides business energy management and sustainability solutions to clients across the globe, helping them quantify and reduce carbon emissions associated with their operations, maximise value from the market and improve onsite efficiency.

The Newcastle-based firm operates across every aspect of the low carbon sector, from carbon

reporting through to delivering legislative compliance around Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR) and the Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme (ESOS).

It also works within corporate power purchase agreements, energy purchasing and managing renewable technology integration projects for its clients, and develops, implements and manages market leading Net Zero strategies for clients across a wide range of sectors, including manufacturing, leisure, construction, retail, transport and property management.

McGrady Clarke has now worked with regional fund management firm NEL Fund Managers to secure the Small Loan Fund investment, which will support its development of new services and the recruitment of the staff required to deliver them.

A number of new jobs are expected to be created over the next 12 months as the business grows, with plans for a move to larger premises to accommodate them already being laid.

The McGrady Clarke management team is continuing to build the brand on a global basis, while it is also open to looking at acquisitions as part of its growth strategy, if the right opportunities arise.

NEL fund managers passes £20m landmark for North East fund investments

The North East's longest-standing business investor has taken the total amount it has invested from the North East Fund Supported By The European Regional Development Fund in growing regional firms past the £20m mark.

NEL Fund Managers took on responsibility in 2018 for investing the £18m North East Growth Capital Fund and £9m North East Small Loan Fund, and has since made a total of 243 investments from the two funds across the region.

More than £8m of the total has been invested over the last two years through the government-backed Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) and Recovery Loan Scheme (RLS) – and NEL is continuing to actively look for further investment opportunities.



The North East Growth Capital Fund was designed to create around 790 jobs in more than 70 regional firms over the life of the programme and offers unsecured investments of up to £500,000 to established businesses looking to realise their growth potential.

The North East Small Loan Fund typically offers loans of between £10,000 and £100,000, and is

designed to assist with the creation of over 1,200 new jobs in more than 320 SMEs over the life of the fund.

Since becoming regulated for the conduct of investment business in 1993, NEL Fund Managers has managed 13 different funds and has made a total of 1,026 investments across the North East.

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FINANCIAL DEFENCE TOOLKIT TO HELP BUSINESSES

As UK businesses brace for looming recession, the Bank of England has warned that the UK will fall into recession throughout 2023 with an increasing volume of data and specialist opinion now beginning to underpin that forecast.

The forecast references rising cost of borrowing and living which will quickly impact negatively on consumer confidence with business confidence and spending following a similar trajectory.

Some sectors and businesses – such as those dependent on consumer demand – will be disproportionately affected.

However, unlike 2008 there is more time to prepare, and businesses have a six-month window in which to review their costs, income, cash flow and overhaul their business plans

to avoid over-exposure to the risks of soaring inflation, rising interest rates, and contracting demand.

Additionally, businesses will benefit from reliable and timely management information to enable early intervention and should prepare projections now for various “what if” scenarios such as falling sales and bad debts. Businesses need to be clinical about retaining cash and focusing on profitability.

Financial Defence Toolkit

Our Azets Financial Defence Toolkit is designed to be easily referenced by any business, large or small, and can be used as a quick guide to ensure you are preparing for the expected downturn and reducing the risk of insolvency. As ever, we would urge any business owner concerned about the next 18 months to seek advice as soon as possible by contacting your usual advisor or a member of our specialist restructuring team. Early intervention provides for a wider range of options.

Cash flow projection – have a short-term cash flow projection – normally 13 weeks – consider additional banking facilities and the Recovery Loan Scheme to boost funds.

Unlock balance sheet value – impose strict controls on money owed and on purchases to maximise cash flow (working capital management). Communicate with customers who owe money and free up cash from excess inventories and sales of surplus assets. Be careful who you provide credit to and consider the use of credit insurance where commercially sensible.

Scrutinise operating costs – Cut or defer non-essential overheads that drain cash.

Manage stocks carefully – Ensure the right amount of stock for ‘Just in Time’ ordering

and avoid overstocking which ties up working capital. This will be a fine balance in the current environment as many supply issues require advance ordering and the holding of additional stock.

Supply chain risk – Assess and monitor the risk of supplier insolvency with a thorough review of their financial profile.

Control growth – Focus on the best performing parts of the business do not use scarce resources to support weaker products or services.

Invest in your existing customers – it is much cheaper to keep a customer than recruit a new one – and then focus on ensuring they remain a customer and build their spending.

Review funding – A good relationship with the bank and other lenders is critical for working capital needs and the flexibility to weather any problems and to capitalise on opportunities. Having good management information (MI) and a set of “what if” scenarios with action plans to discuss in advance with the bank and lenders is a good discipline to ensure they have confidence in the plans you have in place.

It is important to remain optimistic. Recessions and downturns come and go but most businesses will survive, and most people will remain employed. The next 18 months will be extremely challenging for many SMEs, but now is the time to put in place some key changes that will reduce the risks and ensure the business is ready to take advantage of an upturn when it comes.

We are here to help

If you have any questions on the Financial Defence Toolkit or would like to discuss your particular circumstances, please get in touch hello@azets.co.uk

MANAGING THE MANAGEMENT BUY-OUT PROCESS

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



Michael Cantwell

One of the main outcomes of the pandemic has been a change in priorities for many people when it comes to their work.

For some, this has meant stepping away from their jobs earlier than they'd previously planned or deciding to do something different, a situation which anyone who is trying to recruit skilled new staff at the moment will tell you is making that process more than challenging.

The last two years have also made many business owners rethink their long-term plans about when they want to reap the rewards of their years of hard work by selling their business.

The process of selling a business should be something that owners start to plan well in advance, so they can look to maximise the value they get for it at their chosen time, but where things need to move more quickly than that, there are still options to pursue.

One of the exit options would be a trade sale to either an industry peer/rival or a company/entrepreneur that's looking to move into your sector.

Your professional advisors should have contacts who they know are on the lookout for a new challenge and could be a good match for you and your business.

Another potentially attractive option for business owners to take at the moment could

be to approach the company's senior team to discuss their interest in undertaking a management buy-out (MBO).

We've seen a marked increase in MBO transaction in the North East over the last year and have worked on several that have come to a successful conclusion.

Business owners know that they're passing on their company to people that have the skills and knowledge to take it forward, while the management team has a clear understanding of what's required to do this.

A further advantage comes from knowing the personalities involved, which can often be the key to any deal being concluded successfully. Management teams will naturally vary in terms of whether an MBO has been something they've considered.

For some, it will be a long-held ambition, and the pandemic might well have given them the imperative they've needed to look at realising it, while others won't have previously given it the slightest thought.

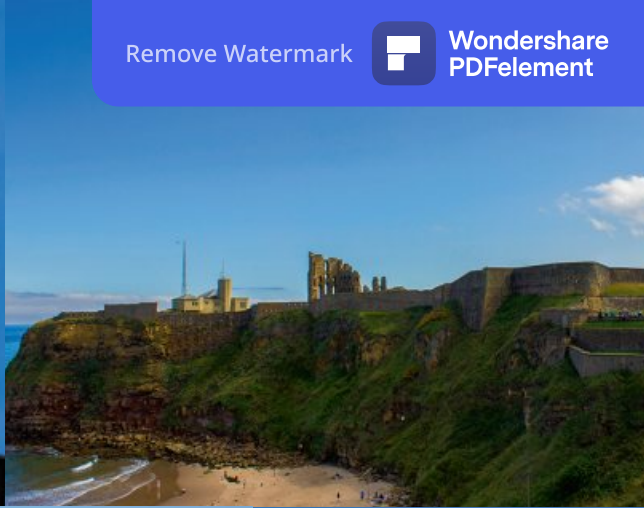
What matters is that all parties communicate clearly and openly from the point at which the sale of a business is first mooted.

It can take a degree of courage for business owners to approach their senior team about the prospect of an MBO, as it's an acknowledgement that things are changing, but there are clear benefits to be had from taking that step for both sides.

Similarly, management teams might have concerns that they won't be able to raise the funding required to complete the deal, but with a wide range of business funding sources available both within and outside the region, this is an area where your professional advisors can help management teams find the most appropriate source of capital for their specific needs, both in the short-term and as they take their business forward in the future.

Working cooperatively on reviewing and agreeing the basis of the potential MBO deal, being clear about your respective priorities and the outcomes you're looking for from the off and having the flexibility to adapt where needed will give you the best chance of reaching the successful conclusion that everyone's looking for and of putting the business on the right footing to move into a new era.

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



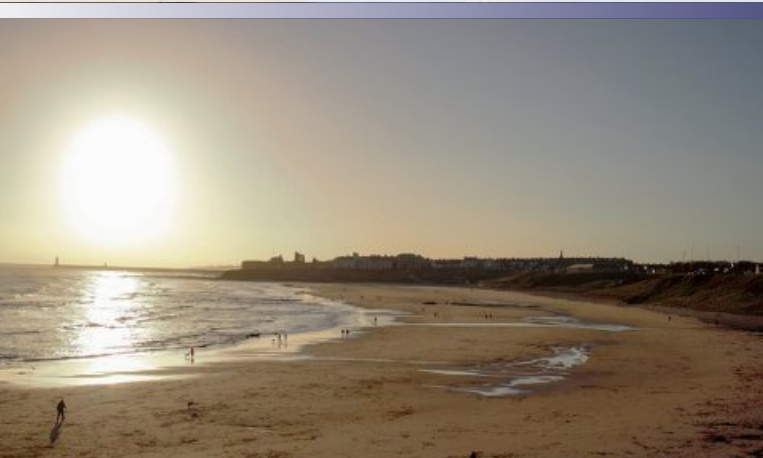
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THE INEVITABILITY OF DEATH AND TAXES

Although this is not published until early October, I am writing it just a few days before the late Queen's funeral. It therefore seems appropriate to thank her for her life of service and to pass on our sympathies to the Royal Family. She was a very special lady.

Unfortunately, death is inevitable, so I thought it appropriate to just remind everyone of when IHT kicks in. This is not meant to be an exhaustive explanation as there is not enough space for that.

Everyone has a Nil Rate Band (NRB) of £325,000 and a spouse or civil partner can inherit this. In addition, there is the Residence NRB which is up to £175,000 per individual. Again, this can be inherited.

If you combine the figures, you will see that a couple can leave £1m without IHT being due.

A point to note is that with the Residence NRB, the value must be 'closely inherited' by your direct lineal descendants i.e., your children (including stepchildren, adopted children, foster children), grandchildren, etc. It cannot be placed into trust except for the benefit of a minor.

If the estate is valued at more than £2m for a couple, then £1 of Residence NRB is lost for every £2 over that figure. Consequently, the Residence NRB is lost to estates over £2.7m.

Anyone with an estate in excess of this value and with three or more children will find that HMRC receives more than the individual children!

Gifts to charities and political parties are exempt.



Peter Rutherford

The tax rate on death is 40%, but transfers of value during life can also attract the tax, albeit at a lower rate of 20%.

The good news is that there is a lot that can be done to mitigate the tax liability. However, the crucial thing is to take advice well in advance. If it is intended to make sizeable gifts, then seven years needs to be survived to provide maximum effectiveness.

Gifts are not the only solutions, and it is perfectly feasible to be IHT efficient but to retain access and control of your assets.

Reducing a potential IHT bill will not just happen, you must be proactive and seek advice. And it needs to be sooner rather than later, otherwise your options may reduce.

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 and his colleagues can be contacted on 0191 229 9600 peter.rutherford@rutherfordhughes.com

www.rutherfordhughes.com

Tax advice is not regulated by the FCA, and legislation is subject to change. The value of investments can fall as well as rise and capital is at risk. Rutherford Hughes Ltd. is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Rutherford Hughes Ltd company registration no: 10431722. Country of registration: England. Office & Registered Office address: Collingwood Buildings, 38 Collingwood Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1JF.



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

Business Distress and Insolvency is no joke.

Directors of distressed businesses must proceed carefully.

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

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

corporate restructuring, accelerated business sales, and closure options.

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

Call Greg Whitehead or Linda Farish for a charge free confidential consultation with no obligation.

If your company has had a CBILS or Bounce Back loan and insolvency is a possibility we can provide early, sensible professional advice, based on significant recent experience of dealing with such cases.

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- Liquidation
- HMRC negotiation
- Law of Property Act
- Bankruptcy
- Partnerships



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Tel: 07900 241 464
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Tel: 07308 662 252
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CMYK Summer Golf Day at Close House

One of the region's leading Business Technology providers CMYK were delighted to welcome their clients, partners, and guests to their Annual Summer Golf Day at Close House.

Despite the challenging weather and course conditions the golfers were in high spirits as they navigated their way around the Lee Westwood Filly Course. The day concluded with a delicious Close House signature BBQ, refreshments and a prize giving presentation.

Craig Pratt, Regional Sales Director of CMYK commented; "Massive thank you to our clients, partners, and guests for attending our Annual Summer Golf Day – albeit not so summery. Your continued support throughout 2022 has been truly amazing and we are extremely grateful. A special thanks to our client and partner Close House for hosting our event.

Congratulations again to all of the prize winners and we look forward to welcoming you all back very soon."







Andrew Marsh

ESG – What Are you Doing? Part 2

Andrew Marsh, award-winning North East and Northumberland Vistage chair, NED for numerous businesses and charities; and successful entrepreneur, spends his days helping business leaders achieve goals and find opportunity. He has a career steeped in technology, business change and venture capital, as well as working with boards to achieve their best. Here, Andrew focuses on the social in ESG, an important topic for business leaders and boards to have on their agenda.

“Last month’s article on ESG became a conversation about Environment... so this month I wanted to give Social the attention it deserves too. And next month, I will dedicate my article to Governance.

“Social in ESG refers to the social impact that actions in business have, and some larger organisations in the North East are demonstrating how to do this really well by having set up foundations. Social impact is probably the hardest of the three interdependent pillars to map and the toughest to measure on effectiveness especially with the current cost of living crisis.

“Greggs (the baker) successfully runs The Greggs Foundation, a grant-making charity which aims to build stronger, healthier communities in the areas they operate. It focusses on addressing poverty, inequality, hunger and supporting local community organisations. Our regional football teams including Middlesbrough, Sunderland and



“As a leader, you should look at how you respond to dealing with trends, your workforce and the relevant legislation. This is a great place to build social standards foundations from, that sit alongside strong environment and governance policies.

“By looking at social impact standards as a company, you are identifying it’s important that better ones are met and that you aim to be socially sustainable in the future. Until the pandemic, Black Lives Matter and #MeToo movements, not many social standards were on the radar for many companies compared to now, so it is good to see the trend changing quickly.

“It’s imperative that commitments to improving social factors are impactful internally and externally in policies and procedures, products and services that affect not only employees but also broader society, customers, clients and suppliers. In fact, the implementation of social standards often helps organisations understand their customer base, employees and stakeholders better, allowing new opportunities to be presented. They also help give a competitive advantage in recruitment or investment, especially if the social standards you set are rooted in the voice of your consumers.

“SAGE is particularly good at this, and regularly publishes impactful research that helps to influence and inform policy, practice and the public. In 2019, they launched an effort to improve the methods used to measure the impact of social and behavioral science (SBS) – beyond citations – and ultimately, bring sustained attention to the company’s value.

“Good social impact involves looking at workplace benefits and safety, including limiting access to or total avoidance of harmful substances and products. Diversity, Engagement and Inclusion are also an integral part of ESG, as I have written about previously. Dr Joanna Berry recently hosted a Vistage webinar on demystifying the business case for gender diversity as part of DEI. The acknowledgement of biases caused by gender, with solutions in place, goes a long way towards a positive social impact, creating opportunities, equality and positivity towards everyone irrespective of gender. Covering how gender equality both plays into and harms social impact depending on delivery, it’s worth a watch and can be found at vimeo.com/748813103.

“Social focus also includes ensuring that anti-bias issues are under control; that human rights are fully extended, career development is accessible and that there is competent and legislative HR support available to all. That provision of a HR service does not just extend to large businesses. SME’s and small family run businesses have an obligation too, and with platforms like Vitality and Pirkx now available there is no need for any employer to not look after employees. These digital platforms give health, wellbeing and happiness benefits to a workforce of any size.

“In my six Vistage groups, I’ve been holding sessions with Lucy James as key speaker, focusing on recruitment as a strategy. Her 15-years experience in board level recruitment has seen her over hauling complex recruitment

environments, positioning her well to discuss how taking control of recruitment gives you a competitive edge in ensuring social elements are well impacted by taking on the right people. It is important you employ and recruit people in the correct way, so there is an understanding of the social journey of the company before they join. Ensuring inductions and terms & conditions reflect that too, is important, as we what offer colleagues is a huge part of good ESG.

“Social impact goes beyond the workplace. Community development, human welfare and impact on the environment all sit within the ‘s’ in ESG, showing how all three pillars interweave, when done correctly. The goals are long-term, such as those that The Greggs Foundation has pinpointed as well as access to education, gender equality, clean water, sanitation, affordable energy and decent work environments.

“Ensuring you are doing all you can use a local supply chain, by giving back to your own local community, by being environmentally savvy and by being a caring employer are not easy steps, but you will reap the rewards. Simple steps like paying a little about the bench mark pay grade or offering extra holidays can all be a good indicator. Robust measurements in place to monitor your journey are essential, to take what you are doing beyond lip service, knowing you are truly making a difference.

“It’s important to close this article with a reminder that none of implementing ESG, DEI or any of the acronyms that are current buzz words is about simply talking a good game. The real action is about making a personal and business commitment, about being present, doing what you say you will do, and most of all keeping it simple so it can be effective.”

If you need support in implementing good ESG into your organisation, then you can get in touch with Andrew by emailing him on andrew@marshbusinessstransformation.co.uk

“
***...As a leader,
you should
look at how
you respond to
dealing with
trends...***

Newcastle United Foundation are also ticking the social box, as independent registered charities using the power of football to connect, motivate and inspire people in our region.

“But what exactly does that mean to a smaller organisation? And how can they do their bit?

“Immediate impact is created by looking at company CSR (corporate social responsibility). Donations to the right charities or sponsorships of events, sports teams or to make a difference to people’s lives in the company’s employ or in the business’s community, make a positive social impact.

“Obviously, people are the most important asset in any business, and they sit at the core of ESG’s ‘social’. When developing an ESG strategy to change your business impact on society, it’s crucial to consider stakeholders’ interests, from investors to employees, to customers, to the local economy.

FINANCE DURHAM EXITS THREAT INTELLIGENCE PLATFORM INTELLIGENCE FUSION



Innovative cyber security firm acquired by global risk services company Sigma7. Deal is added to growing list of innovative tech firms incubated by Maven and Finance Durham

The Finance Durham Fund ("Finance Durham"), established by Durham County Council, overseen by Business Durham, and administered by Maven Capital Partners ("Maven") has completed a profitable exit from threat intelligence firm Intelligence Fusion via a sale to Sigma7, a rapidly scaling global risk services company. Cavu Corporate Finance advised Maven and Intelligence Fusion on the exit which provided a profitable return and was in-line with expectations.

Maven led the initial investment in 2018 and since then, the security and situational awareness specialist has achieved an encouragingly positive cash flow which has been used to grow its staff more than tenfold from two to 30, as well as further develop its proprietary product, generate sales, and drive commercial growth.

In August 2022, Sigma7 sought to purchase Intelligence Fusion for strategic reasons, including the incorporation of the latter's

cutting edge and distinct technology into its comprehensive risk services platform. The partnership will help scale Intelligence Fusion's customer-driven approach and enable them to hire elite talent along with a greater pool of resources.

The global requirement for military grade human and cyber intelligence will always be of high pertinence. Intelligence Fusion's management team gained its expertise from a rich background in the armed forces and subsequently the private defence sector. Having this knowledge and the software tools readily available is a top priority to combat the threat of security incidents adversely affecting organisations that are continuously emerging across the globe.

Michael Dickens, Investment Manager of Maven, said: "We're delighted to see the talented team at Intelligence Fusion enter the next phase of their growth journey after an extremely successful partnership with Maven. Michael is a very driven leader with decades of experience in the global security sector. We are proud to have helped place the company in a position to capitalise on the ever-evolving growth within the security intelligence industry."

Michael McCabe, CEO of Intelligence Fusion, said: "When I founded Intelligence Fusion, it was a new type of tech business in the North East and Finance Durham gave us the financial backing, alongside our other investors, to realise my vision. The company was built primarily

using local talent, however, we have recruited staff from around the world, who have come to live and settle in Durham. An exciting part of this acquisition are Sigma7's plans on investing in the expansion of Intelligence Fusion's team and capabilities in Durham, as well as expanding our operations into the United States and elsewhere."

Sahil Nayyar, Assistant Director of Cavu Corporate Finance, said, "Intelligence Fusion have built an impressive software platform and the combination with Sigma7 will create a powerful service solution. We are delighted to have led and advised on this significant transaction for the North East region and look forward to seeing the continued growth journey of the business."

Cllr James Rowlandson, cabinet member for resources, investment and assets at Durham County Council, added: "This is fantastic news for Michael and his team. Intelligence Fusion is an excellent example of a highly innovative SME in the growing cyber security, intelligence and technology sectors that Finance Durham was established to help fund. We look forward to building on our work with the team as it continues to grow in County Durham as part of Sigma7. The realisation of the investment will enable us to reinvest in more exciting growing companies."

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**Business
Durham**

GCV EXITS FROM INTELLIGENCE FUSION FOLLOWING ACQUISITION

Growth Capital Ventures (GCV) and its private investor network have successfully exited from a technology company they helped take from concept to launch and through its high growth journey.

County Durham-based GCV, which provides co-investment opportunities across venture capital, private equity, and property to an experienced investor network, has exited from Intelligence Fusion after the threat intelligence technology company was acquired by Sigma7, providing a profitable return for all investors.

GCV has supported the Intelligence Fusion team, headquartered in Durham, since inception in 2015 on both an investment and technology basis.

Through GCV Labs, the company's venture builder division, GCV worked closely with founder Michael McCabe on the concept from idea stage through to the launch of the core threat intelligence platform. GCV Labs provided a full-service software development solution combined with lean start up methodology to develop and test the product and business model before raising capital to scale up.

US-based corporation with a global presence and client base, Sigma7 is creating the first independent and all-domain risk services platform, acquiring the highest quality risk services businesses, technologies and talent in each specialised domain. Intelligence Fusion is seen as a key component of Sigma7's strategy. The acquisition will allow Intelligence



Norm Peterson

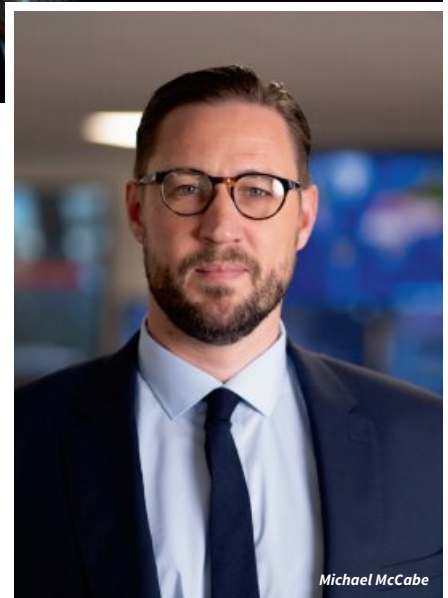
Fusion's leadership team to immediately and continuously scale their capabilities, with Sigma7 investing in the expansion of Intelligence Fusion's team and resources in Durham whilst expanding their operations into the United States and elsewhere.

Norm Peterson, CEO of GCV said: "I am thrilled to see Michael and the Intelligence Fusion team embarking on the next phase of their journey. It has been a pleasure to have worked so closely together and see Michael and the company flourish in every respect. The strategic acquisition by Sigma7 is particularly exciting and we shall continue to champion the team as they go from strength to strength."

Michael McCabe, CEO of Intelligence Fusion said "The support Intelligence Fusion has received from GCV - from the early stages of our journey via GCV Labs and continually from the investor network - has been invaluable. The knowledge and experience the team provided allowed me to realise my vision for Intelligence Fusion from day one, supporting us as we grew.

"I am now extremely excited as the next phase of our journey begins, working closely with Sigma7 to expand the Intelligence Fusion team and further grow throughout the UK, internationally and globally."

Growth Capital Ventures is an FCA authorised investment firm and venture builder.



Michael McCabe

Through the company's private investor network, GCV Invest, GCV provides experienced investors with access to carefully-selected alternative investment opportunities across venture capital, private equity and property.

Norm Peterson added: "Through GCV Labs, our venture builder division, we help founders to build, launch and scale businesses that transform industries."

For more details about GCV:
www.growthcapitalventures.co.uk

TECH SECTOR M&A ACTIVITY REMAINS BUOYANT FOR RGCF

One of the increasingly prominent sectors both in the North East and further afield is the tech sector, which is fast becoming a pillar of the UK economy. As a result, the sector attracts a lot of interest from investors as well as acquisitive companies that grow their businesses through the addition of innovative enterprises.

RG Corporate Finance is highly active in advising on transactions in the tech sector, which is a broad church and includes areas such as software, IT services, unified comms, e-commerce, digital media and cyber security, to name a few.

This has continued throughout 2022 with RGCF advising on a number of significant transactions, including advising the shareholders of Vision Teknology UK Ltd (VTUK) on the sale of the business to iamproperty Group, a Newcastle-headquartered, PE backed, residential auction technology business.

Earlier this summer RGCF also advised the shareholders of Market Dojo Ltd, a Bristol-based procurement software and eSourcing company, on the sale of 50.1% of the business to French listed Esker Inc.

More than half of Market Dojo's clients are based outside the UK in countries including France, the US and the Middle East, which offers synergies to Esker, which is a global cloud platform

and leader in AI-driven process automation solutions.

In the electronic gift card market RGCF advised the shareholders of Redu Group Ltd on the sale of its subsidiary MBL Solutions Ltd to Appreciate Group Plc, which is an AIM listed gifting and engagement company.

MBL, originally acquired by Redu in 2020, is a leading provider of gift card processing and management solutions based in Newcastle, which supports high street retailers such as Greggs, New Look and B&M in providing physical and electronic gift card programmes.

Carl Swansbury, Partner and Head of Corporate Finance at RGCF, said: "The tech sector is increasingly important to the UK economy as a multi-faceted industry that has an impact on every area of our society, both business and consumer. Digital transformation will continue to drive M&A activity as companies look towards acquisitions and investments in tech-enabled assets to pursue their tech-led growth strategies.



Carl Swansbury

"RGCF has been active in the tech sector for a number of years and have an intimate understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing both shareholders, investors and acquirers in this market and we are currently advising on a number of transactions both regionally, nationally and internationally that will come to fruition in the coming months."

Contact:

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0191 239 0962
ryecroftglenton.com

GENESIS ACCOUNTANTS

At Genesis Accountants, based in Newcastle upon Tyne, we offer accounting services such as year end accounts, management accounts, bookkeeping, VAT, tax returns, payroll and PAYE. Basically, everything that most accountants offer, apart from the fact that at Genesis, we want to be part of your business for life, which is why we go over and above for you. We are much more than accountants, from providing training programs and a business incubator to consulting services, to name just a few.

We offer industry-led training programs and workshops with experienced certified instructors on QuickBooks on how to navigate and use the online accounting platform. Our Dext training includes simplifying and speeding up bookkeeping and document storage (on this online platform of electronic receipts) and how to claim every expense.

Business Incubator is a guide for new businesses we offer in your first trading year, helping you avoid common mistakes and set you up for success. We also offer consulting services on cashflows, budgeting, exit strategy and financing. What is more, we can give you strategic advice and come up with clever ways to save money or boost your revenue. Our aim is to remove or automate administrative tasks that distract you from your core business.

No matter what you need, we are there every step of the way to help businesses and individuals navigate the financial journey as smooth as possible. Whether you are starting out or are an experienced professional, Genesis Accountants are ready to roll their sleeves up for you.



Daryl Bibby



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Sophie putting down new roots with Hay & Kilner's rural property team

Solicitor Sophie Fletcher is bringing a range of personal and legal expertise to a new rural role with North East law firm Hay & Kilner.

Sophie has joined the Newcastle-headquartered practice's award-winning private client team and is now specialising in rural and farming business property work.

Having grown up in a farming family in Great Ayton in rural Teesside, Sophie moved north to study for a law degree at Northumbria University before returning to her home area to begin her career and qualifying as a solicitor in 2020.

Sophie Fletcher says: "Much of my work so far has focused on residential property, but with my farming background, I've always had an interest in rural property matters and this new role is a great opportunity to combine both areas."



Hyper growth homeware business Rowen Homes bolsters growth with new Head of Buying.

Rowen Homes, a luxury homeware brand based in the North East have recruited ex-MADE.COM Head of Buying Rob Hudson, in an effort to prime for exponential growth.

Previously associated with brands such as MADE.com, BHS and Next Home, Rob will be bringing a wealth of industry experience, especially from his past 7 years at MADE.COM where he led the buying department, helping the company achieve £371m revenue in 2021. He hopes to build the same success with Rowen Homes.

Rob said "After 13 years within the Furniture Buying sector, I'm excited to be joining Rowen Homes who have been a real disruptor in their sector, achieving great success since launching 2 years ago. I love the energy and pace within the business and I'm looking forward to helping expand our supply base and current product categories, to build on our inspirational, yet accessible product proposition."



NE Broadband specialists Alncom appoint new head of sales

Ian Finlay will be responsible for the sales team working closely with Head of Community and Stakeholder Engagement John Parker to increase the FTTP (fibre to the premises) customer base in the North East.

Ian Finlay said: "Alncom have one of the highest customer service plans I have ever encountered and coupled with their tremendous team spirit and experience, I leapt at the chance to work with them".

With an HQ in Alnwick Northumberland, Alncom are a local ISP (internet service provider) covering an area from County Durham right up to Northumberland and the Scottish Borders.

Taylor Packaging bolsters its team with two appointments

Durham-based packaging specialist Taylor Packaging has strengthened its team with two appointments, to further support its plans for continued growth over the next 12 months.

The company has appointed Katie Skarsgard as assistant accountant, and Michelle Milner as sales administrator.

Founded in 1973, the company offers more than 5,000 high quality packaging solutions which are designed to help customers protect, pack, post and ship their products. Taylor Packaging's reputation and breadth of experience has led it to work with industry leaders in a number of sectors including automotive, manufacturing, engineering and construction.

Prior to joining Taylor Packaging, Katie was an assistant accountant at a Middlesbrough-based solicitors for 6 years.

Katie said: "I am delighted to be joining Taylor Packaging. It has a fantastic reputation, and the company is continuing to grow from strength to strength. I am excited to be joining a forward-thinking, dynamic team."

With over 16 years' administration experience in a manufacturing environment, Michelle will be bringing her considerable experience to



further strengthen the team. Michelle's main duties will include generating orders and raising quotations as well as providing customers with exceptional service and assistance.

Commenting on her appointment, Michelle said: "I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to work for Taylor Packaging, the company has a professional and flexible working environment and an impressive portfolio of clients."



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*L-R: Chris Wilson, Partner and Head of Corporate Finance at UNW,
Paul Mankin, Chair of Corporate Finance at UNW*

DEALMAKER OF THE YEAR RETURNS TO THE NORTH EAST TO JOIN UNW

Newcastle-based independent chartered accountancy and business advisory firm UNW has announced the appointment of former KPMG Director Chris Wilson as Partner and Head of Corporate Finance.

An experienced corporate financier, Chris previously led on KPMG's Mergers & Acquisitions activity in the East of England, advising both private and public companies on a range of transactions, including acquisitions, disposals, equity and debt financing, restructurings, and other corporate transactions.

Originally from Durham, Chris studied Economics at The University of Edinburgh before joining KPMG. After qualifying, he moved into corporate finance, holding positions in Newcastle, Leeds, London and most recently in Cambridge as Director of M&A business.

A former Insider Central and East region Dealmaker of the Year, Chris' recent deal highlights include the sale of Goodfellow to US technology-focused investment firm Battery Ventures, the carve out and £100m sale of AB Volvo's construction equipment dealership network in Great Britain to SMT, and the sale of Cardinal Healthcare's care home portfolio to Optima HCI.

Speaking of his motivations for joining the business, Chris Wilson said: "UNW is a firm I have long been aware of, with a strong brand that is embedded in heart of the region's business community. The firm has grown incredibly successfully over the years simply by doing what it does very well: delivering service excellence, achieving the best results for its clients in a thoughtful, considerate way, and consistently supporting the development of its people. "There is an excellent culture here, and the potential for even further growth. The future looks incredibly bright, and I personally feel like it's the perfect time for me to join the firm and move back to the North East."

UNW's Corporate Finance team has a significant track record both in the North East and nationally. Over the last two years, the team has completed more than a dozen mergers & acquisitions advisory mandates across a range of sectors, in addition to its market leading work on government grants and disposals in the dental sector.

Chris Wilson added: "I am joining an already well-established and successful corporate finance business at UNW with a broad and varied client base, a strong pipeline of work, and some real strength in depth in the team. We have capabilities here across virtually all aspects of the deal cycle, from talking through early ideas to implementing strategy. Looking to the future, we have ambitious growth plans for the business which will create opportunities at all levels as we expand the team further."

Paul Mankin, Chair of Corporate Finance at UNW, said: "Chris has a passion and track record for building lasting, long-term relationships with clients and colleagues alike, and we are delighted to have him join the firm at an exciting time for everyone. His highly impressive professional background means that he is an excellent fit not only for UNW's Corporate Finance team but for the wider firm and its clients."

unw.co.uk



Muckle LLP grows team with appointment of six new trainee solicitors

Muckle LLP is delighted to welcome six new trainee solicitors, taking the total trainee tally to twelve.

Consistently recognised as one of the North East's best workplaces, the Newcastle-based law firm has appointed six new trainee solicitors for the second year in a row, during a time of exciting growth.

This new intake of trainees will complete two years of training at Muckle, splitting their time into six-month stints across practice areas including corporate finance, commercial, property, employment, dispute resolution, banking, and construction.

As a firm, Muckle is keen to support local talent. Among the new cohort are Tom Seed and Katharine Ronn, both from Morpeth, and Jess Gray, from County Durham. All three completed their postgraduate studies at Northumbria University.

Also joining the firm are Durham University graduate Cameron Horton, and Newcastle University graduates Sophie Cragg and Georgia Barber.

Richard Reed Solicitors increases services to employers

A Sunderland firm of solicitors has increased its services to employers, with a new software solution to help manage HR much easier.

Richard Reed Solicitors, based at Frederick Street, recently introduced its RR Protect scheme, an easy and cost-effective way for employers to remove the risk and burden of any claims being made against them by employees.

And now, as part of its on-going commitment to supporting businesses, it has created a new HR system to help employers manage their HR records more efficiently and accurately.

The cloud-based system means records are easily accessed and is also much more economical for users.

At the same time, it also allows staff to view information, from details about their contracts to company policies and holiday



records and management can create and export company-wide or individual employee data via the reporting suite.

"Our new HR system has been created to help employers manage their records more efficiently," said Solicitor, Kat Moody.

"It's the logical next step following on from the introduction of our RR Protect scheme, which has been very well received and has been seen very much as a great way of businesses having piece of mind about the possibility of being involved in an employment tribunal."



Restructure at Square One Law

Gill Hunter continues to lead the firm as managing partner, while Square One Law's co-founder and senior partner, Ian Gilthorpe will retire from the business.

Ian founded the business in 2011 as a start-up and has been instrumental in guiding Square One Law to become one of the fastest growing commercial law practices in the North with offices in Newcastle, Leeds and Darlington.

As part of the succession plan, Gill Hunter joined the business in 2018 and has worked closely with Ian, as well as the other 16 partners, to maintain its position as a creative commercial law firm, which is active in sectors including advanced manufacturing, digital & IT, energy & infrastructure and health & life sciences.

One of the North's best-known lawyers, Ian's career started at Muckle where he led its development over 25 years, then moved to Eversheds where he was business development partner.

His experiences with these law firms encouraged him to be fearless and break away from the traditional law firm model, to create a leaner, disruptive and more entrepreneurial business. As a result, Square One Law has become one of the North's most well connected and proactive law firms, attracting an enviable client base and team of highly talented people.

Managing partner, Gill Hunter, said: "Ian is one of the most respected lawyers in the North and a real trailblazer in our sector and we wish him well for the future. He has helped build and guide the firm into a very strong position, which my fellow partners and I will continue to build upon. The new structure we have evolved within the business will maintain our reputation as an innovative and fresh-thinking law firm and enact our next five-year business plan, which will deliver further growth and services for our established and new clients."

Ian Gilthorpe said: "Having started the business in a recession and then opening our Leeds office on the first day of the full COVID lockdown, the firm is adept at overcoming challenging situations, and the team here will undoubtedly continue in that vein notwithstanding the current economic situation."

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SOLICITORS

JESS FENWICK

I am an equity partner at Sweeney Miller Law heading up the Corporate and Commercial team. As well as day to day case work involving a wide range of commercial transactions across the UK, I also look after my growing team.

My routine work includes dealing with commercial refinancing projects, commercial developments from land purchase, through to plot sales as well as company share sales, share swaps, and management buyouts. We also regularly deal with smaller businesses being incorporated into bigger ones, including national brands and complex commercial leases. Many of our clients are from out of the area, often picked up following referrals and recommendations from other professionals such as surveyors, brokers, accountants, and other lawyers.

In my role, I closely supervise members of my team training them so that they can go on to manage their own clients and transactions. They receive close support at Sweeney Miller Law, giving them the opportunity to rapidly develop into specialised areas.

I have always had an interest in the Law as my father was a solicitor for many years. Several periods of work experience at law firms gave me a real insight into the profession. Despite this, at school I enjoyed more science based topics and anything that included problem solving. I went to Newcastle University to complete a Geography degree, following which I had a year out to explore my options. This galvanised me into pursuing a legal career that led me to complete the Graduate Diploma in Law conversion and then the Legal Practice Course at Northumbria University.

I started as a paralegal at Sweeney Miller Law. I saw it as my first 'rung on the ladder'. I knew straight away at the first interview with the firm's founder, Paul Miller and Managing Partner Surbhi Vedhara, that I wanted to work there - it was very welcoming and relaxed. I worked closely with Surbhi whose supervision and support enabled me to learn so much very quickly. In turn, I developed an excellent working relationship with clients, many of whom are still with us today. After just a few months as a paralegal, I was offered a training contract, following which I qualified as a solicitor in the Corporate and Commercial team. I continued to build the department, growing the number of both clients and staff. In 2018, I became a salaried partner. The most recent stage of my progression was becoming an equity partner last year when Paul took a step back.

Unlocking my inner entrepreneur, I have always had an interest in the business side of the firm, and as a partner was delighted to get more involved in its running and future direction. Knowing that the firm had the solid building blocks for continued future growth, I shared the partners' ambition and vision. I always wanted to be in a place where I would see the results of mine and my colleagues' hard work with a shared purpose to build the business and have control over that.

I enjoy commercial work as it is multidimensional and gives our firm the opportunity to offer a full service to our wide range of clients across the UK. I find it very rewarding to build relationships with clients and seeing the positive results that we deliver, in turn becoming their long term strategic partners. We have always aimed to offer a specialist commercial legal service to the small to mid-range commercial sector. Many SME clients have limited

options when they need commercial legal services - they can either go to large national firms with much higher charges or they use their local high street firm that may not necessarily have the expertise needed for certain work. We fill a vital gap, providing affordable, quality legal services to growing businesses across a range of sizes and industries.

Busy with their "day job", our commercial clients appreciate our partner-led approach, reassured that we are progressing their often complex and time critical transactions. We are often commended for explaining and demystifying complicated processes and for our pragmatism - skills developed through years of working with businesses.

This partner led approach has its challenges as we always like to be available, which often leads to working over the weekends and being contactable out of hours - difficult with a three year old, a house renovation and keeping active all to fit in! However, my view is that you can only develop if you're constantly stretched.

In response to this increased demand and to ensure that excellent client service remains at the heart of everything that we do, we are continually growing the team and investing in the future, giving colleagues the opportunity to grow in and with the firm. As part of this process, we are heavily involved with a range of recruitment initiatives such as structured development schemes for paralegals, solicitor apprenticeships and building relationships with universities.

Looking to the future, I have a what I would call 'grounded ambition' and as an equity partner, my personal goals have in many ways fused into those of the firm. I hope to keep the firm driving forward and be the best that it can be both for the team and our clients - always looking ahead for new challenges and opportunities.

Jess Fenwick is head of Sweeney Miller Law's Commercial Department. For more details call 0345 900 5401, email enquiries@sweeneymiller.co.uk or visit www.sweeneymiller.co.uk

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**...my view is that
you can only develop
if you're constantly
stretched...**

The Big Interview



Jess Fenwick



MY WEEKEND



KERRY KELSO

Senior associate in the specialist family law team at Hay & Kilner in Newcastle.

Do you ever have to work weekends?

Sometimes, yes, if there are court deadlines to meet or a contested hearing to prepare for at the start of the following week, but this isn't a regular occurrence and I do try to avoid working at the weekend if at all possible.

Are most weekends the same?

Not really! I try to fit in quite a lot in at weekends, as I work full time and that doesn't leave much spare time through the week. Priorities include spending time with family and catching up with friends socially. I have three children aged 15, 12 and 6, so a lot of the time at weekends is spent taking them to and from social engagements or activities like football and dancing.

Do you find it hard to switch off?

Not really - I'm so busy doing other things that

I tend not to think about work much at the weekend.

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

Lots of catching up, whether that's with lots of the usual domestic tasks in the house, or more enjoyably, with friends and family is the main one.

Morning exercise or a recovery lie in?

Definitely a recovery lie in, although it's never a long one, as we like to get up and get out if the weather is good, so that we don't waste any part of the weekend.

Big night out or a night in the house?

I enjoy both, but it is good to let your hair down every now and again with friends.

Do you watch or play sport at a weekend?

My daughter plays football, so I'm usually cheering her on somewhere on Saturday mornings.

Where do you like to eat out at a weekend?

I like to try new places for food, with current favourites of mine including Café Andaluz, The

Kiln and Blackfriars. I do love a Sunday Lunch and find it hard to get through a Sunday without one. The Impeccable Pig at Sedgefield is somewhere I'd highly recommend for this.

How important is the weekend to you?

With work life being quite hectic, my downtime at a weekend is really important to me. It gives me a chance to recharge my batteries and spend quality time with my family and friends.

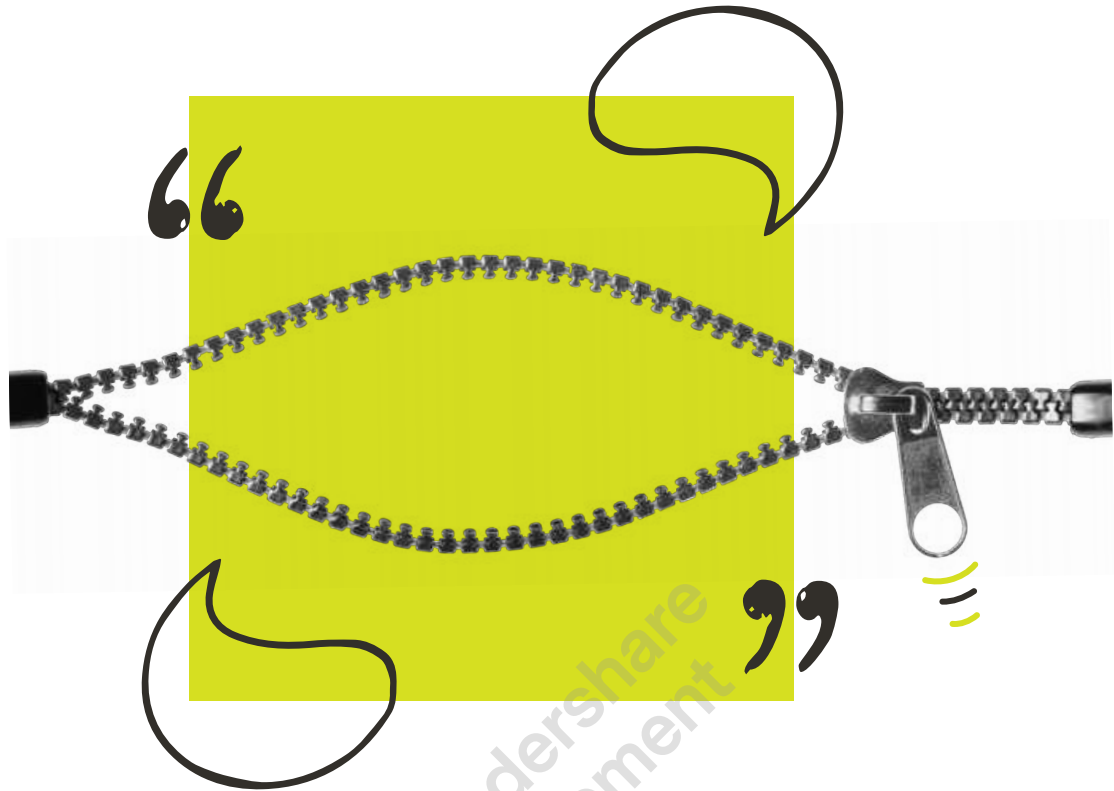
What's the best thing about weekends?

I love being able to get out for long walks with the family and our Cockapoo Biffy, in our own time and without rushing around.

We'll often have a wander on the beach, around Jesmond Dene or on Newcastle Quayside, stopping off for food and refreshments.

When time allows, I love getting away for short weekend breaks. Listening to live music is also one of my favourite things to do - being at a festival in the sunshine would be a perfect weekend for me.

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‘WAGATHA CHRISTIE’ A LESSON IN LIBEL FOR US ALL?

One of the most high-profile rulings of this summer was the so-called ‘Wagatha Christie’ case. Billed as a ‘Battle of the footballer’s wives’ between Rebekah Vardy and Coleen Rooney, the claim arose after Mrs Rooney conducted a sting operation to find out who was allegedly leaking stories about her to The Sun newspaper.

Rooney planted three false stories on her private Instagram account, all of which were printed leading Mrs Rooney to publicly claim that ‘just one person’ had viewed the stories on her private account, tweeting: ‘it’s... Rebekah Vardy’s account’. Vardy claimed that the tweet caused her to suffer ‘very serious harm to her reputation’ and issued a libel claim.

The court had to determine two points:

- 1) Whether the words published by Mrs Rooney caused (or were likely to cause) serious harm to Mrs Vardy’s reputation; and, if so
- 2) Whether Mrs Rooney had a truth and/or a public interest defence.

During the seven-day trial, there was no dispute that the words were capable of being defamatory. The question was therefore if Mrs

Rooney had a valid defence to the defamatory statement.

Was the statement substantially true?

Rooney alleged that Vardy had a ‘habitual and established practice’ of leaking information to *The Sun* and that the statement was true. Truth is an absolute defence to a defamation claim, meaning that Mrs Vardy would not be entitled to recover damages if Mrs Rooney’s statement were true.

The judge found that it was likely that Mrs Vardy’s agent, Ms Watt passed information to *The Sun* newspaper and that Mrs Vardy ‘was party to the disclosure to *The Sun*’ and ‘knew of and condoned this behaviour’. The judge ruled that Mrs Vardy was actively engaged in the leaks by directing Ms Watt to the Instagram account,

sending her screenshots and answering queries raised by the press.

As truth is an absolute defence to a libel claim, the judge’s finding meant that Mrs Vardy’s claim was dismissed in its entirety.

Lessons

The outcome serves as a striking reminder of (amongst other things) the following:

1. In litigation, the credibility of a lead witness is critical as is the preservation of documents. The judge found it necessary to treat Mrs Vardy’s evidence with ‘very considerable caution’, noting that her evidence was inconsistent and evasive. The judge concluded that the loss of evidence in the form of Mrs Vardy’s ‘damaged beyond repair’ laptop and Ms Watt’s lost phone in the North Sea were likely to have been deliberate acts and this further damaged her credibility.
2. Litigation can backfire on a claimant. Here, a case that was meant to vindicate Mrs Vardy’s reputation and set the record straight has left her facing very public judicial criticism and a substantial order for costs. The judgment marks the end of one very bitter battle and the commencement of another over costs of in the region of £3 million.

For more information on the issues in this article or on any other dispute query, please contact Ailsa Charlton on 0191 211 7735 or email ailsa.charlton@muckle-llp.com

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*...I take pride in building
trusted relationships with
my clients and take time
to get to know them...*

SOLICITOR OF THE MONTH

RACHAEL STEPHENSON

A Partner at Muckle LLP, Rachael is a succession planning expert with a dedication to philanthropic pursuits.

Which area of the law do you work in?

I am a Partner in the Private Client Team at Muckle LLP. I specialise in the higher-level succession planning needs associated with more complex family arrangements. This includes cases of vulnerable beneficiaries, second marriages, High Net Worth and Ultra High Net Worth clients and those with cross-jurisdictional estates. My particular areas of expertise include advising on charitable trusts and personal planning for business owners.

As a Trustee of several charities and private charitable trusts, I promote philanthropy in all its forms. I am experienced in helping clients to realise their goals, giving as much as they can in a tax-efficient way whilst making the greatest impact to those in need.

Did you always envisage a career in the industry?

From a young age, I was determined to be a lawyer. It stemmed from a childhood of reading crime novels under the covers! I was very fortunate to be offered some early work experience with local firms which sealed my interest, and I have never looked back.

What has been your career path so far?

I studied LLB law and LPC at Northumbria University. Very early into the LLB degree, I applied for a training contract with a prominent firm in Cumbria which supported me with work experience opportunities in my early years.

Upon completion of my degree, I was offered a training contract working in various departments and benefitting from an insight into the quality work of excellent lawyers in the firm. It was here that I decided I really wanted to have a career in Private Client law.

I then went to work for a niche firm that specialised in estate planning for high-net-worth individuals in London and South Lakes. The role was technically very demanding, and I learnt a lot. After a while, I realised that I missed the Cumbrian mountains and my family. Knowing that North East and Cumbrian clients required bespoke advice too, I relocated back to Cumbria and took a role leading a Wills, Trusts and Probate team. I was offered the opportunity to join the well-respected team at Muckle LLP, I'm looking forward to working together to serve our clients.

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

Covid-19 has had a profound effect on private client practice. We found ourselves immediately thrown into a world where everyone was talking about death and incapacity. People wanted to make wills and powers of attorney, yet our offices were in lockdown. The Wills Act 1837 still provides that wills have to be witnessed by two people in the presence of the Will maker and of each other and lasting powers of attorney require one witness. The legislation did not envisage global pandemic or a world of digital platforms. We had to be innovative and find novel ways to carry out the work and ensure the safety of our team members and clients – executing documents on car roofs, over hedges and park benches and through letterboxes. This was fine in the glorious sunshine of first lockdown but not so pleasant in Cumbria's deep, dank winter!

Who do you most respect in your industry?

Senior Judge Denzil Lush. He was appointed as Master of the Court of Protection in 1996 and Senior Judge of the Court of Protection in 2007. During his career was a key figure in the creation of the Mental Capacity Act in 2007 and the subsequent implementation of the changes in the legal system that followed. We can all learn from his case law – he always

demonstrated the importance of fairness and to be understanding of the complexities that each case demanded. The practitioner texts that he has written are key in our area of practice – always my first point of call when considering tricky technical matters.

Which fictional lawyer would you most like to meet?

Atticus Finch from *To Kill a Mockingbird*. There are so many lessons we as lawyers could learn from him. For those who haven't read the book, Atticus doesn't believe in the mistreatment of African Americans based on race. Because of this, he takes up the legal case of Tom Robinson – a young black man falsely accused of a terrible crime. The novel follows Atticus as he tries to teach morality to his children while defending Tom Robinson in court. Atticus's personality traits combine to create an impressive man: one who is kind, yet discerning; who is wise yet encourages the minds of his young children; who is firm yet preaches compromise.

What is your greatest strength?

I take pride in building trusted relationships with my clients and take time to get to know them, appreciate their concerns and identify their priorities. The Legal 500 described my empathetic approach to the needs of clients as a "breath of fresh air". I have also been recognised by Chambers and Partners for providing "no-nonsense advice" and being "brilliant at helping clients to understand principles and why things need to be done, without making it overcomplicated". Recognition that your clients appreciate the time that you take to understand their needs and how their objectives can be achieved is really humbling.

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

Private Client lawyers in England and Wales face challenging times due to ever greater presence of unregulated Will Writing and Estate Administration services in the market. Inevitably, this growth will result in an increase in litigated probate disputes and we will see firms expand their contentious private client advice offering. Property price inflation means people increasingly come to rely on inheritance to fund retirement. If it is unexpectedly taken away from them, they are also more inclined to litigate to try and recover it.

Perhaps most fundamentally, the post-pandemic world has shown us all that digital working can be successful with the right infrastructure in place. After an initial bumpy ride, we are starting to see benefits for both practitioners and clients in terms of efficiency, accessibility and streamlining of processes. The Government has confirmed that it is committed to implementing a digital system for Lasting Powers of Attorney and has indicated that it is considering how it might replace witnessing in person with a digital system. If the proposals go ahead, it will raise the question of whether or not the requirement of formal execution in relation to other documents (such as Wills) might be abolished as well. Could this be the end of a practice that has survived almost four hundred years?

Rachael is a Partner in the Private Client team at Muckle LLP, specialising in high level succession planning. To get in touch with Rachael, please call 0191 211 7886, or email rachael.stephenson@muckle-llp.com

DIVORCED? THERE IS A LOT MORE TO IT WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR FINANCES

At Sweeney Miller Law, we regularly help clients unfamiliar with the strict rules that are associated with a divorce or separation and their financial settlement. For example, did you know that you could be taxed on transferring your marital home to your spouse?

Capital Gains Tax is a tax on the profit you make when you dispose of an asset, either by sale or transfer. At the moment, where an asset, such as property, business interests or shares, is transferred at 'no gain/no loss', then it must be transferred during the tax year of separation, so no later than 5 April. If not, then there is the possibility that Capital Gains Tax (CGT) may be payable if an asset is transferred after the tax year in which the couple separated. In the following tax year, transfers are treated as normal disposals for Capital Gains Tax purposes.

Unexpected tax liability

This means that once the tax year of separation ends, this tax "loophole" also ends, and the asset will be classed as "sold" at the market value and the gain would need to be assessed. This also applies if you transfer the family home to your spouse or vice versa as it would be deemed equivalent to a sale.

Capital Gains Tax is not usually payable on the disposal of the main family home due to the exemption provided by the Principal Private Residence Relief which applies for the period of time of occupation of the property as your main home plus a further nine months.

Unfair on separating couples

Most couples are not ready to sort their finances so soon after separation as there is a lot to consider, particularly with high value and complex assets. If couples separate in March, it would leave very little time, just 10 months, to arrange their finances before a Capital Gains Tax liability could be triggered.

Recognising this flaw, the Government has drafted new legislation detailing changes to the rules on transferring assets between separating couples. However, this is not due to be introduced until 6 April 2023.

Get expert advice now

Commenting on the changes, Head of Sweeney Miller Law's Family Team, Rebecca Cresswell said: "We welcome the proposed changes. Splitting couples have enough on their plate without also having to worry about the clock counting down to what can be a considerable tax liability. Given that the new rules are still some way off, if you have recently separated from your partner, it is strongly recommended that you seek expert legal advice as soon as possible so that you have plenty of time to reach a settlement and transfer any assets before the end of the tax year."

The Capital Gains Tax rule changes mean that separating spouses will be given up to three years after the year they cease to live together within which to make transfers without any liability. There is also a proposal that any spouse who

remains in the marital home will be given an option to claim Private Residence Relief when it is sold rather than the current strict nine month rule. However, the new rules do not remove the tax issue completely, therefore it will remain an important factor when separating.

Cost-of-living crisis

The new rules will be a welcome change for separating couples, especially given the financial stress and uncertainty during the cost-of-living crisis. We already see many couples who stay together because they are worried about how they can manage financially after separating. The Sweeney Miller Law Family team are here to help clients go through and help manage the future financial implications of the split.

Clients are often concerned about paying the legal fees associated with divorce and separation, especially given the rising cost of energy bills, job insecurity and inflation generally. In response, we have lowered our fees for the divorce process and offer a fixed fee for this element of the case. In relation to the financial side of the divorce, we can structure your case so that it is manageable and will discuss all options with you. If you require advice regarding your separation and are worried about your financial settlement, please get in touch with our experts.

Expert team

The Sweeney Miller Law family team has excellent connections with financial, tax and pension advisors who can advise on the valuation and division of assets, including pensions, following a split.

In addition, we have a large Conveyancing team that can help with the sale or transfer of the family home, as well as an experienced a 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.

To find out more, book an appointment by emailing [Rebecca Cresswell, rebecca@sweeneymiller.co.uk](mailto:rebecca@sweeneymiller.co.uk), calling 0345 900 5401 or visit www.sweeneymiller.co.uk



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*...The new rules will be
a welcome change for
separating couples...*

NEW PRIME MINISTER, NEW EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS?

The Conservative Party selection process has finally concluded after six weeks of campaigning to party members and Liz Truss is the new Prime Minister. During her campaign it has been reported that Ms Truss made a total of 147 separate policy pledges in all sorts of areas from tax and energy policy to the world of work and employment.

Clearly there are hugely important priority matters waiting in the new Prime Minister's in-tray – the energy and cost of living crisis (which we have seen action on within 48 hours of her taking office), rising inflation and the war in Ukraine amongst other – so what are her views on employment rights and what changes can we expect to see and when?

Key questions still remain and we await whether there will be the “bonfire” of EU employment rights which was promised by many as part of the Brexit campaign – but which did not materialise in practice under a Boris Johnson led government.

Here are the matters that we believe that employers should look out for from a Liz Truss government immediately and in the longer term:



Paul McGowan

Curtailling of the right to strike?

This is perhaps the most immediate work matter as the country faces the potential of ongoing and fresh strikes and industrial action from workers facing the cost of living squeeze. Liz Truss has pledged to make significant changes to legislation in her first month of office to reduce the threat of industrial action. This legislation could include changing balloting and voting thresholds to make it more difficult for unions to obtain the necessary mandate to strike within the legal framework. Other steps could include putting additional protection in place to prevent or restrict strike action in public services and national infrastructure such as the railways and health service. A key question is whether Liz Truss and the government will follow through with such politically charged changes and risk going “head-to-head” with the trade unions and workers?

Working Time Regulations

The Working Time Regulations in the UK derive from EU law. Following Brexit, the UK is no longer bound to follow EU laws so there is the potential for the UK to make changes to these worker protections which provide minimum periods of leave and rest breaks etc. However, as the Working Time Regulations are now embedded within UK employment culture and, importantly, are also connected with

health and safety at work we don't expect to see any fundamental changes to these working time rules. There may, in due course, be some “tinkering” in terms of complex areas such as calculation of holiday pay.

Equality laws

When Liz Truss was Minister for Women and Equalities, she promoted the idea of the UK taking a different approach to dealing with equality law. Her view was noted as seeking a move away from focusing on protecting single protected characteristics which we currently have set within the Equality Act 2010 (e.g. protection on the basis of race, sex, disability etc.). Whilst in that role she had said that there should be fair treatment for all including protection based upon geographical inequality and to encourage social mobility. We don't expect to see dramatic changes to equality legislation in the short term and indeed legislating for broader groups based on location or perceived social status may prove extremely difficult in practice.

Paul McGowan is Managing Partner and Principal Solicitor at employment law specialists Collingwood Legal

www.collingwoodlegal.com

GREY-SMITH LEGAL: PROTECTING YOUR COMMERCIAL PROPERTY FROM RISING ENERGY COSTS

It's not just residential properties that are facing big increases in the costs of gas and electricity. For millions of businesses across the country, the impending energy prices are a cause for concern too. But the good news is that there are ways to offset them, according to Dale Smith, owner and director of Grey-Smith Legal.

If you rent or own a commercial property, now is the time to plan how you will manage the energy price increases. While households face a huge 80 per cent rise from £1,971 to £3,549, businesses are not protected by the cap, so do not have a limit on their tariffs. Some UK pubs have already been presented with energy bills of tens of thousands of pounds, which is simply unsustainable for many.

Commercial properties tend to have consistent energy requirements, whether it's for air conditioning, heating, lighting or computers. With these energy needs, expensive bills may seem inevitable, however, there are still steps businesses can take to lower their gas and electricity costs.

Analyse your costs

Before attempting to cut costs, it's a good time to be smart about your cash flow and understand where you are spending your money, especially when it comes to gas and electricity. Part of this will come down to understanding the numbers on your bill. If you aren't completely sure about how you are charged for your electricity, make this a priority – it may raise issues you didn't know were happening.

This is especially important for those renting commercial spaces who often receive a flat

service charge along with the rent. This could mean you are absorbing costs from elsewhere. Businesses have a right to be metered and to have visibility of these meters, so make sure you're taking advantage of this.

Control what you can

This will be the quickest and easiest step you can take. By dropping the heating in your commercial property by just one degree, you could save up to 10 per cent on your gas consumption. Your employees probably won't notice the difference if the office is 20 degrees rather than 21, but your bottom line will.

Lighting is also an area to address as it usually accounts for around 20 per cent of the bill. Changing your lighting to LEDs is simple but effective and could save you a significant amount of money.

Get smart about your energy

Installing a smart meter will quickly and accurately give you an overview of where your money is going and at what times you are using the most. Most energy bills have a traffic light system, with red showing the most expensive time to use energy and green, usually overnight, being the cheapest. It usually costs more to use energy around lunchtime and early

afternoon when there is the most strain on the infrastructure. If possible, reduce your energy use at this time. You could trial flexible working, extended lunch breaks or turning off any TVs around the building.

Switching everything to eco mode will also reduce the amount of electricity and gas your business is using; for example, a dishwasher in eco mode saves around 30 per cent.

Find the best deal

Although prices are high across the board, it is still a competitive market so you may be able to reduce the amount you are paying if you've been with a supplier for a long time. If you have 12 months or less on your energy contract, shop around to compare and secure the best rates.

It's vital to keep as much cash in your business as possible and control your expenditure where you can. That means working out where you are spending the most, reigning it in and identifying the most profitable areas. Although the energy price rises will affect every business across the board, there are ways to make them more manageable.

For more information on our commercial and residential conveyancing services, visit www.grey-smithlegal.com





Claire Rolston

CALCULATING HOLIDAY PAY FOR PART-YEAR WORKERS: ARE YOU DOING IT RIGHT?

Perhaps one of the most litigated employment law topics of the last few years has been the issue of holidays, from holiday entitlement through to holiday pay.

The most recent chapter on the topic of holidays comes from the Supreme Court decision in *Harpur Trust v Brazel* [2022] UKSC 21, where the court held that employers can no longer use the 12.07% method to calculate holiday for “part-year workers” (such as term-time only and zero-hour contracts).

The Acas guidance (which is now withdrawn) said that holiday of 5.6 weeks was equivalent to 12.07% of hours worked over a year, which proved to be an easy way of calculating holiday for a worker with variable hours.

The background

The Harpur case involved a visiting music teacher who was engaged on a zero-hours contract to work variable hours during term times. Her annual leave entitlement was 5.6 weeks each year, which she took during the school holidays, and her holiday pay was calculated by reference to an average week's pay over a 12-week period and multiplying that by 5.6. When her employer, Harpur Trust altered

the way it calculated holiday pay to 12.07%, this resulted in a lower amount of holiday pay being paid to Mrs Brazel. Mrs Brazel claimed unauthorised deductions from pay, but the employment tribunal decided against her. However, she appealed and the EAT and Court of Appeal found in her favour. Harpur Trust appealed, but the Supreme Court dismissed the appeal.

The decision

The Supreme Court agreed with the Court of Appeal that the 12.07% method was incorrect and that holiday pay for part-year workers on permanent contracts should be calculated using the “calendar week method”, i.e. determine an average week's pay over a period of 12 weeks, ignoring any weeks where no work was undertaken, and multiply the average by 5.6 weeks. It was wrong to pro-rata the leave to account for weeks not worked.

The net result is that atypical workers may get higher rates of holiday pay than full-time or

part-time workers, despite not working all year round, as the amount of annual leave is not directly linked to the amount of work done and doesn't have to be proportional to a full-time worker. The Supreme Court held that this was not contrary to the Working Time Regulations.

What the decision means in practice

Employers need to be aware that where they have an atypical workforce who are on permanent contracts but only work for part of the year and whose hours vary, the correct method of calculating their holiday pay is to use the “calendar week method”. Where term time only staff are paid a monthly salary, they will not be affected by this decision.

Methods of calculation need to be addressed immediately and policies may need to be updated to reflect this decision so as to avoid any claims of underpaid holiday pay. Employers may also need to decide upon a strategy for dealing with any historic underpayments if staff raise a complaint.

Since the Harpur case, the 12-week average period has been extended to 52 weeks and so an employer would need to take a workers' average pay over the preceding 52 week period in order to calculate their holiday pay, ignoring any weeks where no work was carried out.

Despite the clarification provided by the Supreme Court, holiday pay will continue to be a complex area and will no doubt be the subject of further litigation until the legislation is revised to take account of the ever increasing atypical work force.

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NEW TALENT JOINS GROWING FIRM

Now in its third year, the Trainee Solicitor Recruitment Scheme ran by commercial law firm St James' Square continues to invest in new legal talent.

Over 150 applications were received by the firm for the sought-after positions and after a tough recruitment process, Luke Burgin, Steven Findlay, Dylan Turner, and Jonathan Moor were successfully appointed onto the programme. They join Ryan Butler and Max Pamler who have recently completed their first year of training.

As part of their two-year development, the trainees will spend time being mentored by some of the North East's leading lawyers at St James' Square. They will undertake seats in several commercial areas of law, giving them valuable experience in a wide range of business areas. Upon successful completion of the scheme, they will join one of the commercial departments on a permanent basis, as fully qualified lawyers.

Luke and Dylan will initially join the Real Estate – Commercial Property department, whilst Steven and Jonathan join the Real Estate – Residential Property department and the Corporate Recovery & Insolvency department, respectively.

Luke said, "I am thrilled to commence my training contract at St James' Square Law Firm and to have the chance to broaden my experience across the various multi-disciplinary teams that SJS supports. I am especially delighted that I have started my first seat in the commercial real estate department where I will continue to develop my understanding across a broad range of matters and work alongside a supportive team. The training given to me has been first class and I am really looking forward to contributing to the continuing success of SJS".

Dylan added, "St James' Square has a growing reputation of delivering the highest quality training through a demanding but equally rewarding training contract. I will be working alongside industry experts who are focused on delivering an exceptional service to their clients whilst simultaneously assisting me with my professional development. I am excited to see what the future holds as a trainee and beyond".

Max, now in his second year, continued, "In my first year I have been involved in a wide variety of work, from advising on insolvency and employment related claims in the high court, to drafting various contractual agreements and workplace policies for individuals, SMEs and PLCs. I am very excited for the start of my Corporate and Commercial Services seat and the breadth of work I will have exposure to in my second year".

Fellow second year trainee, Ryan, added "I have really enjoyed the first year of my training contract with the firm gaining so much valuable experience in the Employment and Corporate and Commercial departments. I am very grateful for all the support I received throughout this last year and, in particular, all the guidance received from the Partners. I am delighted to begin the second year of my training contract and hope to continue putting what I have learnt so far into practice. My time at the firm has flown by and I am looking forward to continuing my journey toward qualification in September 2023".



St James' Square's trainee solicitors (L-R: Max Pamler, Luke Burgin, Ryan Butler, Steven Findlay, Dylan Turner & Jonathan Moor)



Image credit : Life Studios

Samuel Scott,
Employment & HR Solicitor

The firm is also delighted to announce this year's graduate of the scheme, Samuel Scott, who became a qualified solicitor in October 2022. Samuel has now been appointed to a permanent role within the Employment & HR department.

Samuel said "The last two years have flown by - it does not feel like more than a week ago I was starting my first day at St James' Square Law Firm. It has been my absolute pleasure to work within the firm over the last two years and develop so much invaluable experience in the Employment and Corporate & Commercial departments. I am so grateful for the support everyone has given me".

Paul Monaghan, Managing Partner at St James' Square said, "As a firm, we have had a great deal of accomplishments in our five year history - but, for me, the Trainee Solicitor Scheme is up there as one of our best. Finding and nurturing the next generation of legal talent is something we take very seriously, and it makes me incredibly proud to see the trainees grow and develop their skills to become qualified solicitors".

St James' Square is a rapidly growing commercial law firm based in Newcastle upon Tyne. The firm has 9 Partners and employs 35 staff. It provides commercial legal services via its departments in Employment & HR, Corporate & Commercial Services, Dispute Resolution, Real Estate - Commercial Property, Real Estate - Residential Property, Corporate Recovery & Insolvency, Debt Recovery, Family Services and Sports Services.

“

...The last two years have flown by - it does not feel like more than a week ago I was starting my first day at St James' Square Law Firm. ...



People's Kitchen's Corner Shop

Donations of food are essential to the ongoing work of The Kitchen and every tin, jar or fresh produce is put to good use, feeding up to 200 people per session. Sometimes however, a one-off jar, tin, or fresh garden produce just isn't enough to be able to be used communally, so a unique new "corner shop" has been set up within The People's Kitchen to help people combat the rising cost of living.

The contents are free for the "Friends" of The Kitchen to take away. Typically a PK bag will contain some bread, milk, cereal, butter, fresh fruit and veg and things you can eat without having access to proper, if any, cooking facilities.

Trustee of The People's Kitchen, Maggie Pavlou said: "We're looking to raise enough money to help keep the "corner shop" stocked up and also allow us to continue a scheme we started in the summer which was to give away small 'food parcels' to families in need. We know that many people we help are really struggling to afford the costs of even heating food up and so we are trying to also provide food that can be cold or heated quickly with just a kettle or a microwave. It's a serious situation that is affecting more and more people and not just those that we would say are "homeless."

"We want to keep both schemes going until Christmas and hopefully will help to reduce just a little of the financial stress that many people are facing right now."

Donations can be made at www.peopleskitchen.co.uk/donate

New Structures in Blyth Get Council Approval

The builders of the future have been practicing their skills at Blyth beach at a sandcastle building competition over the recent Bank Holiday weekend.

Blyth Town Council welcomed hundreds of young people and their families to get constructively creative in a competition to find the best sand structure.

The event was one of many put on during the year by Blyth Town Council to provide activities for families in the area. Previous events have included Easter Egg hunts, Crafts in the Park, and the Blyth Live music festival.

Chair of the Events Committee, Councillor Adrian Cartie said, "The Town Council are committed to encouraging quality family time in Blyth. We are grateful to Coastline Fish and Chip



Restaurant and Ciccarelli's Ice Cream parlour for donating prizes for the winning designs.

"Those who needed one were equipped with a bucket and spade and everyone was a winner. The beach was filled with wonderful structures and even giant fish. It was a great afternoon."

The next major event from Blyth Town Council will be the fireworks event on 5th November.



Red Nose Signals Christmas Event for Black and White Hero

Tickets for the Christmas at the Cathedral are now on sale. This year, the Christmas at the Cathedral concert will take place on Thursday, 15th December at St Nicholas Cathedral in Newcastle and, for the fifth year, funds will be raised for the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation to help find more effective ways to detect and treat cancer.

Jonathan Wallis from Barnard Castle is once again organising the show which will see a host of celebrity and local stars perform songs, readings, and comedy sketches all with a Christmas theme.

"After a gap of two years due to the pandemic, we are back bigger and better than ever to kickstart everyone's Christmas and raise funds for such a worthwhile and life changing charity.

"We can't say who is performing as we like to keep this a closely guarded secret as it adds mystery and excitement to an already fantastic night."

Lady Elsie says: "I look forward to this event every year and I'm grateful that the show's in aid of our Foundation once again.

"Christmas at the Cathedral has become a wonderful festive tradition for me and lots of other people, too. The entertainment is always marvellous, and the venue gives it a very special atmosphere."

Christmas at the Cathedral will take place on 15th December. Doors 6.30pm, start 7pm.

Tickets are now available from the Theatre Royal box office on 0844 811 2121.

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CHARITY OF THE MONTH



THE PEOPLE'S KITCHEN

Why was the charity founded?

The People's Kitchen was formed in 1985 when founder Alison Kay heard about the death of a homeless man, a year later, Alison had a team of 40 volunteers and together they opened the first People's Kitchen to support the homeless and vulnerable by offering food, clothes, and friendship. We now have hundreds of volunteers and serve around 250 meals per day.

Which area do you cover?

Our friends come from all across Tyneside to use our facilities, get a hot meal and be amongst people who care.

What type of fundraising events do you have?

We operate entirely on a workforce of volunteers. No-one gets paid a penny for the work that they do within the Kitchen. We receive no government funding and as such we are totally reliant on the goodwill and generosity of the people, the communities and the business within our region who support us.

We run one annual Christmas Campaign called "Feed a Friend for a Fiver" and this generates the funds to provide food throughout the Christmas period and beyond.

This year we also put in a PK GNR team – our first ever attempt to do this – we had 30 volunteers who ran for us – we are still collecting the sponsorship money from this but the money raised will be going towards keeping our free 'Corner Shop' open.

We work with organisations and businesses to become their 'Charity of the Year', we work with schools and churches who support us with Harvest Festival donations and regular giving and we also offer Corporate Volunteering opportunities to try and foster better links with businesses who can support us.

How did you adapt during the Coronavirus pandemic?

During COVID, a limited service was introduced with takeaway meals distributed at our doors under stringent social distancing regulations. We are now serving food 365 days of the year, five nights a week and two mornings so that people can get a hot meal every single day. We no longer go out with food vans but invite all of our Friends into the Kitchen every

day so that they can not only get a hot meal but they can also, use our bathrooms, get a hot shower and just have a sit down for a little while.

Being warm and clean is so important especially as the cost of fuel bills rise and we've also found that if people feel good about themselves then their mental health improves too.

What have been your proudest moments so far?

We were awarded The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2014 for which we are all immensely proud. However, it is the feedback from our Friends that really keeps us all going. Our volunteers feel proud every time they serve food, chat to our friends, or help them with a problem. – we know we are not fixing the bigger underlying social issues, and that really, we are a sticking plaster, but we try to make life just a little bit better for people, every day.

Who are your trustees?

We have a Board of Trustees made up of eight people who have a wide range of experience both from within the charitable sector and between them they have the specific skills to ensure the charity operates within its guiding principles, always putting the needs of our Friends first. However, it is our Team Leaders who manage the day to day operation of the Kitchen.

What are you currently working on?

Our annual "Feed a Friend for a Fiver" Christmas campaign is about to launch. Just £5 can make such a difference to the lives of our friends. You can donate here: www.peopleskitchen.co.uk/donate

What does the future hold?

With ever rising costs we are seeing an increase in the number of meals we serve each day which tells us that more and more people need our help. As ever, we will adapt to the demand and together with our fabulous volunteers and kind hearted members of the public and businesses we will continue to be there for the people who need us.

How do you get involved?

We regularly look for additional volunteers to join our teams – our current vacancies are posted on our website www.peopleskitchen.co.uk

You can donate to us in a number of ways -again details can be found www.peopleskitchen.co.uk



Actors Left Behind Form Stage Right

A group of adult acting enthusiasts have come together to form a brand-new adult actors club based in South Tyneside. After completing stage and film acting workshops at one of the region's theatres and realising that there was no obvious place to continue their training, the group decided to form their own acting cooperative.

George Heron is the creator of the newly formed Stage Right Newcastle, himself a keen actor, having appeared in ITV Drama's such as Vera & Malpractice.

He said 'After the 20-week long workshops we all wanted more but looking around and speaking to many of the theatres in the area, I quickly learned that whilst there were workshops and support groups for young people or children, there was literally nothing on offer for adults. It was then that we came up with the idea of creating our very own group.'

Now, the group meets once a week at the Little Theatre in Cleadon Village, and they are looking for other people to join them.

At the weekly meetings, the group discuss topics such as getting an agent, becoming a supporting artist, creating showreels as well as hearing talks from guests from the world of acting, TV, and local playwrights and directors who offer their experiences and knowledge to the group.

www.stagerightnewcastle.com



North East Autism Society supports more North Tynside families

Families in North Tyneside that are navigating a new autism diagnosis are getting extra support thanks to a longstanding regional charity and a four-figure grant from the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation.



The gloves are on!

Union Jab prides itself on its tagline - All Boxing Together - as it's the basis upon which all classes, training, and the community itself are built. Anyone, from any background, with any degree of fitness or experience (or lack of), are welcome to take part and learn a new skill.

This is especially true when it comes to their 'Exhibition Only' boxing shows, an evening of boxing that places Union Jab members in the ring in front of their friends and family to demonstrate just how hard they have worked over the previous weeks and months in partnership with a matched opponent.

As a former competitive boxer, founder and head coach Charlie Cooke found no joy in the competitive aspects of boxing and the risk of damage that came with it. Therefore, instead of letting mis-matched opponents loose on each other in a quest for a paper victory, he opted to promote a show where there are no winners or losers and instead the focus is on exhibiting fantastic technical boxing where the use of haymakers and wild swings are prohibited.

Charlie said of the show, "What I love about boxing is the movement, the footwork, the ability to float on your feet while still being in range to hit without being hit. It's a high stakes game of chess that takes more mental skill than it does brute force."

By being an exhibition only event partners will even spar with each other before the show and are in there to show each other off, not show each other up.

The next Union Jab show, titled 'The Gloves Are On', will be taking place on Saturday the 11th of February 2023 - plenty of time for all participants to learn their craft, hone their skills, and get in great shape to take part in the safest and most enjoyable boxing show around. Learn more at unionjab.com and sign up to take part today!

The North East Autism Society has been working to empower and support autistic children, young people, adults and their families for more than 40 years, and supports around 4,500 individuals around the region every year.

The charity is now using a £3,000 grant to set up a new weekly parent and toddler support group at the Riverside Children's Centre on the Meadow Well Estate in North Shields for families that are either going through or have received an autism diagnosis.

The play-based group, which forms part of the charity's wide-ranging Family Support service, provides an opportunity for up to ten families at a time to get support and advice on their individual situations, as well as information on what autism is and could mean in practice to their family situation.

The funding is being provided through the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, 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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EMPLOYEE BENEFITS... TIME FOR A REFRESH?

Employee benefits for some businesses are steeped in history, have remained the same for a number of years, or are based on a collection of bolstered on regulars such as Cycle to Work and discounted eye care scheme.

Please don't get me wrong, both of those examples are perfectly relevant and attractive benefits however, to remain competitive and to stand out from the crowd – and to demonstrate and live your company values – now may be the time to dig them back out and question if they are still representative of your business and appeal to the market we are in right now.

It all ties into your EVP - Employee Value Proposition – which is the offer you give to an employee in exchange for their skills and experience. This external proposition is what will (or won't) engage and entice talent and is integral to the identity, engagement, and retention for your current team.

So, how can your 'offer' to current team members and new candidates support and promote your company values, and what benefits are possible options to consider demonstrating the type of employer you are and want to be?

If you say your business develops team members – how does your benefits support this? Do you offer a mentoring scheme, CPD opportunities, memberships for industry leading professional bodies?

If one of your values is community how do your benefits illustrate this? Have you considered offering volunteering days, charity events, discounted schemes with local retailers and businesses?



Sam Spoons

If wellbeing is an important aspect of your culture...benefits to consider could include Employee Assistance programmes, a mental health first aider present onsite, flexible working options, annual financial planning advice, animals in the workplace and buddy systems.

As a recruiter, the opportunity to share those reflective benefits on an advert and with a prospective employee maximises the opportunity to 'sell' the Employer brand and to engage with those who share the same values, priorities and outlook – hence improving retention and reaffirming your unique culture

to stand out from competitors.

Also remember your current team have bags of personal insight to share. Don't forget to ask them...

And the benefit for all of this? The financial investment is not necessarily costly.

Food for thought? Here at Talentheads we offer our partners EVP sessions as part of our ongoing in-house recruitment support. Give us a call on 0191 300 8688 or contact hello@talentheads.co.uk for further information.



Kathryn Rodgers

face2faceHR

Kathryn Rodgers - Newcastle

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

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

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

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



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



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Suzanne Duncan

£2.7 MILLION AWARDED TO PLUG 'HIDDEN' HEALTHCARE SKILLS GAPS IN THE NORTH EAST

In 2019, the government pledged to recruit an additional 50,000 nurses to the NHS by 2024. But what about other roles – like pharmacists and healthcare scientists – which form the 'hidden backbone' of the health sector?

A new group has secured £2.7 million to increase healthcare training provision and align it with the needs of employers in the North East. Suzanne Duncan, Principal and CEO, East Durham College – and chair of The North East Regional Health Skills Hub – explains.

The health sector is the biggest employer in the North East and in the UK. Globally, the NHS is the eighth biggest employer – only exceeded by organisations like the US Department of Defense and the People's Liberation Army of China.

But we know that a maturing workforce is leading to skills shortages and that both public and private sector health employers are struggling to recruit the people they need.

And this is by no means limited to the more obvious roles, like the 50,000 nurses that the government has promised. It's also the many, many behind-the-scenes roles like healthcare scientists, pharmacists and manufacturers which are the backbone of the NHS and our health sector.

In the North East, we recognised that the needs of the health sector are so great that no one organisation or college can meet them

individually – we needed to work collaboratively to solve skills shortages, with a focus on these 'hidden' roles.

So, 18 months ago, the health and education sectors came together as The North East Regional Health Skills Hub. The group includes FE colleges, the University of Sunderland, private training provider Learning Curve, Health Education England and the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (North East LEP).

The group has a strong relationship with Health Education England – facilitated by the North East LEP – who have shared data with us about the shortages of skilled workers for particular jobs. Thanks to their insight, the hub can pinpoint roles like aseptic pharmacy technicians which are in real demand and which will continue to be needed in our region in the future.

It's all well and good us gathering and sharing this information, but it means nothing if we don't translate it into action. So we put in a bid for funding to the Department for Education and succeeded in securing £2.7 million for the region. This is being used to increase our training provision in priority areas, and build college facilities like immersive suites, science manufacturing labs and pharmaceutical spaces.

Parallel to this we're working with schools to promote all the careers available across the health sector to pupils. When a young person decides they want to be an engineer, do they realise there are engineering roles in the NHS? And the same goes for the huge number of back office functions in healthcare, like HR and digital roles. Improved careers advice and guidance will help young people access these opportunities.

There will also be flexible learning programmes to help people who are already in the workforce to upskill. Those progression pathways aren't currently here in our region – for example, trainees are travelling as far as Cornwall to qualify as audiologists instead of being able to learn closer to home. Not only is this expensive, but for a single parent or someone with caring responsibilities, it's a huge barrier to them progressing.

Between now and March 2023, the groundwork will be put in place; people will start to see improved careers guidance in schools from next spring and new T-level and apprenticeship pathways will be on offer from April.

What impact will all of this have on our region? Young people will be better informed about career opportunities in our biggest-employing sector. Businesses and the NHS in the North East will find it easier to fill vacancies and upskill their staff. And for individuals, not having to travel huge distances for training will open up opportunities to so many more people.

Our work won't stop next spring; we will move onto the next set of priorities. We have great education providers in the North East, doing great things for our communities. But now we will achieve so much more by working together.

Businesses can support this work by hosting apprenticeship and T-level placements, or working with schools and colleges to inform young people about career opportunities. Email kim.smith@nelep.co.uk to get involved.

TYNE TUNNELS RECORDS BUSIEST-EVER MONTH AND ANNOUNCES COMPLETION OF ALL WORKS



The major, multi-million-pound project to modernise and transition the Tyne Tunnels to open-road-tolling is now complete, with new, fixed road signage signalling an end to all the works - as the river crossing records its busiest-ever month.

Bucking the trend of traffic levels across the rest of the region - which have remained broadly flat - the number of vehicles using the tunnels are now at record levels, with July 2022 being the busiest month in the toll-road's 55-year history.

Just under 1.6 million vehicles (1,594,658) passed through the tunnels in July. The tunnels also recorded its busiest ever 'normal day' (i.e., a weekday, during term-time) when over 62,500 vehicles travelled through the tunnels on 15th July.

Permanent, blue signs informing drivers it is a toll road, to pay by midnight the next day, and how to pay, are now in place - which were designed with the help of a panel of the general public.

Data recently released shows six months since the introduction of open-road-tolling, journey times are down; CO₂ emissions are slashed; and the number of people paying their toll on time, is rising.

Under the new system, cameras automatically register journeys and payment needs to be made online, by phone or at a PayPoint.

TT2's CEO, Philip Smith, which operates the Tyne Tunnels, says: "By removing the toll booths, we have been able to shave valuable time off journeys which is all the more important now that we are experiencing record levels of vehicles passing through. Open-road-tolling is helping us keep queues as short as possible during peak times.

"The fact that traffic levels have remained broadly the same on other regional road hotspots, yet the Tyne Tunnels traffic is rising,

is testament to the success of the switch to open-road-tolling. The tunnels have become more popular because journeys are quicker, smoother and the expanded range of payment options has increased convenience for many drivers.

"There is now also less congestion, reduced emissions and better local air quality which are some of the other key reasons behind the decision to ditch the toll-booths."

Northbound journeys are 33 seconds faster and southbound trips, 29 seconds quicker – on average across a day than before the new system was introduced (June 2022 figures).

CO₂ emissions have been reduced by 90% since open-road-tolling went live. Each month, the CO₂ saving equates to around 2,640 return passenger flights from Newcastle, to New York.

The percentage of customers pre-paying for their journey has risen from 60% in June 2021 to over 77% in June this year.

www.tt2.co.uk



IN CONVERSATION WITH...



MARTIN ELLISON

Business development director at Elanders UK

What is your role at Elanders UK?

As business development director, I am responsible for all of the commercial aspects of business in the UK and have 16 people within my team.

Elanders UK is part of Elanders Group, a global partner for integrated supply chain solutions with over 90 operations across four continents. It provides flexible and agile solutions for complex supply chains, providing customers with value-added services such as print and packaging resources which are integrated into its core business model.

What do you enjoy most about your role?

It is diverse. We have four locations within the UK, our headquarters in North Tyneside, Bellshill, Scotland, our dedicated packaging

site, swing tag and fulfilment business based in Nottingham and our automotive supply chain site in Birmingham.

I enjoy travelling across the four sites and meeting the wider team. Elanders UK has a unique offering with the ability to provide customers a fully integrated solution, from printing and packaging to storage, pick and pack, kitting, shipping and last-mile delivery. Elanders' Global presence makes us the ideal partner for importing and exporting worldwide. As you can imagine we work within a fast-paced environment so there is never a dull moment.

What's your proudest business achievement?

In a former role, I met the Queen when representing Motability. As a national charity, enhancing the lives of disabled people, her majesty was chief patron.

I have also felt extremely proud when watching team members who I have recruited in the past, go on to achieve great things in their careers.

What challenges have you encountered?

Finding the right people is a challenge. Expectations between customer and client can also be challenged. This runs both ways in what we and they expect.

How has the industry changed?

In many ways. Expectations are now more demanding. Electronic changes have had a significant impact on the way we all operate. Timelines are much shorter and actions are more immediate. This brings both positives and negatives.

What would you like to achieve moving forward with Elanders?

To continue our progression routes within the company so that we can continue to attract and retain our people. If someone asked me why you would want to work with Elanders, my answer would be why wouldn't you.

What mantra do you aspire to do business by?

I think people who know me well and work with me would know that I very much have the mindset of 'can do will do.'

How do you like to unwind away from work?

I am a big fan of motorsport and football and my two spaniels also help to keep me fit.

www.elanders.co.uk

IN CONVERSATION WITH...

SOPHIE RICHARDSON

*Assistant apprenticeship manager at
EN:Able Futures CIC*

What services does EN:Able Futures provide?

EN:Able Futures has recently entered the North East market and is the only organisation providing a Flexi-Job apprenticeship service in construction. We will be recruiting apprentices for firms operating in the construction, civil engineering and built environment sectors from the Tees Valley to the Scottish Borders.

We operate on a not-for-profit basis and are committed to increasing training and employment opportunities in those communities hardest hit by the current economic climate and the loss of traditional industries.

What is your role at EN:Able Futures?

I am assistant apprenticeship manager. I focus on providing apprentice support, from recruitment, college, pastoral and in-work, right through until the end point assessment.

How has an apprenticeship benefited your career?

Massively. I have completed two apprenticeships. I felt pressured into studying for a degree at the start of my career and didn't know a lot about apprenticeships. I left my course in events management to start an apprenticeship and haven't looked back.

What is a Flexi-Job apprenticeship and how does it benefit an employer?

A Flexi-Job apprenticeship is an alternative approach to the traditional apprenticeship model. It allows employers to be flexible in appointing apprentices. Essentially, Flexi-Job apprenticeships have been designed to ensure

that those sectors and occupations where short-term contracts or other non-standard employment models are the norm, can access the benefits of apprenticeships.

What's your proudest business achievement?

Where I am today and the role that I am doing. I started my career as an apprentice and now I am supporting other young people as they take their first steps on the apprenticeship journey. Using my knowledge and guiding people through their apprenticeships is a really proud moment for me.

How has the industry changed?

When I first entered into the world of work not many people seemed to be thinking of or doing apprenticeships. I was the only one out of my friend group. In not a long space of time, there are now such a vast amount of apprenticeships available to people.

What mantra do you aspire to do business by?

I always try to be friendly, approachable and professional. I think it's important to bring your personality to a role and to just be yourself.

What would you like to do moving forward with EN:Able Futures?

I want to continue my learning experience and I am currently studying for a Gateway Qualification Level 3 in Information, Advice or Guidance. The qualification is brilliant in terms of supporting my day-to-day role and helps to reinforce good practice, underpinning knowledge and formally recognising learning and skills developed through experience. I am looking forward to adding value to the team at EN:Able Futures and progressing my career with the organisation.

www.efficiencynorth.org



Sophie Richardson



FIVE REASONS WHY CONTENT MARKETING IS ESSENTIAL FOR HEALTHCARE & PHARMA SMEs

By Karen Winterhalter

2019 has been named ‘the year of healthcare content marketing’, with health and wellness generating an influx of search traffic and at least eight out of 10 people turning to search engines as their primary source of health-related information. Not only that, but now more than half (58%) of the pharma/biotech industry are currently spending over \$50 million annually in content development.

We may be over halfway through 2019, but there's still time to utilise this essential area of digital marketing and get an edge on competitors who are yet to see the power in content.

Wherever you sit within the medical sector from life sciences, medical devices to consumer healthcare...If you're still not convinced, this is why content is key.

Thought Leadership

For niche SMEs within the healthcare sector, it is incredibly important that you establish yourself as the expert in your field. Content marketing is one of the most effective ways you can do this.

Through generating carefully crafted content you can showcase your ability to predict market changes, analyse difficult topics and spark conversation in ways that your competitors may not be able to, making you the thought leader.

Most importantly, your content must add value to your target audience – a great way of making sure you are doing this is through solving their problems and answering any important questions your audience might have.

Increased Visibility

Simply put, content marketing makes it easier for prospective clients, customers, investors or whoever you're targeting, to find you. Content marketing forms the foundation of

your search engine optimisation (SEO), which means overlooking it can result in your website struggling to be found, having a knock-on effect on your business.

However, the visibility benefits go beyond SEO, excellent content combined with effective promotion efforts means that your message will reach the right people. SMEs that work in highly specialised niches can especially benefit from content that has been properly tailored to a target audience.

Build Trust & Brand Loyalty

Not only does content marketing contribute to lead generation and sales force effectiveness, it also helps retain customers and improve client relations. By producing regular, valuable content you are reminding your existing audience of why they came to you in the first place and attempting to stay fresh in their mind – ready for when they next need your product, expertise or service.

You can also use content as a way of PR upkeep, announcing company news such as landing investments and acquiring top talent, or regular roundups.

Silent and faceless brands will find it difficult creating lasting connections with their clients. Content can act as way of humanising your brand, giving a platform for your story, and opening up a dialogue between you and your audience, ultimately building trust and loyalty.

Online Portfolio

The content hosted specifically on your website, ideally ranging from video, blogs, images, infographics to website copy, acts as your online portfolio. To be effective, this portfolio should showcase your company's specific expertise and insight, achievements and services or products. From the blogs you post right through to your case studies and videos, you need to make sure they all come together to act as one incredibly impressive portfolio.

Once you have your portfolio fully fleshed out, you can even recycle it and develop long-form content such as e-books and whitepapers.

Drive Behaviour

Content marketing is often mistaken as simply broadcasting a blog or a video on social media, with little thought behind why. Not only is content marketing much more multifaceted, but if the content has no real strategy or purpose behind it and ultimately fails to drive behaviour, it has no value.

Successful content marketing combines strategy, creation and promotion. So, without aligning all three, you could be at risk of wasting precious time and money on one simple technique that has mediocre results. To drive behaviour, content first needs to be seen, it then needs to convey a clear message and lastly, have a compelling call-to-action (CTA).

When content marketing is used effectively it has the ability to drive or change behaviour which can be exceptionally powerful, and not forgetting useful, in the hands of an SME.

Need help getting started?

Onyx Health's skill-based content marketing team have a wealth of experience in helping healthcare, pharma and biotech clients develop effective content marketing campaigns from strategy and generation, to promotion and reporting.

We'd love to tell you more about what we can do for you through powerful content, so why not contact us?

www.onyxhealth.com

DAWSON & SANDERSON RESTRUCTURES FOR FUTURE GROWTH



L-R: Judith, Jan, Tommy, David and Annelene

Leading North East travel agency Dawson & Sanderson has announced a major company restructure, building on the core values of the family run company, to take the business forward in a post-Covid era.

The travel industry is recovering from the most difficult trading period in its history. Dawson & Sanderson's trading in the last two years has been in line with that of most competitors, industry and other parts of the leisure and lifestyle market.

A Dawson & Sanderson spokesperson said: "Our new executives understand we need to adopt to change and prepare the business to ensure we service our customer base and meet the demands expected from a leading travel company."

The changes see the appointment of three new senior roles as well as the appointment to Director of the grandson of the founder and Chairman Tom Dawson.

Taking the helm at Dawson & Sanderson, are Retail Director, Jan Fawcett, along with Finance Director, Annelene Hutton, who take on the role of Joint Managing Directors.

Jan has played a major part in Dawson & Sanderson for over 30 years, with the past 11 as Director. She has extensive experience and her past responsibilities have included all day to day running of the business in sales and operations. She is delighted to be taking on her new role.

Annelene joined the company as Finance Director in March this year and has enjoyed a successful career at several global organisations and brings with her a wealth of experience that will strengthen the business going forward.

Judith Alderson has joined the Board as Commercial and Corporate Director. She has been an integral part of the company for many years with management roles in retail, cruise, worldwide and corporate. Judith also gained extensive sales and marketing experience outside our business with NCL Cruises.

David Chambers, grandson of the founder, Tom Dawson, becomes a Director, strengthening the family representation on the board. In recent years, he has been gaining hands-on experience across all areas of the company, including retail, corporate, foreign exchange, and golf. He will

focus on project management, carrying on the ethos and future of the family business.

Chairman Tom Dawson said: "This new and exciting leadership team offers a wealth and variety of skills and experience to drive the business forward. Trading is strong and has reached pre-Covid levels. I'm delighted the new executive team understand the challenges of a travel business which has been built over the last 60 years on delivering customer service, satisfaction and value for money."

He added: "Now we are facing a set of new challenges of fuel price inflation, which inevitably impact on holiday prices. Therefore, our key objective is to work hard to give customers the best option within their budgets."

Over the last decade, Dawson & Sanderson has transformed the business from a high street facility to an industry that is heavily online.

Tom Dawson added: "The Dawson family are confident that this new leadership team will continue to grow the business and keep the true core values and our position in the North East holiday market."

The travel agent has provided holidays for millions of customers through its website and regional network of 21 branch offices, which extend as far south as Hull and Doncaster and as far west as Carlisle.

For more travel and holiday details:
www.holidayco.co.uk

HUGE OPPORTUNITY TO ATTRACT INWARD INVESTMENT AND CREATE JOBS AT AIRVIEW PARK



Dysart Developments, the developer of AirView Park, has welcomed Catherine McKinnell MP and representatives from Invest North East England and Invest Newcastle to the site to see first-hand the commercial vision being created, the scale of the development, and the potential inward investment and jobs it could bring to Newcastle and the wider North East region.

Construction on Phase Two is well underway, with the first two, high quality office buildings expected to be completed by the end of the year. This is attracting significant interest from potential occupiers operating across various different sectors both locally and further afield, and is extremely encouraging given there are also huge opportunities for AirView Park in the future.

AirView Park, at Woolsington, is only minutes away from Newcastle International Airport and already home to the national HQ of homebuilder, Bellway plc. It is one of the region's most active and important commercial

property developments with direct access to major transport links in and out of the region and globally, as well as excellent commuter connectivity into Newcastle City Centre via the Metro system.

Phase Two includes building 2a - the International Space Station, an SME 'centre of excellence' facility helping regional companies launch, scale-up and take advantage of global trade and export opportunities. It will support in-bound trade as well as showcase North East organisations to international business communities, giving occupiers greater access to world markets including India, Turkey, the Middle East, Pakistan and The Netherlands.

Building 2b - Denyer Court, will offer flexible office spaces ranging from 1,433 to 3,245 sq ft for multiple occupancy use. It is ideal for start-ups, expanding companies and those looking for a highly strategic, out of town North East location.

Other bespoke build opportunities are available as part of future site plans, enabling larger companies who may be looking for a dedicated, single occupancy head office building in the North of England to design a specification to meet their own requirements.

Guy Currey, Director of Invest North East England, commented, "I was very impressed by the design and finish of the office units already completed as well as the high quality business park setting of AirView Park. Its location, adjacent to Newcastle International Airport as well as the Tyne and Wear Metro which connects the site to the wider region being a mere two-minute walk away, means that AirView Park offers something very different to businesses



Guy Currey

looking at quality office locations in the North East.

"I'm extremely excited about the potential of the future phases and what these can offer to businesses in a range of sectors."

Morris Muter, Chairman of Dysart Developments Ltd which is managing the development on behalf of Tynexe Commercial Ltd, welcomed the positive recognition that AirView Park is receiving. He added, "The quality design and build is a reflection of Dysart's approach to all projects including other developments across the region such as Newcastle Business Park and the Genesis Project in Consett."

AirView Park received £994,000 from the Government's Get Building Fund via the North East Local Enterprise Partnership.

For more details regarding office space available or for a property specification brochure, please contact Jess Ross at Naylor's Gavin Black on t: 0191 232 7030, e: JessicaRoss@naylorsgavinblack.co.uk or go to www.airviewpark.co.uk



Howe Consultancy

TOP 10 TIPS FOR MANAGING PERFORMANCE

1. Set clear expectations
2. Set goals together
3. Encourage accountability
4. Recognise positive performance
5. Make consistent decisions
6. Provide leadership support
7. Eliminate surprises
8. Don't make it personal
9. Always ask, don't assume
10. Seek support.... for YOU

A regular query I get is from business owners asking advice about staff who are underperforming in their job role and what can be done about it.

All too often the employee has been doing a poor job for a long time, sometimes years, and there's been a trigger where the business owner just says; "enough is enough".

Managing performance is all about starting the way you mean to go on.

From the first day of employment, you should set expectations, ensure accountability and have a process to deal with any issues.

Be a strong leader, take consistent decisions and above all **DON'T ASSUME** as we all know that makes an **ASS** of U and ME.

I've mentioned the 80/20 ratio before and unfortunately from an HR point of view we spend 80% of our time on managing the "negative" staff rather than working on rewards for the positive staff.

Ensuring a well-motivated and efficient workforce means that you have to acknowledge high performers at the same time as you're dealing with underperformers.

See above for our top ten tips for dealing with underperforming staff.

For more information contact Joanne Howe from Howe Consultancy on 07921 256 981



Nevil Tynemouth

AGILE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT LEADERSHIP IN A CHANGING ECONOMY

I would like you pause and think about a simple question: What percentage of consumers have changed their behaviour over the last two years?

Think about your friends, your family, your network and your own changing and shifting behaviour. What are you now doing differently and what changes have you observed around you.

I regularly speak to groups of professionals on this. The broad agreement seems to be that consumers and client's behaviours have shifted in a significant way over the last two years (let alone the shifts that are coming with a challenging economic outlook and the cost of living crisis). It would be hard to deny that the economic environment is in a period of flux.

The big question is, as a leader how are you adapting your business development approach to match these shifts? Great business leaders use their own situational intelligence to do three things really well in period of change:

Reflect on previous success

Fully understanding the fundamentals that don't change. Delivering great service to your clients and completely understanding their needs. These are the cornerstones of a successful business development strategy. Rather than just looking for new ideas and approaches you need to challenge yourself, your organisation and your teams to "do the fundamentals and do them extraordinarily well". There are very often great opportunities for most organisation in this space.

Research the changing marketplace

Sounding out your trusted clients to explore what they are doing and seeing how they are changing their personal approach or business strategy. There are very often opportunities to reopen discussion on services and approaches that may have previously been ruled out. Meeting with and fully understanding your new clients and understanding why they chose to work with you. You are looking for changes in patterns in why they choose you or your firm. Very often this shift in clients buying values goes unnoticed by individuals as no one looks for these shifting patterns.

Innovate

This one comes with a caution. Innovation can only come after the two points above. There is no point in innovating if you aren't doing the basics well and don't fully understand how your clients needs have shifted. Innovation can lead you down the wrong route very quickly. When you have understood the two first points then looking for innovative (very often simple) ways to truly engage and excite your clients.

Great business development leaders apply their situational intelligence to changing times

in exploring the three key points above. Take for example what we have applied here at New Results:

Reflect on previous success – we get lots of great feedback about our "discovery led, PowerPoint light" training sessions. We haven't changed this format for our face to face delivery, we focus on refining and improving this as a fundamental part of our offering.

Researching the changing marketplace – lots of our new clients are asking for shorter sessions. "Espresso sessions", "lunch and learn" and "bitesize learning" is something we have worked hard to deliver for our clients. We have had to rework material to match the increasing need for shortened high impact sessions.

Innovate – we have had to increase our delivery of eLearning. Creating online business development academies for some of our clients to help with long term development programmes and embedding of new learning.

We encourage those leading a business development team, partners and directors of firms to apply their own learning and experience along with these three points. What have you previously learned about a changing marketplace? When in the past have you had to shift what and how you work with your clients?

Periods of change always provide challenges, and very often there are opportunities in these challenges, if you are prepared to dig in and look for them.

To discuss your own changing client's needs, speak to Nevil, email him: nevil@newresults.co.uk, connect with him on LinkedIn or visit the website www.newresults.co.uk

HOUSEWARMING TIPS TO SAVE MONEY THIS WINTER FROM ROBINSON BATHROOMS & HEATING

With the current cost of living at an all-time high, there is a sense of anxiety and panic across the country heading into winter this year.

Typically, from October to March is when people will use their heating in order to stay warm over the colder periods of the year. Recent figures show that 2.38m households in the UK are in fuel poverty which means that almost 11% of British homes cannot afford to keep warm this winter.

With that being said, and given the significance of the situation, we want to offer alternatives to help you stay warm during this unprecedented time.

The first step is using timed central heating. The Centre for Sustainable Energy advises that setting your boiler to turn the heating on a little earlier i.e., 30 minutes before you get up in the morning but having it set at a lower temperature is cheaper than turning it on just as you need it at a higher temperature.

Secondly, you want to keep items out the way of your radiator, let that heat spread through the house. Don't let curtains, sofas or items block the heats passage through your home, as nice as it may feel. People love a warm cosy seat, but the benefits of an equally heated home highly outweigh the first option.

If your home has a hot water tank, make sure it is properly lagged or at least insulated. This will keep the water warmer for longer and reduce the heating costs. Insulating a water tank could lead to £150 in energy savings.

Bonus tip: Radiator panels can reflect the heat in your home and the good thing is, they're a reasonably priced option to ensure the radiator warms up the room and not the walls. As well as this, they're incredibly easy to install.

Robinson Bathrooms & Heating,
www.robinsonbathroomsandheating.co.uk, 0191 483 5888



Hey You!

Have You Made
Your Will Yet?



Do You Have Children?

Will they be properly looked after if anything happens to you?

Do you know that if you don't make a Will your children may miss out financially? Do you have children from more than one relationship? If so, they may not be fully protected if you predecease them.

If you have a Will and are unsure if it will meet your needs, or you need to know why you need a Will, then let us help you. We can assist you to plan ahead for the benefit of your children.

Why not ask us for a no-obligation
FREE WILL APPRAISAL.

Contact us now on:

0191 284 6989 or

enquiries@emmersons-solicitors.co.uk

Home visits are often available.

emmersons-solicitors.co.uk



On the shop floor: David with Paul Wilson and Tom Flanagan from Woodland Flooring Ltd.

FOR THE LOVE OF WOOD

Narratives play a huge part in company stories, entrepreneurial journeys and the development of leaders as David Cliff explores Woodland Flooring Ltd at Shildon...

Okay, it is a factory in Shildon, from the outside one would think, like most factories, it's nothing to write home about, inside however, it is a powerhouse of product development, innovation and attention to customer service.

Paul Wilson and Tom Flanagan, head up this high growth company that is now working with Gedanken to define a strategy to address its exponential growth potential.

Friends for years, Paul and Tom have over fifteen years of experience in the manufacturing of wood products. Touring the factory, Paul's absolute love of wood is tempered by Tom's incisive focus and passion on creating processes that deliver for the customer.

In common with all quality companies, the company's corporate and social responsibility is palpably real, not rhetoric. The war in the Ukraine, a country where Paul has spent some years living, resulted in the company strengthening its supply links there whilst embargoing Russian timber completely. "The move has paid dividends," said Paul, "we have fostered far stronger links with Ukraine and are committed to working with our partners there, not only through the war, but to support them through the rebuilding that follows". As a result of this partnership, Paul has had the opportunity to learn many traditional wood preparation techniques prevalent to Ukraine and incorporate them in the company's products making for a unique offering.

Paul is ex forces having spent time in the reserves and regular Army, after having served for a period in Iraq "you watch conflict and see what it does to the people. It is happening in Ukraine now that bringing together of people around an effort that takes so much out of a country. It is a long haul back to normality. We won't break our commitment with Ukraine, UK companies have to be there for the long game".

Within the Shildon factory are machines painstakingly chosen for their accuracy and reliability, some, the only examples of their type in the UK, "We are not about being the same as our competitors, we are about subtle differences that make all the difference". Whilst the two friends focus on managing their workforce, being creative with supply chains, price sensitive to the economic conditions and customer expectations, they have recognised the need to take time out to reflect, plan and strategise.

"Our work with Gedanken allows us to take the time to think, sort and plan our next steps on what is a very fast-moving journey", says Paul, Co-director Tom

agrees, "sometimes partners need a third party detached from the operation to bring some alternatives views, challenge and keep us accountable. Working with Gedanken has made us aware we have under-sung our green credentials, producing as we do, sustainable natural products from ethical supply sources, have good longevity of use, are biodegradable and capture carbon in ways many competitors do not".

The only way is up for this innovative, growing company as it now begins to experiment with incorporating robotics into its practices to improve production, reduce costs and ensure the workforce are deployed on meaningful rather than repetitive tasks in the manufacturing process.

It is truly a pleasure to work with these two dynamic entrepreneurs - watch this space on the journey they have ahead! The importance here is that every company has its story to tell whether it is about a director's life experience, the choice of a machine or the make-up of a product, its far more than the end product itself, it's about narratives of how things came to be, the values and the experiences that hold them together and what corporate life offers to communities and society as a group and how these stories inform individual experience. But it is just a factory at Shildon, is it? They don't even make trains there anymore...

www.gedanken.co.uk



David Cliff

“

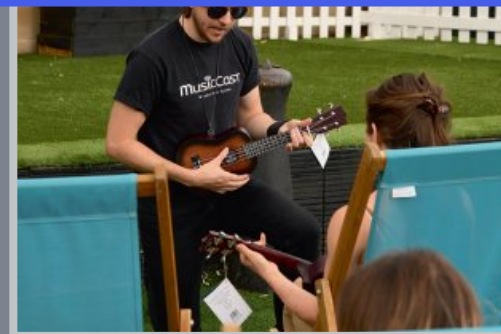
...we are about subtle differences that make all the difference...



WHAT A SUMMER IN THE CITY

Ben Whitfield, Director of Communications at NE1 Ltd looks back at what has been delivered across Newcastle throughout a busy summer.

The Great North Run held last month marks a symbolic end of summer for the team at NE1 and the final days of NE1's Summer in the City events and activities programme. As the schools go back and the nights draw in, we start packing up the events and looking back at what a tremendous summer it has been.



Since July, we've delivered our Summer in the City programme, Screen on the Green, and Newcastle Restaurant Week, while sponsoring and supporting major events hosted in the city including Magic Weekend, Northern Pride, and Mela, events of all shapes, sizes, and styles, all packed into an 8-week period. We do this because we know that events play a crucial part in 'place making', shaping Newcastle's unique identity and bringing people, spend, and future investment into the city. Events have also encouraged people back into the city post-pandemic and helped Newcastle return to almost pre-pandemic footfall levels much more quickly than the national average.

On the Quayside alone we had over 100 free events for people to get involved in as part of Summer in the City, and 84 free family movies screened at NE1's Screen on the Green, our open air movie theatre which made a welcome return to Old Eldon Square. There was something for everyone.

Our Summer in the City programme was designed to provide a multitude of reasons for people to visit Newcastle and to keep coming back throughout the holidays. And come back they did, for free meditation sessions, yoga, and puppet making, as well as story-telling, art workshops and HIIT classes, the activities were a huge draw and were extremely well attended. One of the most popular activities

of the summer was one of the only paid-for opportunities, the zip wire from the Tyne Bridge. People loved it and we'd love to bring it back.

Making the Quayside and Old Eldon Square the hubs of the action was always our plan so people could arrive knowing something would be happening and where they needed to go.

People could spend the whole day moving around the city from one free event to another. It was 'staycationing' at its best. Exploring your home city like a tourist and seeing and doing things that perhaps you'd never considered before.

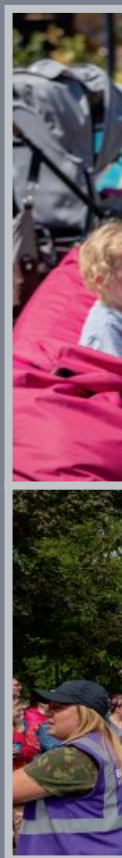
This year, we also focused heavily on increasing activity in Old Eldon Square, making the area extremely family-friendly. We introduced Play Rebellion, a free outdoor play space for young people and the response was phenomenal, with regular queues and a clamour to get involved. The artistic and buildable play-shapes worked well alongside the Screen on the Green movies, giving more reasons for families to spend longer in the area.

In addition to all of this, there was the welcome return of August's NE1 Newcastle Restaurant Week, the first summer edition since the pandemic and by an impressive margin the best attended in the event's illustrious history. We had 113 restaurants take part with more than 50,000 diners enjoying the Restaurant Week offers. At the last count, the event delivered an economic boost of over £850,000 for participating venues with results still coming in.

Other major events in the summer calendar also set records for attendance starting with Magic Weekend which landed in the city for the sixth time in July. This year the event registered another successful weekend with the 4th best attended day in its long history.

As one event finished another rolled into town and this year Newcastle was delighted to play host to UK Pride, which saw the biggest ever Pride march through the city with celebrations continuing at Northern Pride's festival at Exhibition Park. NE1 sponsored the event, as we have since 2013, and this year we invited our business community to pre-launch celebrations before the weekend got underway. Exhibition Park has seen a raft of activity this summer, with Mela staged there again, while NE1's sponsored Mela in the City, brought free, family-festivities into the city.

NE1 were also delighted to host several events on the river. We worked closely with the North East Maritime Trust, on the Historic Harbour Day to give people the chance to learn more about the history of the Tyne. In August we hosted the much-loved Dragon Boat race with over 20 teams competing while raising money for the Freeman Hospital's Children's Heart Unit Fund, CHUF.





While the summer may be over, the events are not. We can still look forward to the Rugby League World cup in mid-October, when the eyes of the world will be upon us as Newcastle hosts the tournament's opening fixture. And, we are backing the bid for Newcastle to host the Eurovision song contest.

Curating a packed programme of events and investing in the look and feel of the city is crucial to ensuring that there is always something happening in Newcastle. As well as the immediate economic impact and benefits events deliver, they help create vibrancy and generate civic pride, as well as encouraging return visits and investment.



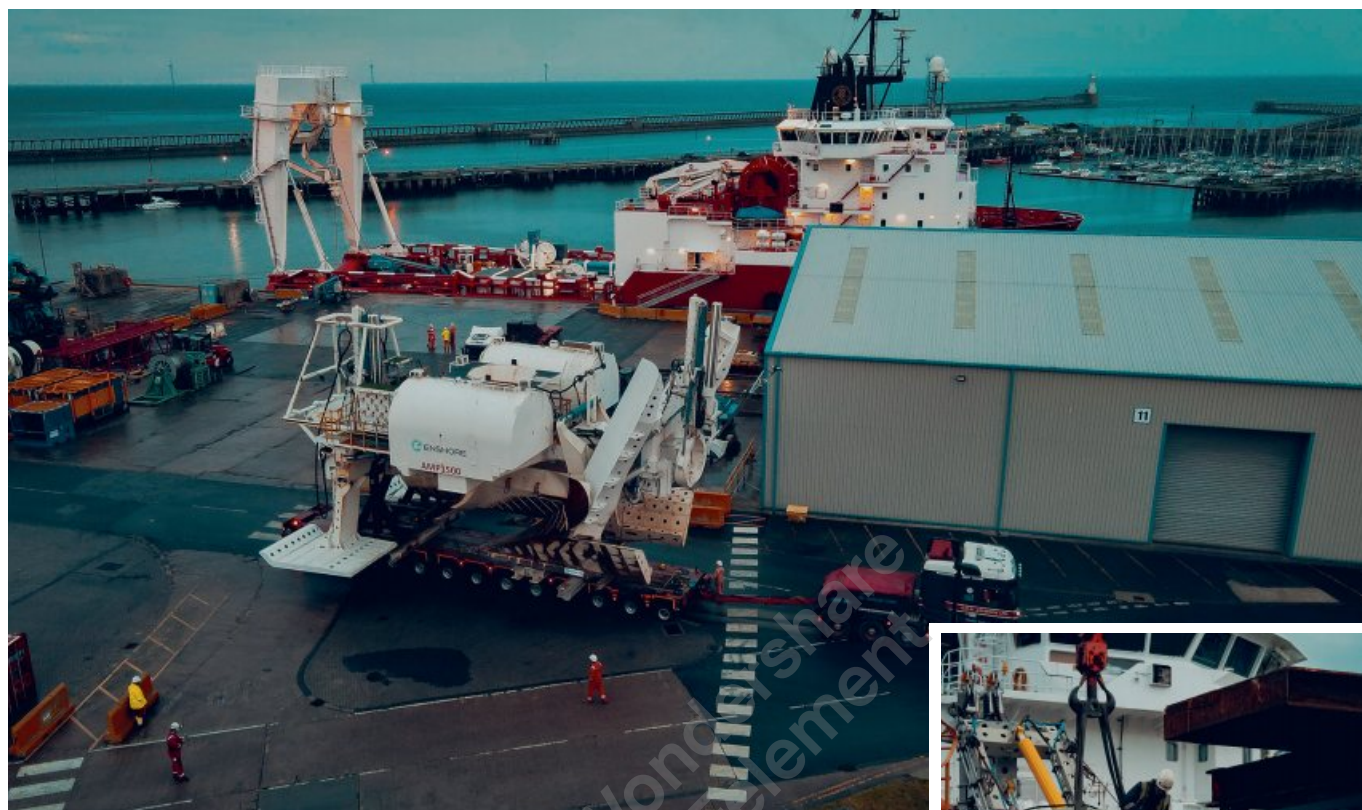
We have shown that we can host events of any shape and size, from intimate classes for 10 – 15 people, to huge, world-class events with audiences of 50,000 – 60,000. Newcastle can cater for everything and we are genuinely excited for what's around the corner.

www.newcastle1ltd.com



Ben Whitfield

HOW HARLYN SOLUTIONS IS DELIVERING TONNES OF SPECIALIST NORTH EAST-MADE EQUIPMENT TO THE WORLD!



The client's vision was vast - the challenge for Harlyn Solutions was making it happen. Because working in the offshore sector there is no room for error. The safety of individuals is paramount, while the cost of the specialist cargo can run into the millions.

The client wanted AMP1550 and backfill ploughs weighing 250 and 185 tonnes moved from Blyth to a project in Cyprus. There they would be used to bury and protect subsea pipelines.

While such a project would require a team effort - collating and overseeing such a group was beyond the clients' resources.

Harlyn Solutions MD Hamish Adamson explains: "They needed a turnkey solution. The stakes were too high and the schedule too tight to hire multiple contractors. That's why they called us, because, from their end, they needed it to be simplified. They wanted a fixed price and they had a hard deadline. They couldn't afford to be distracted by the challenge."

So Harlyn swung into action. They closed in

quickly on the right specialist shipping vessel. That left them with the challenge of moving the machinery overland, and cost-effective hydraulic platform trailers were selected and sourced.

From Blyth to Cyprus - it worked like clockwork. So well, in fact, that when it was time to return the plough, the plan was used again - this time in reverse!

And that's what Harlyn does. They are an engineering-led transportation company that specialises in moving complex and unique cargo from origin to destination. No risk, no surprises, no teams to chase - just one engineer who is the single point of contact and completely committed to a project's success.

Now in its third year of operation, Harlyn Solutions almost tripled its turnover in its second year, despite the pandemic. Harlyn has built a reputation for being able to take the drama out of the most dramatic challenges. Some require cutting-edge solutions, others require a mix of lateral and creative thinking. Most require both.

Like the time a client wanted to repurpose an old oil accommodation unit as a hospital in Peru. The unit had sat dormant for years in the Port of Tyne - a 1,340-tonne big red eyesore.

And to their tight schedule, a little miracle unfolded.

The precious cargo was manoeuvred onto a barge and on its way. Project Management, marine risk mitigation, mobilisation support and



stakeholder management - all executed. A blend of intricate planning and 11th-hour problem-solving.

For Hamish, it's the quality of his team that makes the difference.

"Every member of our team is committed to engineering-led solutions. We are world-class naval architects and engineers applying cutting-edge engineering and innovation. It's always about finding the best solutions for clients. They don't have time for problems so we solve them - it's that simple."

www.harlynsolutions.com

ACCESS TRAINING REPORTS STRONG GROWTH AND ANNOUNCES NEW MANAGING DIRECTOR

Team Valley based training company, Access Training, is reporting strong growth and an ambitious trajectory for expansion – under the steer of a new managing director and senior management team.

During the last 12 months, the firm has seen an impressive 45% growth in turnover, a 26% uplift in staff numbers, as well as 40% of its employees being promoted and the launch of a host of exciting new products.

The firm says it has bold plans for further expansion, investment and a recruitment drive.

Access Training's strong performance is down to a senior management shake-up and the launch of new services, including fully-funded professional upskilling courses for businesses, and new apprenticeships in areas including HR, project management, teaching assistant and school business manager.

After 38 years with the company, Malcolm Armstrong stepped down as managing director and is succeeded by his son, David Armstrong who was formerly finance director. Malcolm is now chair of a new senior leadership team comprising managing director, David Armstrong; director of training, Sharon Wallace, and Valerie Green who heads-up business development and marketing.

Demand for Access' accountancy and fire & security systems apprenticeships has been booming over the last 12 months, with the demand for the fire & security systems course being so high that an additional cohort has been created. The company is also seeing places on its ESF fully-funded CPD courses filled in record time.

Managing director, David Armstrong, said: "Taking over from my father was daunting because it was big boots to fill - he's been here for so long and he knows the sector inside-out but I've navigated the transition with the support of a great, close-knit team and I'm delighted to be announcing healthy growth and expansion.

"We remain focused on supporting our learners and businesses with their

training needs and also on being as responsive as possible to the changing requirements of the North East business community, whilst ensuring we are adding value."

Access Training's biggest clients include Newcastle University, Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust, KAEFER, Pyrocel Limited and Miller UK Ltd.

www.accesstraining.org



L-R Access Training's senior management team: Sharon Wallace, David Armstrong and Valerie Green.

Thinking about upskilling your employees?



APPRENTICESHIPS

Access Training have been delivering training for businesses across the Northeast for over 35 years, with achievement rates continually above national averages.

OUR OFFER

We can support you in upskilling your existing employees, and can offer apprenticeship levels 2-5 in the following occupational areas:

Accountancy (AAT)/Business/Customer Service/Human Resources/Project Management/Team Leader & Management/Fire, Emergency & Security Systems

While gaining qualifications is highly desirable, the most important aspect about good training is whether it has an impact on the individual and on your business. Here are some of the benefits our employers have told us about:

Increased productivity - improved levels of quality - growth of the business - staff loyalty and retention - cost effective training and recruitment - support in managing the apprenticeship levy.

ESF FULLY FUNDED COURSES

Access Training are delighted to be a part of the North East Workforce Skills Programme, working with a consortium of partners led by the University of Sunderland.

Financed by the European Social fund/levy match - it aims to support employers in upskilling their employees and enabling them to sustain and grow their business as well as offering employees the opportunity for Continuing Professional development (CPD), making a real difference to both the employer and the individual, whilst accessing fully funded training.

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0191 490 4646

Get in touch!

info@accesstraining.org

www.accesstraining.org/employers



L-R: Carl McCammon, Salicru UK & Mark Henderson, Compliant.

ISO SPECIALISTS GIVE IT PROVIDER THE POWER TO GROW

A Sunderland based ISO consultancy have supported a fellow North East based business to help them gain valuable accreditations.

Compliant, who were launched by managing director, Mark Henderson, in 2017, were exhibiting at the North East Expo in 2021 when they met Salicru UK.

Following an initial conversation at the expo, further discussions and meetings took place, with Salicru UK appointing Compliant as their ISO consultant to gain UKAS accredited ISO 9001 (quality) & 27001 (information security) standards.

ISO standards are becoming increasingly necessary for businesses looking to grow, tender for public sector contracts or for inclusion in specific frameworks, resulting in Compliant experiencing a dramatic increase in enquiries during the past 18 months.

Salicru UK, who are based in Durham's Portland House, offer a wide range of uninterruptable power supplies (UPS's), variable frequency drives and transformers to businesses across

the UK. Owner, Carl McCammon, was keen to gain the two ISO standards to demonstrate to prospective clients their commitment to quality and information security.

Upon gaining the standards, Carl commented, "As we wanted to grow the business, I knew that gaining the ISO standards would be integral to us, not only would it enable us to tender for larger contracts but it would also streamline our processes and ensure we are offering the very best service to our clients."

Following our initial meeting at the North East Expo, it was great to work with the Compliant team, they made everything straightforward for us and were with us every step of the way and helped make the ISO process pain free. We're delighted to have gained the standards and look forward to working with Compliant on an ongoing basis to support us in maintaining the management systems."

Compliant managing director, Mark Henderson, who is a BSI trained lead auditor, commented, "Salicru UK are a great company to work with and we were delighted they chose us as their consultant after initially meeting at the Chamber Showcase within the NE Expo. We work hard to ensure that our clients experience as minimum disruption as possible when going through the ISO process and also reduce the resources in terms of time and cost.

There is a common misconception that gaining ISO standards is expensive and time-consuming however with our support, cost-effective plans and monthly payment options, we do everything we can to make sure the process is as easy as possible, all the while providing a first-class service.

As a company, we are accredited to the five main ISO standards ourselves too, this gives our clients the reassurance of knowing that we practice what we preach, we go through the exact same processes as our clients so are in a perfect position to advise, guide and support our clients.

We're looking forward to working with the Salicru UK team in the future and helping more businesses throughout the UK to gain ISO certification."

www.compliantfm.com

MAKING THE PERFECT HIRE: ATTRACTING THE PERFECT FIT FOR YOUR BUSINESS

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

Hiring the right employees is imperative for any business. It's such a struggle to hire anyone in today's competitive candidate market place that businesses often make the costly mistake of 'making do'.

Finding the right match takes a lot of ground work. Take dating for example. If you want a long lasting, harmonious relationship, you need to establish who exactly is right for you and place a well-worded advert on the right dating website which will attract the right match.

The same goes for hiring candidates. On paper, you might have applicants with the right set of skills and experience, but they just don't 'feel' right. You make an appointment and they leave before you know it and you have to start again.

Establishing Your Employer Brand

The key for attracting the right match is communicating your core values and what you have to offer. Your personal, or employer brand. It's quite simple. Spend time on promoting who you are as a business and why candidates out there should come and work for you. What do you offer? What's good about working for you?



Heidi Turner

You can get a lot of insight into this, simply by asking existing employees why they like working for you. Advertise these testimonials on your career page on your website, record videos of employees talking about what is great about working for you and post these on social media. Generate a buzz out there about how good an employer you are.

Offering a Range of Benefits

You might not be able to compete with salary, but there are low-cost, no cost benefits you can offer. Enhanced annual leave, flexible working hours, enhanced pension contributions, health cash plans, free meals, employee discounts, social events are just a few examples. Shout about these in your job advert.

Attracting the Right Candidate

Now that you have the candidates' attention, there are a few things you can do help ensure that you hire the right person that's the right 'fit' and who will commit to you long term. Firstly, work out who exactly you are looking for, not just the skills and experience you need but the personal attributes, the competencies that are aligned with your company values. To give an example, as a business, your main

focus is ensuring that all of your customers have an excellent experience so that they buy from you again, and recommend you to others. So, you need to hire someone that goes above and beyond to help others – someone who is customer focused. You need to specify this in your job advert, alongside any other deal breakers.

You have an applicant who meets all the criteria and they state that they are customer focused. Next, you need to test this at interview, by using competency-based interview questions. You ask "Give me an example of a time you have gone the extra mile to help a customer".

Maintain Your Reputation

There are many text books on the subject of work culture, but it really is this simple: value and respect your employees and ensure that your employees have a really positive experience of working for you – word gets out.

If you would like to find out more about establishing your employer brand, or how we can support you with your HR, please contact Heidi at heidi@cheviothr.co.uk



Louise Kennedy

THE MASS CALL BACK

The post-pandemic working landscape has changed and over the last couple of years businesses have been navigating the route back to the office for employees. Opinions and approaches have varied across businesses and industries. Some have fully embraced homeworking with no intentions of a return to the office, others have developed a mix of hybrid working models and some have requested a full call back to the office.

Louise Kennedy, Founder and Managing Director, Oculus HR said: “The Covid-19 pandemic has inspired widespread change for many businesses with the need for new HR policies and procedures to factor in the new ‘normal’, however there really is no one size fits all approach. We have been working closely with businesses post-pandemic to support the return to work process, but there are an array of factors to take into consideration.

Plans will be completely dependent on the nature of the business and needs of the employees and employer to ensure maximum productivity.”

It is clear that different companies are adapting to varying methods and the last few months have seen many trialling a range of approaches. There will be more opportunities for some industries to adapt these more so than others, and even opportunities for certain teams to warrant more flexible working, this in turn can create conflict within companies.

Louise added: “The HR industry has faced massive upheaval since the pandemic with employers consolidating new ways of working. We’ve seen varied approaches over the last few months. There is an element of risk with employers who completely ignore the shift towards flexible working post-pandemic, given expectations of existing and new employees.

Likewise, there is risk of conflict within businesses where some teams can freely embrace flexible working, which is not always possible for other teams who need to be on-site. Policies and procedures need to look at ways of embracing a fair work culture whilst also looking at the practicalities and the impact on productivity.”

There is the need for pro-active and highly responsive strategies to be in place with consideration of an array of factors. A clear approach to navigating the change is key and communication always need to take centre stage. Businesses that go down the path of remote working or hybrid working need to factor in the importance of support, inclusion, and employee wellbeing.

Louise added: “Management of remote workers and managing hybrid working teams is fundamental. The challenge will be to ensure employers make employees feel ‘part’ of the business. A culture of inclusion needs to thrive, which can be tricky if employees are remote and constantly only dialling in via zoom, there is the risk they become excluded from the ‘office’ culture.”

It is clear that there needs to be a reimagining of work processes with the new ‘normal’ here to stay. Covid-19 has shone a light on more flexible working solutions and there is demand and desire from employees for more of a work/life balance. Equally, employers need to be aware of the impact that remote working may have on mental health and wellbeing at work which can lead to loneliness and anxiety.

Coaching and training of line management is key, alongside communication and consultation to ensure both employer and employee derive the best solution, with strong and positive HR processes underpinning at all times.

Sunderland based Oculus HR provide innovative and flexible HR solutions to SMEs regionally and nationally through their dedicated and holistic approach.

To find out more about the support packages available for businesses contact the team at Oculus HR at louise@oculus-hr.co.uk or visit www.oculus-hr.co.uk

“

...Management of remote workers and managing hybrid working teams is fundamental...



SMART QUESTIONS TO ASK AN INTERVIEWER

Bryony Gibson, Director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, offers insightful interview questions that will set you apart from the competition.

Last month I spoke about questions to avoid asking in an interview. One of the most neglected aspects of interview success, this month, I'm exploring the questions that will give you the upper hand and help you stand out from the crowd.

When it comes to the end of an interview, the best approach is to ask four or five thoughtful questions that demonstrate you are serious about the role, have done your homework, and are someone who is proactive and will add value to the team.

While it is important to keep your eye on the clock, so you don't overrun, you need to take the opportunity to impress with a series of smart, considerate, and well-researched questions or comments.

When pre-planning, it pays to consider your motivations. Whether it's the company culture, professional development, or their approach to sustainability, the answers you get should help you to decide if the job and organisation are a good fit for you.

1. Learn more about the people interviewing you:

- Why did you decide to work for the organisation?
- What is your favourite part about working here?
- What excites you about the future of this company?



Bryony Gibson

- What do you believe is necessary to succeed at the company?
- What are some of the company's recent accomplishments?

2. Find out all you can about the role, making sure questions cover new ground:

- What are the first projects I'll be working on?
- What are the most challenging aspects of this job?
- Are there any functions not mentioned in the job description?
- Do you expect any change to the role in the future?
- What training can I expect in my first week?

3. Look for a company culture that aligns with your values:

- Are there ambitious growth plans for the next few years?
- How has the company changed over recent years?
- How would you describe the culture of the office?
- Does the business help staff achieve a healthy work-life balance?
- Is there any volunteering or charitable service opportunities?

4. Training and development should be tied to personal career goals:

- How will my performance be measured?
- What do you hope I will achieve in the six months here?
- Is there support for professional development in this role?

- Does the role have a planned path for future advancement?
- When I have settled into the role, what opportunities are there for career growth?

5. The people you work with will have a big impact on your success and happiness:

- Can you tell me about the team I'll be part of?
- What other departments will I work closely with?
- What are your biggest concerns about the team right now?
- How does the team contribute to the overall success of the business?
- Does anyone on the team get together outside of work?

An interview is a two-way process. With the knowledge gained in preparation, you should be ready to ask a selection of questions that not only interest you but show you are aware of the challenges and opportunities you will face in the new role.

The further along in the hiring process you are, the more crucial this becomes. Try to match the questions to the people you are speaking with and pitch the level accordingly.

Ultimately, businesses want to work with candidates who go above and beyond the basic requirements. By asking questions that show you fit that description, not only will you impress the interviewer, but it can also mean the difference between being offered the job and not.

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



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Sarah Waddington

QUEEN ELIZABETH II – THE GREATEST OF LEADERS

Non-executive director, activist and communicator Sarah Waddington CBE pays tribute to the late Queen, whose leadership qualities were second to none.

US modern leadership pioneer Warren Bennis became famous when he said that “Leaders are made rather than born.”

Contrary to ‘Great Man’ and ‘Trait’ theory he believed that leaders weren’t such thanks to their genetics but were formed by ‘crucible moments’ that forced individuals to grow, think differently and look outside themselves.

There can be no better example of this than a young Princess Elizabeth acceding the throne at just 25 on the death of her father. Taking the place of Head of State, surrounded by men mostly twice her age, would have been

a formative moment that little could have prepared her for.

Since then, Queen Elizabeth II has proven herself as one of the greatest leaders of our time.

The most visible female leader in the world, there can be no doubt that the Queen had a unifying mission: to keep Great Britain, the realms and Commonwealth together, to support our armed forces and provide stability throughout a time of change and political and economic uncertainty.

Her values were British through and through – a commitment to democracy, the rule of law, respect and tolerance and individual liberty. She devoted herself to public service, knowing that to break this unwritten contract with society would break the monarchy. As she often would say: “I have to be seen to be believed.”

Her speech during the coronavirus outbreak was one only she could give, providing a very human reassurance to the general public that was not forthcoming elsewhere. Without us even realising, she continuously filled a vacuum, steadying us at turbulent times through her very presence:

“We should take comfort that while we may have more still to endure, better days will return: we will be with our friends again; we will be with our families again; we will meet again.”

The very definition of a leader is someone who commands followers and Queen Elizabeth had millions across the globe, united in admiration for her sense of duty, dignity and soft power.

As Andrew Rawnsley wrote in the Observer: “She

satisfied Britons’ love of tradition and pageantry while moving with the times just enough not to look archaic. Incremental adaptations to popular culture swelled the affection for her.”

Now all eyes turn to King Charles III who, as his mother before him, has been propelled into the role of Head of State on the death of a parent. Watching him from a human perspective it has felt unfathomable, brutal, almost inhumane to watch him follow the protocols that are necessary at this time, while needing to grieve.

But as a communicator his actions have been commendable and to see the affection his presence among the general public has generated shows that there is still a huge opportunity for the monarchy to remain a firm part of British life.

In his first address as King, he said: “As the Queen herself did with such unswerving devotion, I too now solemnly pledge myself, throughout the remaining time God grants me, to uphold the constitutional principles at the heart of our nation.

“And wherever you may live in the United Kingdom, or in the realms and territories across the world, and whatever may be your background or beliefs, I shall endeavour to serve you with loyalty, respect and love, as I have throughout my life.”

***A new era dawns.
God save the King.***

www.sarah-waddington.co.uk



MONTANE RELEASES INNOVATIVE AW22 COLLECTION BUILDING UPON A SIMPLIFIED 'LESS IS MORE' APPROACH

North East based outdoor performance specialist, Montane, has launched its AW22 collection to encourage customers to find their unknown and commit to more in kit which they can trust.

The collection, which is designed with performance and resilience in mind, is brought to life through the introduction of streamlined key products and a simplified franchise naming structure centred through its shell, insulation and fleece categories.

Product highlights in the shell category include the Phase franchise which introduces a technical three-layer Gore-Tex offering for use in a multitude of disciplines. The Phase franchise includes four products from the expedition ready Gore-Tex Pro Phase XPD and the Phase XT for long days in the mountains, through to the core of the offering with the light and packable Phase to the minimalist, and breathable Phase Lite active shell.

The down insulation category introduces the Anti-Freeze franchise, a perfect balance of warmth, weight and packability ideal for active exploring in cold, dry conditions. The Anti-Freeze franchise is a collection of versatile micro baffle down insulation pieces made with

100% recycled down ECO lining with PFC-free DWR. Ranging from the Anti-Freeze XT Hoodie which delivers exceptional warmth for its weight through the core of the offering with the Anti-Freeze Hoodie and Anti-Freeze Jacket, to the packable and breathable Anti-Freeze Gilet.

Montane's Global Marketing Manager, Matthew Hickman, commented: "Our collection for AW22 embodies a multitude of qualities – from energetic, flexible, and dynamic, to warm, calm, and protective. The kit, with a specific focus on our staple products and new franchises, has been designed so whichever activity you're doing, there is a go-to option for everyone.

"We want to give our outdoor community the confidence to pursue new routes, to meet new challenges and to push themselves further and faster to places they haven't been or experienced before – all the while doing it in clothing and equipment they can trust every step of the way."

Product highlights in synthetic insulation include an extension to the Fireball collection with the Fireball Lite Hoodie, a lightweight and breathable hoodie which is filled with recycled Active Eco insulation to provide exceptional core body warmth. Coupled with stretch Thermo Grid side and underarm panels, the combination of materials is optimised to handle a range of conditions as a mid or outer layer which is ideally suited for stop start activity.

The fleece category introduces the Protium franchise, a selection of warm and technically advanced winter midlayers. The warmest fleeces in the series of products are the Protium XPD Hoodie which is designed to boost thermal efficiency for use in colder and more extreme environments and the Protium XT Hoodie, a lighter weight, packable and versatile mid-weight fleece which is highly effective at assisting temperature regulation.

Built upon a simplified 'less is more' approach, the new collection offers uncompromised quality for multi-activity adventures, mountain activities and extreme environments. Additional product highlights in legwear include the introduction of the weather resistant Dynamic XT pants which have been designed with freedom of movement for fast moving mountaineers and ski-tourers. In headwear, the Phase Lite cap is ideally suited for fell runners, backpackers and hillwalkers who will benefit from the lightweight, waterproof, and breathable Gore-Tex fabric.

The AW22 collection will be available for purchase from September 2022 at www.montane.com and at selected retailers



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The 'In Royal Recognition of' Award



HRH Queen Elizabeth II

This year we are celebrating with a royal theme, inspired by the Commonwealth, in loving memory of Queen Elizabeth II, and to welcome his majesty King Charles III. This will be a very special event, and without doubt the best and biggest possible ABC celebration to date. We even have a new award to signal our appreciation to the late Queen, her family, and all the hard work that they continue to do across the Commonwealth and the world.



HRH King Charles III

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As a not-for-profit social enterprise, all of the funds raised are ploughed back into helping local communities, including the PIE Charity, tackling inequalities and positively raising the profile of inclusion.

#inclusionbydefault



#connectsupportpromote





Ammar Mirza CBE

GOD SAVE THE KING

29 million plus watched our Majesty the Queen's funeral on September 19th. However, this figure does not include digital and online viewers. Which in guestimate would be more like 290 million and fitting for a monarch that was recognised globally as "The Queen".

Whilst we didn't manage to get down to London as hoped, we did come together with other people, at Old Eldon Square in central Newcastle and watch the procession on a large screen. The immense military precision of the event coupled with the incredible pomp and ceremony should have made every single person within the United Kingdom immensely proud.

The whole 10 days of mourning, whilst extremely sad, brought the whole community together. Individuals, very publicly showing

grief and sorrow that is normally reserved for close family or friend. Queen Elizabeth meant so much more to us than simply being a monarch or figure head of a state. **Her Royal Highness had more than a Royal aura, Queen Elizabeth was an ultimate being, a super person, almost omnipotent.**

There have only been 8 Queens throughout the history of England out of a total of 62 monarchs. Queen Elizabeth II setting the benchmark for the longest serving monarch in history, and not just a Queen. This year, the whole of the Commonwealth came together to celebrate 70 years of reign and public service, connecting with younger generations through the wonderful and unforgettable collaboration with Paddington Bear.

From jam (marmalade) jars to James Bond, many lasting common memories have been created. I remain humbled and immensely grateful for all of my personal experiences and memories of our late monarch. From every one in our family, and especially my late mother, holding Queen Elizabeth in the highest of affection, was not just an obligation, but a privilege. **The monarch brought us all together as a community.**

To have met Queen Elizabeth on a few occasions is undoubtedly a highlight of my life, and to hold several appointments on her behalf, is an immeasurable honour. Yet, coupled with the sadness of loss, there is a sense of celebration for both the lifelong selfless public service our

late Queen has given, to the welcoming in of a new King.

King Charles III just didn't sound right in the first few days, but I must admit, having acclimatised, that it sounds rather exciting. Change is inevitable, but what happens as a consequence can be thrilling. Having spent over 70 years preparing, it must be rather daunting for Charles to now be King.

I believe that King Charles will undoubtedly be different to our late Queen, but without question a great monarch. Having had the pleasure to have met King Charles on a few occasions, I am looking forward to what the new monarch will bring. Being an advocate of inclusion, one of his first statements was to recognise all faiths. **That is why I am looking forward to our ABC Annual Awards Dinner on the 20th October where this year we are recognising the contribution of our late Queen and welcoming in our new King, celebrating their commitment to inclusion. Let's grasp this opportunity to rejoice with one another and take the time to ask God to Bless our Queen and may God Save the King.**

To find out more please visit www.yohlar.com

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



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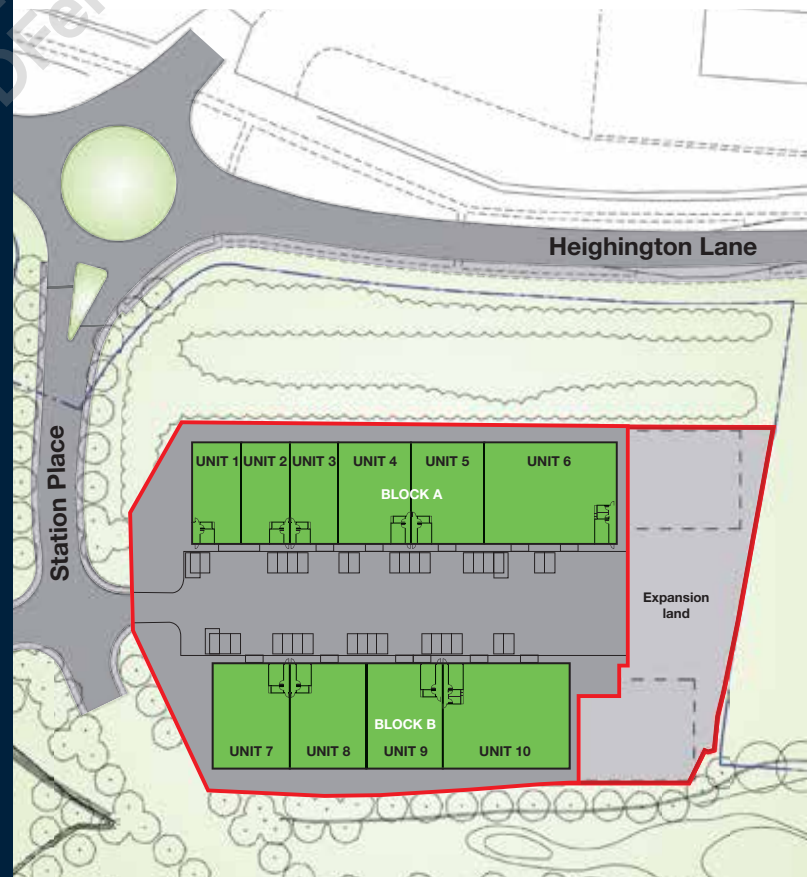
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Marc Millar

SIZE ISN'T EVERYTHING

Marc Millar from North Wealth Management, and Senior Partner Practice of St. James's Place Wealth Management talks to Highlights PR's Keith Newman about his work and how he can help businesses of all sizes with their financial affairs.

Tell us a little bit about what your business does?

I help individuals and business owners with financial advice and planning. I think there's lots of things that people don't realise that they can have when they've got a sole business or a small, limited company. For example, income protection.

What does income protection do?

It's there for when a sole trader or a limited company finds that they can't work. At this time, challenges with their income can become overriding as everybody's got their outgoings and expenditure on a monthly basis and not being employed means that you've no income.

Income protection policies cover them for a certain percentage of their turnover looking at the last three years but for those kinds of individuals it's more about "Peace of Mind"

that they've got something in place that would provide them with an income that would cover part or most of their outgoings on a monthly basis.

What would you say to somebody who perhaps is worried about the rising cost of living and then this is just another expense?

It's very difficult as a lot of it comes down to affordability. There's a lot of options available and it's about looking at what's most important to them. I don't sell on fear, and I don't get people to take anything on that they can't afford. That's why I'll sit down with my client and look at the options in depth.

Are the services you provide tax deductible?

For limited companies then they could use it as a business expense with relevant life cover. There are other tax benefits too that I discuss on an individual basis. For example, taking profit from a business into a pension is straight forward, if you have a pension in place and you've got a successful business you can then backfill what you haven't used on your annual allowance for the three years previous.

Now I know you work with a lot of sole traders and limited companies, but you've also got a wealth of clients who are bigger companies or shareholders how's that different to being a sole trader?

I think that at any level the similarities are that all these people are engrossed in the business trying to make it successful and more profitable. They have to look after staff as well as the challenges we have with the cost of living and expenditure. Sadly, many of them don't have the protection in place for their level.

Take for example, a limited company with multiple directors.

It's about "What if?" How would they settle an individual's share of the business if they passed away? What if someone was incapacitated and couldn't work?

I can arrange life insurance for them as well as key person protection in case the worst happens. It means that there's continuity in the business so they can perhaps bring someone in at that same level on a set amount that they've already covered for in the protection.

How can you help businesses raise money?

The priority now with a lot of businesses is to have their own buildings and commercial properties. It's quite complex but pensions can be utilised for commercial premises purchases and can be used in conjunction with a self-invested personal pension. For some it is a very smart way to be tax efficient, but every circumstance is different, and I'd need to research and talk to the business owners before offering any advice.

We've talked about helping business owners, but can you help people who work for an employer?

Everybody's under a lot of pressure from rising costs and there's a lot of anxiety and depression about and the first thing that people think of is finance. I'm more than happy to sit down with a group of employees and listen to what their challenges are, give a little bit of help with their own pensions or state pension projections or look at what they need to give them "Peace of Mind." The most forward-thinking companies are the ones that value their staff and will allow me to sit down with them for trusted advice.

Marc Millar is on 07842 628731
Marc.Millar@sjpp.co.uk

PUTTING RELATIONSHIPS AT THE HEART OF HR

HR is all about people and relationship building, so Sarah McKenna HR Recruitment was delighted to recently welcome over 50 of the region's best HR professionals to a collaborative event held between the recruitment agency and 50:50 Future's Co-founders Lyndsey Britton-Lee and Lynsey Harbottle.

The event saw the return of one of the first HR specific events in the region, with a focus on Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, hosted at Hope Street Xchange, Sunderland.

The 90 minute session provided an overview on how to avoid tick-box narrative and embed inclusion holistically across an organisation, with delegates from a wide range of companies, from small start-ups to commercial heavyweights in attendance. Openreach, BT, The NHS, the Tyneside Cinema, Northern Gas & Power, END. and Northumbria Police were just some of the organisations occupying seats within the room with varying HR roles.

Sarah McKenna, Founder and Owner said: "This was my first in-person event held since covid, and the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion session with 50:50 Future certainly could not have gone any better! Everyone was eager to learn, share knowledge and hear about the successes of other businesses in the region when it comes to implementing a successful ED&I strategy.

The overriding feeling was one of positivity and everyone had a genuine interest in finding out about new ways of working and were looking forward to being in a room full of like minded HR professionals, it has been far too long."

The event focussed on why Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (ED&I) within the workplace is so imperative. It was highlighted that when ED&I is present in the working environment, teams generally perform better, there is more engagement out of staff, and productivity levels reach new highs.

HR specialists across the globe are responsible for hiring diverse talent, nurturing inclusive workplaces, and of course, dealing with ED&I claims, tribunals and grievances. HR professionals are also catalysts for inclusion and equipped to break down barriers within the workplace and this event really instilled how powerful that can be.

The main takeaway for everyone in the room was to not to fall into the trap of affinity bias; be sure to check yourself and ensure that you're not just speaking to, or hiring people, based solely on the premise that they are similar to you. Naturally, potential candidates have to be a great cultural fit for the company in question, but that individual's identity and unique traits should be respected and appreciated even when they're different to what you're used to.

Sarah added: "Events like this are key for building and connecting industry professionals. Relationship building is at the heart of what I do, may that be with recruiters, candidates or industry peers. I look forward to hosting more events in the future, it was a great catalyst for open discussions."

Sarah McKenna HR Recruitment applies over a decade of experience recruiting HR professionals throughout the North East and Yorkshire regions. Specialising in all levels of HR recruitment and offering a fully consultative

customer-driven approach with a personable and flexible style.

Sarah McKenna HR Recruitment have recently been working closely with the team at The Office Rocks to further build the brand exposure of company with plans for further growth. With the founder and Managing Director, Laura Middleton at the helm, The Office Rocks, the parent company behind the recent sale of e-commerce business WHAT ABOUT THIS (WAT) has created and grown substantially over the last six years by leveraging their expertise in community building and digital marketing.

Laura Middleton, Founder and Managing Director, The Office Rocks said: "We are really excited to be working closely with Sarah McKenna HR Recruitment. Sarah has such a strong presence and reputation across the industry, and we look forward to building the brand presence of her phenomenal company even further."

Whether you are looking to grow your HR team or seeking your next career move, Sarah McKenna can really add value to the process, by understanding your culture, values and individual needs.

To find out more contact:
sarah@sarahmckennahr.co.uk



Sarah McKenna



TruStack named 2022 EMEA Partner of the Year by Arctic Wolf

North East-based Business Recognised by Security Operations Leader North East
Managed IT Services provider TruStack has been named Arctic Wolf's EMEA Partner of the Year for 2022, only a year after partnering with the technology giant.

TruStack began working with Arctic Wolf in July 2021, and was named the organisation's partner of the quarter for August to October 2021.

News of its being named EMEA (Europe, Middle East & Africa) Partner of the Year was greeted with delight by one of TruStack's directors, Phil Cambers.

Mr Cambers, Commercial Director at the Cramlington-based business, said: "This is an

absolutely huge moment for us at TruStack – to say we are proud to be named partner of the year is an understatement.

"Arctic Wolf has a thriving partner community across Europe, the Middle East and Africa so to be named partner of the year for the entire region is a huge achievement for the business.

"The recipe for success when it comes to partnerships is for both sets of people to get on and understand one another, and for there to be a market for the product or service you are offering. In this case, all these ingredients have been present and have led to a successful partnership between TruStack and Arctic Wolf."

Managed IT Services provider TruStack, based in Cramlington, Northumberland, was formed following the merger of three companies in 2019, and has grown rapidly despite the Covid-19 pandemic – its workforce has increased 30% percent from 43 to 55, and has around 450 active clients.

It specialises in cloud management, infrastructure, security, unified communications and agile working solutions - it has helped hundreds of businesses implement an agile working model since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The EMEA Partner of the Year award recognises TruStack's commitment to improving its customers' cybersecurity posture through a strategic partnership with Arctic Wolf that focuses on joint business growth and planning, engagement and training, demand generation, and executive and security practice alignment.

Celebrating their fifth year globally, and first

year in EMEA, the Arctic Wolf Partner of the Year Awards honour top-performing partners for their achievements in helping organisations improve their security operations through the use of Arctic Wolf solutions and for their commitment to shared customer success through a partnership with Arctic Wolf.

Clare Loveridge, Vice President & General Manager, EMEA, at Arctic Wolf, said: "The Arctic Wolf partner community leads the way in embracing security operations and playing a transformative role in the security journey of their customers.

"Our Partner of the Year Awards recognise and celebrate those partners who share our mission to end cyber risk, and we congratulate TruStack on their significant achievements."

Arctic Wolf is a global leader in security operations, who pioneered a cloud-native security operations platform designed to end cyber risk. It opened its EMEA HQ in Newcastle earlier this year.



Marra and Eagles make play for top talent

Ambitious tech disruptor Marra is making a play for the region's top talent after joining forces with Tyneside's trailblazing women's basketball team.

The North East-based start-up is on a mission to upskill the tech stars of the future and embrace the transformational power of cloud-based technology.

And a company committed to gender diversity and unlocking the potential of talented women has found the perfect partner in Newcastle Eagles WBBL.

"The Marra team is really proud to be part of the Eagles family this year," said Sam Bramwell, CEO of Marra.

"Marra's mission is to change the face of technology for good.

"We're focused on upskilling women — and men — from all backgrounds and providing them with a rewarding career.

"Marra is a new type of technology services consultancy that puts diversity and equality at the heart of everything we deliver."

That ethos resonates with Newcastle Eagles' Managing Director Paul Blake as the club continues to support and grow professional women's sport in the region.

The WBBL continues to attract bigger crowds and better players season upon season and earlier this year a league record 1,200 fans attended



Newcastle's Championship clash with Caledonia at the Vertu Motors Arena.

"We're happy to be working in partnership with Marra and it's fantastic to see them on the front of the WBBL jerseys," he added.

"There's a clear synergy between Marra and the Eagles. Both organisations are committed to providing talented women with the chance to shine and I'm looking forward to watching this partnership grow."



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Kevin Howell

ALL CHANGE

The business landscape has changed dramatically over the last few years, and Kevin Howell, CEO of Howell Technology Group (HTG) and a Fellow of the British Computer Society, takes a look at how IT partners have transformed into being real business allies in driving growth.

“Businesses have had a lot of change and challenges thrown at them over the past couple of years as they have coped with switching to permanent hybrid working as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, experienced huge increases in raw materials and energy prices they struggle to pass on to their customers, while also seeing a tight labour market forcing wages ever higher” says Kevin.

“To tackle these challenges businesses are being forced to automate more of their back

office processes, outsource work to partners, offer remote working for many roles and move more business towards ecommerce and online platforms. To help them do that they are appointing a new breed of trusted and strategic IT partners who are experts at the digital transformation journey.

Our role now is actually that of a business advisor, looking at business goals, constraints, and changing markets to help clients along a digital transformation journey that will deliver better customer service, drive innovation, and support staff and stakeholders in the long term.

Here at HTG our mission is to help businesses with that journey to the cloud, while helping to always keep businesses secure and available. Many of our clients are heavy IT users, working in the financial services sector, social housing and wider professional services sector.

They value our 25 years of industry experience and see our strategy and roadmap work as being essential starting points for change. It's seen us develop services such as Northstar, which uses tools including our free Modern Workplace assessment to review every detail of a company's infrastructure, benchmark a business against the three stages of IT, and establish a plan that lines up with business goals.

We're driven by client need, so for example if they identify that cost is an issue, we look at whether they should be looking at switching to an on-premise data centre model; do they have

legacy on-premise security services that are no longer fit for purpose in a hybrid cloud world; could they be making savings on third party services, or streamlining licences and reducing support costs. An in-depth analysis by our team can illuminate murky corners which if they are not causing a problem yet, are likely to be costing money and will almost certainly hold the business back in the future.

Cybersecurity continues to be one of the top three business risks we identify, as cyber attacks increase in their sophistication and frequency. No organisation is immune from the threat, and as secure cloud experts we help clients place much more emphasis on prevention, through highly proactive security assessments and monitoring using the latest industry tools.

We look at every client with fresh eyes and a thoughtful approach, working towards delivering a flexible, scalable and secure modern workplace environment.

And our approach is paying off. A healthy client retention rate has seen us recently double the size of our headquarters in Hebburn, to accommodate growing staff numbers.

We live in interesting times, as the old saying goes, and we are more than up for the challenge of helping clients succeed against difficult odds, because when they do, so do we.”

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Stewart Hogg

TALKING TECH AND DIGITAL

In the latest of these popular series of features we talk to...

STEWART HOGG

Associate Director for Cyber at Waterstons

Stewart has worked in information and cyber security roles for over 12 years and is the driving force behind the cyber division at Waterstons, having developed it from scratch to now boasting a team of over 50 people.

He has recently been named a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Information Security (CIIISec) and we caught up to talk tech and digital...

Did you always envisage a career in the world of technology?

I was passionate about science but after getting my Astrophysics degree I knew I wanted to use the technical and problem-solving skills I'd gained in the real world. I fell in love with Durham (my university city) so decided that the North East was to be called home and I found Waterstons.

What attracted you to your current role?

I've always been passionate about the values of our company, especially our commitment to trust and empower the team. In my current role I've been able to create and grow a business within a business, developing our cyber offering from the ground up.

Harnessing the innovations and entrepreneurial flair of staff can lead to great results which has been proven with a number of exciting new services and locations launch in my time at Waterstons.

How important was technology during the Coronavirus pandemic?

Organisations would have been totally stuck if something similar had happened a decade earlier, however with the use of cloud services and the scalability of modern technical systems the vast majority of organisations were able to continue to operate to a large degree. It's often said that necessity is the mother of invention, and a lot of our clients comment that as a result they saw three years of progress in three months. That wouldn't have been possible without technology!

What tips would you give to someone looking to work in the industry?

Always keep learning – both the technical and cyber landscapes evolve at a rate of knots so there's always new ways to solve business problems. The key is to maintain a thirst for knowledge and collaborate with others in the industry to gain real world experience.

Tell us the most exciting thing you're currently working on

We're working with a number of clients to design and execute their cyber security strategy which involves investment in people, processes and technology for some of the most critical organisations in the UK. It's exciting to be able to play our part in ensuring clients can operate without interruption from a cyber-attack and harness the latest technical innovations to safeguard their critical systems.

What's your fondest memory of a career in the industry?

I've recently been recognised as a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Information Security and also work collaboratively with the National Cyber Security Centre as a Head Consultant. It's a great feeling to have your expertise recognised by some of the industry's most prestigious bodies and has presented a great opportunity to learn from other specialists across a range of sectors.

What are your remaining career aspirations?

Building on the success of our UK cyber security skills and the opening of our Australian office a few years ago, we now have a great platform to export our cyber services globally. This is an exciting prospect and when we go global, we can deliver value to clients on a much greater scale.

What piece of technology would you be lost without?

Noise cancelling headphones – while remote has its advantages and means I can spend more time with family, these definitely help me get stuff done while chaos reigns elsewhere!

Within my role; endpoint detection and response technologies. This innovation uses behavioural monitoring and AI to stop suspicious activity in its tracks and has been a critical defence tool in the fight against ransomware. Absolutely a must-have for all organisations to ensure they can protect themselves from the bad guys.

Who are your heroes and mentors?

Prof Brian Cox – while he's not a technologist per se, he does an excellent job of making physics and astronomy concepts accessible for all, and demystifies complex topics without losing the wonder and meaning he's aiming to convey. This is exactly what we try to do with our clients as we communicate the importance of technology and cyber innovations to business leaders across a range of industries.

When not working, how do you like to relax?

I'm a big fan of escape rooms which involve solving a series of puzzles in a race against the clock. 55 escape rooms and counting so far.

When I'm not doing that, I enjoy spending time with our three boys and making good use of our National Trust membership.

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Matthew Begg, Eclipse Head of Sales says "It's great to see Alt-Nets investing and reshaping the future of Full Fibre in Newcastle, helping Business FTTP to be the leading connectivity product for the next decade."

This is a huge opportunity, which many providers are yet to embrace. That's why Eclipse are best placed to support you as you expand your customer offering to include business FTTP. Get ahead of your competition now and secure this exciting, new broadband.

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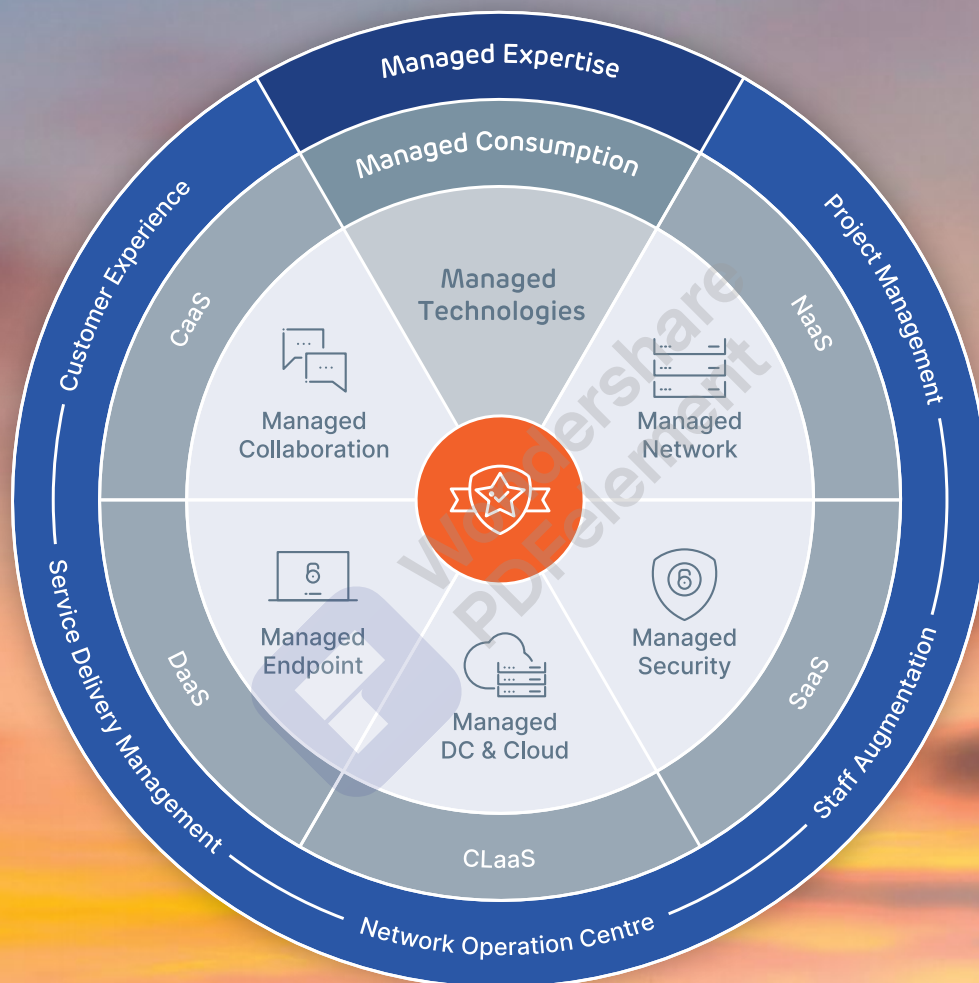
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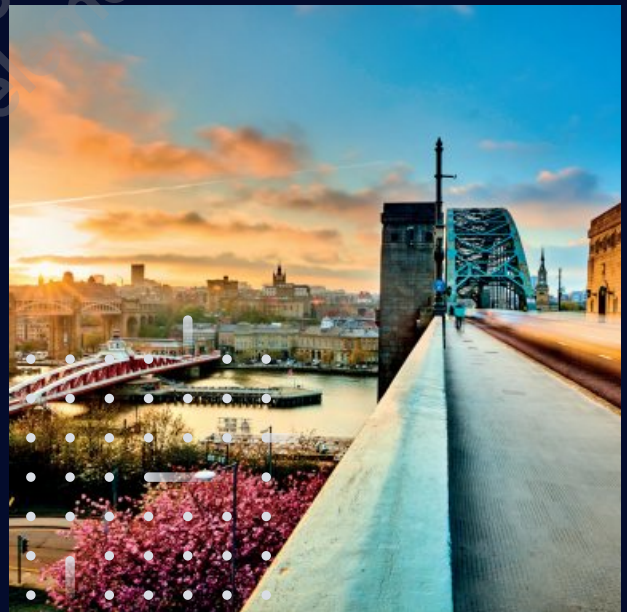
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WHEN DILIGENCE IS DUE

From finance, legal and HR, to technology, intellectual property, strategic fit and more, all disciplines require expert review before any significant business acquisition is executed. But now, evidence is mounting that a new due diligence discipline is on the rise for M&A.

Environmental and Social Governance (ESG), the practice of reporting on non-financial objectives demonstrating ethical organisational behaviours, is being driven by broader stakeholder demand for better transparency and disclosure. Many investors are now demanding ESG be factored into the due diligence process.

Mike Davis, Executive Business Consultant at Waterstons explains: "In the past, issues like climate change and diversity were often deemed peripheral to ongoing commercial viability, but board rooms and executive teams looking to create a truly long-term value proposition are now taking them very seriously."

Waterstons, which has provided business and technology management consulting expertise to UK and international clients for almost 30 years, lists value creation during the M&A due diligence process as a core capability.

"When assessing the technology assets and enterprise architecture of acquisitions for Private Equity clients, we also identify and unlock opportunities to increase the value proposition.

"Value can be found through operational cost and/or risk reductions, or through new revenue streams embedded in organisational data. This makes ESG due diligence an obvious service expansion for us because ESG disclosure must be evidenced by data," says Mike.

ESG due diligence analyses the environmental and social topics and objectives an organisation



Mike Davis

has chosen to disclose, comparing them to those being disclosed by peers and against the expectation of the organisational stakeholders.

This could be compliance with relevant regulations and standards across topics like energy, greenhouse gas emissions, water usage and waste; issues like diversity, inclusion, labour standards and health and safety from a social perspective, and risk management systems, policies around anti-corruption, and remuneration transparency for governance.

Waterstons acknowledges that ESG due diligence is not a one-size-fits-all.

"Different industry sectors and business size can impact the extent of diligence required," continues Mike.

"Many frameworks are available to support ESG reporting, but there is no agreed standard in place. Knowing which to apply based on an organisation's objectives, or whether ESG disclosures are simply greenwashing, are among the biggest challenges."

With a value creation mindset, where reimagining business by unlocking organisational potential through technology is baked into everything they do, Waterstons is well-placed to support M&A activities.

If you'd like to know more about Waterstons' M&A technology and ESG due diligence assessments for your next acquisition, scan the QR code to visit the website.

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MAJOR CYBER SECURITY SUMMIT COMING TO THE NORTH EAST FOR CYBER SECURITY AWARENESS MONTH!

Cybercrime is currently estimated to cost UK businesses over £13 billion each year. With the frequency and complexity of cyber-attacks ever increasing, it's more important than ever for businesses to take action.

That's why this October, as part of Cyber Security Awareness Month, Aspire Technology Solutions are bringing together cyber security specialists from across the UK at one of the region's biggest cyber security events.

We caught up with them to find out more.

Aimed at business leaders across all sectors, expert speakers will provide an in-depth programme to help companies to improve their security posture and defend against the constantly evolving threat landscape.

With Keynote speaker Ciaran Martin, founder of the UK's world-leading National Cyber Security Centre, the event is set to provide invaluable insights for North East businesses aiming to defend themselves against the latest cyber threats.

- *Date: Tuesday 18 October 2022*
- *Time: 9:00am – 5:00pm*
- *Location: Crowne Plaza, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 3SA*

What can attendees expect on the day?

The expert panel of speakers will be providing an in-depth programme to improve businesses' security posture and defend against the constantly evolving threat landscape.

- Keynote speaker Ciaran Martin, founding CEO of the National Cyber Security Centre – the leading global authority in cyber security, will share experienced-based insights on cyber risk and how organisations can protect themselves. Once named as "Britain's top cyber spy" and currently a professor at the University of Oxford, Martin has established himself as one of the UK's most eminent experts on cybersecurity.
- The North East Regional Cyber Crime Unit (NERCCU) will be sharing insights into the increasing sophistication of cyber threats and risks to information.
- There will be an overview of industry-leading security solutions with technology showcases from Gartner Magic Quadrant Leaders: CrowdStrike and Securonix.
- Global business communications market leader, Mitel will be exploring the future of voice security.
- Cyber security consultancy Seguro will highlight critical steps to reduce cyber exposure.
- Attendees can connect and network with key players from across the security industry including a panel session with Dynamo's Cyber North.

What will attendees take away from the day?

- An understanding of the threats and challenges North-East businesses are currently facing.
- The latest insights on cyber security, cloud security, and advanced threat detection, helping attendees discover



Ciaran Martin

what matters most now and how to prepare for what's ahead to stay protected.

- The opportunity to connect and network with key players from across the security industry.

Businesses have never been at a greater risk from cyber criminals. Since Aspire was established in 2006, they have seen the threat of cybercrime evolve dramatically, with more and more businesses contacting Aspire for support.

With the current cost of living crisis already impacting businesses across the region, Aspire felt it was essential to launch an event that informs business leaders how to effectively protect their digital assets and infrastructures.

The Cyber Security Summit is free to attend and places are limited.

Find out more: www.aspirets.com/acss22

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...Since Aspire was established in 2006, they have seen the threat of cybercrime evolve dramatically...

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CUTTING YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT WITH THE CLOUD

By Steve Morland, Specialist Tech Lead, Leighton

An alternative to traditional models of computing, many businesses are turning to cloud-computing for on-demand access to a variety of IT services such as data storage, networking and software.

With cloud providers like Amazon Web Services (AWS), Microsoft Azure and Google Cloud Platform offering access to the necessary resources on a pay-as-you-go basis, businesses no longer need to invest in buying and maintaining physical infrastructure and can reduce costs by buying less hardware and using servers located elsewhere to store, manage and process data.

Not only does cloud-computing offer many benefits from a technological and financial perspective, but it also offers benefits from an environmental perspective as serverless technology allows you to run complete applications without the need to run your own servers, further reducing cost and emissions, making it an ideal solution for developers and technical teams who want to build applications that have a minimal carbon footprint.

Whereas computing's carbon emissions account for a significant proportion of global greenhouse gas footprint (with data centres making up the largest share of this), cloud-computing can significantly reduce your carbon footprint by taking advantage of shared resources such as networking, power, cooling and physical facilities and cloud providers are increasingly sourcing their energy from renewable sources, in fact AWS became the world's largest corporate purchaser of renewable energy in 2020.

Better utilisation rate

Traditionally, businesses have used more servers than they need to reduce the risk of downtime during periods of high demand. This has resulted in on-premise infrastructure having a low utilisation rate due to using very little of the available capacity. However, since cloud providers can host thousands of businesses with different usage patterns that balance each other out, they can more accurately predict usage requirements. This enables cloud providers to eliminate or minimise idle resources, processing and storage, reducing the energy required to power your application.

Faster hardware refresh speed

Typically, companies with on-premise infrastructure tend to use their hardware for longer periods of time before an upgrade or replacement since their utilisation rates are lower resulting in a longer life cycle, not to mention the time and cost associated with upgrading. Whereas cloud providers are more likely to refresh hardware more frequently due to their higher utilisation rates and because investing in new technology brings better energy efficiencies, meaning your applications will be running on the most energy efficient hardware, using much less energy in the long run.

Reduced electricity means less CO2

If you've already made the jump to the cloud, further savings can be made in the way your products make use of cloud infrastructure. Cloud-computing offers a platform that technologists can utilise to reduce costs and the amount of CO2 that is produced to power the infrastructure your products consume, but savings can be made in a number of areas such as scaling the number of servers you need to match demand, identifying where workloads could be moved to serverless technology that operate on a pay-per-use model and optimising software to run quicker, using less power, on the cloud infrastructure. Together these can make significant cost reductions in both monetary value and the CO2 produced.

leighton.com

“

*...If you've
already made the
jump to the cloud,
further savings
can be made...*



Steve Morland



Angela Ross with John Webb

sub-10 - WE'RE CHANGING HOW PEOPLE LEARN

Eat, Sleep, Click, Repeat. Is this what corporate compliance training is like for you? Are you trapped in hamster wheel hell, with a "Get it done" mindset and a "Make it stop!" plea?

sub-10, the digital compliance learning provider, can take your training agonies and transform them into learning excellence. Here's how...

The sub-10 Experience

sub-10 prides itself on 'turning have to do learning into want to do learning.' While most businesses are content to ensure compliance training exists, sub-10 focuses on what the experience was like, how effective it was, and what impact it had on individuals and their business.

We talk about learning, not training. Training teaches a particular skill or behaviour; learning is the acquisition of knowledge or skills through experience. Training is a short-term fix; learning covers the long-term. Training is for the masses; learning is aimed at the individual.

We're changing how people learn.

What's wrong with corporate training?

The British Chambers of Commerce states that up to 90% of corporate training is either forgotten, never understood, or never applied. When we consider the way training is deployed, this is hardly surprising.

Doing the same dull training in one annual hit year after year after year is simply not effective. Corporate compliance training needs to be designed differently, with a bite-sized progressive approach that enables learners to build up the required knowledge or skill. This is the sub-10 way. We have an ever-evolving curriculum composed of units that never exceed 10 minutes in duration but always inform and engage. These units make perfect sense in any order you choose. They're built up, not chopped up, with each one containing a single learning outcome to guarantee knowledge transfer.

Why so short?

Short doesn't mean insubstantial. Bitesize is the right size. Our concise units of 10 minutes are engaging, fit more easily into a busy schedule, and can be referred to as a reference tool in the moment of need. And the science backs us up. In a paper by Harvard Business Publishing, Jeff DeSmet and Marisa Plowman discuss the benefits of learning in shorter segments over a longer duration. They state that it can lead to a richer and more lasting learning experience. They praise the benefits of practice, reflection, and repeated application.

But do we really need academics to tell us this? Think back to the last time you were made to take that one-hour Code of Conduct course. You were bored, weren't you? Chances are, you clicked through page after page of text, only occasionally encountering a multiple-choice question or a five-minute animation that sent you to sleep. You were glad when the whole thing was over. It was have to do learning...and you probably learned nothing.

It's a fact: information is not forgotten if learners are encouraged to recall, apply, and reinforce what they have learned.

How it works at sub-10

We're different. We have content and a platform that work together to spare you the pains and frustrations of the past and enhance your experience. This approach differentiates us in the marketplace, as both content and platform are underpinned by our learning design.

Currently, our content covers units on Code of Conduct, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Bribery and Corruption, and Safeguarding but fresh topics and units are added all the time.

And if a piece of content changes, then the unit can easily be pulled and a new one put in its place. It then becomes a dynamic offering that keeps the learner up-to-date, and the business protected over the longer term. This dynamic quality mirrors the one constant within the compliance industry: that the state of risk and compliance is ever-changing.

Firestarters

We've had enough of the hamster wheel approach. It makes us dizzy and it leads nowhere. The sub-10 way is about empowering people with the knowledge and facts that they need to succeed.

Only then will individuals and businesses gain from the smarter processes, heightened ethical awareness and innovation, improved performance, and the other benefits associated with compliance training.

The poet W. B. Yeats once said, "Education is not the filling of a pot but the lighting of a fire." sub-10 are proud to be considered firestarters.

Why not try for yourself? Start your free trial today!

sub-10.co.uk





Jackie Latham

AWARD WINNING WEB DESIGNER LEADING THE FOCUS ON ACCESSIBILITY

An award winning and acclaimed web design company in North Tyneside is stepping up the tempo in their offering by leading the way with designs that are inclusive and focus on accessibility.

Jackdaw Web Design is owned by Jackie Latham and the company, which has been going for over 10 years, has a strong portfolio of corporate and charitable website creations.

In the last few years, with the growth of digital due to many external forces, the need for accessibility is growing and as Jackie is well positioned to deliver such websites, she has had an influx of enquiries from charities and community groups.

She said: "It is so important that online information and websites are inclusive with good accessibility. By ensuring this you are enabling all potential users, including people with disabilities, to have a positive user experience. The more easily they can access your information, the better a response you get. And by implementing accessibility best practice,

everyone who visits will have a better usability experience."

By comparing your website to your company's policies and governance, you will soon know if you have got the accessibility of your website right. For example, if you have a robust diversity, engagement policy but the website doesn't reflect that with closed off language, limited ways to access, no translation or a reliance on colour as a navigation tool, then your policy isn't worth the paper it is written on.

Jackie has recently worked with Beach Access North East on a new website complete with good accessibility, including an accessibility statement.

In this the organisation states: "At Beach Access North East we are committed and passionate about ensuring digital accessibility for as many

disabled and impaired people as possible. We are continually improving the user experience for as many users as possible and applying the relevant accessibility standards. We listen to the feedback of affected users and make the necessary adjustments to the usability of our website."

Jackie continued by explanation: "The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) define requirements for designers and developers to improve accessibility for people with disabilities. It defines three levels of conformance: Level A, Level AA, and Level AAA. The Beach Access North East website is conformant with WCAG 2.1 level AA.

"This includes things such as guaranteed text minimum contrasts, relevant page titles and headers, skip links, closed captions on videos, autofill forms, readable content, alternative text descriptions on images, and a suitable setting for zoom, amongst others. The statement even goes as far to admit the site's limitations and asks for feedback from users. A truly inclusive approach."

If you feel your website needs to meet more accessibility needs, then get in touch with Jackie to discuss what can be done.

You can find out more information on www.jackdawwebdesign.co.uk and beachaccessnortheast.org

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Transformation of Old Teesside Business Centre is complete

An old disused business centre in Billingham has been transformed into 11 high-spec apartments, which are already flying in the local rentals market.

David Lamb, managing director of Orange Sales and Lettings and property development business partner Kyle Fowler knew the unloved Old Billingham Business Centre building on Chapel Road had real potential, despite the fact it had fallen into disrepair, having previously been a hive of commercial activity for decades. Early last year, David set about transforming

the property, much to the delight of local residents, who were dismayed at the way it had deteriorated over the years.

Now, the 11 one and two-bedroom apartments at the site are ready to move into – and are already being snapped up.

David said: “We’re really pleased at the way both the conversion and the new build section have turned out.

“We didn’t just want to do a quick job of patching up the building and installing low quality, cheap and cheerful fixtures and fittings.

“Instead, we wanted to create something that was an asset to the local area and would attract good quality, professional tenants looking for a comfortable standard of living in a nice neighbourhood.”

Surgo appointed as main contractor for exclusive £15m development

Bede Homes have appointed Surgo Construction as the main contractor for their £15 million development of the site of the former Tall Trees Hotel in Yarm.

The development at Beck View will see the construction of 21 five-bedroom Executive Homes with all the properties enjoying south or west-facing views of the picturesque Saltergill Rock and the surrounding countryside.

The properties have just been released for sale, through Yarm-based estate agents Michael Poole. Further information can be found on the Bede Homes website, and property prices range from £560,000 to £745,000.

Bede Homes Managing Director Joe Docherty said: “We are tremendously excited about this development and there has already been significant interest in the properties because of the wonderful location. “Surgo are a long standing and respected contractor, known



for building quality homes across the North East, and Bede Homes are delighted to have appointed them to build this flagship £15 million development in Yarm. I’m very much looking forward to working with Managing Director James Walker and the Surgo team.”

James Walker said: “We are delighted that Bede Homes has chosen to appoint Surgo as its main contractor on such a desirable scheme in a fabulous location. I believe that our extensive experience built on successfully delivering many high-quality residential developments for discerning clients, such as Bede Homes, makes us the perfect project partner to construct the new homes at Beck View.”



Construction boss takes CPD to another level

As managing director of McCarrick Construction in Chester-le-Street, Matthew McCarrick has always been a staunch advocate for professional qualifications and is certainly leading by example, having just achieved his third fellowship from a chartered organisation.

Internationally recognised organisations such as the RICS, CIOB and APM offer differing levels of membership via punishing application processes, only awarding chartership to those who have acquired years of experience and made significant contributions to their profession.

Equivalent to completing a Masters degree, a chartered Fellow will rank amongst the most highly qualified and experienced of their peers, able to inspire and influence the direction of their industry and to lead with authority within their professional field.

Commenting on his recent success, he said: “As managing director of an SME, my everyday role incorporates contract management, project management and thorough knowledge of all construction processes so each of my charterships is directly relevant to me. However, it is apparently very unusual to have a Fellowship in three different fields – most business leaders would be satisfied with just one of these qualifications. I do know of a couple of others – Lance Taylor, CEO of Gallagher Group and Richard Steer, Chairman of Gleds – who clearly feel, as I do, that they are a tremendous asset in business and indicate an extremely high standard of integrity and professionalism.”

Matthew is now able to incorporate after his name the post-nominals FCIOB – Fellow of Chartered Institute of Building, FRICS – Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, and FAPM – Fellow of Association of Project Managers. “I will probably only use the full set on my business cards though, as it’s starting to become a bit of a mouthful.”



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WINTER'S GOVING

AND WITH IT...

THE MUCH DREADED ENERGY BILL INCREASE.

DUNCAN YOUNG OF SANDERSON YOUNG SHARES A FEW TIPS WHICH COULD SAVE YOU MONEY...

It's hard to think about the depths of winter while the sun is still shining, however with the rather gloomy announcement of the new energy cap prices we have been forced to address the chill and the dramatic increase in one fell swoop.

The good news is you don't just have to sit and wait to be hit by soaring bills; there are things you can do now that may just help. We have compiled a few clever changes you can make for a small outlay, some energy saving upgrades that are actually worth it and that will last for this winter and beyond. So let's look at how you can spend now to save later.

1. UP YOUR ENERGY

You can generate your own energy if you install solar electricity panels on your roof. This will currently save a typical 3 bedroom home £474 a year by creating free energy and also selling any excess power back to an energy supplier.

2. BOOST YOUR BOILER

Buying and installing an A-rated condensing boiler, with a thermostat and thermostatic radiator controls, costs about £4,000. If it replaces a D-rated boiler, the energy savings would be £380 a year.

3. IN WITH THE NEW

Replace old appliances with

more energy efficient models. For example, by replacing a D-rated washing machine with an A-rated version makes a saving of around £50 a year, going up to £100 and £119 in October and January.

4. SMART THINKING

A smart thermostat can be controlled remotely from your mobile phone and typically costs from £150-£300 - but can cut energy bills by 14%. This means savings of £275 a year at today's prices, £501 from October and £597 from January.

5. WRAP UP WARM

Insulating walls costs about £12,000 for a three bedroom semi detached home, resulting in savings of £390 a year - more than any other kind of insulation. The savings are expected to go up to £709 in October and £844 in January.

6. KEEP THE HEAT IN

The yearly savings to be had, if all of a home's single glazed windows are replaced, are £145. This is expected to go up to £264 a year from October and £314 in January. Making windows more energy efficient also has the added bonus of reducing the noise levels from outside.

“

The good news is you don't just have to sit and wait to be hit by soaring bills; there are things you can do now that may just help.



SANDERSON
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PROPERTY OF THE MONTH



TREE TOPS, THE DELL, FULBECK, MORPETH



GUIDE PRICE: OFFERS OVER £975,000

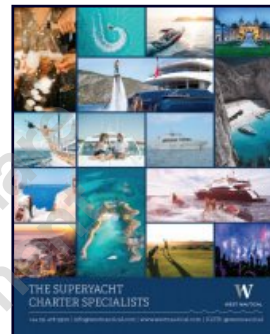
Tree Tops is a beautiful, architecturally designed, detached split level bungalow, built by the renowned architect Henry Faulkner Brown and a much loved family home for the current owners for close to 40 years. This wonderful residence offers an extensive and mature garden site of circa 1 acre with an abundance of mature trees, well stocked borders, rockeries, walkways, two summerhouses, Slaley sandstone terraces and a small orchard; the property also benefits from a lovely streamside walk through mature woodland and is within walking distance of the centre of the popular market town of Morpeth. Boasting approximately 3,700 sq ft of internal living accommodation, Tree Tops has benefited from a number of refurbishments and improvements in recent years, including the construction of a bespoke timber lodge, ideal as a home studio/office.

Tenure: Freehold Council Tax Band: G EPC Rating: D

Contact rare! From Sanderson Young on 0191 223 3500 ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk www.sandersonyoung.co.uk



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Visit www.sandersonyoung.co.uk to view our current issue, our next issue will be published in November 2022.

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Collection



Eildon Cottage view of Cheviots

INVESTING IN THE GOOD LIFE

Shopping habits forged because of Covid restrictions have lasted long beyond the pandemic with the trend for farm shops continuing to skyrocket as people move on from having to source food from alternative outlets during lockdown living to appreciating sustainably produced local food.

As investment opportunities go, it is well reported that the rural property market has been particularly buoyant since the end of the first covid lockdown in 2020, now is the time for small farms to come to the fore.

While some looking to buy a house with land crave the good life in a bid to supplement their existing income and strive for self-sufficiency, others are seeing the potential in investing in smallholdings and farm shops. A small-holding, traditionally classed as anything under 50 acres but can be anything upwards of a large allotment, offer anything from beehives, micro dairies, flower farms and even gourmet speciality products.

Indeed, the Farm Retail Association (FRA)

revealed earlier this year that farm shops generate £1.4bn in sales a year nationally with 64% of farm shops expecting year-on-year sales to increase in 2022.

The continuing success of shows such as Clarkson's Farm not only highlight the reality of farming in the UK but also the potential for people from non-farming backgrounds to tap into the market.

youngsRPS Rural Property teams are seeing first-hand the rise in demand and now the availability of such properties with several recent launches.

Leasingthorne Farm, a traditional County Durham farmhouse which is being sold along with an extensive range of traditional and modern farm buildings. Another example being Eildon Cottage in Mindrum, North Northumberland is an equestrian and lifestyle property with picture perfect views of The Cheviots.

Both have extensive buildings that could remain in agricultural or equestrian use but offer plenty of scope for conversion to residential or commercial uses, such as farm shops, cafes and holiday lets, subject to obtaining necessary consents and permissions of course.

However, it is not something investors should dive into without guidance and sound advice. youngsRPS rural experts can guide potential investors through the available Government grants and funding streams for such ventures and, of course, steer you away from the possible pitfalls.

If you would like to learn more about our rural property experts and current property investment opportunities visit www.youngsrps.com



Eildon Cottage



Leasingthorne



Leasingthorne



Sue Tomlin

REACHING ALL OF THE MARKET ALL OF THE TIME

When it comes to estate agency there is only one thing better than using a trusted local firm and that is using hundreds of superb local firms working as one across the UK and overseas. Here at Sanderson Young, we provide the very best in local expertise and experience with the added advantage of our widened exposure to the global market via our Mayfair Office.

Mayfair Office provides a network of the finest national and international firms of estate agents in the industry, Sanderson Young being one of them. This formidable hub covers every aspect of modern estate agency, land agency and property related professional services, blending multiple disciplines with outstanding expertise and geographical supremacy, providing a source of national property marketing specialism for its members. Consisting of over 300 UK offices working in 47 counties, plus 150 offices active across North America and Australia, The Mayfair Office brings together all the very best independent firms to make a formidable force in property and they all have one aim in common – to provide the best possible property service where you live or would like to live.

As proud founder members of The Mayfair Office, we work closely with our colleagues in London to actively promote our properties and bring them to the attention of potential buyers outside of our region. With their strong connection with journalists working for the national press, we are therefore able to gain regular free publicity for our properties in leading titles such as *The Times*, *Financial Times*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Country Life*. In fact, Sanderson Young's expertise in PR has resulted in the winning of several prestigious awards for the high volume of editorial features that have appeared in the national press, and not just for luxury houses but for smaller properties and cottages too. These awards reflect the importance of national property editorial in the media today as we strongly believe they play a critical role in the marketing mix.

Sadly, too many estate agents now seem to be wholly reliant on the internet for their enquiries, but important as the internet is, we know that millions of people read the local and national press and are influenced by it. Reading about a property fresh to the market in a major quality newspaper or on their online platform does have a huge impact and works to extend the range of marketing for our clients, whilst also encouraging more people to visit and make their home in our beautiful region.

Sue Tomlin, Media Manager at Sanderson Young

T: 0191 2132533 • E: sue.tomlin@sandersonyoung.co.uk

The continued adventures of...

Ziggy!



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

Hi everyone,

The nights are cutting in and it is getting cold. I am back home now and can cuddle up on the settee with my sister Cally.

Still really busy at work but still getting out for nice long walks. My cousins come and go so life is hectic.

See you next month!

Q. Can you suggest any safe woodworm fluid for an attic which has worm holes? We would be concerned for our children's health particularly. We have installed modern Velux windows and need to protect these from any live woodworm.

What would you suggest?

A. I cannot recommend any woodworm fluids. They are all nerve poisons.

Your worm holes are probably many years old. They are actually 'flight holes' of the adult beetles leaving the wood.

There is no justification for using insecticides unless you have definitive evidence that there is a continuing active infestation, and that this cannot be dealt with by normal construction methods, i.e. central heating and ventilation.

Your new Velux windows are unlikely to be affected by wood-boring insects – the timber in them is kiln-dried and sealed with a water-based varnish.

CONSTRUCTION SUMMIT AND INNOVATION SHOWCASE RETURNS TO RAMSIDE HALL



L-R: Kathryn Gardner, regional director at Faithful+Gould, Tim Bailey, chair of CENE, Natasha Boulding, ceo and co-founder at Sphera, Catriona Lingwood, chief executive at CENE and Kate Lloyd, programme manager at CENE.

Constructing Excellence in the North East has announced this year's annual North East England Construction Summit will return to Ramside Hall on 24 November.

It is the largest construction conference in the region and supports the industry's OneVoice campaign, which aims to build a successful, sustainable and inclusive construction industry. It will focus on the OneVoice action plan's three key themes – people, value and climate, whilst also exploring innovation in North East England.

The OneVoice action plan is led by the Construction Industry Council North East (CIC), Constructing Excellence in the North East (CENE), Construction Alliance North East (CAN) and Generation for Change (G4C), as a rallying call to the region to become a beacon of best practice.

Faithful+Gould is headline sponsor with four themed sponsors which link to the OneVoice campaign. They include Tilbury Douglas as people sponsor, Wates Construction as value sponsor, Turner & Townsend as climate sponsor and CoreHaus as innovation sponsor.

The summit also welcomes back its Innovation Showcase and is encouraging companies to demonstrate innovations supporting Climate Action in practice, including products, processes, modern methods of construction and digital solutions.

Speakers include David Mosey PhD, professor of Law and former director of the Centre of Construction Law and Dispute Resolution, Andy Riggs, head of government sector at Wates Group and Kevin Thomas, founding director of IPInitiatives, a company dedicated to improving the performance of the construction industry through the inclusive collaboration of all the constituent parts.

The Construction Playbook, the Gold Standard and the Value Toolkit, will be explored as tools to drive whole life value in construction projects.

Carole O'Neil, managing partner at Cundall is also a confirmed speaker. As former HR and training partner at Cundall, Carole will lead on the people theme drawing upon her time leading the global HR team for Cundall, whilst also sitting on its global management board.

Kathryn Gardner, regional director at Faithful+Gould and headline sponsor of the summit, said: "The summit is a key calendar event and we continue to showcase our support as headline sponsor. It is a day which allows us all to come together, hear from industry leaders, share best practice and learn more about how the region can embrace change and collaborate."

Tim Bailey, chair at Constructing Excellence in the North East, said: "The summit brings together leaders and decision makers from across the construction sector and the supply chain. We are able to collectively listen to how the industry can positively impact climate emergency, deliver exceptional value for clients and create companies which have a diverse, productive and engaged workforce."

"The Innovation Showcase is always a key highlight and we would encourage

organisations to take up exhibition space. It provides an opportunity to highlight to fellow members, construction clients and the supply chain what they can offer.

"We want to bring together forward-thinking clients and the region's innovators and SMEs, enabling conversations which will only be achieved through collaboration across the industry."

"This was evidenced last year, when WSP leading engineering and professional services consultancy, met Sphera, developer for new materials for the built environment who were exhibiting."

"As a result, Sphera was one of four firms to join WSP's new Emerging Growth Partnership Programme (EGPP). This provides the opportunity for innovative early growth stage companies to engage in a strategic partnership with WSP. The start-up partnership pairs four pioneering technology and product start-ups companies with technical leaders across WSP's various business lines to strategically refine products, services and technologies."

"We have seen tangible results from the Innovation Showcase and this should provide SMEs and start-ups with confidence and opportunity to speak to future construction clients, consultants, contractors and the supply chain."

If you are interested in taking exhibition space, please email leanne@cene.org.uk further details on the event can be found here: cene.org.uk/onevoice/summit-2022



Damiano Rea

GHOST AND CHIPS

At the start of the pandemic some light relief was provided by images of people walking out of the supermarket with a trolley stacked high with loo rolls. Most of us giggled and speculated on what these people thought the future held. But there was an unintended consequence. The price of loo rolls went skyward due to excessive demand and limited supply.

I have no wish to compare the housing sector to the supply of lavatorial products but, I am afraid I must. Not because the sector is going down the pan, quite the opposite. House sales continue to be robust as we regularly see properties selling for 10% over the asking price. The market shows no sign of slowing, despite inflation and rising energy prices. We fully expect to see a 5-6% increase in house prices in Heaton by the end of the year. High demand, limited supply. Sound familiar?

The view from the rental sector is pretty dismal for tenants, and largely for the same reason. Buoyant prices and over-regulation mean many smaller landlords are emptying their properties and selling up. This has resulted in a lack of available rental properties and, as with loo rolls and house sales, the result is high demand, limited supply.

The problem is exacerbated by over regulation. Often enacted with the best of intentions but subject to the law of unintended consequences. The Tenant Fees Act of 2019 banned most letting fees paid by tenants in the private rental sector. This news was welcomed with universal glee by consumer champions and tenant associations.

Letting agents who tried to point out the obvious were ignored as politicians showboated. "The aim of the Act is to reduce the costs that tenants can face at the outset, and throughout, a tenancy," said the Ministry. I assume the Ministry imagined letting agents' costs would simply vanish. That office, vehicle, compliance, staff, training and administration costs would melt away like a ghost in sunlight.

Strangely, they did not! Landlords, already on tight margins could not absorb the additional cost so, take a wild guess where those legitimate

costs were recouped? Yep, they were simply added to the annual rental calculation resulting in a rent rise that exactly marched the cost benefit of scrapping letting fees.

The latest populist move comes from Scotland which is to impose a rent freeze and a ban on evictions until March 2023 to help ease the cost-of-living crisis. This has again been welcomed by campaigning groups many of whom have called for the freeze to be extended across the UK.

One Scottish politician has suggested the cost of the freeze will be met by landlords and thus, will cost the Government nothing. That may be the case, but it will surely cost tenants. Smaller landlords fed up with over regulation, shrinking returns and a buoyant housing market will do the obvious. Cash their chips and sail away into the sunset with them.

The housing and rental sectors need regulation, something I have often advocated in this magazine. But it would be nice if just now and then, rather than grabbing a soundbite on the news feeds, regulators sat down and discussed proposed legislation with professionals. My door is always open, but I shall not clear my diary while I wait for the call.

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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.

WHAT IS THE POINT OF GOOD ARCHITECTURE?

By Neil Turner, Howarth Litchfield

What is the relevance of good architecture and what does it contribute to our lives, society and the North East region?



Neil Turner



Redcar Station - Image; Howarth Litchfield

As an architect working in this region across many sectors on both modern and historic projects with varying values and levels of complexity, one of the key questions I often consider is 'what is it that makes a building into a piece of architecture'?

The joy of this profession is the creation of buildings and spaces and how they are used.

I was sat recently on the train (coming back from a meeting in Leeds) and drawing a new surgery for a GP client. The time passed quickly, and the man opposite said as I packed up to get off, "that looks a lot more interesting than my spreadsheets". In truth, it probably was.

I love the challenge of a brief and responding to specific design requirements including the flow and function within the spaces; and at the same time converting my ideas into a three-dimensional design solution with a heart and soul.

Architecture should stimulate our senses and make us appreciate what is around us. A mere building just passes us all by.

Buildings do much to enrich our lives and our experiences and how we react to places. Here in the North East, we have our challenges (and opportunities), but good architecture is very influential in terms of showcasing the region. There is considerable development in Durham, Newcastle and Teesside and I only hope that the quality (of the new buildings) is worthy of these great cities.

So, are you thinking, is this daft old architect just wanting clients to spend their company profits on extravagant buildings that do nothing? Well of course not. I recognise the unique challenges of 2022.

A good piece of architecture can act as a signature or statement for a business, council, or charity. A building should increase footfall or improve efficiency. Its reason for being created should help attract people, customers

who may pay to use it or help the production efficiency of a business. It can be achieved very simply or with great elaboration, depending on what the client wants - a statement to show success or one that demonstrates environmental credentials? Both have their place.

Great architecture doesn't need to cost more either. Yes, budgets are important and never more so than now. I've heard many architects using cost as an excuse for a poor design. A good architect can still produce a clever solution on a tight budget - if allowed!

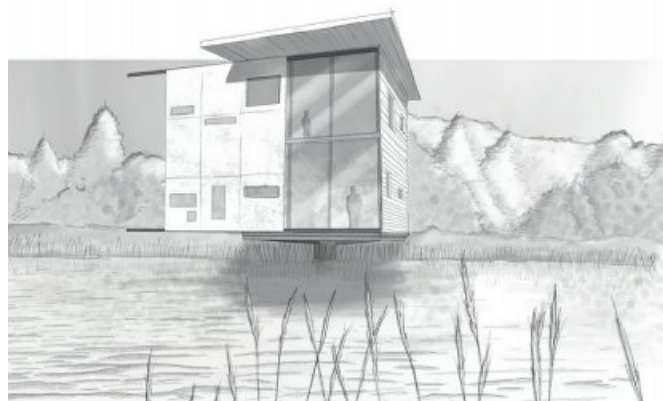
At Howarth Litchfield we have worked on a vast array of building types over the last few months, working with vets, schools, churches, large manufacturers, housing, historic building, community centres and railway stations to name a few. As different as they are, we aim to create designs that delight, perform and are affordable.

A good example recently was Durham Wildlife Trust, who asked us to help develop a new bird hide. There was no initial budget or brief, just a desire to create an exciting building that would add to its beautiful surroundings. We have created a concept and they are now working hard to raise funds for the development. Their ambition and vision are to be admired.

Other examples can be found at many schools we have worked with, where ambitious masterplans recognise that estate development adds to the attractiveness of the school for both parents and children and plays a key role in ensuring that a school maintains its educational status.

Howarth Litchfield has recently completed the Parsons Depot in Sunderland which has a huge emphasis on sustainable energy generation. The new building allows the transfer to electric vehicles for waste collection and grass cutting, whilst at the same time, delivers a huge decrease in carbon use. The building design demonstrates how a large metal frame building can be simple and elegant.

Durham Wildlife Trust - Image; Howarth Litchfield





Neville Hall refurbished interior. Image: Andrew Heptinstall Photography

It's also important to consider how our current building stock can be maintained, improved and reinvigorated. I have had the pleasure of working on the Neville Hall project in Newcastle with the Common Room of the North whose determination and skill have combined to make a lovely old building shine again.

Good architecture is important to the economy of the North East, adding to the attractiveness of the region - whether it is a new visitor attraction or a business investing in this area. We are also fortunate to benefit from a vast skills resource provided by the construction sector within the regional economy.

If we fail to invest in buildings, then can we really complain when a building is poorly designed or worse still, lasts only a few short years. Investment comes in many forms including the quality of design, the budget for a development and the commitment of all parties to succeed. Good architecture needs supportive planning authorities, not bodies that are weighed down by rules and regulations.

With the current energy crisis, it serves to illustrate that we need all buildings to be cleverly designed to use less energy - in fact to generate energy. Our standards for judging what makes good architecture should be the incorporation or a much greater focus on sustainable design.

Good architecture, by whatever definition is good for society, good for business and good for the soul.

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Parsons Depot, Sunderland. Image: Howarth Litchfield



Barnard Castle Sports Pavilion -
Image; Howarth Litchfield



Neville Hall refurbished interior. Image:
Andrew Heptinstall Photography



STYLED INTERIOR DESIGN'S RIVERSIDE REVAMP: INTRODUCING THE STYLED SUITE

Tasked with revamping the Riverside suite at Middlesbrough Football Club, Styled Interior Design scored one of its biggest wins to date. Taking the tired, heavily branded room and transforming it into a modern space fit for not only football, but a range of other events too, was an experience unlike any other says Bethany Walker, head of interior design at Styled.

Out with the old

The Riverside suite at Middlesbrough Football Club has served many a supporter over the years, but it was time to give it a new lease of life. The aim of the project was to create an appealing and multi-purpose space for all to enjoy and encourage private events such as wedding receptions and baby showers, as well as the usual matchday hospitality.

Originally, the room was quite dark, having not been updated for several years. It had little design consideration and was heavily branded, which was fine for match days but did little to appeal to events outside of football.

Our goal was to create a space that is adaptable to a range of different events that will help bring in new streams of revenue for the football club. The space needed a complete redesign to take it from being an overcrowded, dated and run-down function room, to a modern multifunctional events space with a warm and vibrant atmosphere - a room which would overhaul Middlesbrough's current hospitality offering and make it a top choice for functions on Teesside.

In with the new

The works, which were completed by WOODSmith Construction Group, began by replacing the floor with a hardwearing and on-trend herringbone effect LVT (Luxury Vinyl Tile) throughout the main suite and accompanying boxes. The colour

palette was switched from dark reds and stark whites to lighter shades consisting of warm greige, seafoam blue and leafy green. However, as the space is still primarily used for match days, the team introduced a more subtle nod to the club's branding by adding accents of a soft red-terracotta shade throughout the backrests in the chairs, wall murals and custom cabinetry for the serving area.

Modern oak cladding was used to add depth and interest to a new bar and throughout the suite. The bar itself was completely redesigned, and further enhanced by custom-built brass shelving

for drinks and glassware, a bronzed mirrored wall and marble worktops. Pendant lighting at various heights provides a warm and cosy atmosphere.

When designing a space, one of the main considerations was how it will be used. The most significant problem with the old suite was the lack of space when at full capacity. To solve this, we decided to use a variety of table sizes to help maximise the area available. Bespoke booth seating was also built into the large windows which offered the club a premium seating option for their hospitality guests, whilst also being a great space-saving solution!

The project had an incredibly tight deadline, just eight weeks from start to finish, so the pressure was on to complete it in time. To achieve the redesign within the timeframe, our team worked with local companies and subcontractors for the works, including everything from decorating, bespoke joinery, the new bar area and the furniture.

As part of The SDDE Smith Group, a huge part of Styled's business is helping to create better places to work, live and stay, which is why choosing local companies for this project was a fantastic way to reflect this aspect of the business.

The new Riverside Suite is modern and bright and now available for anyone to host a party or event in style. To see how Styled can help with your design project, call 01287 348 311 or visit www.styledinteriordesign.co.uk



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NEW HIRES AND HIGH-FLYERS HELP PROPERTY SPECIALIST GROW



L-R back: Nigel Goodrum, Darron Barker, Marc Pickering, David Catto, Joseph Cuthbert, Benjamin Riddle, Karolina Volkova
L-R front: Sophie Swift, Tamsin Swann, Chloe Humphrys, Katie Kinchella, Paul Thompson

Leading commercial and residential property expert Bradley Hall has announced a raft of new appointments to underpin its ongoing growth.

Over the last three months, the company has taken on an abundance of new starters and has promoted three employees as it continues to invest in the North East.

Operating in the region for 34 years, the company is now one of the region's most active property agencies, having recently topped the EGI North East lettings and occupational sales ranking during the second quarter of 2022.

Bradley Hall topped the rankings for all three North East counties included in the report – County Durham, Northumberland and Tyne & Wear – having closed 47 deals across the region from April to June.

This increased activity was a result of the company advising on a number of high-profile transactions during the period, leading to the company continuing to invest in the region as it looks to capitalise on the resurgence of the North East property market.

Neil Hart, Group Managing Director at Bradley Hall, said: "I'm delighted to welcome all our new starters to the team and I'm pleased to be able to offer promotions to some of our existing employees.

"As a company, we pride ourselves on looking after our own, which is why – when you compare us to our industry peers – we have a much higher-than-average percentage of senior employees who have started in junior roles and risen through the ranks, from myself to our head of marketing, operations director and many others across the business.

"However, this would never have been possible were it not for the continual hard work and dedication of our staff that has enabled us to grow in such an organic, sustainable manner and

I would like to thank everyone at the company for their fantastic efforts which have helped lift us to where we are today.

"It's a hugely exciting time for everyone associated with Bradley Hall and I expect the business to keep growing and keep creating opportunities across the North East as we continue to expand."

Katie Kinchella is one of the company's recent senior hires, having joined as Bradley Hall's Gosforth Office Manager from Rook Matthews Sayer in July.

She said: "I am thrilled to have been offered the opportunity to head up the Gosforth office of Bradley Hall, one of the most active agencies in the region.

"As demand for property across Newcastle and its surrounding areas continues to rise, demand for homes in leafy suburbs such as Gosforth is only going to continue growing.

"Sited just two and a half miles from Newcastle city centre and five and a half miles from Newcastle International Airport, it is ideally situated for commuters and families looking to achieve the perfect work-life balance.

"Easy access to public transport links also means it is only a short journey from the coast, countryside, and city centre and I'm excited to start working with the team at Bradley Hall to help others realise the potential of this beautiful part of the region."

Bradley Hall also has a proven track record of recruiting and upskilling graduates by helping them undertake Assessment of Professional Competence (APC) courses to qualify as chartered surveyors and providing career progression opportunities. In fact, Group Managing Director Neil joined the company as a placement student before climbing the ladder to where he is today. Olivia White is one of the latest recruits hoping to follow in his footsteps, having recently joined Bradley Hall's graduate programme as a Graduate Building Surveyor after completing a degree in Building Surveying and Surveying Technology at Northumbria University.

"I'm delighted to have been offered the chance to

join Bradley Hall's graduate programme," Olivia said. "It's fantastic to have joined a company that offers genuine opportunities to climb the career ladder and prides itself on promoting from within. I'm looking forward to my future here and seeing where it takes me."

The other appointments and promotions include:

- **Darron Barker**, Principal Surveyor/ Valuation & Consultancy for the Valuation department, who joins from Connells Survey & Valuation.
- **Tamsin Swann**, Property Management Surveyor for Property Management, who joins from Buxton Group.
- **David Catto**, Commercial Agency Surveyor – Newcastle Commercial, who joins from Align property Partners.
- **Joseph Cuthbert**, Graduate Surveyor for Valuation, who graduated from Newcastle University with a degree in Urban Planning and Green Infrastructure.
- **Lucy Mouter**, Commercial Agency Surveyor for Newcastle Commercial, who joins from Keith Pattinson Estate Agents.
- **Paul Thompson**, Property Inspector for Property Management.
- **Benjamin Riddle**, Assistant Surveyor for Property Management.
- **Luke Overton**, Graduate Building Surveyor for Building Surveying.
- **Josh Robinson**, Graduate Surveyor, Leeds.
- **Chloe Humphrys**, Junior Digital Executive, Newcastle.
- **Marc Pickering**, Graduate Surveyor for Property Management and Durham Commercial, who recently completed a Masters at Northumbria University in Real Estate.
- **Sophie Swift**, promoted to PR & Marketing Executive in the Marketing department.
- **Nigel Goodrum**, promoted to Morpeth Office Manager.
- **Karolina Volkova**, promoted to Property Executive in Gosforth.

For more information on Bradley hall, visit: www.bradleyhall.co.uk or follow www.linkedin.com/company/bradley-hall



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PROPERTY PEOPLE

In the latest of these popular features we talk to...

CAROLINE HARRISON

Director, Jack Harrison Estates

Did you always envisage a career in property?

I actually started out in property, working in London where my parents are originally from. When I moved to the North East, I was working in property management for a few years before taking a break to study and work as a beauty therapist. However, when the opportunity to be a part of launching our own family business came about, it seemed the perfect time to get back into the property industry which is what I know best.

What attracted you to your current role?

As I say, it is a job that I have done on and off for the best part of 15 years so I have always been drawn to property on both the sales and the lettings side. The chance to be a part of our own family business was so exciting, I couldn't wait to get started.

What changes have you seen in the market since you started?

We have seen so many ups and downs in the housing market since we opened in 2016 as well as a great deal of changing legislation on the lettings side. However, over the past few years, as everyone knows, the market has just gone crazy and there seems to be a real shortage of rental properties which is making it an exceptionally competitive market at present.

How would you advise people looking to rent property?

I would say to try to have a clear picture in your mind as to what you want and how much you are prepared to pay as it is easy to get swept up in what is such a competitive environment. Also, I'd suggest registering your rental requirements with agencies such as our own so that we can ensure that we keep you notified of any properties coming on to the market that meet your criteria.

Tell us the most exciting thing you're currently working on?

We are always working on ways to improve our business and the ways that we service our clients. That never stops really. I'd have to say that at the moment, the most exciting thing we are working on is a bit of a refurbishment at the office which I am looking forward to having completed by the end of the year.

What's your fondest memory of a career in the property industry?

I'd say the launch party of Jack Harrison Estates was pretty special. It was a lovely party with all of our friends and family and marked the start of what has proved to be so many exciting times ahead. We've also been fortunate enough to be nominated for and win several awards over the past few years which has felt like recognition for all of our hard work.

What are your career aspirations?

To be the best sales and letting agent in the North East. I know that that sounds ambitious given what a small company we are compared to most but I think that that is part of what enables us to offer such a good service. We are able to provide our customers with the service that we feel that they deserve because we are able to manage our stock volume.

Where's the best place to live in the North East, and why?

I am slightly torn as Jack and I always lived in High Heaton and obviously work there too. It is such a great place for families and is so central for just about everywhere. However, we now live at the Coast which we also love because there is so much to do there. I'm going to call it a draw between the two!

What does the future hold for Jack Harrison Estates?

Just to focus on improving and growing our little business to make it the very best that it can be. It is also really important to Jack and I that the company continues to support the local community such as our ongoing sponsorship of The Heaton Hawks junior football teams.

When not working, how do you like to relax?

To be honest, I don't get much time to relax but we both love spending quality time with our six year daughter, Mataya and our 11 year old pug, Elmo.

“

...The chance to be a part of our own family business was so exciting, I couldn't wait to get started...



AxB or AxBxC?

Occupiers of commercial property who pay rents and rates will be well aware that the predominant way of valuing almost all of it (shops, offices, factories and restaurants) is on an area basis. But is this all we need to think about?

I know that many reading this will operate shops and will be aware of the “zoning” method of valuation undertaken by surveyors (for those who aren’t shopkeepers or surveyors, we consider the first six metres depth of a shop to be twice as valuable as the next six metres which in turn is twice as valuable as the next six metres and so on). And in restaurants kitchens are valued at a lower rate than the actual trading area etc. But recently I have been engaged to negotiate the rates on a warehouse using the Governments Check, Challenge, Appeal system. Now this relies on floor areas in the basic assessment of warehouses and my client’s unit is in fairness rated at a fairly low level within that. It should be because it is very basic (it has the horrors of a corrugated asbestos roof and only nominal insulation) which obviously have a negative effect on value.

But also... it has a clear working height of approximately 4 metres. Around 15 feet 1 inches isn’t terribly high for storage and so I will be seeking an adjustment to reflect this. The question is how much should the rate be adjusted to compensate for the low height and conversely, were the height to be say 8 metres (over 30 feet), would that have a diminished value because of the extra costs of heating and maintenance? I found forklift trucks that lifted to 6.3 metres, so assuming they were lifting a pallet with stock on of a metre high, anything over 7.3 metres would seem to be wasted space. Excessive heights are of course a problem that I and other churchwardens have to deal with in heating the caverns of our churches and other religious buildings.



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Phil Bowe

So is this relevant to you? I suggest that all commercial property occupiers look at the areas of the properties they are operating in, the volumes of the properties they are operating in and the shape of the properties they are operating in. Floor area gives a very strong clue as to the value of a property, but I don’t think it is anything like the whole answer, even comparing two properties of like floor area, age and energy performance.

And this leads onto how we configure commercial property within – and outside – our town centres. The economy is going through

huge changes, some of which may be short term (I hope that the crazy energy price increases we have seen recently will in due course be reversed) as it is another wake up call for us to consider absolutely objectively the space we have and if we can make it better use of it for ourselves and for others.

***If you disagree, tell me! If you agree, tell me!
I also write on my LinkedIn profile
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Pay-as-Hugo, the contract-free, fixed fee, little brother brand of award-winning agency Harvey & Hugo, has recently relaunched its eCommerce site following customer demand and user feedback.

Jumping on the eCommerce scene back

in 2020 in the midst of the pandemic, Pay-as-Hugo aims to revolutionise the ways businesses and brands access PR, content marketing and social media services by throwing out the traditional contract ways of old and offering a new fully flexible approach.

The revamped website gives customers the option to browse and purchase a wide range of services, just like any online store. Visitors to the site can build their own bespoke bundle of services or choose from the most popular ones in the essentials section, all from the comfort of their office (or sofa!). Options include press releases, blogs, graphics, videos, social media packages and more.

The same team of experts, known as The Pack, will be working on the services you purchase and there is even an option to upgrade to the annual 'PRiority' service. This works just like Amazon Prime, with faster turnarounds, a dedicated account manager, and a 5% discount off every order.

Sunderland student gains valuable experience creating promotional videos for local businesses

A videography student from the University of Sunderland has proven he has what it takes to make the cut, with commissions from two local businesses to sharpen his skills.

Following briefs from Sunderland Creatives Agency - a student-led business set up by the University of Sunderland in partnership with Creo Comms - student Jeason Hanson has filmed and edited professional videos for Reds Hair and Beauty and East Coast Fitness.

The projects, which were overseen by Creo Comms, a Sunderland-based communications consultancy, supported the businesses with affordable and quality work, all while providing Jeason with authentic, paid work experience.

Susan Hall, owner of Reds Hair and Beauty, said: "We wanted to capture some social media assets, particularly video content, to use on our channels. We'd heard of Sunderland Creatives Agency through word of mouth, and so got in touch to see if they could help.

"Jeason was brilliantly creative and the short film he produced for us was great



value for money. It's a fantastic way to support local and emerging talent."

The video for Reds Hair and Beauty showcased the space and services on offer, while the East Coast Fitness video captured a morning boot camp on Seaham Harbour.

Graham Low, owner of East Coast Fitness, said: "Especially in the fitness industry, with people being body conscious, it can be quite hard for people to have a camera on them, but Jeason was amazing and made them all feel at ease. He had some really fresh ideas and I love the end result."

Louise Bradford, managing director of Creo Comms, said: "We're thrilled with the lovely feedback from the businesses we have worked with so far and can't wait to add more brilliant local companies to a growing roster of Sunderland Creatives Agency clients."



Northumberland publisher relaunches Tyne to Tweed visitor guide

Following a two-year hiatus, Offstone Publishing has launched the third edition of its Tyne to Tweed visitor guide, which promotes the very best of Northumberland, North Tyneside, Newcastle, and the surrounding areas.

Stocksfield-based Offstone Publishing has relaunched its Tyne to Tweed visitor guide after a two-year break in publishing due to the Covid pandemic. The third edition of the guide is available now across the region and its 220 pages are filled with days out for the whole family right across Northumberland, North Tyneside, Newcastle and the surrounding areas.

Previously published in 2019 and 2020 following Offstone's successful acquisition of the Lakes & Cumbria Today publication - the best-selling visitor guide in the Lake District & Cumbria - the visitor guide is supported by businesses across each of the areas detailed as well as the National Trust and Tyne & Wear Metro.

The 2022 guide has been thoroughly researched and updated to reflect very best of the region and it contains gorgeous photography, informative features, and handy tips to help readers get the most out of their time - making it an essential guide for anyone visiting the region as well as people lucky enough to call it home.

New content for 2022 includes details of the Hadrian's Wall 1900th anniversary celebrations; a journey to the Farne Islands to uncover its profusion of wildlife; meeting Northumberland's first dik-dik (it's an antelope, in case you were wondering...); uncovering some of Northumberland's most unusual sights; and chatting with one of Alnwick Garden's poison gardeners about the weird, wonderful and downright scary plants in the collection.

The guide also includes in-depth details about the best food and drink hotspots, fantastic independent shopping and interesting cultural locations as well as glorious nature and wondrous history. There's also information on local transport, museums, family-friendly activities, walks in the Northumberland National Park, and lots more.



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"EYE-OPENING" NEW WORKSHOP TEACHES LOCAL BUSINESSES HOW TO TURN SOCIAL MEDIA INTO A MACHINE THAT *SPOON-FEEDS THEM LEADS*



If you're a local business owner on the hunt for more leads and customers, this could be the most important half-page you read inside this magazine... Here's why...

Local businesses are under a barrage of threats to their survival. From conflicting "guru" talk to **WILD** government advice about cutting marketing budgets, it's hard to know how or where to find new customers to grow your business.

**"SO MANY LEADS ITS LIKE DRINKING
FROM A FIRE HOSE"**

That's why Blacktip Social has opened up in-person workshops, specifically created for North East small business owners on how to use social media to recession-proof their business by attracting "starving" crowds of leads and transforming them into paying customers without needing an Apple or Amazon-sized marketing budget.

The first workshop has already been touted as "the best business investment we've ever made" by attendees. Find out more about the "game-changing" workshops by scanning the QR code on the left!

MARKETING AND MEDIA MATTERS

In the latest of these popular series of features we talk to...

SAMUEL MARRIOTT-DOWDING

Founder and CEO, Marriott Communications.

Did you always envisage a career in the Media industry?

Yes and no. I had always been torn between becoming an investigative journalist or working within the Civil Service, such as in the Foreign Office, but neither ever seemed to totally fit what I wanted to do or where I wanted to grow professionally. Eventually I found myself working in Marketing and Public Relations, and in many ways I now get to have the best of both worlds. However, if you told me 10 years ago that I would eventually own my own Communications agency - I would have just laughed!

What has been your career path so far?

My career path so far has really been about growth and evolution, I have nearly always had professional roles within the Marketing and Public Relations industry (aside from a stint as a bartender in Holland during my university days!). After I graduated and moved back to the UK, and during the pandemic, I began freelance Communications work for a venture capitalist and a few charities. Something had clicked for me and I knew that this was what I wanted to pursue, so I thought long and hard about applying for a job at an existing agency, but I eventually decided that I wanted to make my own dreams happen, rather than working towards making someone else's dreams happen. So I took a chance on myself and started my own agency, and now 18 months, 17 clients, and a move to Sunderland later, I am now the CEO of Marriott Communications, and I have never looked back.

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

I think the biggest challenge so far has been finding my place in this extremely competitive sector. For any start up, there are always businesses and organisations that are much more established, have more financial freedom and flexibility, and have the longevity and the prestige to dominate the market and secure upcoming and potential projects and clients. For me, finding my footing has not always been easy, especially in a sector where there is such incredible and vibrant creative talent, and I have definitely made my fair share of mistakes along the way. With time comes experience, and with experience comes the growth that enables you to solidify who you are and where you belong.

How did you adapt your business during the coronavirus crisis and support clients?

I officially incorporated my business in January 2021, so right in the middle of lockdown and the pandemic, and I was incredibly fortunate in that the lockdown actually gave me an advantage. As Marriott Communications is a digital communications agency, I had limited overheads and a flexibility that allowed me to adapt to the changing markets and the ebb and flow of external marketing spend. I also spotted a gap in agency service provision, and to exploit this I created a specialist digital transformation service to support businesses that were affected by the lockdown - especially those with brick and mortar stores, and those who had not up until that point established a digital marketing strategy that would drive revenue and raise brand awareness. This particular service proved invaluable to several businesses and organisations, and was an integral part of our first year rapid growth.

What is your greatest strength?

Intuition and discernment. For as long as I can remember I have always been able to instinctually assess and analyse situations and people, and to be able to do this within the Marketing and Public Relations sectors, let alone when running a business, is invaluable. These strengths have helped me to identify problems needing solving, to see what relationships to cultivate or abandon, and to map out what opportunities to say yes to, and most importantly what opportunities to say no to.

What has been your proudest achievement?

Celebrating Marriott Communications' first business anniversary! When I started my company I was very well aware of the statistics surrounding how many startups fail in their first year and I just did not want to become that statistic - which really forced me to diversify my services and to really think outside of the box. I ended up having a really strong first year and saw twelve straight months of profit, and when that anniversary arrived it really became a milestone for me, and I could not be any prouder of what was achieved in our first year, and of what is to come.

What are your remaining career aspirations?

I think I probably have too many to name! One important goal of mine is to continue to grow Marriott Communications nationally and internationally, and eventually transition the business into a Public Affairs agency alongside opening a creative agency specifically for the lifestyle and entertainment industries. I also would not be opposed to a Forbes feature!

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

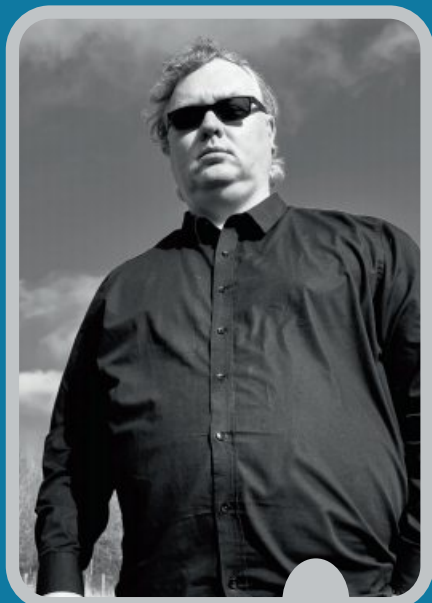
The most significant evolution over the next decade could quite possibly be the shift towards conscious marketing. More and more consumers and audiences are becoming more socially, ethically, and politically aware in how they spend their money, and from whom they are acquiring products and services. Consumer trends are shifting and a greater value is being placed upon supporting and buying from businesses that are sustainable, ethical, and socially aware - and most importantly whether these businesses values align with those of their consumers. As a result, a greater focus will be placed upon implementing conscious marketing into a businesses marketing strategy and sales function in order to demonstrate to the consumer that their buying decisions will have the greatest positive impact on their lives, the lives around them, and for the world that they live in.

sam@marriottcommunications.com
0191 535 9978



...THE HORRORS OF HAVING A BUSINESS AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT...

It's Halloween this month and Highlights PR's Keith Newman asked some of his RADAR members to tell us about some of the horror stories their businesses have experienced and how they put them right.



Halloween is all year round for me. I'm a writer and occult consultant with the distinction of having written more books on the occult than anyone else in the English language with a current total of more than 600. Check out my website for more information.

S Rob, author, www.srob.co.uk



One of our horrors was teaching each client how to use microphones and how to address the camera, it took up so much time! So, we produced a few short videos to showcase how to use these items and what to do when we get on-site to assist with production.

Dan Wilkinson, www.thedwmedia.co.uk



Back in October 2020 our traditional and favourite day of the year, 'Spooky Larks in the Park' could not go ahead due to Covid. In fact, very little could happen because of Covid!

However, this is Leading Link and Halloween was NOT going to be cancelled! If the families couldn't come to us, then we could go to them where they lived! We dressed the minibus and turned it into a spooky ghoul bus with bubbles, smoke and a real life Witch Doctor walking in front of the bus. We blasted out our repertoire of spooky music and set off around the villages waving at the families as we went by.

Whilst planning, we discovered a residents group had set up a pumpkin trail around the villages whereby they placed pumpkin pictures in their windows and decided to follow the trail on a planned route.

We worked with a group of partners to include Woodhorn and a professional photographer as we forewarned people that if they dressed up and we photographed them then they would be put in a draw to win a prize. We worked with Bacmans who gave us a load of Halloween Activities that we could give out to the children as we passed and also with Time Step Dance company who followed in their own cars and sprung out at any given time to create a flashmob to Thriller! What more could we ask for?!

The smiles and cries of delight made all of it worthwhile but the best of the day was a young lad who said 'this is the best Halloween ever!'

Lyn Horton, www.leadinglink.co.uk



Halloween and the dark nights can often be filled with excitement and fun or the start of a long dark scary winter for others. At Off The Grid, our mentoring service is gearing up to help and support our clients through this winter which is looking like a very tough one! To combat some of the challenges we have just been successful with a Sport England Jubilee Fund Grant for the Byker area and have been out on the streets with partners such as the Kids Cabin delivering sessions. We have an amazing street food festival in the Byker Wall Estate coming up along with other creative solutions to the problems our communities face. If anyone is interested in supporting our programmes through volunteering or food donations get in touch and drop me an email for an informal chat!

Paul Kirkpatrick paul@off-the-grid-cic.uk



Horror for us at the moment includes, leaking windows, dirty socks, rotten flooring, and a cellar which could be used in any horror movie!!

We've been renovating the HUB Consett, the home of MINT Business Club and Celebrate Difference, thankfully all is well now and we're investing in new windows and transforming the outside of the building too.

*Nicola Jayne Little, Founder MINT Business Club,
mintbusinessclub.co.uk*



March 2020 was a terrible time for businesses thanks to lockdown, but I was delivered a further cutting blow when I was diagnosed with diabetes and told that it was irreversible and unlikely to go into remission due to a number of factors including the deprived area which I live. As a business -owner, mum, and wife, the news was totally devastating to hear. I felt that the diagnosis was prejudiced and made me determined to prove the doctor wrong. I was also incredibly worried about whether my business would survive lockdown at the time too. While other businesses managed to move online and make record sales, I had to prioritise my health above all else.

Lockdown gave me the opportunity to reflect on what I needed to do to make my business pandemic proof. As a result, I'm now pre-diabetic and my next health goal is to go into remission. Business wise, I now have a digitally robust small business which is in a much stronger position than it might have been without the pandemic. I started to work with a local fulfilment centre and print on demand specialists to reduce my work load which gave me a better work life balance. This gave me the time and space to manage my health condition and see my business grow.

Corinne Lewis Ward, www.powderbutterfly.co.uk

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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ARE YOU QUALIFIED FOR THIS POSITION?

Why people take up marketing as a career, and why being qualified helps.

“Marketing is something I have always been passionate about since I first started studying it during my Post-Graduate Diploma in Management Studies”.

Veronica Swindale, nesma MD



Veronica Swindale

So, what's it all about, and why would we encourage school, college and university leavers to take it up as a career? First, it's relevant to any sector you can think of, from gaming, food and drink, charities, local councils, transport, manufacturing, professional services, and sport - the list is much longer than this word count allows. So, it should be easy to find a job you enjoy in a sector you are interested in.

The jobs you can do include market research, design, branding, planning, advertising,

digital and social media, artificial intelligence, statistics, measurement, events, sponsorship, and strategy. It can feed your creativity or your attention to detail all in one go.

Our students work for big brands like Virgin Money, Vertu Motors, Barbour, and Ubisoft, which have bases in the North East, while others are nationally and globally based. The great opportunity we have now is to work where we like and for whom we want - geography has no barriers - and our students are from all over the world.

However, it is competitive.

So, make sure you have all the soft skills an employer needs - genuine confidence, authentic curiosity, communication and time management skills, a willingness to manage your time and energy well and know how to be sociable and have a good sense of humour.

The next thing to look at is your experience. What experience do you have now that will help you in your next job tomorrow? And are your skills and qualifications relevant and up to date? Employers increasingly need their staff to hit the ground running.

At nesma, we work with marketers from 16 to 60, helping them to gain their qualifications for the next stages of their careers. Mostly their employers pay for them too. Working in marketing is no more or less stressful than any other discipline. The key is to make sure you are working for a good employer.

This year we expect at least one employer to come to his team's graduation in London - yes, his team! That shows a genuine commitment to your staff and makes him an outstanding manager.

So, do we practice what we preach? Marketing is about providing VALUE.

Our professional students tell us they value the opportunity to be part of a marketing community. They participate in live seminars where they can talk to fellow marketers and comms managers from other organisations about the highs and lows of their daily work. Many share their problems and help each other to solve them (it's tough if you're the only marketer in the village).

All the modules are assessed either through an exam or assignment. And all the assessments are work-based, which develops skills that truly transfer into the workplace. So not only are you working on live problems relevant to your organisation but also paying your employer back by gaining valuable insights whilst learning relevant frameworks and processes to manage effective plans related to marketing, communications, resource management, branding, digital optimisation, digital customer experience or even sustainability. A qualification award can be achieved in just three months! Things are looking bright.

Our added value doesn't end there.

The ongoing support, one-to-one feedback, 100% results (six times in a row!), small personable groups, interaction with their peers and ongoing mentoring, even when they have passed their qualifications, means that our students tell us that studying with nesma is the best.

Two thousand students and counting, many of whom have come back for more!

Our subsequent accredited qualification programmes for CIM start in January 2023, and the next intake for CIPR is from the end of September 2022 onwards.

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NORTH EAST AGENCY CELEBRATES MILESTONE BIRTHDAY WITH RECORD YEAR

One of the North East's longest-established integrated and multi-award-winning PR, digital, and creative communications agencies, Karol Marketing Group, is celebrating its 30th birthday and is firmly on track for its most successful year to date.



Founded by Stefan Lepkowski in 1992, the Karol Marketing Group has seen several new business wins resulting in the doubling of its turnover year-on-year. Most recently, the business has been shortlisted for the CIPR North East's PR Consultancy of the Year.

Earlier in 2022, the Group made a strategic move to expand by acquiring competitor agency Fusion PR Creative – retaining all staff and providing Karol with more resource, a creative design department, and critical volume in areas of specialism such as healthcare, sustainability, wellbeing, and energy. The acquisition drove forward a vision to offer the very highest level of strategic communications, marketing, digital, public affairs, and public relations expertise to its regional, national, and international client base.

“

*... is evidenced by
Karol being firmly on
track for its most
successful year to date...*

Cumulatively, the Karol Marketing Group has won business from nine new clients in the past 12 months with four existing clients approaching a doubling of fee spend with the company. These recent successes have resulted in three new appointments across the business.

Mr Lepkowski said: “When Karol Marketing was set up from my bedroom 30 years ago, I never could have imagined it would grow to become the thriving, and internationally recognised agency it is today. It is our team of enthusiastic, passionate, and generous PR and marketing experts that makes the Karol Marketing Group what it is today. Our recent client wins and accolades demonstrate that success, and this, is evidenced by Karol being firmly on track for its most successful year to date.

“We're privileged to work with, and alongside, the businesses, charities and public sector organisations that make up this thriving and vibrant part of the world, and I'm particularly proud that our Old Pub office in the Ouseburn has been the home of some fantastic regional, national, and international campaigns, delivered for so many incredible organisations and people over the years.”

The Group is committed to continuing its investment in further growth of the business, the region, as well as its people, offering a wide range of initiatives such as hybrid working, wellbeing days, and mental health prevention programmes, to support overall wellbeing and work-life balance across the organisation.

For more information visit www.karolmarketing.com







“

*...business meetings
on the golf course
are a welcome
bonus!..*



A UNIQUE INTERVIEW...

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PAUL SYKES

Director, The Unite Group

How did you get into IT?

I started my journey into technology with a company called Telephone Rentals as an apprentice. It was a varied introduction into the industry, covering telecoms, IT, data, telecoms cabling, and fire alarm and clocking-in systems. I worked all over London in many different types of businesses. It gave me a fantastic base of knowledge to build my future career.

Who or what inspires you?

I am inspired by the passion I see in the younger members of the team within the different businesses that make up the Unite Group. Young people sometimes get bad press but the dedication to their roles, looking to continually work hard to develop themselves and be a valued member of the team is fantastic to see.

Customer service is the absolute key to what we deliver as it's the only differential between Unite and our competitors and seeing the team continually deliver this and work to improve what we do is inspiring.

What advice would you give to anyone interested in getting into IT?

I still firmly believe that a role in IT and technology is still a great path to follow and provides a really varied career path that's constantly changing, sometimes every week! I think also accepting that you will never know everything, that the role is a continuous learning curve and in general you can learn something different every day. The thrill of resolving an issue for a client or delivering a project that will make a real difference to their business is also great and one you never get tired of.

What is your favourite part of your job?

My role has changed and developed over the years as The Unite Group has grown. These days I am far more involved with business development and account management of our customers. I enjoy both aspects equally, seeing the business develop and grow and being involved in that, and seeing the team reap the rewards of our growth is really satisfying. I also love the fact I get out to meet our clients regularly and help them move their technology services in the right direction.

Bringing new customers into the business is also a key part of my role and business meetings on the golf course are a welcome bonus!

What has been your most memorable moment relating to your business journey?

Whilst Unite as a business has been a 13-year project to date the merger with SMT Tech and the knowledge and expertise we now have within the business and management team have really allowed us to drive the group forward. This has been fantastic to be part of. Seeing the group's growth and the addition of Social Plus over the past few years has been exciting.

What are your favourite magazines?

I love all sports, so any magazine related to this is always a favourite! If I had to pick one, it's Golf Monthly as I enjoy reading about the latest clubs or tips to improve my game!

What does the future hold for Paul Sykes?

I have no plans to slow down just yet! I am lucky in that I have a job that I really enjoy, and I am looking forward to being part of the continued development of The Unite Group for as long as possible. On a personal level, my two daughters Rachel and Amy are now all grown up and I am looking forward to more holidays and travelling with my wife Lorraine. We have some great trips planned and the list keeps getting longer!

www.theunitegroup.co.uk

www.uniquemagazines.co.uk

A DECADE OF SUCCESS FOR LEC

It's 10 years since former journalist and communications professional Leanne Fawcett launched her own PR company, LEC. Today, the business boasts an impressive portfolio of regional and national clients and is a fully integrated provider of media relations, publishing, and print services.

Leanne tells us more about her journey and what the future holds for LEC...



L-R: Leanne with Denise Fielding and Alison Machin

"It's hard to believe it's 10 years since I launched my business, LEC.

"The milestone has crept up on me a little and while I am always so quick to celebrate client anniversaries, I have been a little guilty of overlooking my own.

"So, it's nice to have the platform to sit and reflect on my business journey, the highs and lows, the hits, and misses (thankfully more highs and hits in my decade of being an entrepreneur) and think about the future holds for LEC.

"I decided to launch my own business after nearly 15 years working in regional journalism and local government.

"It was always something I fancied doing, however the timing was never quite right and inevitably, it was put on the back burner.

"But when a change of personal circumstances gave me the chance to think about where my life was going, I decided it was now or never.

"That was 10 years ago – how the years have flown by.

"LEC started life as a public relations company, working with regional businesses to help them raise their profile within the regional and national media.

"But gradually, as we became more established and our portfolio of clients grew, the services we offered also expanded and LEC became a provider of PR, design, marketing, and social media services.

"That growth led to the expansion of the team, and I won't lie, being an employer just wasn't for me. I built a small team of people around me, however three years ago I stripped things right back and after a couple of my staff moved onto pastures new, I took the chance to go back to basics and use freelance support where I needed it.

"I have to say, nothing has changed with the business and our clients still get the same level of support – in fact, the business is as successful now as it was when we were a team of five, however,

the pleasure I get from running it is far, far greater.

"Don't get me wrong, as any business owner knows, the pressures and challenges never go away, and I've lost count of the number of tears I've shed over the years.

"However, I finally feel like things are just about where I'd like them to be.

"In the past six months, we've secured a number of new clients in sectors including e-commerce, commercial cleaning, coaching and renewable energy. I love bringing on board new clients, I get such a buzz from a company saying they want to work with LEC, however keeping existing clients is as much of a priority to me so one is never at the detriment of the other.

"Our publishing arm has also expanded, and now includes the quarterly East Durham Business magazine, the flagship magazine for East Durham Business Network, and the hugely successful Business News North East and East Durham News websites.

"So, what does the future hold?

"Certainly, I want to continue to grow the business, bringing in new clients and increasing the workload we have with those businesses we already work with.

"And I'm very excited about the potential of a new venture I am involved with.

"Novus Business Collective has been launched by me along with Denise Fielding from East Durham Business Service and Alison Machin from Think D.

"The new business is aimed at those people and SMEs that are already operating successfully but who need specialist targeted assistance which could help them grow.

"Initially Novus Business Collective will offer help in areas including financial management, business development and planning, coaching and mentoring, communications, design and marketing.

"Each business that signs up will be put through an initial diagnostic of their set up to determine which areas they need to invest in to boost their chances of growth.

"It's an opportunity for the three of us to get stuck into a new project outside of the day job and we're currently in the process of spreading the word and networking to raise awareness of what we're doing.

"LEC has come such a long way in the 10 years since I set it up and I really am incredibly proud of everything we've achieved – good and bad.

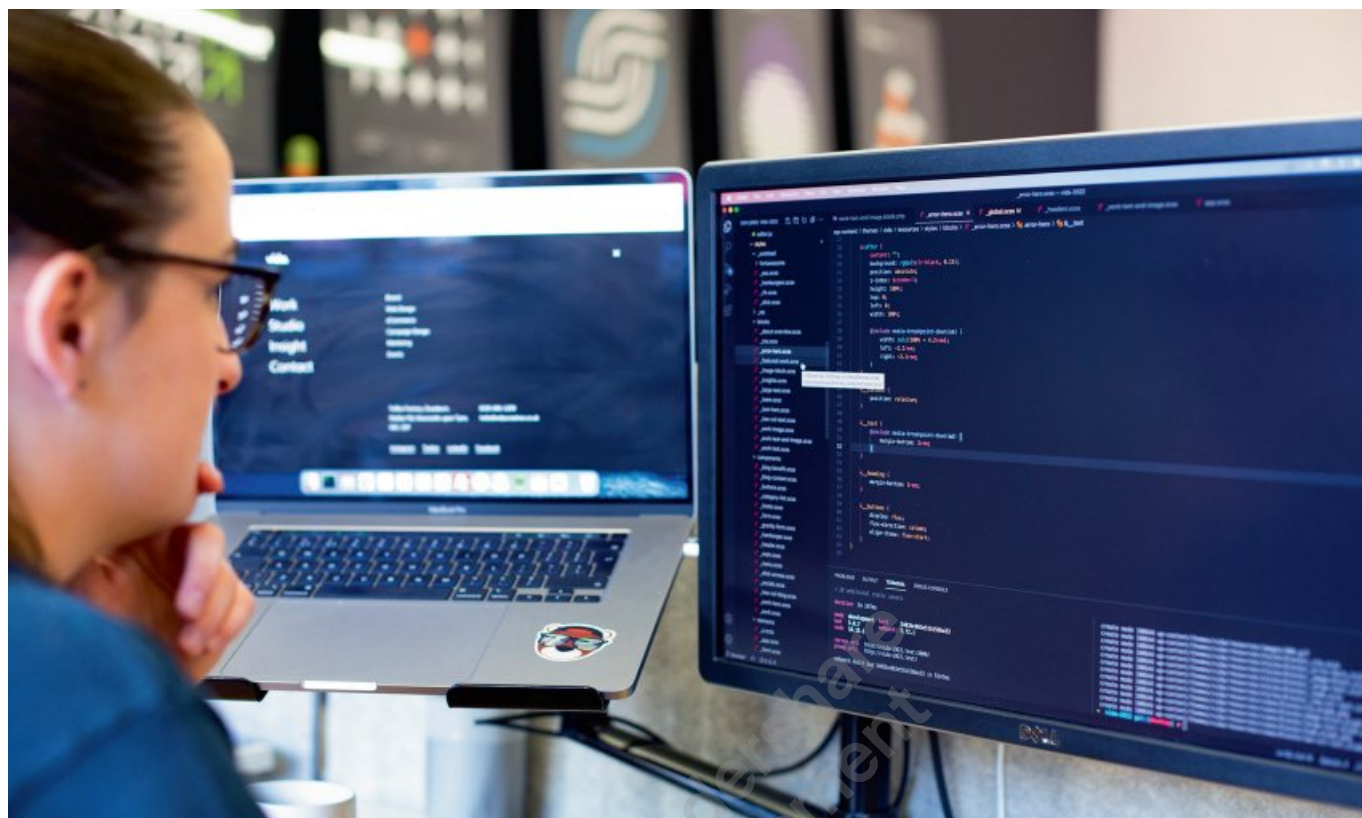
"Every day's a school day as they say and never is that more true than when it comes to running a business."

lecc.co.uk



Leanne Fawcett

FIVE TIPS FOR A HIGH PERFORMING WORDPRESS WEBSITE



Did you know that one in four visitors are likely to abandon a website that takes over four seconds to load?

That's why it's so important for your website to have a fast loading time. To keep your site loading as quickly as possible, and therefore performing well, the developers at Vida Creative have put together this handy checklist.

1. Less is more when it comes to plug-ins

"There's a plug-in for that" – the phrase that any developer dreads to hear. When building a website with WordPress, less is definitely more when it comes to plug-ins. They allow you to add functionality to your site with a simple click of a button. However, they can add lots of bloated code which slows your site down, and possibly creates security weaknesses too.

So, choose wisely and don't just install plug-ins for the sake of it. Look for high ratings and a good source.

It's a good idea to review the plug-ins you're using on a regular basis and remove any that you don't use. If functionality can be done without a plug-in, then this is always the best method.

Bonus tip: Remember to always update your plug-ins as this is another culprit for slowing down your site.

2. Resize images

Oversized images that aren't optimised for the

web are one of the main causes of slow loading pages. So reducing the file size of your images can improve your site's performance.

Ideally, you should use images with a width of 2000 pixels on average, saved at 72dpi. Images in this format won't take too long to load and they're ideal for large header images on wide screens and desktops.

You can build image reduction functionality into your site, or there are several websites you can use to compress images before uploading.

3. Run performance tests

Performance tests show where your site stands performance-wise (no surprises here!). It sounds basic, but you'd be surprised at how many businesses don't do this.

You can use free online performance measuring websites to give you suggestions on how to improve your website's performance. Be sure to test more than just your homepage, as loading speeds could vary on different areas of your site depending on the content.

There's no one size fits all metric we can give you on this one, as performance can vary for several reasons.

The main thing is to get the technical functionality right, then your users are less likely to run into issues. Plus, Google will have all of the information it needs to rank your website for people searching for the services you offer.

4. Update your website during times of low traffic

Making updates and changes to your live website is essential to keep your website in tip top condition. If you need to update your site, you

should do it at times when you experience low user numbers.

This prevents your site from displaying an ugly "under maintenance" message. Because, let's face it, the closed for maintenance message isn't a good look! It might not feel like a big deal, but think about it this way, if users are unable to properly access your website due to maintenance, you could miss out on potential enquiries.

5. Choose reliable hosting

A fast WordPress site needs a quality web host. You should choose both a hosting provider that meets your bandwidth and performance requirements. Most WordPress hosts offer several types of hosting:

- Dedicated hosting
- Shared hosting
- Managed WordPress hosting plans
- Virtual private server (VPS) hosting

When choosing your hosting plan, you generally get what you pay for. Shared hosting has competitive pricing but hosts your website on the same server as other websites. This is the choice often picked by newer sites to help gain momentum before upgrading.

Websites that are more established should use dedicated or VPS hosts. They will be able to handle increased traffic without affecting load time or performance.

Need help with your WordPress website? Get in touch, we'd be happy to have a chat about how your website can help propel your business to the next level.

vidacreative.co.uk

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TEENAGE TRIBULATIONS

By Kieran McLaughlin,
Headteacher, Durham School

Bringing up teenagers is tough. I am sure that, no matter how dim and distant our own teenage story may seem to be, we can all remember the pains and pangs of adolescence. The slammed doors, the sulks in the bedroom, the moans of “it’s so unfair”; the emotional rollercoaster ride we endured has been a common experience for teenagers for a number of generations now.

There is one aspect of teenage life however which I think is different for youngsters these days, and it makes their teenage tribulations an order of magnitude more complex: mobile technology.

There have been a number of studies recently on the impact these devices have had on the lives of youngsters and their findings make for uncomfortable reading. Sleepless nights, cyber bullying and sexting are a cocktail of ingredients guaranteed to give parents nightmares about the dangers that come with the uses of modern day technology. Stories in the media don’t help; we are bombarded seemingly on a weekly basis about the evils of technology and how we are raising a generation of zombies, addicted to mobiles and unable to learn at school or conduct a civil conversation at home.

However, though there is no doubt that these are pressing concerns, the situation does need to be tempered with a degree of calm. Scares about the “youth of today” go back as far as Elvis Presley, when his gyrations on television were feared to be corrupting the teenagers of America. However, what makes our anxieties about today’s youngsters more acute is the scale of the change between our social interactions back then and their online lives now.



Kieran McLaughlin

There’s no doubt that technology presents a challenge. However opposing the situation we live with is as pointless as bemoaning the demise of the slide rule. We as teachers and parents need to educate children in the ways in which it is right and wrong to use their phones. In my school it is simple: pupils can use their phones to aid their learning in class if the teacher agrees; use if the phone in public places and in formal school time is forbidden. It is rarely a problem.

I would suggest at home similar rules apply. Of course youngsters will want to spend more time than is healthy on their screens, just as in my day I wanted to watch too much television. That’s where parenting comes in. It’s up to us to let our children know when it’s time to text and when it’s time to chat, when we can converse on Facebook and when it’s a face to face conversation that’s needed.

And there’s the rub. It is we as parents who make those ground rules and we don’t do that purely in what we say. We set our expectations in how we behave. One of those many surveys

I mentioned took a more interesting slant and asked youngsters about their parents’ use of mobiles. Over a third of those surveyed reporting having to ask their parents to put down their phones, and half of those requests were unsuccessful. Unsurprisingly, the parents surveyed did not perceive the problem to the same extent.

I am sure there is more than a hint of truth in these findings. These pocket Pandora’s boxes are infernally tempting and I know I am guilty of “just checking my emails” far too often. The challenge for us all is to practise rather than preach and establish the social values we want for our children by starting with ourselves. If we want our children to turn off, tune in to the real world and drop out of the virtual one, we need to have the discipline to do so as well.

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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A TRIBUTE TO ELIZABETH II

By the time of publication, the funeral of The Queen will have taken place and the national period of mourning will be over. However, the legacy of this most admired- and probably most famous woman of the last hundred years- will continue for millennia.

The wonderful school of which I am Principal responded to the news of the death of Her Majesty with our students' customary respect, courtesy and sense of engagement. As the news emerged on the evening of Thursday 8 September, our own, modest Operation London Bridge began, as the Senior Leadership Team began to plan the next steps on how we would help to navigate our school community- including parents- during this cataclysmic event and mourning period. In addition to the outpouring of grief from staff and students alike, there was also a sense of wonderment at the scope of Her Majesty's reign.

Moreover, as our own memorial service emphasised, she had an absolute commitment to her role as Head of State of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, plus all the other territories and countries over which she presided.

Dozens of biographies have already been written about Her Majesty, and there will be countless more over the coming months and years. Not one of them will be able to be exhaustive in detail, as that would entail tomes larger than the Encyclopaedia Britannica volumes that I envied so much as a child. However, here are a few observations about her reign that we, as a school community, have noted about Her Majesty:

Her Majesty was incredibly well-loved and respected around the world outside of the UK and the Commonwealth.

Who knew that she had a particularly close relationship with the Obamas, and that Michelle was a real favourite of hers? The outpouring of public grief from current and former world leaders was a testament to her world-beating status. Even 'The Donald' managed to produce a statement that sounded heartfelt, genuine and considerate. No mean feat in itself.



Simone Niblock

Medical advances during the Queen's lifetime would have been inconceivable when she was born.

Her reign, the second-longest in recorded history, encompassed a world that began in 1926 before penicillin was discovered, and ended at a time when nanotechnology drugs and treatment are no longer a figment of a sci-fi geek's imagination.

She enjoyed/had to endure weekly meetings with a variety of Prime Ministers during her reign.

During her reign, she presided over 15 Prime Ministers, from her beloved Winston Churchill, to her not-so beloved (allegedly) Margaret Thatcher; to the eccentricities of the recently deposed Boris Johnson, and the installation of Liz Truss only a few days before she died.

The Queen had a wicked sense of humour.

Who can forget her 'skydiving' stint at the 2012 Olympics, alongside Daniel Craig as 007? Also,

her interaction with Paddington during last year's Jubilee celebration was a masterclass in comic timing and drollery.

She was, actually, just as mortal as the rest of us.

I don't think many of us will forget the last public image of her that was released, where she is greeting the newly-elected PM with a broad grin, but with a frailty that touched the hearts of the nation. For lots of us, it made us realise that she was, after all, a mortal being. All across social media on Thursday night were people incredulous that our beloved monarch was dead- 'I thought she would live forever', was a refrain issued across the social media platforms.

Finally, as Paddington sagaciously posted on Twitter: Thank you, Ma'am, for everything.

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WHAT CHANGES IN ASSESSMENT WILL SUPPORT LEARNERS OF THE FUTURE?

With thousands of students having received their results in August, Jessica Blakey, Head of Assessment Innovation at the North East based educational charity and leader in vocational and technical learning NCFE, questions what changes are needed now to better support the learners of the future.

For many learners, this year may have been the first time since 2019 that they sat exams. We know that we haven't yet returned to post-pandemic normality, with mitigations and adaptations still in place for many assessments in 2021-22.

Data on Year 11 student absences shared recently from Education Datalab, for example, highlighted that learners missed, on average, one in ten sessions, while pre-pandemic absences were only half that figure.

These statistics link to findings from the Sutton Trust, released earlier this month, revealing concerns from teachers that the attainment gap will continue to get wider. A huge 72% of teachers surveyed said they thought disadvantaged learners at their school would fall even further behind their more affluent peers this year.

All of this suggests that disadvantaged learners were on increasingly uneven footing when sitting their exams or assessments this year and may not have been celebrating as much as some of their classmates on results day.

Education seems to be trying its best to go back to 'normal' but, with the challenges that we're still facing, it makes me wonder why should we return to normal?

Despite the Former Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson's views, we believe that exams alone may not be the fairest way to assess all learners' abilities. Instead, we must think about what the future of assessment could do to reduce the attainment gap and give all learners a fairer chance, while also embracing new technologies. This would only add to celebrations on results day.

When we launched our Assessment Innovation Fund last year, our vision was (and still is) to break the boundaries of assessment within education. We believe we need a shift from the current dated and disconnected methods of assessment to transformational approaches that meet the needs of learners and educators today.

We're now well underway with piloting the first successful projects that were awarded funding in previous windows, and we're excited to see the impact these pilots could have on the learners of the future.

One of the successful applicants was the Really

NEET Project, based in Rotherham. They're testing the effects of immersive and interactive story-based assessments, which aims to change perceptions by using modern technology to engage learners in a more personalised assessment. One of the key focuses of the pilot is to engage hard-to-reach learners who don't respond to mainstream education and assessment.

Solutions, such as this, are much needed to support disengaged learners, or those who struggle with the typical exam format.

New approaches could also be used to support those with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), as statistics shared by the Department of Education last year highlighted that just under a quarter (23.4%) of these learners achieved five or more GCSEs at A* to C or the equivalent, compared to 70.4% of learners with no identified SEND.

Another pilot is being undertaken by Sheffield College is testing the effects of how virtual reality (VR) can be used effectively in summative and formative assessment. Its aim is to build experiences that enable learners to go into a fully immersive VR setting and practise their skills.

This will give learners more practice time when the physical spaces for work experience are limited and increase learners' opportunities to work with teachers and get constructive feedback.

It's clear that, post-pandemic, we need to continue to innovate and introduce new and effective assessment methods to support the learners of the future. We want results day to be a celebration for all learners, not just those who are good at passing exams.

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CULTURE CLUB

Photo: The Bigger Picture Agency



ALEXANDER MILLAR

Artist based in Newcastle and Glasgow.

His iconic “Gadgie” paintings have made him one of the UK’s best loved artists. Here he tells us about his favourite music, films and culture.

Who is your favourite author and why?

I love all things spiritual and enjoy the books by Dr Joe Dispenza as I think there is more to life, healing and tapping into our unconscious to help you along in your life...plus I’m completely bonkers too.

What would be your three Desert Island Discs?

There are so many to choose from, but *Life on Mars* by David Bowie would be one.

Good Vibrations by the Beach Boys and Jessie Rae’s fabulous Scottish funky song, *Over The Sea*.

Who is your favourite film star and why?

Peter O’Toole as his acting looks so effortless

which I’m sure was helped along the way with a few drams before going on set.

What are your top three films?

1. *Forrest Gump*. The scene at the end where he meets his son for the first time always brings a tear to my eye.
2. *Gregory’s Girl* as that is exactly me when I was a big gangly, awkward teenager not knowing how to be comfortable in my own skin, plus I met Clare Grogan a couple of years ago in Glasgow and she still makes my heart skip a beat even today.
3. My all-time favourite film is *The Quiet Man* with John Wayne and Maureen O’Hara. I know every line in the film and always mime along to every scene. Favourite line in the film is “here’s a fine stick to beat the lovely lady.”

Which poem left a lasting impression on you?

That would have to be *If* by Rudyard Kipling.

A must for every father who is looking for inspirational words to impart to their sons.

What box sets have you enjoyed?

It’s took me an eternity to get around to watching “*Game of Thrones*” but my god what a series. I’ve also enjoyed “*Ozarks*, *Peaky Blinders*, and *The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills*...Just kidding.

Who is your favourite artist or performer?

For a singer songwriter that honour would have to go to David Bowie, truly inspirational.

As for artist that would be Claude Monet. I’ve visited his house about half a dozen times throughout the years and I’m always entranced by his world seen through the layers of his pond at the bottom of his garden.

What is your favourite venue?

I adore the Theatre Royal in Newcastle. I wanted to be an actor when I left school and had the chance to join the Scottish Drama Association, but my dad heard the word thespian and thought it sounded too much like lesbian so marched me to a building site in Glasgow and a three year apprenticeship as a joiner...thanks dad. However, I did do an audience on the stage a few years ago where I did a live painting in front of a packed house at the Theatre Royal so a big tick off the bucket list that night.

Which musical instrument do you particularly enjoy?

That’s would have to be the triangle as it’s the only one I can master, I’ve tried guitar, piano and penny whistle...complete disaster.

From the world of Arts and Culture who would be your ideal dinner party guests?

I’d have to have David Bowie, Maya Angelou, Laurel and Hardy and Peter O’Toole for the craic.

Alexander Millar Fine Art is on Grey Street Newcastle www.alexandermillar.com

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LET YOUR DAUGHTER BE THE GIRL SHE WANTS TO BE AT NEWCASTLE HIGH

At Newcastle High School (NHSG) we empower girls to be leaders, trailblazers and world shapers. Our all-girl education supports girls in finding their own voice and following their dreams and aspirations.

This summer, we've seen our A Level pupils land highly sought after degree places including at Cambridge University, world-renowned arts school Central Saint Martins and The University of Edinburgh – currently ranked 4th in the UK.

What's more, they're doing things their way - and they credit their all-girl education for sparking their passion.

Jess Spearman, 18, was so encouraged by the school environment at NHSG that it inspired her choice of college, Murray Edwards, at Cambridge where she will be reading History. Jess explained: "I am particularly interested in the links and themes around revolution and the quick change that comes about as a result. We are seeing this more and more often, for example there's been a small women's revolution in recent times. This is also why I chose to apply to a women's college at Cambridge, a continuation from my all-girls' education with NHSG, which I loved, and where there is also a big focus on uplifting women."

*Jess Spearman is going to
Cambridge University to read History*



As well as leading the girls to excellent academic success, an all-girl education at NHSG empowers them by providing them with the environment and opportunity for personal development, where they can develop the confidence to find their own voice and grow into the person they want to be.

Student, Emma Gibson, found her voice at NHSG by getting involved in Debating and we have no doubt that she will be a force for good now and in the future. Emma, who is heading to the University of Edinburgh to read Politics this autumn, told us that her time with NHSG fired her interest in feminism. She said: "Coming from an all-girls school, women's issues are really important to me, so if I move into politics for my career, I'll be coming from a feminist standpoint."

Jess and Emma are only two examples from this year's brilliant 2022 A Level cohort, all of whom are now fully equipped to forge their own paths. They will be embarking on a wide-ranging set of courses including Medicine, History, Dentistry, Environmental Sciences, Modern Languages, Politics, Fashion Marketing and Dance.

Michael Tippet, Head at NHSG, explains more: "I passionately believe that an all-girl education provides the perfect environment for girls to achieve without limits, and the exam results from this summer seen across our school are testament to this. This year's leavers have left an inspirational legacy to future cohorts of NHSG girls and I can't wait to see how each and every one of them shape their own futures and ours!"

With outstanding results at both A level and GCSE, you don't just need to take our word for it.

Our current and past pupils are living proof of what can be achieved when an empowering all-girl environment, outstanding teaching and exemplary facilities combine.

NHSG is a member of the Girls' Day School Trust. Girls can start their educational journey with NHSG from just three years of age onwards thanks to our dedicated early years offer.

For further information visit www.newcastlehigh.gdst.net





Sugar and spice and all things nice at Royal Quays

The latest new retail businesses to move into the North Shields based Royal Quays Independent and Outlet Centre have added a touch of sugar and spice and all things nice to the rapidly growing shopping and entertainment visitor destination.

Namaste – A Taste of India and **Sweet Memories** are the newest businesses to relocate to the outlet after leaving their previous premises in Whitley Bay and Stockton respectively. Outlet Centre Manager Matt Dawson welcomes

both businesses and explains that having smaller, local businesses is changing the way that the public view the centre in a very positive light:

“We’ve actively encouraged smaller independent businesses to join the Royal Quays family and since we started this policy, we’ve went from having 17 empty units 18 months ago to having only four now. The whole feel of the outlet has changed, and the public seem to like the blend of big stores and small local traders like Namaste and Sweet Memories.

“We’ve now got a fantastic collection of different businesses here and it’s a real family destination rather than just somewhere to shop. You can come here to eat, drink, play games in our Retro Arcade and you can even take part in dance classes. All of these things give the centre a character that it’s never had before and I’m glad to say that footfall is increasing, and we have a very unique place to visit.”

Namaste – a Taste of India is run by Sangeeta Chopra. Originally her business was based on selling Indian food, spices, and ingredients together with home cooked food but the opportunity to move into larger premises has enabled her to diversify into Indian based jewellery and fashion.

The move has already paid dividends as Sangeeta is seeing new customers from the east side of Tyneside buying sari’s, jewellery and food ingredients who would traditionally travel to Newcastle’s west end to shop.



Stylish celebrations at menswear store

A North East menswear company is celebrating the success of its newest store, one year after opening.

Master Debonair opened its third branch in Sunderland at the historic Mackies Corner in 2021 – and has seen the shop go from strength to strength.

The store has just marked its first anniversary in the city and according to co-founders and business partners, Simon Whitaker and Eve Middlemiss, the response to date has repaid their belief that Sunderland city centre was a great location.

The co-founders opened their first Master Debonair opened at Station Terrace, East Boldon six years ago and since then have also launched a store in Chesterfield.

The thinking behind Master Debonair was to create a brand which would bring together the very best in men’s clothes for all ages, along with top level customer service and an unforgettable experience.

Visitors to the Sunderland store get the opportunity to use the private showroom which they enter through a Narnia-like wardrobe door, while the Boldon shop features everything from lamps with multiple shades to upside down desks.

The must-see décor is an important part of the experience, with one of the stores even featuring a hidden beer tap for shoppers to enjoy.

“It’s a landmark year for us and we are really delighted so far with the response to Sunderland, which is our most recently opened store,” said Eve.

Investor snaps-up £3.55m Durham City retail parade

Knight Frank has acquired a multi-let retail parade in Durham for £3,550,000 on behalf of Ward Group Investments.

Knight Frank Newcastle brokered a deal to purchase 1 – 7 North Road which is in a prime location within Durham’s retail core, opposite the newly-refurbished Riverwalk Shopping Centre.

The 23,000 sq. ft. prominent parade comprises one convenience food store, five retail units and a kiosk - all fronting onto North Road with tenants including Greggs, Hays Travel, Sainsbury’s and Bank of Scotland.

The investment generates a healthy yield of 8.25%, an annual income of £311,000 and was acquired for Andrew Ward of Ward Group Investments who is very active in the investment market in the North East currently.

Partner at Knight Frank, Dickon Wood said: “These shops are a fantastic investment opportunity. Eighty-percent of the total income is secured to low risk tenants and we know that the Sainsbury’s unit trades particularly well. There is also potential to convert the upper floors for alternative use, subject to vacant possession and



planning permission.”

The purchaser, Andrew Ward, adds: “I’m delighted to have acquired this property which is opposite one of our existing holdings and offers a number of asset management initiatives for us to improve the income.”

The vendor, Halifax Pension Nominees Ltd, were advised by Green and Partners.

Knight Frank LLP is the leading independent global property consultancy. Its Newcastle office has a 76-strong team who provide property management, office and industrial buildings agency, building consultancy, ratings and lease advisory and property valuations. The team is very proactive in the market, using its unrivalled access to the latest markets research to ‘know things first’. They are a friendly team that deliver a personal service.

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Alexander's brush With 911 Firefighters

The bravery and courage of the 343 New York City Firemen and Women who lost their lives in the World Trade Centre's Twin Towers 911 attacks have been immortalised in a unique new exhibition by Newcastle based artist Alexander Millar.

The Every Day Heroes exhibition at his gallery in Grey Street, Newcastle contains eight original works and six limited edition prints, and it is the first time that they have been exhibited together in the UK.

Best known for his iconic "Gadgie" paintings and sketches, the inspiration for the new exhibition draws on his moving experiences talking to the men and women who ran into the Twin Towers to fight the fires while others fled to safety.

While watching an online interview with Pearl Maynard, the mother of black firefighter Keith Roy Maynard who lost his life in the attacks, Alexander was so moved that he decided to do something to honour the bravery of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

"I did a painting of Keith Roy wearing his American fire fighter tunic with his surname at the bottom and included his Ladder 33 helmet carrying his little son. I draped the American flag over his shoulders, and it was a moving, evocative image. It prompted me to do more firefighter paintings and I was asked by the New York City Fire Department to do a show in New York."

The Every Day Heroes exhibition is now on display at Alexander Millar Fine Art, Grey Street Newcastle until mid October.

Lindisfarne Festival crowds feel the love and go crazy for the 'best one yet'

As the signature flags, giant marquee stages and award-winning toilets at Lindisfarne Festival are stowed away for another year, organisers and festivalgoers alike are hailing the 2022 event as a cast iron triumph.

Around 7,000 people congregated on the Northumberland Coast for the much-loved camping festival, which kicked off on Thursday September 1st and kept the good times rolling until Sunday morning – more than living up to its 'ultimate-end-of-summer-party' strapline.

National treasures Madness (Friday

night) and award-winning drum and bass collective Rudimental (Saturday night) took care of headlining duties in legendary fashion to the delight of the ecstatic audiences who had assembled in the main Shorefields tent to sing and dance the night away.

As well as the headliners, crowds were treated to a jam-packed bill of live performances by more than 200 acts, across the site's 10 distinct stages including storming sets from the likes of Slamboree, Lindisfarne, Smoove and Turrell, OMG It's the Church, K-Klass, Slipmatt and Lindisfarne Festival icons, Colonel Mustard and the Dijon 5.

Festival founder, Conleth Maenpaa, said: "We've had an incredible few days. Seeing everyone have amazing times singing, smiling and dancing together never fails to blow me away."



Balamory is just the start of Kim's story

A whole new generation of young people are about to discover catchy songs, brightly painted buildings, and characters with an equal amount of colour as BBC iPlayer celebrates the 20th anniversary of one of the most popular children's TV shows of all time by making them available online.

Balamory, a children's TV programme on BBC One, BBC Two and CBeebies for pre-school children, is being re-released six years after it last appeared on television.

Set in Tobermory, on the Scottish Island of Mull, the show had eight central characters with each wearing a distinctive colour of clothing and living in a house of the same colour.

One of them was Penny Pocket played by Newcastle based actor, producer, writer, and presenter Kim Tserkezie who now has her own production company, Scattered Pictures. In the two decades since Balamory, Kim has won a Royal Television Society Award for best drama performance for her leading role in Obsession (BFI Network), received drama and comedy writing commissions from BBC, ITV and C4 and was named as one of the 100 most influential disabled people in the UK (Shaw Trust Power 100).

"I had the time of my life working on Balamory with a team of incredible people. I'll always be thankful to Brian Jameson who created the show, for giving me my first opportunity, as a disabled actor, to play 'a character' rather than 'a disability issue' or 'medical problem'. I know this also meant so much to disabled children who had never had such a character to identify with on screen before.

"It was a privilege to be part of such a wonderful, funny show that entertained children and their families worldwide, breaking the mould using live action and embracing inclusivity."

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Kids Eat Free at Fish & Chip Restaurant, Trenchers

If you're looking for a post-school treat now that the little ones have returned to school, Kids Eat Free is back at the UK'S No.1 Fish & Chip Restaurant, Trenchers, Whitley Bay!

Kids Eat Free includes one free children's three-course meal and cordial with every full paying adult, and runs Monday - Friday, 3:00pm - 6pm, during term time.

Following 40 years of traditional Fish & Chips at Trenchers of Whitby, winner of the UK's Best Fish & Chip Restaurant for 2019 as part of the National Fish and Chip Awards, the institution was brought to the iconic Spanish City, Trenchers, Whitley Bay, was also named the Best Fish and Chip Restaurant in the UK as part of the National Fish and Chip Awards 2020.

Offering friendly service with a smile, Trenchers is a place for the whole family to enjoy. The restaurant notably sits directly underneath Spanish City's iconic dome and its menu includes fish & chips, vegetarian options, grilled fish, traditional British fayre and fresh seafood.

As well as its Kids Eat Free Offer, Trenchers also has a popular OAP Chippy Tea offer, which runs Monday - Friday, 3pm - 6pm, where senior guests can enjoy traditional fish & chips, mushy peas and a hot drink for just £11.95!



All change at the top for six restaurant

The restaurant with arguably the best views on Tyneside has a brand new management team.

Fresh Element, the company behind Six on the top floor of BALTIC, Gateshead is welcoming three new directors to lead its next chapter, and the original founders are stepping aside to follow new ventures.

Greg Lambert, previously Executive Chef is stepping up to Food Director, Roy Ng previously General Manager is stepping up to Operations Director and Charley Currie who has been Head of Events, will now take on the Events Director role. Between them they have some 23 years' of service in the company - which just shows the

true reward in investing in your staff because they will be your future.

The co-founders of Fresh Element, Andy Ross and Pete Hunt, have been heading up the business for nearly 15 years, after winning the BALTIC contract in 2008. Since then, they have established Six's unassailable destination restaurant credentials, but also successfully run the café, events and hospitality at the Art Centre.

A new licence agreement with BALTIC's board will enable the company to focus solely on Six, heralding further investment, expansion of opening times and exciting new menus. However, the new arrangement also coincides with the two, having literally grown up over the two decades of developing the Fresh Element business, recognising their own personal need for new challenges; so they are stepping back to give the new team a chance to stamp their own signature on the restaurant.

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EXPANSION IN THE PIPELINE AT AWARD-WINNING WL DISTILLERY

It's been two years since the first bottle of gin left WL Distillery and the County Durham based distillery have been shaking up quite a ginpire ever since with plans for future expansion set to be unveiled.

In a short space of time the independent distillery made one almighty splash in the gin market, from picking up international awards, hitting top glossy magazines to being featured at London's world-famous Science Museum.

WL Distillery released their award-winning 1st Edition Gin in September 2020, this was shortly after the newly launched distillery halted the production earlier in the year and switched production to sanitiser. Supporting organisations across the North East including foodbanks, Grace House, Sunderland Samaritans, schools and NHS staff at a time when the sanitiser was in short supply.

Since restarting production in 2020 the distillery has gone from strength to strength, and although 2021 remained uncertain, the team behind the award-winning 1st Edition Gin continued to innovate and the portfolio range grew to include limited edition festive and Valentine ranges alongside Wilson's Gin Club 'Watermelon and Liquorice', increasing the range to six flavours.

Distilled in the North East from start to finish the gin is expertly monitored and created, by hand in the distillery. The distillery have bottled a number of prestigious industry awards including gold at The Gin Masters and were listed in the London Spirits Top 100 spirits. They made Vogues 'Hot List' and GQ's 'Cocktail Club', and saw the festive range stocked in Fenwick, ahead of setting up their own shop at the previous Newcastle STACK site.

Their community support during the COVID-19 pandemic saw the Founder and Managing Director Scott Wilson-Laing pick up a Business Hero Award and selected to be one of the 2,022 batonbearers for England as part of The Queen's Baton Relay in the summer.

A sample of hand sanitiser produced and equipment used by WL Distillery was acquired by the Science Museum Group as part of its COVID-19 Collecting Project. The hand sanitiser



Scott Wilson-Laing

joined other historic items in the collection in London to provide insights into the medical and scientific advancements of the last two years. The project provides a permanent record for future generations of medical, scientific, industrial, cultural and personal responses to the outbreak and chronicling its impact on society.

Scott Wilson-Laing Founder and Managing Director, WL Distillery said: "We have been on an incredible journey and are delighted with the growth of the company to date. Receiving leading industry awards in such a short period of time really helped cement the brand as a strong player in the ever-growing gin market, demonstrating that the spirits we are making are the kind that bar managers and mixologists want to stock.

I am in awe of the opportunities I've been nominated for around the sanitiser production we were involved in during the pandemic, from the opportunity to be a batonbearer to knowing our story will be known to generations to come at the Science Museum, it really was a pinch me moment."

As the distillery raises a glass to their second year in business, the team have unveiled plans to ramp up expansion. Further investment and site acquisition at their County Durham based site will assist in expanding their product portfolio and developing their export growth strategy to support further accelerated growth.

Scott said: "The new site will see us expand our

operations to enable us to continue to make our award-winning gins. The introduction of a larger still and an enhanced storage area will enable us to launch a variety of new and exciting spirits making us one of only a hand full of distilleries within England doing so.

Pre-orders for these will be released in the next few months. The expansion will also enable us to increase our workforce creating skilled jobs within the region in a very exciting and dynamic industry."

With an explosion of flavours, their inspiration comes from their Northern roots, ensuring a fresh and classic authentic gin experience for customers. Ingredients have always taken centre stage at WL Distillery and each bottle is infused with nature using handpicked and measured botanicals to ensure the freshest, most authentic taste.

Scott added: "With interest for our gins coming from other countries this expansion will also enable us to explore exporting our products to other areas outside of the UK. The demand for our gin continues to be strong and the further developments over the coming months mark another really exciting chapter for the company."

Follow for the latest updates at
www.wldistillery.com

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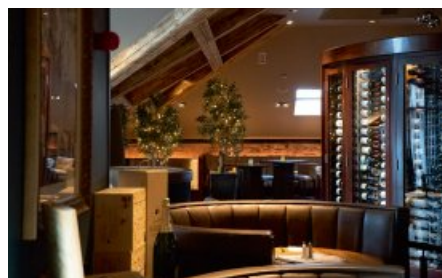
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FAVOURED FRATELLI

By Michael Grahamslaw

Off the back of a stunning Summer of eating out, we rounded off with a visit to old favourite Fratelli in Ponteland. As cultured readers will know, Fratelli literally means brother in Italian parlance, which feels especially apt as this is a familiar haunt where great food is always guaranteed whilst the reception is always warm and welcome.

The restaurant is owned by proud Sardinian, Fabrizio Saba, who has developed a knack for bringing the sunshine of the Old Country to the Geordie culinary scene.

Fratelli serves up a winning mix of homespun Sardinian specialities, we have live music on a Friday evening and children's entertainment on a Sunday afternoon which makes it a firm favourite of everyone from families to Newcastle United footballers.

The dining area is a large, capacious space yet it still manages to retain a lively atmosphere. There's a sumptuous mezzanine for parties and private dining, not to mention an al fresco dining terrace where we enjoyed some late Summer sun. We visited during the hustle and bustle of Bank Holiday weekend, yet the restaurant is seemingly always busy with those eating out, drinking cocktails or simply meeting

for Italian coffee and biscuits.

Impressive wine cabinets are built into the bar offering ample choice and we were soon sipping on a silky and seductive Sardinian red whilst checking out the restaurant's extensive menu.

A lunch time offer runs 12 til 4 Monday to Saturday with 2 courses for £15 and 3 courses for £20, offering a weekly selection of specials.

There's also plenty room for Sardinian flair with some standout starter dishes. One of which was the Antipasto Fratelli – a grand sharing plank of traditional antipasto featuring Sardinian meats and cheeses, pickled vegetables and carta musica. Also top tier was the soft centred burrata mozzarella with fresh tomato, basil and extra virgin olive oil.

There was much to enthuse over for main course too. "Must try" dishes are signposted in a well-devised menu and Lisa couldn't resist another Sardinian speciality, Zuppa di Pesce all Sarda – a prevailing dish of the island consisting of Sardinian broth with mixed fish and shellfish, flavoured with tomato, lemon zest, thyme and chilli, served with toasted Altamura bread.

As is my wont, I plumped for the incendiary pizza diavola featuring spicy sausage, onion and a shower of extra chilli. Both dishes really hit the spot yet we couldn't help but look forward to our next meal with a host of other options left unexplored!

Topping off a tremendous meal was an epic slab of homemade tiramisu which was shared between Lisa and I alongside coffees.

After a memorable meal, we left in high spirits (a brace of sambucas sorted this) and were left to reflect on what a great addition Fratelli is to our region. Now into its 15th year, the restaurant continues to dazzle locals and those from further afield.

Long may the Sardinian sun shine on Bell Villas.

For more information, visit www.fratelliponteland.co.uk

fratelli bar



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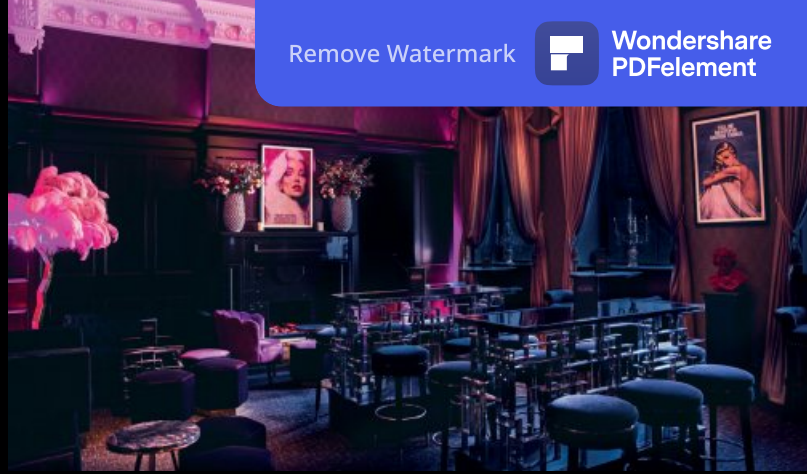
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TO THE VICTORS, BELONG THE SPOILS

By Michael Grahamslaw

Newcastle's leisure sector received a huge boost recently with the opening of Victors – the city's swanky new bar and kitchen.

The high-end restaurant chain has carved out a fine reputation with sister venues in Manchester and Oxford and this new venture reflects the group's investment in the North East.

Victors occupies a prime location on the city's quayside by the Millenium Bridge and its deluxe offering of modern American-Asian fayre is befitting of its magnificent surroundings.

Inside, the venue offers a warm Tyneside welcome whilst the décor radiates that contemporary "WOW" factor. White-washed brick walls combine with rustic oak beams and wisteria trees to create an atmosphere of easy glamour which has to be one of the most 'instagrammable' restaurants in the city. Now, never did I ever think that word would enter my vocabulary!

The restaurant carries a buoyant atmosphere with throngs of couples, old friends, business folk and ladies who lunch populating the dining area.

On a late Summer's afternoon, we quite literally sampled the last of the summer's wine with an excellent bottle of Sauvignon Blanc to kick off whilst looking over an epic menu.

Victors offers a mix of sushi, small plates, steaks and larger plates which can be enjoyed in typical starter / main course form or as an all-out tapas

style feast. We chose the latter and ordered with gusto. Dishes arrive in a steady stream of "as and when" and begun with a lovely selection of giant green nocellera olives and sourdough bread with salted butter and honey truffle.

We were advised to order three small plates per person and did so accordingly. My son Jack chose the seared scallops with pancetta jam and herb salad, the beef tataki with soy and white truffle dressing and the panko squid, enlivened by lime and BBQ Japanese mayo.

Yours truly meanwhile chose the chicken skewers with soy and sesame dressing, the shrimp tempura and the crab & yuzu tacos – something of a headline dish recommended by our server and featuring handpicked Devon crab, avocado and a tongue-tingling wasabi mayo.

These were a feast for the eyes as well as the tastebuds with each dish artfully presented in impressive fashion, drawing upon edible flowers, boutique crockery et al.

This was a meal of the highest calibre yet even for true trencherman like us, we had ordered far too much so swerved dessert.

Perhaps in true "insta-grammable" mode we did order a brace of after-dinner cocktails. Jack enjoyed the Japanese negroni, spun with Roku gin and plum sake whilst I opted for the "English Country Garden" – a gin-based treat with fresh lemon juice and elderflower tonic which fittingly evoked the splendour of British Summertime.

It would appear then that Victors has all the boxes ticked when it comes to food and drink. At this corner of Newcastle's Quayside, the V is for victory!

For more information, visit www.victors.co.uk





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HOST & STAY: WHAT WILL IT MEAN IF ENGLAND CRACKS DOWN ON HOLIDAY LETS?



This September, the Scottish government introduced rules to designate the entire city of Edinburgh as a short-term let control area. This control requires owners of second homes to apply for planning permission in order to continue letting out their property.

But what, if anything, does this mean for England's short-term rental market? Dale Smith, CEO of holiday home rental company Host & Stay, investigates...

Why the change?

For Edinburgh, this new legislation means that anyone who has a second home will now need to apply for planning permission to change the use from residential to a short-term let. Why? To allow the council to make decisions based on its local development plan and other material considerations.

It's worth noting that Edinburgh is an extreme example. Around a third of all Scottish short-term holiday lets can be found in the capital – a very high concentration for what is a relatively small city. So, the reason for introducing the controls is a simple one: there are simply too

many holiday homes.

This impacts the local housing market in a number of ways: houses become unaffordable, there are too few of them for local people to buy, areas become blighted by anti-social behaviour and the number of vehicles brought into the city by guests causes traffic and safety issues.

But if you have a short-term holiday let, this news shouldn't alarm you too much. For one, there is currently no limit on the number of holiday lets in Edinburgh. Each planning case brought forward will be considered in line with the Council's development plan and other material considerations.

Will England be affected?

There are currently no plans to introduce the same controls in any English cities (aside from London, which enforces planning permission for any property let out for more than 90 nights a year), and while this might change in the future, the government will first want to see the impact they have on Edinburgh.

A report published in January of this year addresses some of the concerns of short-term rentals. The government's Tourist Recovery Plan also includes a commitment to consult on the possible introduction of a statutory Tourist Accommodation Registration Scheme in England, although thus far it has not progressed.

Any new regulations would almost certainly affect the local economy if brought into force in England, as we expect them to with Edinburgh.

Short-term and holiday rentals play an increasingly important role in English tourism, not only by bringing in new income but also by the number of local jobs they provide. In fact, according to Airbnb, the sector brings billions into the UK economy and provides thousands of jobs. In Edinburgh, the platform has estimated a loss of £133 billion and 7,000 jobs to its local economy - eye-watering figures that many English councils won't want to lose.

Striking a balance

The way forward is, as usual, a balanced one, with popular tourist locations considered on a case-by-case basis. There are many positive impacts with short-term rentals, but, when holiday rentals begin to outnumber residential homes, there are also negative ones too.

For those who already have short-term rentals, you don't need to do anything differently. For those considering investing in a holiday let, or renting out a second home, the figures still speak for themselves. The average annual income for a holiday homeowner is £28,000 – nearly the average UK salary. And with the population of staycations still rising, now is a great time to invest, particularly in popular tourist spots.

For more information on how Host & Stay can support you on your short term let journey, visit www.hostandstay.co.uk or email info@hostandstay.co.uk

LAUNCH OF THE SOCIAL & KITCHEN BY CHEF MATEI BARAN



On the back of his success with #PoshStreetFood in Seaburn, his private catering business as well as pop-up kitchens, cookery classes for children and the release of his latest book *Big Chef, Mini Chef*, one Sunderland-based chef is opening a brand-new venue, later this month.

Baran is something that we are extremely proud of and want to offer a warm, relaxed atmosphere to the people of Sunderland and surrounding areas. You need to watch this space though, as we have another project underway in North Shields, which we will be unveiling very soon."

Due to open on September 2nd, The Social & Kitchen by Chef Matei Baran will be serving some opening offers to newcomers to the venue and visitors can expect the same high standard of food available at his other businesses.

Serving food Monday to Saturday, 12 noon until 9pm and Sunday 12 noon until 9pm, there is much anticipation surrounding this new venture as locals pop in to ask about the change to the venue.

Chef Matei Baran concluded: "We hope our latest venture will be a great success and really look forward to welcoming the lovely people of Pallion and beyond to sample our delicious food and drinks."

info@mateibaran.co.uk

Chef Matei Baran who opened his first venture at STACK in Seaburn just one year ago, has sourced to success, following his showcase on MasterChef, the Professionals in 2018.

Proudly opening his new premises in Waverley Terrace; The Social & Kitchen by Chef Matei Baran will be serving Chef Matei's take on his authentic street food, designed exclusively for the pub diners. Housed in the premises of The Pickled Radish and previous to that a local working men's club, #PoshStreetFood has refurbished the venue to represent Chef Matei's food and drink offerings.

Talking about his latest venture, Chef Matei Baran said: "It's been an incredibly difficult two years of trading with #PoshStreetFood at Seaburn, but we were determined to weather the storm. The Social & Kitchen by Chef Matei



OUT AND ABOUT - MACCLESFIELD



My day visit to Macclesfield, to visit the Silk Mill and museum, was planned for the 17th August, there and back in a day from home. The day before I was in London, when a major meltdown on the East Coast Main Line occurred at Biggleswade, blocking the line for eight hours.

I ended up at Peterborough, by way of Cambridge and Ely, from where there were no trains going north, but there were trains to Birmingham and I reasoned I might as well forget about going home and head direct to Macclesfield, by way of Leicester and Derby. With no town centre Premier Inn, I elected to stay at the fairly new Tytherington Club. Waking up with a town to explore, before my appointment at 1400, I found a bus stop with only four buses a day into town and sampled the Little Gems 392 to the station where I picked up replacement tickets for my journey home that evening, the originals being in my office at home.

Macclesfield town centre is built, unusually, on a hill, and the bus station clings on to the hillside. I found a pub with the intriguing name The Cock in Treacle, the fine Victorian drill hall, and the art deco Picturedrome. My attention was also attracted to a big sign on a roundabout "Could your hearing problems just be EAR WAX? Safe and pain free micro suction technology", it said. I found the clinic at Chestergate (close to the Georgian Town Hall) on the main shopping street, and went in for an immediate appointment. Ten minutes later, with a large blob of wax removed from my right ear (which I left with them) I had much better hearing. There was a Sri Lankan restaurant called Kandy, not open until the evening, unfortunately, and I proceeded down the hill to my destination.

The Silk Mill complex is a museum and associated café, just along the street from the Paradise Mill which looks like it is set in the 1930s.

The Silk Museum reveals Macclesfield's 300-year story as a global centre for silk production, textiles and design. It was a boom and bust operation, depending on the supply of foreign silk, and visitors can discover the unique collection of machines and learn about Macclesfield's rich industrial heritage. There's a historic archive of pattern books and textiles, from which you can see how designs were created and then transformed onto silk on the Jacquard looms using card with punched holes to direct the looms, which system would be used in later years as the punched cards of early computer programming. The town exported much labour to Paterson in New Jersey, USA, to establish a silk industry there. The expert guides at Paradise Mill each offer unique insights, looking at all aspects of Mill life and silk production, from the beauty of the textiles, the social history and the global phenomenon of silk.

The Paradise Mill was used for high end short run silk production (e.g. men's ties) by the firm of Cartwright and Sheldon whose offices and machines can be seen. The Silk Museum and Paradise Mill is open from Wednesday to Saturday 10-4, also on Treacle Sundays (the last Sunday of the month) 12.30-3.30, this being the day of the town's colourful Treacle Market, giving rise to the pub name earlier.

Heading back to the station, I waited for my train on a wooden seat dedicated to transport campaigner and associate of mine Chris Dale (1948-2020). Three trains, but five tickets of three types brought me back to Chester-le-street for £33.20 on split tickets, as opposed to £54.90 normal fare with a railcard, and I enjoyed half an hour overlooking Manchester Piccadilly station at Yo! Sushi, although the little conveyor belts of food have been removed post-pandemic.

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For a copy of the UK rail map, extract below, visit www.railmap.org.uk

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HEADLINING HARDWICK HALL

By Jack Grahamslaw

Unquestionably one of the standout events in the North East's music calendar is the Hardwick Festival. The two day music festival takes place annually on the site of the sprawling 120 acre Hardwick Hall estate and in recent years has hosted the likes of *Stereophonics*, *The Specials* and *Nile Rodgers & Chic*.

We had the pleasure of attending this year and vowed to return to sample the hotel itself, which operates as a four star luxury retreat all year round.

My girlfriend Rosie's birthday presented the perfect opportunity to do just that, so we booked in for all Hardwick Hall has to offer, namely 50 deluxe bedrooms and a flagship in-house eatery 'The Rib Room'.

Located just off the A1 at Sedgefield, the hotel is easily accessible. Its meandering driveway stirs a real sense of expectation, whilst on-site the hotel overlooking lake and surrounding parkland creates a stunning pastoral scene.

We were checked in cheerily on arrival and directed to our premier room. This was a picture of contemporary elegance by way of Ancient Greece, with a show-stopping, pillared four-poster bed the centrepiece of the room.

Elsewhere, the individually designed room was decked out in the boutique style with modern amenities including a 50" plasma screen TV will Sky box, tea & coffee making facilities and complimentary Wi-Fi. The only real conundrum proved to be whether to have a blast in the room's walk-in jet shower or a soak in the deep, free-standing bath before changing for dinner.

Dining is a top priority at Hardwick Hall with dedicated restaurant 'The Rib Room' offering a comprehensive steakhouse style menu with many modern inflections. Readers may be familiar with the Rib Room concept from sister-venue Ramside Hall and this is similarly open to guests and day visitors alike.

Set down in the cellar, the restaurant packs character in abundance and we were seated in

a cosy alcove lined with wine bottles. Speaking of the good stuff, the Rib Room offers a pleasing selection of libations with a steak-friendly Malbec catching our eye from an impressive wine list. We sipped on this whilst tucking into some doorstep sourdough and verdant green olives whilst looking over an enticing menu.

Kicking off, Rosie chose the blue cheese and leek tart, presented with real panache with an artful slick of beetroot. I chose the garlic & chilli king prawns, singing with sweet lemon zest.

Following on, Rosie opted for the wild mushroom & truffle gnocchi which she declared one of the best she'd had in recent times whilst I tucked into the house speciality 8oz fillet steak with all the trimmings.

Hellbent on squeezing the last drops out of Rosie's birthday, we lingered into the night over coffee and liquors in the Hardwick Lounge, a sumptuous space all polished oak and chrome.

The following morning, we rose early for a bracing walk around the grounds before breakfasting regally on eggs benedict and eggs Florentine respectively.

Heading for the hills, we reflected on a fantastic stay entirely befitting of the special occasion. On this visit, it would be the hotel assuming centre stage!

For more information, visit hardwickhallhotel.co.uk





Anna Wadcock

WE'RE BACK, AND BACK FOR GOOD...

After a two-year break, because of the Covid pandemic, one of the hardest-hit industries, a hospitality organisation, is coming back fighting and proving that they may have been down, but they're definitely not beat!

North East Hotelier's Association (NEHA), which was established over thirty years ago is an organisation which offers support, guidance, and camaraderie with hoteliers as well as businesses associated and servicing this industry.

Believed to be one of the biggest of its kind in England, NEHA currently has 45 of the best-known hotels in the region and are the voice of the hospitality sector. Their aim is to speak out, influence and challenge the decisions

made on behalf of their industry and have their voices heard. NEHA strives to make the lives of hoteliers an easier one and address some of the obstacles that often arise.

The organisation celebrates the success of the industry with the Excellence Awards and recognises the most deserving every year at a black-tie ball, this year taking place on Sunday October 2nd at The Grand Hotel, Gosforth Park, where it is expected that over 370 guests will be in attendance and will be treated to a three-course meal and a live band.

Collaborating with key sponsors from the region, the ball highlights the individuals / categories with awards given to the best, and recognising the excellence within the industry, against all the odds. Their aim is to seek out the best people, those that have gone the extra mile in providing exceptional service.

Anna Wadcock, General Manager of the Maldron Hotel and Sarah Harrison, General Manager of the Marriott Metrocentre at NEHA said: "It's so good to be back after the most stressful two years that our industry has ever seen. Our staff have coped remarkably well and fought against adversity in a way that only people in the service industry could understand. We're grateful to all our members and sponsors who have supported us over the years and this years Excellence Awards Ball promises to be a great evening for everyone."

The contribution that hospitality industry has



on the economy is enormous in the region, with over 4500 bedrooms and a spend of £70M on goods and services. The hotel revenue alone exceeds £200M, with an economic footprint estimated at £616M.

Anna concluded: "In an industry that employs in excess of 3,400 staff and influence in the region of 11,400 jobs, we hope that more hoteliers will consider joining NEHA, in order to get their voices heard."

For information on NEHA's services contact: sponsorship@nehahotels.co.uk or Nola Collinson 07792 382 693.



Me and kids - Jubilee Celebrations 2022

Invest in Future Gala -
Getty Images

OPPORTUNITY SAVES LIVES AND THAT IS WHY CHARLES III IS MY KING!

The passing of the Queen led to much reflection for many of us. And whilst social media was awash with conversations about whether there's a place for the Monarchy in today's world, I reflected on the purposeful impact King Charles has had on my life.

As a young adult I was struggling to live with several chronic illnesses and invisible disabilities. I felt worthless and useless, made to feel this way by an exclusionary society. Life was a contrast to the aspiration I once had. Having accepted my health situation, I started to try to build a new life living with disability. I was working, trying to, but with no opportunity or support I wasn't earning enough to meet my basic needs. I felt depressed about my future. I was also volunteering with Sure Start and UNICEF.

Surestart introduced me to the Prince's Trust. This opportunity completely transformed my life.

In 1976, the then Prince of Wales had a bold idea. Following his Royal Navy duty, he became dedicated to improving the lives of disadvantaged young people in the UK, setting up the charity with his severance pay of £7,400. He founded 'His Trust' to deliver on his commitment. And what a commitment it is! The Trust has supported more than 1,000,000 young people across the UK. Many sharing the sentiment, they would be in prison or dead

without the Trust. And these young people go on to positively impact the lives of thousands of others. A legacy.

The Trust offers an abundance of opportunities. Working with incredible support workers I began a journey to start a business; self-employment is an accessible 'right to earn' solution for the disabled community. The business support was pivotal, but the personal support delivered significant impact. The Trust believed in me. They highlighted my strengths and shone a light on my capabilities and qualities. They enabled me to sow a seed of belief in myself and more importantly, I saw a future.

Years later, my life is enriched with experiences; one was working on the wedding of one of the Trust's Patrons through my wedding consultancy. The Trust's support and belief led me to more charity and voluntary roles, primarily working with Disadvantaged Children and Inclusion; filled with gratitude I wanted to ensure all children accessed equal opportunity.

As the King made his first address, just 24 hours after his dear Mamma had died, I told my

children how the King had been influential in the opportunities they are privileged to have. I stood and sung God Save the King, tearfully realising the doorway the Trust opened for me had led me to the path I am on today with Kind Currency. The heart of Kind Currency is to improve the quality of life of disadvantaged people, to strive for a fair and kind society, to ensure we protect people, the planet, and the future. The King's bold idea, sparking the flame of another bold idea.

The world needs empathetic leadership, commitment to delivering change and the passion to protect people and the planet. Qualities and values the new King, HM Charles III possesses. I know because I have experienced them through his work.

Queen Elizabeth II may have died the greatest Monarch that ever reigned but as a mother, I believe she had great comfort in passing the Crown to her Son, who's legacy has reigned for many years already.

A legacy of opportunity. Opportunity saves lives.

**God Bless the Queen.
Long Live the King.**

www.kindcurrency.co.uk



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The Northumberland Golf Club (NGC) are offering a limited number of opportunities to join our over 37 years old category with a 15-month membership running from 1st October 2022 to 31st December 2023. The offer is a reduced joining fee of £400, representing 50% off and an option to pay the membership subscription in January 2023, but play from 1 October 2022.

The benefits of this package are a reduced joining fee and free temporary membership for 3 months from 1st October 2022. This will allow you to experience all the benefits through golfing, practicing and socialising that NGC warmly offers from its challenging course, superb practice facilities and enjoyable clubhouse *before committing to 2023 membership*. Designed by both Harry S Colt and James Braid, NGC is a Regional Qualifier for The Open and is playable all year round.

Our membership year starts from 1st January and this offer is restricted to 15 applicants. Please note, this offer is only available to individuals over the age of 37.

To enquire, please email admin@thengc.co.uk or call Julie on **0191 236 2498**. We look forward to hearing from you.





GOOD VIBRATIONS

Feeding from the positivity of others is something we should all take advantage of. We all have good and bad days but we all need to control our emotions and stay in a strong mindset as much as possible while also learning how to push through the harder times.

There are many positives we can look at and draw energy from to give ourselves that timely boost that lifts us when we need it. Taking time to focus on the positives rather than jumping on every negative is key to a strong mindset.

Sometimes we have to step back and reset our minds.

Here are a few examples of things we can draw energy from:

- The incredible women's European football win has given the country a monster boost and feel good factor. I hope this result can be a real catalyst for the younger generation to become more active and push more girls into exercise and competitive sports.
- The lows of covid are behind us and we can look positively to the future and feed from others positive response to being able to roam freely again.
- This is the first summer for over 2 years many will be jetting off abroad, its given many of us a real buzz.
- Being able to finally spend quality time face to face with friends and family, coinciding with this fantastic bout of hot weather has certainly boosted people's moral.
- Enjoying time out in the fresh air and taking in the North East's stunning scenery is one of those things things we may take for granted and often underrated how big an impact it has on our mood and confidence.
- Exercising to boost your endorphins and your mental health is a must.
- Uplifting music can give you a real spark and immediately boost your mood, find something that works for you and feed from it's energy.
- Podcasts, just like with music, can help you find your mojo and set your mind to think in a different more positive way.

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DAVID'S SUMMING UP

Make a choice in life to be more positive and less critical, this will immediately create good vibes for you and those around you.



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THE LAST WORD



Barry Speker

The death of our beloved Queen Elizabeth II consumed most of the nation and the commonwealth in a period of mourning and grief, culminating in the funeral to end all funerals. That so many world leaders attended and were fulsome in their praise of the Queen, brought immense pride to us and a testimony to Britain's subsisting softer power. The nation and the commonwealth fully realise that Her Majesty is not only our longest serving sovereign but one who has left an indelible legacy. This was a life devoted to service and dedicated to ruling benevolently with love, kindness and wisdom, and an example to all countries and their leaders.

No one does ceremonial better than Britain and it was clear that the funeral was many decades in the planning, much of it dictated by the Queen herself. For the sceptics and mean-minded who see the price of everything and the value of nothing, there will be an inevitable increase in tourism.

This was no doubt a traumatic time for Liz Truss. The excitement of her leadership victory and meeting the Queen to be asked to form a government; within days the Sovereign died and the PM meets the new King Charles III. The period of mourning and the funeral required suspension of Parliament and a period of grace for the PM to delay decisions on inflation, energy prices, strikes, tax cuts and other crises; also the unexpected bonus of accessing as many world leaders as possible, during their attendance for the funeral. Prime Minister's Questions may seem less daunting.

Following Covid lockdown restrictions it was delightful that the North East Chinese



Association has been able to resume traditional celebrations. The banquet for the Mid-Autumn Festival was held at Sky in Stowell Street. Sumptuous occasion - fewer speeches but more karaoke.

The Gosforth Curry Club is still going from strength to strength including a celebratory trip out of the area - the Curry Train to The Valley in Corbridge. The standard of debate remains impressive, although emotions run high during predictions of Premier League positions.

Starting the football season with only one win for Newcastle United in the first seven games might be called a crisis. The optimists stress that Newcastle have only lost one game and drawn five. Granddaughter Dayna was not discouraged and came up from London for her first match at St James Park which turned out to be a disappointing 1-1 draw with Bournemouth. However there was the great atmosphere, the tribute to the Queen and the chance for Dayna to meet Mr and Mrs Magpie.

barryspeker@hotmail.com





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